

Ephesians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of the Messiah Jesus by the will of God, to those who are set apart in Ephesus and who are believers in the Messiah Jesus,¹ **1:2** grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.²

1:3 Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, who is bestowing on us in the Messiah every Spiritual benefit in the heavens,³ **1:4** just as He chose us in him before the creation of the world, so that we would be set apart and acceptable before Him.⁴

With love, **1:5** in view of Jesus the Messiah, He predestined us to adoption to Himself according to the satisfying of His desire,⁵ **1:6** for the praise of the glory of His grace, which He has granted us in the one who himself has loved.⁶ **1:7** In him, through his blood, we have deliverance, the forgiveness of transgressions, according to the riches of His grace, **1:8** which He has caused to abound towards us.⁷

With all wisdom and understanding,⁸ **1:9** He made known to us the mystery of His desire according to His satisfaction, which He purposed beforehand in him,⁹ **1:10** for implementing the plan of the fullness of the times, to bring together the sum total of everyone in the Messiah, everyone in the heavens and everyone on the earth—in him,¹⁰ **1:11** in whom we have indeed been given an inheritance, after having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who produces all things in line with the intent of His desire,¹¹ **1:12** with the result that we, who were the first to hope in the Messiah, exist for the praise of His glory.¹²

1:13 In him, you also, having heard the message of truth, the good news of your salvation, which you also believed, were permanently marked with the promised Holy Spirit,¹³ **1:14** who is the first installment of our inheritance towards the deliverance of the possession, for the praise of His glory.¹⁴

1:15 Therefore, after hearing about your belief in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all those who have been set apart,¹⁵ **1:16** I do not stop giving thanks for you while I mention you in my prayers,¹⁶ **1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Father of glory, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revealing in the knowledge of Him,¹⁷ **1:18** because the eyes of your heart have been enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among those who are set apart,¹⁸ **1:19** and what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe in accordance with the operation of the power of His strength,¹⁹ **1:20** which He activated in the Messiah, when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavens,²⁰ **1:21** far above every ruler, authority, power, jurisdiction, and every name being named, not only in this age, but in the age to come.²¹ **1:22** And He placed everyone in submission under his feet, and He gave him as head above everyone to the gathering,²² **1:23** which is his body, the fullness of him who himself provides the fullness of everyone in the all.²³

2:1 Indeed, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,²⁴ **2:2** in which you formerly lived in conformity with the age of this world system, in line with the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now in operation in the sons of disobedience,²⁵ **2:3** among whom we all formerly conducted ourselves in response to the strong cravings of our flesh, as we performed the desires of the flesh and its intentions. Indeed, we were by nature children of wrath just like the rest.²⁶

2:4 However, God, who is rich in mercy on account of His great love with which He has loved us,²⁷ **2:5** even though we were dead because of our transgressions, has made us alive with the Messiah (by grace you have been saved).²⁸ **2:6** Indeed, He has raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in the Messiah Jesus,²⁹ **2:7** in order to demonstrate in the coming ages the extraordinary magnitude of the riches of His grace in the midst of His kindness towards us in the Messiah Jesus.³⁰

2:8 For, in light of your belief, you have been saved by grace, and this is not from you. It is a gift from God,³¹ **2:9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.³² **2:10** For we are His created thing, having been created in the Messiah Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, so that we will walk into them.³³

2:11 Therefore, remember that formerly you, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “the uncircumcised” by anyone who calls himself “the hand-made in the flesh circumcised,”³⁴ **2:12** that you, in that season, were separated from the Messiah, excluded from the citizenry of Israel, even strangers to the covenants of promise, while you had no hope and were atheists in the world.³⁵ **2:13** But now in the Messiah Jesus, you, who formerly were far away, have drawn near by means of the Messiah’s blood.³⁶

2:14 For he is our peace, who has made both groups into one, even destroying with his flesh the barrier of the dividing wall, the hostility,³⁷ **2:15** when he nullified the Covenant of commandments with regulations, so that, with him, He could create the two groups into one new set of human beings by making peace,³⁸ **2:16** and so that he could reconcile both groups in one body to God through the cross when He killed the hostility by means of him.³⁹ **2:17** Thus, when he came, he proclaimed the good news of peace for you who were far away and peace for those who were near,⁴⁰ **2:18** because through him we both have access by means of one Spirit to the Father.⁴¹

2:19 Therefore, you are no longer strangers and outsiders, but you are fellow citizens with those who are set apart and members of the household of God,⁴² **2:20** because you have been used as bricks on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with the Messiah Jesus as its cornerstone.⁴³ **2:21** In him, the whole building is being joined together and increasing into a holy temple in the Lord,⁴⁴ **2:22** in whom, indeed, you are being built up together into the dwelling place of God by means of the Spirit.⁴⁵

3:1 On account of this, I Paul, the prisoner of the Messiah Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles...⁴⁶ **3:2** since, indeed, you have heard of the arrangement of the grace of God which was given to me and intended for you,⁴⁷ **3:3** that, according to a revelation, the mystery was made known to me, just as I wrote above in brief.⁴⁸ **3:4** In regard to this, as you read, you are able to understand my grasp of the mystery of the Messiah,⁴⁹ **3:5** which, in other generations, was not made known to the sons of men as it now has been revealed to his set-apart apostles and prophets by the Spirit,⁵⁰ **3:6** to the effect that the Gentiles are co-heirs, co-body members, and co-possessors of the promise in the Messiah Jesus by means of the good news,⁵¹ **3:7** of which I became a servant according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me in line with the operation of His power.⁵²

3:8 To me, the least of all those who are set apart, this grace was given—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incomprehensible riches of the Messiah,⁵³ **3:9** indeed to bring to light for all what is the plan of the mystery, which has been hidden for ages within God, who is the Creator of all things.⁵⁴ **3:10** This was so that the multifaceted wisdom of God could now become known in the heavens through the gathering to the rulers and authorities,⁵⁵ **3:11** in line with the plan of the ages, which He devised to include the Messiah Jesus our Lord,⁵⁶ **3:12** in whom we have boldness and confident access in the light of our belief in him.⁵⁷

3:13 Therefore, I ask you not to become discouraged at my afflictions, which are for your sake, which is your glory.⁵⁸ **3:14** Because of this, I bow my knees before the Father,⁵⁹ **3:15** on the basis of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named,⁶⁰ **3:16** that He would give you, commensurate with the riches of His glory, to be strengthened in the inner man with power through His Spirit,⁶¹ **3:17** resulting in the Messiah’s dwelling in your hearts in light of your belief, because you have been rooted and established in love,⁶² **3:18** so that you, along with all those who have been set apart, may be able to grasp what is the breadth, length, height, and depth of,⁶³ **3:19** that is, to know, the Messiah’s love which exceeds knowledge, so that you may be filled towards all the fullness of God.⁶⁴

3:20 Now, to Him who is able to do abundantly more beyond all that we ask or think, in line with the power which is working in us,⁶⁵ 3:21 to Him be the glory because of the gathering and the Messiah Jesus to all generations of the age of the ages. Amen.⁶⁶

4:1 Therefore I, a prisoner because of the Lord, encourage you to live in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,⁶⁷ 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, as you bear with one another with patience. With love⁶⁸ 4:3 labor to preserve the unity of the Spirit by means of the mutual bond of *shalom*.⁶⁹ 4:4 There is one body and one spirit, just as you were indeed called because of the one hope of your calling.⁷⁰ 4:5 There is one Lord, one belief, one baptism,⁷¹ 4:6 one God and the Father of all, who is over all, throughout all, and in all.⁷²

4:7 And grace was given to each one of us in accordance with the measure of the Messiah's gift.⁷³

4:8 Therefore, it says,

Having ascended on high, He led captive the captives. He gave gifts in the manner of men <Ps. 68:18 almost>.⁷⁴

4:9 What does it mean that He "ascended" except that He descended into the lower regions of the earth?⁷⁵ 4:10 He who descends is also he who ascends far above all of the heavens, in order that he fill out the all.⁷⁶

4:11 And He gave on the one hand apostles, and on the other hand prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers⁷⁷ 4:12 for the equipping of those who have been set apart for the work of service, for the building up of the Messiah's body,⁷⁸ 4:13 until we all arrive at the unity of belief in and understanding of the Son of God, to be the man who has completed his goal (*telos*) (εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον), to the measure of the extent of the Messiah's fullness.⁷⁹

4:14 In order that we may no longer be children who are tossed by the sea and carried here and there by every wind of teaching because of the trickery of men, because of craftiness for the purpose of being deceitful schemers,⁸⁰ 4:15 while thinking and living truth with love, let us cause everyone to grow towards him who is the head, the Messiah,⁸¹ 4:16 from whom the whole body, being joined and brought together through every supporting joint according to the measured working of each one of the parts, produces the growth of the body for the building up of itself within the context of love.⁸²

4:17 Therefore, I say this and bear witness in the Lord—that you no longer live as indeed the Gentiles live within the empty futility of their mind.⁸³ 4:18 They have been darkened in their thinking, while being estranged from the life of God on account of the ignorance which exists within them because of the stubbornness of their heart.⁸⁴ 4:19 Because they have lost all feeling, they have delivered themselves over to unrestrained immoral behavior so as to gain every kind of impurity in the midst of their insatiable desires.⁸⁵

4:20 However, you did not learn about the Messiah in this way.⁸⁶ 4:21 Because, indeed, you have heard about him and were taught about him, just as truth is in Jesus,⁸⁷ 4:22 you should lay aside the old man, who, in line with your former manner of life, is being corrupted in accordance with strong desires of deceit.⁸⁸ 4:23 Instead, be renewed in the spirit of your mind,⁸⁹ 4:24 and put on the new man who, according to God, was created in righteousness and devotion to the truth.⁹⁰ 4:25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor <Zechariah 8:16>, because we are members of one another.⁹¹

4:26 Be angry and do not sin <Psalm 4:4>. Do not let the sun go down on your anger,⁹² 4:27 and do not give the adversary an opportunity.⁹³

4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather he must labor, doing good with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with him who is in need.⁹⁴

4:29 Let no worthless word proceed from your mouth, but only that which is good for the purpose of upbuilding in the midst of need, so that it may provide grace to those who hear it.⁹⁵ **4:30** And do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.⁹⁶

4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, shouting, and slander be removed from you, along with all evil.⁹⁷ **4:32** Instead, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, and forgiving each other, just as, indeed, God forgives you in the Messiah.⁹⁸ **5:1** Therefore, be imitators of God as children who are loved,⁹⁹ **5:2** and conduct yourselves with love just as the Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for the purpose of being a calming aroma.¹⁰⁰

5:3 Let no sexual immorality, any impurity, or insatiable craving be named among you, just as it is appropriate for those who are set apart.¹⁰¹ **5:4** This includes obscene comments, foolish talk, or vulgar talk, things that are not appropriate. Instead, be people who give thanks.¹⁰² **5:5** Know this for sure, that no sexually immoral, impure, or insatiably craving person, who is a worshiper of idols, has an inheritance in the Kingdom of the Messiah and of God.¹⁰³

5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words. It is on account of these things that the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.¹⁰⁴ **5:7** Therefore, do not be participants with them.¹⁰⁵ **5:8** For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Conduct yourselves as children of light.¹⁰⁶ **5:9** The fruit of light is found in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.¹⁰⁷ **5:10** As you provide clear evidence of what is pleasing to the Lord,¹⁰⁸ **5:11** do not take part in the unfruitful actions of darkness, but rather reprove them,¹⁰⁹ **5:12** because it is disgraceful even to talk about the things that are done by them in secret.¹¹⁰ **5:13** But the all becomes manifest when they are exposed by the light.¹¹¹ **5:14** In fact, each one who is revealed is light. Therefore, it says,

Wake up, you who are sleeping, and rise from the dead, and the Messiah will shine on you <Isaiah 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1>.¹¹²

5:15 Therefore, look carefully at how you are behaving, not as people who are unwise, but wise,¹¹³ **5:16** making the most of the season, because the days are evil.¹¹⁴ **5:17** Consequently, do not be foolish, but understand what is the will of the Lord.¹¹⁵ **5:18** For example, do not get drunk with wine, because of which reckless behavior occurs. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,¹¹⁶ **5:19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music to the Lord with your heart,¹¹⁷ **5:20** by always giving thanks with respect to all things to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.¹¹⁸

5:21 Be subordinate to one another in the fear of the Messiah.¹¹⁹ **5:22** Wives, be subordinate to your own husbands as you are subordinate to the Lord,¹²⁰ **5:23** because the husband is the head of the wife as the Messiah is the head of the gathering. He is the savior of the body.¹²¹ **5:24** As the gathering is subordinate to the Messiah, wives are subordinate to their husbands in everything.¹²²

5:25 Husbands, love your wives as, indeed, the Messiah has loved the gathering and given himself up for it,¹²³ **5:26** in order that he may set it apart, cleansing it with the washing of water with the message,¹²⁴ **5:27** in order that he may present the gathering in all its glory, having no stain, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, but so that it may be set apart and without defect.¹²⁵

5:28 In the same manner, husbands are obligated to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.¹²⁶ **5:29** No one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and takes care of it, just as, indeed, the Messiah nourishes and takes care of the gathering,¹²⁷ **5:30** because we are his body.¹²⁸

5:31 For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and he shall be united to his wife, and the two of them will be one flesh <Genesis 2:24>.¹²⁹

5:32 This mystery is great, but I am speaking to the point about the Messiah and the gathering.¹³⁰

5:33 Consequently, let each one of you love his own wife as himself, and the wife's purpose is to respect her husband.¹³¹

6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,¹³²

6:2 Honor your father and mother <Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16>,

which is the first commandment with a promise,¹³³

6:3 in order that it may be well with you and you live long on the land <Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16>.¹³⁴

6:4 Therefore, fathers, do not make your children angry, but raise them with the instruction and teaching of the Lord.¹³⁵

6:5 Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling because of the single-mindedness of your heart, just as you obey the Messiah,¹³⁶ **6:6** not to impress your masters as people-pleasers, but as slaves of the Messiah, doing God's desire out of inwardness.¹³⁷ **6:7** With good intent, serve as those serving the Lord and not men,¹³⁸ **6:8** knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.¹³⁹

6:9 Therefore, masters, do the same things to them. For example, forego threatening, knowing that their Master and yours is in the heavens, and there is no partiality with Him.¹⁴⁰

6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His power.¹⁴¹ **6:11** Put on the complete armor of God, so that you may have the ability to stand firm against the cunning stratagems of the adversary,¹⁴² **6:12** because our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the religious forces of this darkness, against the spiritual elements of evil in the heavens.¹⁴³

6:13 Therefore, take up the complete armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and, having done everything, to stand firm.¹⁴⁴ **6:14** Therefore, stand firm,

having wrapped your waist with truth <Isaiah 11:5>,
and having put on the breastplate of justification <Isaiah 59:17>,¹⁴⁵

6:15 having put on your feet the equipment of the good news of shalom.¹⁴⁶ **6:16** Along with all these things, take up the shield of belief, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of evil.¹⁴⁷ **6:17** And grab the helmet of salvation <Isaiah 59:17> and the sword of the Spirit, which is the message of God.¹⁴⁸

6:18 With every prayer and request, pray in every season in your spirit, and with this in mind—being on the alert with all perseverance and in every request on behalf of all those who are set apart,¹⁴⁹ **6:19** and, on my behalf, so that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the good news,¹⁵⁰ **6:20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may speak with boldness about it as I ought to speak.¹⁵¹

6:21 In order that you may indeed know of my circumstances, Tychicus, the brother who is loved and a faithful servant because of the Lord, will make you aware of everything.¹⁵² **6:22** I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us and so that he may encourage your hearts.¹⁵³

6:23 Shalom to the brothers and love with belief from God the Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.¹⁵⁴ 6:24 May grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus the Messiah in indestructible immortality.¹⁵⁵

Appendix A – Regarding the Writing of This Letter

There are good reasons, as explained below, to conclude that Paul wrote this letter while he was under house arrest in Rome awaiting an audience with Caesar Nero around A.D. 62. It is also reasonable to assume that this was a circular letter to the Christian communities in the cities of Asia (western modern day Turkey), of which Ephesus was the primary city, so that eventually certain copies of this letter included the words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ = in Ephesus. Finally, Tychicus, who was from Asia (cf. Acts 20:4), carried this letter to the Asian communities at the same time as he took Colossians and Philemon to Colossae, which was also in Asia east of Ephesus.

The first reason to conclude the above is that Paul alludes to his being in prison in 3:1, 4:1, and, especially, 6:20 (“I am an ambassador in chains). The possibilities for the location of this imprisonment are Philippi in Macedonia (cf. Acts 16, circa A.D. 52), Caesarea Maritima in Israel (cf. Acts 24, circa A.D. 58), and Rome (cf. Acts 28, circa A.D. 62). Philippi is unlikely, because Paul had not yet been to Asia and, therefore, could not have picked up Tychicus as a traveling companion (cf. Acts 16:6, “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia”). Caesarea is also unlikely, because all these Gentile Christians (?) would have found it more comfortable to visit Paul in the very Gentile city of Rome, rather than in the very Jewish location of Caesarea. The last location, Rome, is therefore the most likely.

The second reason to conclude the above is the common personnel who are mentioned in Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, so that these letters were written at that same time—Tychicus in Ephesians and Colossians; Onesimus in Colossians and Philemon; Epaphras in Colossians and Philemon; Archippus in Colossians and Philemon; and Aristarchus, Mark, Demas, and Luke in Colossians and Philemon. Considering that Luke wrote Acts and was an important traveling companion of Paul, it would make sense that Luke was actually there in Rome with Paul during his house arrest (cf. Acts 28:12-31).

Then, Paul mentions in this letter that Tychicus will be delivering it (6:21,22). Tychicus is also mentioned as the bearer of the letter to the Colossians (4:7,8), along with Onesimus. Onesimus is from Colossae and the subject of Paul’s letter to Philemon, in which Paul probably does not feel it necessary to mention that Tychicus is bringing it, because it will be obvious when he shows up in Colossae with both Colossians and Philemon.

Then, Paul speaks in Colossians of Epaphras’ being from Colossae, having presented the Colossians with the message of Jesus as the Messiah, and having reported to Paul about their new faith during his imprisonment. Paul also comments to the Colossians that Onesimus, who is also from Colossae, will be accompanying Tychicus, without commenting on Onesimus’ being the subject of another letter that Tychicus is bringing to Colossae, Philemon.

Add in Paul’s including Archippus in Colossians and Philemon along with his including Aristarchus, Mark, and Demas in Colossians and Philemon, and Rome looks like the most probable location of Paul’s authoring all three of these letters. The third reason to conclude that Paul wrote these letters from Rome around A.D. 62 is that many of the early manuscripts do not include the words “in Ephesus” (ἐν Ἐφέσῳ), opening the door to the possibility that this is a circular letter, sent to the community of believers in western Turkey, “Asia” in the Bible, so that this letter, Colossians, and Philemon are three letters that Tychicus was carrying from Rome to this area of the Roman Empire.

The fourth reason to conclude the above is that the later Pauline fan Marcion, around A.D. 140, called this letter the one to the Laodiceans. Thus, there is the strong possibility that Ephesians is the letter that Paul wrote to not only the Laodiceans and that he encouraged the Colossians to read once it came from this other city (Colossians 4:16), but it is also a circular that was sent to Asia in general, to the people who had become Christians as a result of Paul's influence in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10, "This [Paul's teaching in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus] took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the message of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks").

The fifth reason to conclude that Paul is writing a circular letter to the Asian Christians is that the letter addresses rather general issues without reference to any specific problem or to anyone specific, except to Tychicus who is mentioned as the bearer of this letter. This is different from, for example, Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, the Corinthians, the Philippians, and even the Galatians, this last group living in an area, not in a city.

All five of the above reasons would mean that Tychicus is carrying the circular letter ("Ephesians"), the specific letter Colossians, and the specific letter Philemon from Rome, accompanied by Onesimus from Colossae, around A.D. 62.

Paul had first visited Ephesus during his second major missionary journey around A.D. 54 on his way back to his headquarters in Antioch (cf. Acts 18:18-22) but stayed only a short time. He visited it again around A.D. 55 during his third major trip and spent around 3 years there (cf. Acts 19; 20:31), heavily influencing the entire western region of what is modern day Turkey (cf. Acts 19:10, "This [Paul's teaching in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus] took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the message of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" and Acts 20:31, "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears"). Then, he visited with their elders around A.D. 58 on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 20:15-38). As a result of Paul's extended first stay in Ephesus, the information about Jesus as the Jewish Messiah reached most of the area of the Asia, i.e., western Turkey.

Paul is simply writing to the Asian Christians a letter of encouragement, carried by Tychicus who is also carrying letters to the Colossians and Philemon fairly nearby. Thus Paul figures that, either because he is writing a letter to the Colossians, Tychicus might as well take one to the Asian Christians too since he has not been in touch with them for a while (cf. notes at 1:15ff.), or because he is writing a circular letter to the Christians in western Asia, Tychicus might as well take one to Colossae and one to Philemon, now that Epaphras has arrived in Rome and told him about the new Christian faith of the people in that city, and he needs to send a letter specifically to Philemon about his slave Onesimus, who has become a Christian in Rome and who is returning to Colossae with Tychicus (cf. Colossians 4:9).

In the circular letter, Paul does not address any specific problems as he does in the rest of his letters to Christian communities in other cities. He has received news recently of the Asian Christians' persevering in their belief and love for one another, but no major problems have arisen among them. This does seem unusual in the light of Ephesus' being such an important and bustling commercial center in Asia, at the crossroads of four main arteries that carry goods and services in all four directions, including a fine seaport, which has access to the Aegean Sea and beyond to other areas of the 1st century A.D. Roman Empire. One would think that the Christian community in Asia would be barraged with ideas and influences from the far reaches of the contemporary world that would force Paul to address all sorts of theological and moral issues in their lives.

Indeed, we could say that he does address various issues, ones that pertain to all Christians, but without necessarily pointing to them as immediate problems that the Asian Christians have to solve. Assuming that they had nothing written to which they could constantly refer, no OT or NT manuscripts, Paul provides the Asian believers in the Jewish Messiah with a marvelous treatise on overall salient points of biblical, messianic theology that includes the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers along with details about proper living corresponding to the ideas of the messianic theology, which, even indirectly, addresses the different kinds of influences that are coming to bear upon the Asian Christians. With this letter, they can remain grounded in the apostolic message.

¹ Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ τοῖς ἀγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – As usual, in the first verse of this letter, Paul introduces himself as an apostle, a commissioned authoritative spokesman on behalf of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, Paul has the knowledge, ability, responsibility, and right to present the biblical message with the same level of accuracy and authority as Jesus himself. He also says in this verse that he was given this responsibility, etc. by God. It was ultimately His choice to make Paul an apostle of Jesus. We also know that Paul was unique as an apostle, because he was the only one called to present the message of the Jewish Messiah to Gentiles. And this is why he traveled so much to places far away from the land of Israel and therefore to places filled with mostly Gentiles, people who are not physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Plus, Paul was not an apostle initially by choice. Instead, it was God who completely changed his life from one who wanted to destroy the Christian movement to one who had the responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (and to Jews whenever he had the opportunity to speak to his own ethnic group).

Paul goes on to say that he is addressing the authentic believers in Ephesus (Asia), who have been destined for the Kingdom of God and are inwardly made different by God. They are set apart for this destiny by God's having chosen them before the creation and changed them in their hearts by the Spirit of God. These are, therefore, believers in the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and who are therefore located in association with and belonging to Jesus, the advocate and high priest for morally depraved human beings at the final judgment (cf. Hebrews), as well as the king of the eternal Kingdom of God, i.e., the one who fulfills the role of the final and eternal king of the Davidic Covenant (cf. 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2, Psalm 8). In other words, these are people who have chosen to identify with Jesus as their teacher, master, savior, king, priest, etc. and who are therefore followers of Jesus in who they are and how they are living their lives.

² χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – As in several other letters, Paul mentions that he would want God to extend His grace to his readers, in this case, in Ephesus. Thus, this grace would come from both the transcendent Creator, the Father, and His instrument of mercy within the creation, Jesus the Messiah, who will intercede for believing morally depraved human beings at the judgment, i.e., at his return, and act as their savior and advocate, resulting in being reconciled to God and making peace between Him and sinners, along with obtaining eternal life for them, which are all God's *shalom*, the complete package of God's promise of bringing "blessing" to Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

Thus, God's grace works in conjunction with Jesus' qualifying to be our advocate through his death by God's choosing to change our hearts and cause us to persevere in our belief in Jesus the Messiah in order that we may reach our goal of eternal *shalom*—life and the mercy of being at peace with God and from God.

Paul's next use of the term "Father" in reference to Christians ("our") is indirectly in v. 5 when he refers to our "adoption" by God. Therefore, calling God "our Father" in this verse refers to His taking unbelievers and causing them to become children in His family so to speak, which of course ultimately results in the completely different destiny of eternal mercy and life for them. But it is also hard not to think that with the term "Father" Paul is also referring to God's being the very source of these people's existence. He has created them and moved them relationally from being outside His family to inside His family. He has done both. Cf. Ephesians 1:5.

³ Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ – Paul begins the body of this letter by expressing the highest reverence, admiration, and approval to God. Εὐλογητὸς literally means "well spoken," from which we get our word eulogize. And Paul is imagining the greatest things that a human being can say to and about the greatest being, God, whose attributes, purposes, and actions are the greatest that can be. So whatever a human being would say in this situation, this is what Paul is doing himself. God deserves our inward and outward expressions of praise and worship, because He is the morally perfect, just, and merciful sovereign ruler of all reality and all human beings. Our acknowledging His place in reality and offering Him nothing less than our constant admiration and worship is only appropriate, given our utter dependence on Him for everything we need, especially His mercy, reconciliation, salvation, and eternal life.

Thus, Paul identifies God, the transcendent Creator, as the Father of the Messiah Jesus. There is no greater association with another person than that of God to the Messiah, the final Son of God. In 2 Samuel 7, we learn that the kings of Israel from the line of David were each the Son of God, which means that they could call God Father and that they ruled over His creation with a level of authority just under that of God Himself (cf. Psalm 8). Jesus is the unique one of these kings, the unique Son of God (cf. John 1:18), because it is he who is not only the final king of Israel and the Son of God, but also the permanent and eternal ruler as the actual icon of God in the creation and over the new and perfect creation of the future, i.e., the Kingdom of God on the new earth of Revelation 21, which is of most concern for Paul's Gentile Christian readers in Ephesus who will be a part of the promise of the Jews' becoming a "great nation" according to Genesis 12 when Jesus returns, but who will also be looking forward to the new, eternal earth. Thus, the emphasis in this letter is on the second Abrahamic promise of eternal life and not on the first promise of making of the Jews a "great nation" (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

Because Paul did not include anyone else in his introduction as a co-author of this letter, e.g., Silvanus or Timothy (cf. 1 & 2 Corinthians; 1 Thessalonians), it makes sense to interpret the "us in the Messiah" as *all* authentic believers in his day who had associated themselves with Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah for the divine purpose of his being their king and advocate before God. Thus, Paul is stating in this first paragraph that God grants every good thing that He has

planned for those whom He brings into the eternal Kingdom of God. In other words, this is not a situation in the letter where Paul uses “we/us” to refer to his apostolic workers and himself while referring to his readers with “you/you”—at least not yet. Thus, God’s plan to grant all authentic believers in Jesus entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God is on account of His plan involving the ultimate Anointed One of the Jews, who is the most important person and object within the created reality, the Messiah, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth. By extrapolation, all the first-person plural references to Paul and his contemporary believers can apply to authentic believers who follow them in history, as long as the references are to ideas that are universally theological and not either apostolic or cultural/ethnic (cf. 1:8b-14).

Thus, “every Spiritual benefit in the heavens” refers to the eternal Kingdom of God. First, the benefit God will grant us is “Spiritual,” i.e., it comes from His work in and towards us through His activity in creation, which the Bible calls His Spirit. It is the very person of God who is acting within the created reality in mostly a very special way in and towards the people whom He has chosen to receive eternal life.

Second, the phrase “in the heavens” is used by Paul here in this letter in 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12 (cf. Colossians 1:5). It seems to refer to the kind of benefit which will not involve the corruption, evil, and death of the present realm. As a result, Paul is not saying that people go to heaven after death, but that what God has promised and will certainly grant us that which is permanent and incorruptible, i.e., immortality and moral perfection that come from God’s forgiveness and mercy through Jesus as the crucified Messiah. This will be an environment unlike the one in which we live now because it will be without any evil, heartache, and suffering that so affect the present realm. In addition, Paul is using the aorist tense participle εὐλογήσας in a chronological generic sense. The providing of the eternal Kingdom of God to genuine believers is something that God just does, for which Paul expresses his admiration and approval as a human being—only because God’s intention is to be admired by His creatures.

The prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ goes best with ἡμᾶς = us. It is those who are associated with (“in”) the Messiah as his disciples and followers who receive from God these blessings of a permanent and morally perfect nature.

⁴ καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου εἶναι ἡμᾶς αγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ – Paul goes on to say the process of God’s granting sinful human beings the gift and right of eternal life began when God decided, before He even started to create the cosmos as described in Genesis 1:1, who would become associated with the Messiah (“in him”) and therefore inwardly different and set apart spiritually by the work of the Spirit of God for the eternal destiny of eternal life. Therefore, these would be the kind of people whom God would welcome into the Kingdom of God.

Paul goes on to say that God works within these human beings to make them internally different from the way they were and from how the rest of the world is in its hostility towards God, so that the sinners who are changed by God become approved of and acceptable to Him and in His presence. Paul is saying that the Ephesian Christians and he are this kind of people.

⁵ ἐν ἀγάπῃ προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ – Paul goes on to explain that God’s choosing certain people to be acceptable to Him involved His assigning them a particular destiny even before they came into existence. And he describes this destiny as taking place through the process of an “adoption.” Children do not cause their adoptions to happen. The parents do. In this case, it is God as Father, the source of the children’s human existence and the instigator and perpetrator of their being brought into a relationship with Him such that they, like the Messiah, could call Him Father, because they were His “sons.” Of course, providing people with a specific destiny was ultimately because God was looking at what He was doing with Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. He was going to make him the ruler of all the creation for all of eternity along with making him the advocate for human beings at the final judgment. Thus, God assigned a destiny to some sinful human beings such that they would acquire the same kind of relationship with Him as the Messiah and live with him in the eternal realm as His children. Cf. Romans 8:23 where the adoption as sons means the same thing as the redemption of their body, i.e., their transformation from morally depraved human beings to immortal and morally perfect beings in the eternal Kingdom of God.

It makes more sense to connect the words ἐν ἀγάπῃ of v. 4 with this verse and see that Paul is indicating God’s attitude and motivation of complete and total love for all His chosen people when He made the decision, before He even starting creating the cosmos as described in Genesis 1:1, to ensure that some of the sinful human beings whom He would create would obtain His eternal mercy and life rather than His anger, justice, and punishment of destruction. This attitude and motivation were those of love. He chose them with love. In other words, God had a genuine, heartfelt concern for certain human beings whom He was to create, such that He would care for them during their existences on earth by making sure that they became authentic believers in the Jewish Messiah Jesus, remained authentic believers, and eventually acquired His mercy at the judgment and entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God. He chose them with love so that in the midst of the process of caring for them, these believers would also become His children, those for whom He would care in the same manner as human parents care for their children. And certainly this love of God for His people continues throughout their entire lives on earth and into eternity, so that they can always think of themselves as being chosen and loved by God in spite of whatever circumstances they are experiencing.

In addition, the plan and purpose of God to take people from non-existence to eternal existence would satisfy God’s own soul and fulfill His eternal plans. This is to say that God is very satisfied with the story that He is telling through the creation, and the inference is that we should be satisfied ultimately with it, too, even while we struggle with painful and difficult elements within the story and try to direct it in a particular way in order to avoid suffering where possible

and to promote biblical truth and goodness as that which is the right thing for us to do.

Thus, His *θέλημα* is what He wants to happen in the creation on this earth in human history in the story of each and every human being. This word is used four times in chapter 1 – vs. 1,5,9,11.

Cf. **Luke 22:42** saying, “**Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not My will (τὸ θέλημά μου), but Yours be done.**”

Cf. **Romans 1:10** always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God (ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ) I may succeed in coming to you.

⁶ εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ – Paul now says that the effect of and purpose for God’s fulfilling His plans to His own satisfaction will be that both He and the people, at least those who respond positively to the truth about Him, will praise, admire, and applaud Him for what a wonderful and awesome God that He is, especially because of His grace, i.e., His independent desire and actions to reach out and embrace sinful human beings who do not deserve anything from Him but His anger, justice, condemnation, and destruction. Thus, God can personally admire what He has done, while also the people’s admiring His grace will be at the forefront of their minds not only during their lives here in the present realm but also on into eternity. And the personal satisfaction of understanding just how glorious, magnificent, and wonderful His grace is will always be a motivating factor in every believer’s life each day.

Paul also states that the basis and reason for God’s autonomous, loving, and gracious actions towards unworthy human beings is the love and concern that the Messiah Jesus himself has shown by willingly dying for sinners who deserve only God’s condemnation and destruction. In other words, I think it makes more sense to interpret “the Beloved” not as the one who is loved by God, even though Jesus definitely is loved by Him, but as the who loves those whom God has chosen for salvation. All this truly feels satisfying to God, and He praises and admires what He does, which is exactly what we should do also.

⁷ Ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς – Paul then gives a more detailed explanation for why Jesus is important to the whole process of God’s satisfying His own desires. It is only by being associated with Jesus (“in him”) that any sinner can be rescued by God and delivered from His justice, condemnation, and destruction, which every human being deserves and is in a captive position to experience. But, in order for Jesus to bring about the rescue of evil people, he had to die a horrible death on the cross with “his blood” as an allusion to the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant as an appeal to God for His mercy. But it is not the blood of bulls and goats that brings forgiveness and salvation from God’s eternal condemnation. It is Jesus’ death alone by which he qualified to intercede on behalf of sinners. Thus, Jesus has liberated and freed sinners from their captive position of incurring God’s wrath and destruction. And his rescuing them from God’s justice and condemnation results in God’s richly and abundantly granting them mercy, reconciliation between Him and them, and forgiveness for all the choices they have made to violate His moral commandments in their rebellion against Him, meaning that He does not require that they pay the debt that they owe His justice, such debt being measured actual punishment and then eternal destruction.

Paul also says that another way to state the basis for this happening is the wealth of God’s grace, i.e., the bottomless source of His self-authorized and independently initiated kindness and charity towards people who do not deserve His love but who, nevertheless, obtain His reconciliation, forgiveness, and mercy. Paul also describes (at the beginning of verse 8 – ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς) the limitless quantity of God’s gracious mercy towards people as that which He has poured out on them like rain that never stops and creates a flood in which they drown. But, of course, drowning in God’s grace is the best “catastrophe” that could happen to a human being.

ἀπολύτρωσις = release and deliverance from a captive condition or from a very, very undesirable situation. Thus, Paul uses a term for release from slavery in the Roman Empire to refer to deliverance from the very undesirable position of being under God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction as His eternal punishment for our sins against Him. This word is used also in 1:14 and 4:30, as well as in Colossians 1:14.

⁸ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει – It is clear because of the concepts in this paragraph mostly pertain to the apostles so that Paul is transitioning from speaking of both the Ephesian Christians and himself to just himself and his apostolic co-workers in v. 12. Thus, he changes to the second person plural pronoun following this paragraph in v. 13 as referring to the Ephesian readers. Consequently, Paul is saying that God presented him and, by extrapolation, his apostolic co-workers with the biblical message of the Messiah and provided them with the responsibility to proclaim it to the Gentiles. And He did this with all the wisdom and understanding that is possible for a human being to have as a created being. In other words, Paul and his co-workers (but really, mainly Paul) knows the biblical message as well as it is humanly possible, just as Jesus did also. Thus, we can count on Paul’s being the premier biblical theologian and author of all time, along with his fellow apostles, except for Jesus who was the utmost biblical theologian.

Nevertheless, it is also true that God grants wisdom and understanding to people who hear the apostolic message and become authentic believers, who not only grasp what God’s eternal plans and purposes are but also are able to live life in this realm in such a way that corresponds to the gospel, i.e., morally while experiencing the various suffering and pain that is even Christians endure, including persecution by a world that is hostile to God and His truth.

⁹ γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν ὁ αὐτοῦ ἦν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ – Paul is saying that something that truly satisfies God is His communicating to Jesus’ apostles the information about Jesus as the Messiah and all the ramifications of using him as king and priest to gather together a group of people who receive

His mercy and eternal life (cf. v. 10). This is information which Paul calls a “mystery,” not because it is impossible or even difficult to understand, but because it is contained in various written statements in the Old Testament that predicted the coming of the Messiah. But these were only statements for a long time, i.e., a “mystery,” until Jesus finally appeared. And then He stood before the world in person, thus revealing the predictions as a real human being. This transition from written statements in the Bible to an actual person showed that the statements were no longer a “mystery.” We can also assume that all the statements about the Messiah in the OT were not easy to put together in order to form a coherent picture of exactly what he was going to do.

But now God has made everything clear by the actual first appearance of Jesus. Learning about Jesus through the gospel message allows one to put together all the messianic passages in the OT in such a way that a person has as full an understanding of him as God intends (cf. Colossians 1:13-29). Thus, God has taught the biblical message and His plans and purposes to the apostles, both through the Old Testament and through Jesus when he was on earth and supernaturally appeared to Paul for the sake of his conversion on the road to Damascus (cf. Galatians 1:15-2:5). As a result, this message involves that which God made known about the Messiah through the writings of the Old Testament, the “mystery,” and that which God made known by the actual appearance of Jesus at his first coming. The former was, in a sense, a partial and somewhat difficult to put together explanation of the Messiah, i.e., a “mystery,” while the latter was definitely a full and clear explanation of him, because it involved the very person of the Messiah, Jesus himself.

In addition, Paul reveals that, when God devised the story of the creation prior to His beginning to make it and that would satisfy Him completely, He set out before the creation to satisfy Himself specifically with the Messiah. Thus, it is those sinners who find themselves associated with the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who are “in him,” that ultimately bring great satisfaction to God too. It is Jesus and the ramifications of his existence, death, and resurrection for underserved sinners from both the Jews and the Gentiles that constitute “the mystery of [God’s] desire” and that ultimately satisfy Him.

¹⁰ εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν. ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἑπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ – Paul says here that God’s “desire” that completely satisfies Him (v. 9) is to use the Messiah as the basis for how He is going to implement His plan to gather and bring together throughout all history (“the times”) the entirety of the group of people who will be associated with Messiah into all eternity. This group of people are the “fullness” of the Messiah as Paul makes clearer in 1:23. They are also “everyone” (τὰ πάντα – cf. Galatians 3:22, even though neuter, it refers to people) who are “in him,” i.e., in association with Jesus, on the one hand who are already dead so that their next waking moment will be eternal. They are “in the heavens” and will experience only immortality and incorruption after they are raised from the dead. On the other hand, there are those who are still “on the earth,” currently experiencing sin and corruption while waiting for either death or Jesus’ return, the latter being when they will be immediately transformed into immortal and morally perfect beings. Both these groups have lived throughout “the times,” throughout the seasons of history from the beginning to the end, and have been or are genuine believers in God and obedient to Him with hearts that have been changed by His Spirit.

God will ultimately demonstrate this “fullness” of the group associated with Jesus via the millennial kingdom of Israel after Jesus return and then through the new heavens and new earth which will contain the permanent Kingdom of God.

¹¹ Ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἔκκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν ἡμεῶν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργούντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ – By being associated with Jesus as the Messiah (“in him”), Paul and his apostolic workers have been granted by God to inherit the eternal Kingdom of God.

This involved God’s having predestined Paul and the other apostles/apostolic co-workers in line with what He intended during the time that He conceived of the story of the creation which was before He even started making it. Paul also identifies God as the one who brings about every single element of the creation (τὰ πάντα; this time the neuter means “all things,” not just all believers) into existence as that which corresponds to what He wisely chooses and believes to be good and right as each constituent element participates in the overarching purpose of the whole creation—the featuring of the Jewish Messiah as its central element along with the specific group of people from all ethnic backgrounds to be authentic believers in the Jewish Messiah (the “fullness”) for the sake of obtaining God’s mercy and participating in His promises of Genesis 12:1-3.

τὴν βουλὴν is usually translated “counsel,” but God’s counsel is His wise intent always to produce and create that which is good, right, and excellent for what He desires, the fulfilling His eternal plans in the Messiah Jesus.

τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ is usually translated “His will,” and God’s will is not only what He wants, but also what He chooses. He chooses what He desires. This is the same word in v. 9, i.e., the mystery of His *desire*.

Thus, as in v. 5, His *θέλημα* is what He wants to happen in the creation on this earth in human history in the story of each and every human being.

¹² εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ – This verse shows that Paul is focusing on his Jewish apostolic co-workers and himself. He calls them “the first to hope in the Messiah.” Certainly, Paul is not referring to his Ephesian readers, who must be mostly Gentiles as is made clear by 2:11-22 where he describes how God has made Jewish believers and Gentile believers into one group who have been reconciled to God through Jesus the Messiah and not through the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, Paul is talking about only the Jewish apostles and their very close associates who help them.

Paul also understands that his own existence as an apostolic spokesman for Jesus is the outcome of God’s wisely

choosing to use Jesus and announce him as the central feature of the creation. Therefore, for the second time, Paul talks about God's being admired and praised for His glory, magnificence, and greatness by both Himself and human beings who hear what Paul has to say about the Jewish Messiah and who become people who connect to him with authentic belief in him. Thus, they respond positively to the information that the Jewish apostles and their co-workers disseminate and which culminates in their all being rescued from God's anger and condemnation, while being granted citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God in the new creation. As a result, God has brought the creation into existence primarily for Himself as a way to reveal and demonstrate Himself to Himself and to reveal and demonstrate Himself to all other creatures who can grasp intellectually His existence, i.e., believers whom He predestined to eternal life. In this way, the Jewish apostles and their co-workers become tools in God's hand to hammer out His eternal plans and purposes vis-à-vis the Messiah.

¹³ Ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν. ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἀγίῳ – It was by associating with Jesus the Messiah (being “in him”) that God also set apart the Ephesian Christians with the inward and permanent work of His Spirit in the midst of their hearing the biblical message from Paul and his apostolic associates who were traveling with him. Paul says that this message contains the ideas of their being rescued from God's anger, justice, condemnation, and destruction because of their sinfulness, and that they believed it as the correct way of understanding the nature of reality. Thus, these same Christians have received from God an identifying and permanent mark or logo (ἐσφραγίσθητε), like a signet ring in wax that seals a letter, that is His very own activity within the creation and within them, i.e., His Spirit's circumcising and changing their hearts, and which demonstrates that they belong to God. It was God's Spirit as that which was contained in the promise, going all the way back to Abraham, when God assured him that people from all ethnic backgrounds would obtain the blessing of eternal life in association with him. And it was in the Upper Room Discourse in the gospel of John that Jesus mentions that God will send His Spirit as the *parakletos* to the apostles and people to mark them, encourage them, comfort them, and keep them motivated to continue teaching the gospel.

¹⁴ ὃ ἐστὶν ἀρραβὸν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ – Paul calls the identifying logo of God's Spirit the “first installment” (or down payment, in real estate terms) of that which they will eventually obtain in eternity, i.e., mercy and life. And here, Paul is referring not only to the apostles but also to those who believe through their presentation of the biblical message. He identifies them all as being on a journey that started with their believing the message of Jesus as the Messiah and involves their progressing on this journey towards ultimately being rescued from God's anger, justice, condemnation, and destruction because of their sinfulness, and obtaining the final promises of God, eternal life. The outcome of this journey will also culminate in their expressing to God their boundless appreciation for what a great God He is, which is God's very purpose for providing them their salvation (the third time Paul has mentioned this concept).

The “deliverance of the possession” is God's rescuing sinful human beings whom He possesses as His people because of having permanently marked them with His Spirit.

While it is possible to interpret the Spirit's work as making people better on their journey towards the eternal Kingdom of God, Romans 7 is still true for Paul and all Christians, “The good that I wish, I do not do. But I do the very thing that I hate.” Christians are still sinners and capable of great evil.

¹⁵ Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γὰρ ἀκούσας τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἑτὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους – Paul goes back to referring specifically to himself by using the first person singular pronoun. It was not unusual for Paul to receive information about various Christian communities from traveling companions (cf. cf. 1 Corinthians 1:11). But different from 1 Corinthians or his letter from Rome to the Colossians written at the same time as this letter, Paul does not mention the person from whom he received information about the Ephesians' belief and spiritual condition.

Nevertheless, Paul, just as he always did in other letters, expressed his great gratitude to God for the belief of his readers, many of whom had become such through his own efforts as an apostle (cf. Acts 19:10, “This [Paul's teaching in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus] took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the message of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks”; 1 Thessalonians 1:2ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:3, etc.).

While this verse could be interpreted as referring to the *first* time that Paul hears about these Gentile Christians' belief, so that we should conclude that this is a circular letter written to only Christians whom he has never seen, it makes more sense to understand that, after at least two and probably three to four years (between A.D. 58 when he passed near Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem and spoke to the Ephesian elders and A.D. 62 when he is writing this letter under house arrest in Rome), he is speaking to all the Asian Christians, including those in Ephesus and those whom he may not have met in other parts of Asia (western Turkey). He is encouraged by their *continued* and *persevering* belief, which is like the gratitude that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy express in 1 and 2 Thessalonians for these Christians' persevering belief after a one to one and a half year period of time. In addition, because it has been so long since Paul personally spoke with the Ephesian Christians and influenced the other Asian Christians, he includes a lot of information in this letter that is simply a retelling of it—because this is always important for especially Gentile Christians, who have no other access to the truth than what they can read in a letter like this or what they hear from their “elders” who rely on remembering what Paul said several years before.

Notice also in this verse that Paul once again sums up the two primary pieces of evidence for people's authentic

Christianity, their belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and their Lord, as well as their care and concern for fellow believers in Asia, that, like the rest of the Roman Empire, was consumed with pagan idolatry and polytheism, which rejected the idea of a transcendent Creator, as the only way to view reality correctly, to the extent that people associated it with the well-being of the Roman Empire. Thus, “all those who have been set apart” refers to the Christians in Asia.

1 John 3:23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He ²commanded us.

¹⁶ οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μείαν ἵ ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου – In the light of what Paul says throughout his letters, it makes the most sense that Paul prayed for the continuing perseverance of the belief of his fellow Christians, as well as for more opportunities to visit them and encourage them in their belief with his teaching them the apostolic message, even if it was repeating it over and over. In addition, as he prays for them, he is extremely grateful for God’s having changed them inwardly and granted them authentic belief and the expectation of eternal life. He does not thank the people, but God, who is the one who causes people to be both believers in Jesus and those who love their fellow Christians. As a result, here he mentions that he prays for them that they may have wisdom and continued awareness of how powerfully God is working in them and of how wonderful eternal life will be.

¹⁷ ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης, ἰδῶν ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ – Here, Paul explicitly states the content of his prayers on behalf of the people, that they may be wise human beings with the knowledge that they have gained of God, and that God may give them a desire (πνεῦμα = who they are in their inner being as to what they desire and want to do) to have revealed to them more and more and therefore to uncover and discover more and more of the message from God in order to grow in their knowledge and understanding of Him.

Paul says that this is the “God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah,” that God is the origin and determiner of Jesus’ existence and role as the king and priest of people who eventually gain God’s mercy and entrance into the Kingdom of God. God is also “the Father of glory.” He is the source of all grandness, magnificence, and impressive grandeur that is connected to the Messiah’s existence, i.e., the eternal kingdom and moral perfection that will be its characteristic in contrast to that of the present realm’s, which suffers the effects of the sin and moral depravity of all human beings.

¹⁸ πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας ὧ[υμῶν] εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ. ἵ τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις – Paul says that it makes sense that he prays for their continued growth in knowledge and understanding of all that God is doing with respect to them *because of the inward change that has taken place*. God has basically turned on the lightbulb in his readers’ minds and given them a fundamental desire to believe the truth of the biblical message. Again, only God can do this, and a great example of people for whom God has not done this and of people for whom God has done this is John 6 where some disciples simply do not get what Jesus is saying about his being the bread of life, while Peter and the other close disciples (except Judas Iscariot) do.

Paul also says that the first purpose of their knowing these biblical ideas is that they be fully aware of and clearly grasp the “hope of His calling,” i.e., the guaranteed nature of the future, eternal destiny to which God has both invited and appointed (“called”) them. This is their hope and that of which they can be confident they will receive from God. It is also that for which they are eagerly waiting. In other words, the only reason to have a hope, especially a biblical hope, is to wait expectantly for it with confidence that God will certainly follow through on His promises and provide it. The “hope” to which God has called the Ephesian Christians, i.e., to which He has prepared them as inwardly changed human beings, is first of all “the riches of the glory of His inheritance.” Thus, the second purpose for their knowing the biblical ideas is that they understand clearly the wealth and full extent of how magnificent will be the experience of eternal life as morally perfect beings for Christians. This will truly be a “Wow” experience for them. Nothing in the present realm and experiences of life is more valuable and can compare to the wonderful and fulfilling effect on people of eternal life, especially when it finally arrives at Jesus’ return.

It seems best to translate ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις as “among [or ‘for the benefit of’] those who are set apart.” Simply translating ἐν as “in” does not make any sense. Thus, God has planned this kind of experience of eternal life and moral perfection to be that which contributes now and in the future to the well-being of those whom God distinguishes from the rest of the world by changing them inwardly and giving them authentic belief in what He will provide them in eternity.

¹⁹ καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ – It makes sense to see that this is the third aspect of that which Paul prays for these Ephesian Christians to be fully aware of—“the surpassing greatness [extraordinary magnitude] of His power towards us who believe...” Thus, he wants these Ephesian Christians to realize just how powerfully God works in them in accordance with His independent plans and purposes. This is part of their “hope” in that they cannot attain their intended destiny unless God powerfully causes them to do so through pursuing in their faith. If they are left to themselves to remain faithfully committed to the truth of the gospel, they will fail. But God has included in their waiting expectantly and confidently for Him to fulfill His promise of granting them mercy and eternal life His commitment to them to make sure that they reach this intended destiny according to His sovereignly ruling over the creation. But it takes His power, i.e., transcendent power of His own strength, to do so, which God is glad to provide, because it is exactly what He has sovereignly planned to be the case within the story which He is telling through the creation.

It is important to realize that God’s power and sovereign strength within us as believers is not like gas in a car’s fuel tank that we draw upon whenever we choose. Instead, our choices flow out of God’s powerfully and transcendentally

working to cause us to be committed to Him, His plans, and His purposes in the midst of our continued inherent sinfulness and hostility towards God. Therefore, we do not cause God's power to work, but God causes His power to work and continue in order to move us perseveringly towards qualifying for our ultimate goal of eternal salvation and life.

²⁰ ἦν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἑπουρανίοις – Paul goes on to say that the power which God uses sovereignly to accomplish His purposes with respect to the Ephesian Christians is the same power that He used inside Jesus' body as he lay dead in the tomb, when He raised him from the dead and eventually lifted him off the earth and into "the heavens," i.e., into an incorruptible and eternal position of beingness (wherever he might be now, which we are not told exactly in the Bible), in order to take his permanent position as the ruler of the created cosmos (cf. Acts 1:9, "And after he said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking at him. And a cloud received him from their eyes."). This is Jesus' "sitting at the right hand of God," a metaphorical statement from Psalm 110:1 for Jesus' ruling over God's creation with just a little less authority than Yahweh, the transcendent God, but as God's proxy.

cf. **Psalm 8:4** What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? **5** Yet You have made him a little lower than, and You crown him with glory and majesty! **6** You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.

Psa. 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." As a created being, Jesus cannot transcend the created reality as Yahweh does. Instead, he remains within it. To be "in the heavens" is for Jesus to have the permanent and incorruptible role of ruler over the universe. Thus, Jesus has qualified to receive his kingdom even though it has not yet come into existence yet (cf. Hebrews 2:8, "...but we do not yet see all things subjected to him"). But it will when he returns and establishes the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel with the Jews' finally having become the "great nation" which God promised in Genesis 12 that they would be. And then this kingdom will continue when God destroys the present realm and creates a new and eternal one as described in Revelation 21-22.

The inference we can draw is that if the uncreated God can raise the created Messiah from the dead and position him to rule over all the created reality, then He can sovereignly control history and cause people to continue in their genuine belief along with their growing in their understanding of Him and His purposes. God put this power into effect when He raised Jesus from the dead and began the process of making the information of this event available to others in whom He would use this same power to change them inwardly into people who are committed at the level of their hearts to His mercy and righteousness. In turn, the Ephesian Christians' persevering in their belief through the effects of God's power working within them will result in their reaching their "hope," the mercy and eternal life, i.e., the awe-inspiring moral perfection to which God has destined them.

²¹ ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι – Here Paul states that Jesus' position is as the ruler of the cosmos, just a little lower than the transcendent Creator's Himself (cf. Psalm 8:6), which makes him the ruler of all other religious and political rulers, whether they exist in the present realm before his return or in the future earthly realm of the millennial kingdom, where he will impose his rule over other kings, presidents, prime ministers, et al. In the future eternal realm, there will be no other rulers for him to rule over. There is no one more powerful than Jesus now, even though he is not imposing his rule over them yet, and there will be no one more powerful than Jesus during the time of the millennial kingdom, when he will coerce them into submitting to them if they are not naturally willing to do so. Thus, Jesus has the right to say who is right and who is wrong and to deal with them accordingly, as if Yahweh, the transcendent Creator, were doing so, because he is God's final proxy, i.e., final Davidic king, within the creation.

²² καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῆ ἐκκλησία – Paul indicates that the upshot of Jesus' ascension to a position of prime authority just under that of the transcendent Creator's, i.e., at His right hand, is that God has caused everyone else to be metaphorically a footstool for Jesus' feet, symbolizing their submission to him, whether they recognize it or not. Thus, God has placed Jesus at the head of the people who comprise his followers, being the one who leads them with truth towards eternal life by virtue of the message that God has conveyed through His apostles and which they have believed. Additionally, in ANE fashion when someone's enemies are placed under a ruler's feet, those who have opposed God and Jesus will be destroyed forever by God at the final judgment. Thus, in one way or another, all people will have to submit to Jesus as the most powerful ruler in the creation. The only person more powerful than him is the transcendent and invisible God and Father.

The first use of ἐκκλησία in the LXX is for the nation of Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the gathering ("called out ones") of the people of God. So here Paul says that Jesus gives definition to the community of believers as their head. Cf. Psalm 8:6 – "You have made him to rule over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet"

(וְיָשִׁיבֵהוּ עַל יְדָיִם) (καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ). Paul quotes Psalm 8 where David is describing the marvelous nature of God's covenant with him to the effect that David's son, e.g., Solomon as the first one, is God's Son and His proxy in the universe. This means that God's Son rules over all of His creation, symbolized by everything's being the Son's footstool, including his enemies whom he suppresses.

²³ ἥτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πάσιν πληρουμένου – Thus, with Jesus as their head, the Christian community, as the body of Jesus, fills out his human purposes on earth as they hear his message and follow

his teaching. By their learning all they can about him, Jesus provides the fullness of knowledge and understanding with respect to everyone whom God brings into existence in the creation who will be eternally associated with Jesus. Thus, he provides the fullness of his followers' existence, which will be eternal salvation and life in the Kingdom of God. This is why it makes so much sense that Christians love Christians, because they have a common purpose, to follow Jesus as their Messiah and high priest with the common knowledge of the nature of reality that only he can provide as the very center of God's plans and purposes for the creation and which includes their eternal destiny of mercy and life. Thus, more and more people are being added to the "body" of believers as the full complement of Jesus, i.e., all who fill out God's purposes for him within human history. And these people, the little people who are in association with Jesus, are involved in the most important project which God is engaged in within the creation, even if hardly anyone knows who they are. Cf. James 1:9-11; 2:5. In addition, these people are also looking to add to the body of Christ by being sensitive to when someone may truly be interested in the gospel.

²⁴ καὶ ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ὑμῶν – Paul begins describing in greater detail the transition that has occurred for his Gentile readers—from being sinful pagan idolators outside the boundaries of the one, true God's people and headed towards a destiny of eternal destruction to being sinful believers in the Jewish Messiah who are headed towards a destiny of eternal life. They have changed from one state to another, from being not the body and fullness of Jesus with the proper knowledge of reality to being the body and fullness of Jesus with the proper knowledge of reality. And Paul will identify God as the One who caused this change to take place and brought it about by His grace.

Thus, there are two possibilities for what Paul means by "dead." Either 1) his Gentile readers were spiritually devoid of life before they became Christians and, therefore, unable to believe in God with genuine belief. Or 2) they were headed towards eternal condemnation and destruction, i.e., eternal θανάτος. #2 makes more sense in the light of 2:5 and 2:6, as well as in light of his use of this same terminology in Colossians 2:4ff.

They were headed towards eternal destruction in the midst of their ignoring and violating God's moral commandments.

²⁵ ἐν αἷς ποτε περιπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας – The Ephesian Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, lived in rebellion towards God before their inwardness was miraculously changed by Him, whether they lived in conformity to the OT derived Judaism of their day or the pagan polytheism of their day. This world system of the present age is ruled by Satan, the authority who exercises his power to set the atmosphere in which people live, move, and carry out their plans and purposes which are disobedient to God. This, then, is the spirit which pervades all humanity and cultures unless people have been changed by God to think and act differently according to the truth of the Bible.

Paul is saying that his readers' purposes and intentions lined up with the inwardness and manner of operation of all sinful human beings, who exist at one time or another within this creation, which is temporary.

Their aggregate and agglomeration of evil and rejection of God constitutes that which commands all human beings by virtue, in Greek terms, of the fact that they all breathe the same air and atmosphere just above the surface of the earth. It is as though this "air" that they breathe, which is oriented towards being unwilling to obey God, leads them to be and act in a certain way, i.e., in rebellion against God. And this is because Paul is saying that they are all made of the same immoral stuff and they inhabit the same realm, following the currents of human cultures which are not in line with the moral truth of God. This then constitutes the "spirit" or the manner, morally speaking, of how those, who are unwilling in Paul's day (and ours by extrapolation) to obey God, act as persons. This "spirit" sets the course of their lives—towards disobeying Him. They thus form a culture of rebels who encourage each other to continue to rebel against God (cf. Romans 1).

In addition, Paul labels all those of the present creation "sons of disobedience," i.e., the progeny of a kind of father, i.e., Satan, who teaches and encourages his children to do evil only, and, in this case, within the context of being unable to do otherwise. As a result, all Christians are in some way counter-cultural, because every culture in which they live is fundamentally rebellious against God.

2 Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

²⁶ ἐν οἷς 'καὶ ἡμεῖς' πάντες ἀνεστράφημέν ποτε ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν ποιοῦντες τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν, καὶ ἤμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ – Here Paul confines his comments regarding the contemporary and universal evil of mankind to himself and the Ephesian Christians, all of whom used to pursue a course of evil in their lives, being led by their inherent and overwhelming evil desires that were always in rebellion against God.

Paul also comments that this made him and other Christians, who were merely following the lead of the source of their rebellion within them, deserving of the anger and condemnation of God. This is just the way they were as human persons, stuck in their unwillingness to obey God by deciding for themselves what is right vs. what is wrong. They were unwilling to submit to the biblical definition morality from God.

Plus, Paul and his fellow Ephesian believers were no different from everyone one else who is inherently a willing rebel against God.

While "the strong cravings of the flesh" for any of the Gentile Christians in Ephesus led them to pursue pagan idolatry and immoral behavior associated with it such as temple prostitution, the same cravings for Paul led him to engage in

false and worldly Judaism. And both kinds of evil cravings would naturally keep a sinner from being willing to believe in Jesus as their Messiah and to pursue obedience to God's moral commandments.

²⁷ ὁ δὲ θεὸς πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει, διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην ὁ αὐτοῦ ἦν ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς – In this verse, Paul begins to describe what God has done to change the inward and eternal circumstances of the Ephesian readers and himself. God has chosen to love them and extend His mercy and forgiveness towards them. Indeed, God's love has been the basis for His granting them mercy.

God is wealthy when it comes to His possession of and extending mercy and forgiveness to sinners. His love towards them is also "great," because they certainly do not deserve it or His mercy. And He has chosen to be forgiving towards sinners on account of His choosing to love them with His great love.

²⁸ καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ, ἡ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι – If option #2 in the footnote for 2:1 above is correct, then Paul is saying that the "life" that God has given his readers and him is the new destiny of eternal life which they will have with Jesus as the Messiah, which is coherent with Paul's statement in this verse, "by grace you have been saved" and escaped eternal condemnation. These Ephesian Christians are now headed towards eternal life because of God's inward work within them of causing them to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, who will be their advocate at the final judgment and thereby obtain God's mercy for them. This is in line with Paul's statement in 1:13 to the effect that God has permanently marked these Christians with His Holy Spirit within them.

If option #1 above were correct then Paul's spiritual assessment of himself and those who have experienced God's inward change is that, in the midst of being morally depraved human beings who were completely incapable of changing themselves and who deserved God's eternal condemnation, God Himself made a fundamental change within them, that of causing them to be authentic believers in the Messiah who all now qualify for eternal life. Thus, even though Paul and his fellow Christians still in a sense deserve God's anger and condemnation, because they are still inherently morally depraved, nevertheless, they are experiencing that which can be described as "life" by virtue of their orientation towards the Messiah and on the basis of their receiving mercy from God through him. Paul indicates that this is all God's doing and, once again, emphasizes that the mechanism that has caused this change to happen in Christians' existences is God's grace, His independent and sovereign choice before even the world began to move towards sinful human beings and make them instruments of His love and mercy.

However, I still think that option #2 is correct.

²⁹ καὶ συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – This statement is more coherent with option #2 above, that the "life" which God has given Paul and his readers is their eternal destiny of an existence with Jesus as the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God. As in 1:3 and 1:20, "in the heavens" refers to the permanent and incorruptible nature of this change which God has caused for these Christians. His grace has made it as certain as the Messiah's permanent position as ruler of the eternal realm that they will dwell with him and rule with him. In other words, just as the Messiah permanently occupies a special and unique position with respect to God, i.e., metaphorically sitting at His right hand with everything else that exists as his footstool (cf. Psalm 110:1; Hebrews), which means that he rules over God's creation, Paul and the Ephesian Christians will be right there with him as his constant companions, supporters, and even fellow rulers of sorts.

Therefore, their eternal destiny is as certain as that of Jesus. So even though Paul and the Ephesian Christians still inhabit the present realm and this earth, nevertheless they can consider themselves as being guaranteed a position of being with Jesus and ruling over the next realm with him just as much as he is guaranteed the role of being God's proxy over His creation. Christians are as good as seated with Jesus in his indestructible and permanent position as ruler of the created reality and future Kingdom of God.

³⁰ ἵνα ἐνδείξηται ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις ἡ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Paul also says that God's purpose in making him and the other sinful Christians the constant companions and fellow rulers of sorts of Jesus, the primary ruler of the cosmos, is so that He may show forth into eternity the greatness of His sovereign and independent kindness towards them on the basis of Jesus as His instrument of mercy, because he will act as high priest and advocate for them at the final judgment.

Could we, therefore, say that this is God's *ultimate* purpose for having created the whole cosmos? Indeed. This is like Paul's statements at the beginning of this letter to the effect that God has chosen and predestined Christians in order that they admire the magnificence of His grace (cf. 1:3-6). God's showing forth His unbounded and eternal willingness to rescue sinners from His condemnation and destruction will be a wonderful and beautiful aspect of the eternal Kingdom of God.

³¹ Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ τὴν πίστει καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον – Paul continues the theme of God's being the one who does what is necessary in order for sinners to escape His eternal condemnation and obtain salvation and life.

Now he states categorically that his Ephesian readers have been rescued from God's condemnation and destruction (the "this" of which Paul speaks) by means of His "grace," His independent kindness towards them by changing them into people who exhibit genuine belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah. It is "in light of their belief" that they are saved. Their belief has become the one human element that they possess that qualifies them for eternal life. Paul also emphasizes that this whole change on their behalf, i.e., their salvation by grace, and in them, i.e., their belief, did not come from them *per se*. It was not their inherent and independent human doing as sinful and rebellious human beings.

Instead, God merely gave them salvation through belief without asking them or anybody else if it was ok to do so. It makes sense to interpret the word “this” (τοῦτο) as mainly salvation by grace because first of all the word is neuter and second of all belief is contrasted with works in the next verse, indicating the means by which “this” has occurred. It is not Paul’s and the Ephesian Christians’ religious and moral performance,, especially of the Mosaic Covenant, which has made them worthy of “this,” but it is their “belief,” which itself by nature is a gift from God, that has qualified them for salvation by grace.

³² οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων. ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσθῃται – Here Paul says that the Ephesian Christians did not do anything to make themselves worthy of their belief and being rescued from God’s condemnation and destruction. Indeed, Paul says that no one who ever receives salvation and eternal life has anything to brag about, as though he did something to impress God and obligate Him to rescue him from eternal destruction and grant him eternal life.

God does not rescue sinners from His condemnation and give them eternal life as a response to their independent choice to do what is good and right so that they earn His response. Instead, sinners acquire the necessary qualifications by virtue of God’s gifting them to them.

³³ αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν ποιήμα. κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἱ προητοιμάσεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν – Paul continues to argue for God’s being the primary source of all that ends up being that which saves sinners and qualifies them for eternal life.

He now includes himself in this whole point of God’s grace and salvation to the Ephesians, by putting it in terms of what God has created. As the author of the story of the whole cosmos, God has written into it Paul and the Ephesian Christians for the very purpose of changing them from abject rebels against God to humble penitents who are “in the Messiah” now and who will perform “good works” as a result of their being different from the world (and certainly good works in the future Kingdom of God where they will be morally perfect and perform morally perfect actions). This will be part of their salvation now. Indeed, God formulated the whole story of the creation prior to His bringing it into existence as described in Genesis 1, including whatever Paul and the Ephesians as authentic believers will do now that will result from their genuine belief so that they will demonstrate that they are “saved,” i.e., granted mercy along with immortality and moral perfection.

Therefore, they will walk right into these “good works” that are waiting for them, because these works already exist in the transcendent mind of God as He tells His story by bringing their doing these good works into existence when He so chooses. Consequently, people of genuine belief fulfill or fill out the whole story that is in God’s head and is always forever still waiting to come into existence, because it never ends, except to change locations when He destroys the present realm and creates the new one of Revelation 21-22.

³⁴ Διὸ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου – Paul now goes on to address specifically his Gentile readers as to what their situation was before they became believers and what their situation is now that they are believers. They are not *physical* descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, therefore, not members of the ethnic nation of Jews, God’s “chosen people.” Paul wants them to know what it really means for them to be believers in the Jewish Messiah with respect to both God and the Jewish people. This also reveals the fact that most of the believers in Asia (western Turkey) probably were Gentiles and not Jews. Although, one would think that at least some of the Christians in each city were Jews.

Paul also mentions the all-important issue of a person’s inward condition vs. their relying on their outward actions for making themselves acceptable to God. Paul explicitly calls *unbelieving* Jews those whose outward sign as the chosen people of God, circumcision, is something that *human beings* do by means of their own strength and resources, not that which God alone does apart from the choices of the human beings. The notion of these Jews’ unbelief is implied in their calling Gentiles “the uncircumcised,” as if this outward sign ultimately distinguishes them as those who are fully accepted by God as opposed to those who are not circumcised. In other words, Jews view this external mark on their bodies, along with outwardly following the rest of the Mosaic Covenant’s commandments, as a *bona fide* means to obtaining God’s blessings—without their taking into account the depth of their sinfulness, because they fundamentally are unwilling to do so according to Paul in Romans 2, just as Gentiles are unwilling to do so also, according to Paul in Romans 1.

³⁵ ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκεῖνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ – Paul reminds his Gentile readers that first, culturally and spiritually, they were not associated with the Jewish Messiah, who is the only means for human beings to gain God’s eternal mercy by his being their advocate at the final judgment. Second, they were outside the group who can call themselves the chosen people of God, i.e., “the citizenry of Israel.” In other words, here, the “citizenry of Israel” are not only the ethnic people who are authentic believers, but also Gentile believers who become associated with the father of the Jews, Abraham, by virtue of their belief which is like his—inwardly caused by God and genuine. As Paul says in Romans 11, Gentiles become grafted into the tree of the people who participate in the fulfillment of the promises which God made to Abraham which reach their culmination in the earthly Kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of the next realm, both constituting the eternal Kingdom of God. Before all these Ephesian Gentiles became believers in the Jewish Messiah Jesus, they certainly were not considered God’s chosen people and acceptable to Him in order to receive His mercy. Now they are.

Cf. [Phil. 3:20](#) “For our citizenship is in heaven [the heavens] (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει), from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ [21](#) who will transform the body of our humble state into

conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” Therefore, these Gentiles, in the midst of their previous unbelief, had no positive connection to the Jewish Messiah and to the promises that God had made to even Gentiles through Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically the promise of Israel’s becoming a “great nation” which will initiate the eternal Kingdom of God when Jesus returns and sets up the Kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem, which will also be the time when previous and existing believers will obtain eternal life. Instead, by virtue of their worshipping pagan gods, these Gentiles were, in effect, atheists, worshippers of no god at all, because the pagan gods as *ultimate* forces in these people’s lives simply do not exist. This also made these formerly unbelieving Gentiles people without hope, because the only substantive and meaningful expectation for the future that sinful human beings can have is that of the one true God’s *eternal* mercy and *eternal* life through the advocacy of Jesus as their high priest.

³⁶ νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγγήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ αἵματι ὁτοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul says that things have changed for these Gentile believers. They used to be outside God’s “people” so to speak, i.e. they were separated from God and His mercy and even farther away from God than Jews who ethnically are physical descendants of Abraham. Now, these Gentile believers are as close to God and His Messiah as any human being can be, because they have embraced Jesus of Nazareth as the one who has qualified, through his death on the cross (“his blood”), to be their advocate at the final judgment because he has offered himself to God to extinguish His anger towards sinners. Therefore, God accepts the Gentile believers as His people with equal status as all other believers throughout history, like His “chosen people” of Israel, at least those among the Jews who have authentic belief like them. Later, God will welcome them all into the eternal Kingdom of God.

Cf. [Galatians 3:26](#) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. [27](#) For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28](#) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29](#) And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

We notice also that Paul does not say that the Gentiles are now close to the Messiah because of their adherence to the Mosaic Covenant and being newly circumcised. Instead, it is Jesus’ death and both their recognition of their deserving God’s condemnation and destruction because of their immoral condition and their desiring God’s mercy through Jesus that has brought them close to God and into the citizenry of Israel. They are now “in Jesus” as those whom God considers His ultimate eternal people. In other words, their close relationship with God is on the basis of their belief in Jesus and not on the basis of their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

³⁷ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ – Now Paul focuses on the effects of Jesus’ being the Messiah. First, he and his death are “our peace,” referring to that which in this realm ultimately provides a person with a wholesome and friendly relationship with the transcendent Creator God and in the next realm will provide a person with eternal forgiveness, salvation, and life. The Gentile believers were enemies of God, and He was angry with them. Now, they are His friends, and He is at peace with them.

Second, Jesus has brought believing Jews and Gentiles together into one group of people, whom he called in v. 12 the “citizenry of Israel.” Thus, we notice that it is not the Mosaic Covenant and Gentile’s obeying it that unites them with Jews—even though this is what made sense to Jews, even a lot of “Christian” Jews. It is only the Messiah who does so by connecting them through their belief with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob according to God’s promises in Genesis 12:1-3 that “in [Abraham] all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Third, he has broken down what he calls “the barrier of the dividing wall,” where the words “the hostility” (the cause of anger and being enemies with God), are in apposition to the first words. The next verse could make it seem as though cause of the hostility is the Mosaic Covenant and that this hostility exists between the Jews and the Gentiles. However, it makes more sense that Paul is referring to mankind’s sinfulness and rebellion against God. It is this that Jesus “destroyed” so to speak by qualifying through his death to make sure that man’s sin does not prevent God from being merciful and kind to him and therefore his friend. In addition, God does not destroy the Mosaic Covenant in the present realm, because He continues to use it as the identifying factor in the Jews’ lives as authentic believers, especially in the millennial kingdom when Jesus reigns in Jerusalem over them and the world.

Therefore, Paul is saying that the effect of man’s sinfulness is to alienate people from God by making Him angry with their rebellion against Him, so that the eternal effect is that God punishes and destroys those who remain hostile towards Him in their immoral condition throughout their entire lives. Thus, Jesus “destroyed” God’s hostility towards man by dealing with man’s rebellion so to speak when he qualified through his death (“his blood” and “his flesh,” i.e., his crucified body) to be people’s high priest and advocate as their propitiation, the offering that assuages God’s anger towards all believers who have rebelled against Him (cf. Hebrews). The means of this destruction was “his flesh,” i.e., his body on the cross when he died and earned himself the right to be the Messiah and priest of sinful human beings. With “his flesh” Jesus obliterated any anger which God might have towards sinners who meet the requirement of gaining salvation from His condemnation through their genuine, inward belief in God and His crucified Messiah as the basis of their salvation.

³⁸ τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἔν δόγμασιν\ καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίση ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα ἑκαὶνὸν ἄνθρωπον ποτῶν εἰρήνην – Paul goes on to say that Jesus’ activity of qualifying to be the high priest and advocate of both Jews and Gentiles, in some sense, demonstrates the eternal irrelevance of the Mosaic Covenant in the lives of believing Jews

(and believing Gentiles, for that matter), because it is only the Messiah who molds *believing* Jews and *believing* Gentiles into one new group, this new set of human beings who obtain peace with God and His eternal mercy, regardless of whether or not they have been following the Mosaic Covenant.

Cf. Galatians 2:11-21. Thus, it is Jesus and not the Mosaic Covenant that brings peace and reconciliation to the relationship between God and sinful human beings. This is the good news of the gospel, that reconciliation between sinners and God can actually be had—through Jesus and through Jesus alone.

Therefore, the “Covenant of commandments with regulations” is the Mosaic Covenant and specifically its inability to settle the issue of even the Jews’ sinfulness with God. Instead, as Paul argues in Romans 7 and Hebrews, the covenant only perpetuates the problem of the Jews’ [and Gentiles’] not having God’s eternal mercy while also marking them as God’s chosen people on earth. Indeed, the covenant only reminds the Jews that God requires something other than it in order for them to obtain His mercy (cf. Psalm 110 and Hebrews—the “something other” is the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, the Messiah himself who qualifies for his priestly role by offering himself to God through death on the cross).

Therefore, with the Mosaic Covenant, God initially created (or really just perpetuated) a hostile environment between Himself and the Jews (and, for that matter, between Himself and the Gentiles, because it would have been completely ineffective for them to try to obtain God’s eternal mercy through the Mosaic Covenant too). The Jews will follow the covenant properly without its perpetuating a hostile environment only during the millennial kingdom when they all are authentic believers in their Messiah Jesus as the true priest and advocate on behalf of them as sinners.

In addition, Paul refers to the fact that, while the Mosaic Covenant intentionally divided mankind into two groups, the Jews and the Gentiles, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and belief in the Messiah makes all believers members of one group, the group who will obtain peace with God and His eternal mercy and life, regardless of their ethnic origin and how diligently they outwardly obey the Mosaic Covenant, whether Jew or Gentile.

Also, cf. Deuteronomy 31:12 – “Assemble the people, the men, women, children, and outsider, who is within your gate (וְיָגֵד אֶלְּכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶלְּכָל נְשֵׂי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶלְּכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶתְּכֵן הַגֵּר הַיָּדוֹן בְּיַמֵּי מֹשֶׁה, καὶ τὸν προσήλυτον τὸν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ὑμῶν), so that they may hear and learn and fear Yahweh your God, and they may be careful to do every word of this instruction.” Here, Moses assumes that there will be Gentiles, “the outsider[s],” who have immigrated into Israel and are willfully living among the Jews in order to join them in Mosaic Covenant worship of God and living before God. Therefore, it has been possible for Gentiles to unite with the Jewish people, even under the Mosaic Covenant. However, true unity takes place only through authentic belief in the Messiah, now that the Messiah has appeared.

Also, cf. Leviticus 17:8,9 – “Then you shall say to them, ‘Any man from the house of Israel and from the outsiders who live as outsiders in your midst (וְיָגֵד אֶלְּכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶתְּכֵן הַגֵּר הַיָּדוֹן בְּיַמֵּי מֹשֶׁה, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν τῶν προσηλύτων τῶν προσκειμένων ἐν ὑμῖν), who offers up an offering or a sacrifice, and he does not bring it to the doorway of the appointed meeting place tent in order to do it for Yahweh, indeed, that man will be cut off from his people.’” This passage also alludes to Gentiles, “outsiders,” who are living among the Jews on the land of Israel. The context before this verse refers to God’s prohibiting idolatry on the land. In vs. 8 & 9, God prohibits idolatry among both the Jews and the Gentiles who are living together on the land. To put it differently, God is requiring that anyone, Jew or Gentile, who lives on His land, the land that He promised to Abraham and his physical descendants, the Jews, worship and obey the God of the Jews according to the Mosaic Covenant. As in the case of Deuteronomy 31:12 above, the Mosaic Covenant can be a place where Jews and Gentiles are united as the people of God. However, true unity for eternity’s sake is only through belief in the recently revealed Messiah, who has qualified to be the eternal advocate of both *believing* Jews and *believing* Gentiles.

Consequently, in contrast to both what God did with the Mosaic Covenant by perpetuating a hostile environment between Him and the Jews and what the Jews did with the Mosaic Covenant by misinterpreting it and deeming all uncircumcised Gentiles as rejected by God, Paul says that Jesus has brought peace between God and all Jews and all Gentiles who are authentic believers in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Jesus has eliminated the problem of man’s moral rebellion which created an atmosphere of hostility between God and man by qualifying as their eternal advocate at the final judgment. Thus, Jesus takes Jews who are believers and Gentiles who are believers and molds them into one eternal group who all receive God’s mercy.

Paul is thus *connecting* the Mosaic Covenant with man’s moral rebellion without saying that it is the cause of the hostility between either God and man or Jew and Gentile. Thus, sin is the very division and barrier between God and the Jews, even though the covenant was given to the Jews as the specific agreement between God and them. One might expect God to make an agreement with people that worked by producing peace and friendship between Him and them! However, this specific agreement only exacerbated the problem by perpetuating the hostility that God felt towards them, which actually was His purpose for it in order for it to be just that much clearer that a new high priest, a new sacrifice, and a new covenant was necessary for the Jews to acquire His mercy and eternal life (cf. Psalm 110; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 7-10). The New Covenant is the agreement between God and the Jews with effects that extend into the arena of the Gentiles that produces peace and friendship between all sinners and God. This is why it will finally make sense that the Jews obey properly, i.e., with changed hearts, the Mosaic Covenant on the land during the reign of Jesus after his second coming, because God will no longer be hostile towards them—not on the basis of their performing the Mosaic Covenant, but on the basis of Jesus and his having qualified to be their high priest for all eternity and when all the Jews fulfill the requirement of genuine belief to take advantage of Jesus as the basis of their

salvation and peace with God.

To be clear, the “peace” to which Paul is referring here is not between Jews and Gentiles by destroying the Mosaic Covenant through Jesus’ death. It is between all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, and God by nullifying the Mosaic Covenant as any means to obtain eternal mercy and by destroying the problem of sin’s making God angry by qualifying to be an advocate between God and sinners. Thus, Jesus propitiated and appeased God’s anger for sinners through his death by qualifying to be their advocate and intercessor at the final judgment, which, by definition, shows the inability of the Mosaic Covenant to do so.

³⁹ καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν ἑαυτῷ – Paul again declares that, by his death on the cross (“by means of him”), Jesus has eliminated (“killed”) any hostility between God and sinful human beings who take advantage of his role as their high priest at the final judgment. “Both” groups “in one body,” the entire collection of believers who are either Jews or Gentiles, have been reconciled to God through Jesus’ death. Thus, Jesus “killed” the hostility between God and sinners by providing the only means to God’s granting them eternal forgiveness and being at peace with them.

As stated earlier, the Mosaic Covenant, in the final analysis, perpetuates the hostility between God and the Jews, indeed, between God and all human beings, i.e., even Gentiles who join the Jews on the land of Israel and bring their sacrifices and offerings to God at the temple in Jerusalem. This perpetuation is not because the Mosaic Covenant is bad and needs destroying, but because in God’s plans it was never intended through the sacrifices of bulls and goats to solve the problem of man’s needing God’s eternal mercy (cf. Romans 7,8; Hebrews). Therefore, Jesus, by his death on the cross as an offering to God, basically also eliminated the shortcomings of the Mosaic Covenant both for Jews who believe in the Messiah and for Gentiles who believe in the Messiah. Paul in this passage is encouraging believing Jews and believing Gentiles to see each other as members of the same unified group of people by means of the Messiah, the group who have been reconciled out of a hostile relationship with God into a friendly relationship with Him that results in both believing Jews’ and believing Gentiles’ obtaining peace with God and His eternal mercy through him. Thus, Paul is implying that this is a whole new arrangement between Jews and Gentiles. While there is an historical and ethnic divide between Jews and Gentiles as stipulated by the Mosaic Covenant, there will be an eternal unification of these two groups in the Messiah, because of their both obtaining God’s eternal mercy through the one method of the Messiah’s death and advocacy at the final judgment. Because God has changed His relationship with both Jews and Gentiles through their belief in Jesus to one of friendship instead of one of hostility, having done so with the crucified Messiah as His instrument of reconciliation, He has brought peace between Himself and all believers and, therefore, even between Jewish believers and Gentile believers (indeed all believers of all time going back even before Abraham and the inception of the Jewish people through him).

⁴⁰ καὶ ἐλθὼν εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς – Paul has been saying that the Gentiles have been “far away” from God because of their pagan idolatry and rejection of Him along with their not being physical descendants of Abraham, while the Jews have been “near” God because of His having chosen them as an ethnic group and given them the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, the Messiah’s purpose was to announce for both Jews and Gentiles that they both could be at peace with God apart from the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, believing Jews and believing Gentiles are combined into one group of eternal believers who are at peace with God. In other words, Jesus’ announcement and message was that he was God’s means of fulfilling both promises to Abraham, to make the Jews a “great nation” of authentic, forgiven believers and Abraham and similar Jewish and Gentile believers forgiven sinners who will obtain eternal life.

cf. Isaiah 57:19, וְהָיָה יְהוָה יֹאמֵר לְבָרְכֵם וְלְשָׁלוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּ [גַּיְב] בְּרִיךְ נֹבַח (LXX – εἰρήνην ἐπ’ εἰρήνην τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ τοῖς ἐγγύς οὖσιν καὶ εἶπεν κύριος Ἰάσομαι αὐτούς), “‘creating the fruit of lips, “Shalom, shalom,” to those who are far away and to those who are near,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and I will heal them.’”

The above verse from Isaiah is similar but not really the same as what Paul is saying.

⁴¹ ὅτι δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα – The reason why the Messiah could offer himself as a means of unification for both Jews and Gentiles is because he is the one and only intermediary between God and man. Therefore, there are two aspects of God’s work within the creation, His Spirit by which He changes people’s inwardness and the Messiah by whom He reconciles sinful human beings to Himself, thus making it possible for people who deserve no audience with God or mercy from Him to have both.

Indeed, the inference from what Paul is saying here is that the Spirit’s work, Jesus as advocate before God, and a common personal and individual inwardness are the only legitimate means to peace between sinners of all ethnic groups and God (and, by extrapolation, between people who are different on *any* basis—gender, station in society, calling, etc.).

And by the way the story of the Tower of Babel is the explicit biblical teaching that God simply will not allow human beings to all be at peace with one another—until the death of the two witnesses of Revelation and the 2nd coming of the Messiah, after he has destroyed all those following the Man of Lawlessness in the Middle East who have rebelled against God. But this peace will be only temporary until the end of the “1,000 years” of Jesus’ reign on earth when a final uprising against God will take place, and then He will destroy eternally all remaining unbelievers and will create the eternal earth and second stage of the Kingdom of God for only believers.

⁴² Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἔστε συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ – Now, Paul says clearly that his Gentile Ephesian readers, by virtue of their belief in the Jewish Messiah, are no longer outside the

bounds of the “chosen people” of God. Indeed, they can consider themselves, in a sense, citizens of the nation of Israel, i.e., Israel that is made up of authentic believing Jews and Gentiles who both will enjoy the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham (cf. 2:9 and Romans 11). Thus, they join the believing Jews in the “Israel” of God, so that these Ephesian believing Gentiles are obviously different from the rest of the world and can think of themselves as God’s children and family. They live together with believing Jews in the same spiritual house, the house of God. They all, in fact, are of the household, i.e., family, of God. And Paul will go on to describe them as even a building by using the concept of the temple of God.

⁴³ ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου ἡ αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ – The temple of God that is comprised of people has as its keystone, its cornerstone, the person of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, so that every other “brick”/person who comprises this building lines up with him, his role, his purpose, and his activity in the past, present, and future. The bricks/people, who are directly connected to the cornerstone of the Messiah, are his apostles whom he commissioned to be his authoritative and accurate spokesmen. They have conveyed the biblical message as well as Jesus did, and all Jesus’ followers should listen to them as if Jesus himself were speaking. Then, connected to them are the teachers who are contemporary to the apostles and who take their cue directly from the apostles by sticking strictly to the Messianic and apostolic message (cf. 3:5). These are the prophets (cf. 4:11), the spokesman of God during the period when the apostles are actually alive and able to coach these teachers, even in person. Finally, connected to the living prophets who are connected to the living apostles who have been taught and commissioned by Jesus are the Jewish and Gentile beneficiaries of the apostolic message, such as all the Ephesian Christians (and then Christians throughout the rest of history leading up to the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21).

The Greek word for “cornerstone” is ἀκρογωνιαίος which is comprised of words that mean “at the tip of the angle.” Also, perhaps interpreting “prophets” as the authors of the OT makes sense in the light of the fact that Paul is identifying the authoritative spokesmen on whom everyone else relies for gaining a truthful understanding of God, thus pointing out that all of them are Jewish. But cf. 3:5, where the prophets fit better as contemporaneous with the apostles. So even if these in 2:20 are OT prophets, those in 3:5 are NT prophets who are closely associated with the apostles, especially Paul who mentions in his letter a lot of men who were important traveling companions of his and whom he trusted with proclaiming and holding on to the gospel message. There is also, for example, Epaphras, in Colossians.

⁴⁴ ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὔξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ – Paul repeats the fact that it is “in” the Messiah that this building is what it is by virtue of his being its cornerstone. It is he who makes the people one group and one building, whether Jews or Gentiles, who have been inwardly changed by the Spirit of God and who have exercised authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah, thus pointing them towards the goal of the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham. Thus, they are all “in the Lord,” associated with Jesus as bona fide believers and citizens of Israel for all eternity.

⁴⁵ ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ ἁγίου ἐν πνεύματι – The inference from what Paul is saying by his use of the building metaphor is that both Jewish believers and Gentile believers constitute this building, with the ramification being that they are all ONE building and, therefore, one group of people with no division between them, which the Mosaic Covenant by itself could not produce because it is inadequate to provide eternal mercy for any human being, thus, *by itself*, perpetuating the hostility between God and the Jews. Even if Gentiles join the Jews in trying to obey the Mosaic Covenant, but without authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah, God is still angry with all of them. This hostility between God and Jews will end completely only when Jesus returns and the believing Jews on the land of Israel perform the covenant with genuine belief. But God will also have ended His anger towards all believing Gentiles through Jesus and his death.

In addition, Paul is saying that it is the work of God within the creation by virtue of His “Spirit” that ultimately causes all this to happen. Just as the Spirit is the permanent mark inside all authentic believers, He is also the ultimate builder of God’s dwelling place within the creation comprised of these same people.

In the song of Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 15:17, they call the land of Israel and specifically its capital, which they probably do not know yet will be Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place (ἡ κατοικητήριόν σου). In other passages, heaven, i.e., “the heavens” (οὐρανός, τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), is God’s dwelling place. Thus, to be God’s “dwelling place” is to have a permanent and incorruptible status where God himself “is” or concentrates His most important activity within the creation. In this case, it is in His chosen people, both Jews and Gentiles who authentically embrace Jesus as the Messiah.

⁴⁶ Τοῦτου χάριν ἐγὼ Παῦλος ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἰ[ησοῦ] ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν – Having argued for the absolute and required unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in the crucified Messiah, Paul describes his own life and calling from God in terms of it, and he labels in v. 4 the unifying and saving effect of Jesus as the “mystery of the Messiah.”

He begins to discuss the role that God has assigned him of being the unique apostle to the Gentiles after labeling himself a prisoner of the Messiah, thus referring to the fact that he is divinely and morally obligated to carry out this responsibility, or he would be rebelliously disobedient to God. It makes sense to think of Paul’s bringing up this subject to underscore his encouragement to the Ephesian Christians to listen to what he has to say and to obey it. He is chained in his heart and mind as a prisoner to the Messiah, while also being literally chained to the Romans as their prisoner,

awaiting an audience with Nero. Clearly, the first kind of prisoner is the more important of the two. However, Paul stops mid-sentence, before going on to exhort his Christian readers to make choices that are in line with the good news of the apostolic message of Jesus which he is presenting as the Messiah's prisoner, and he will pick up the thread in 4:1. He feels the need to restate the fact that his role was graced to him by God, his understanding was taught to him by God through the OT scriptures, and the result is the combining of Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah with Jewish believers for a common eternal destiny as he fulfills his responsibility to present the good news of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus has personally arrived on the scene and ended the mystery which was not made known in past generations. It was only taught and predicted in the OT.

⁴⁷ εἴ γε ἠκούσατε τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς – Paul interrupts his current train of thought to remind his readers of what they have heard from him and his associates about the story of God's stopping him on the road to Damascus and telling him that, from that point on, he would be Jesus' unique authoritative spokesman (apostle) to non-Jews. Eventually, Paul spent at least two years in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19, where it is also said that he stayed "in Asia"). So there was plenty of time for him to relate to them a lot of theology and his own experience as an unbelieving Jew and then a believing Jew.

Paul says that the apostolic responsibility that God has assigned him is an effect of God's grace. This is always Paul's emphasis apart from Jesus as the crucified Messiah. Paul's job is what God has arranged through His independent and kind choice (and what God has given Paul to manage through his existential choices – cf. 1 Peter 4:10, Just as each one has received a gift for yourselves, serve with it as good managers of the diversified grace of God), so that God has given to Paul the role of being the apostle to the Gentiles and making choices that fulfill this responsibility. He also indicates that God's purpose was for Paul eventually to travel to Ephesus and present the ideas concerning Jesus as the Messiah to these very people who have become genuine believers (this is to say that Paul had chosen to manage his role this way).

Thus, Paul's readers in Asia and Ephesus have heard of Paul's experience of becoming the apostle to the Gentiles through either Paul himself or through his associates (cf. Acts 19).

⁴⁸ [ἴτι] κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἔγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον, καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ – We do not have a previous letter from Paul to the Ephesian Christians. Therefore, it could just as easily be that he is referring to the earlier part of this letter in 1:3-14 as well as 2:11-22 where he lays out the theology of the Messiah and God's plans to use him through his death as advocate for sinful human beings as well as their ruler and king in the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, Paul reminds his Ephesian readers that God has revealed the details of His plans and purposes to him, which has now become clear through the first coming of the Messiah (so that the "mystery" is no longer a mystery), through Jesus' appearing to Paul on the road to Damascus, and through Paul's learning all that God wanted him to understand during the fourteen or so years that Paul restudied the OT (cf. Galatians 2:1, etc.).

This mystery comprises two main elements—1) the death of the Messiah in order to qualify to be everyone's king and high priest, and 2) the unification of Jewish and Gentile believers into the saved people of God without either one having to go through the Mosaic Covenant in order to arrive there.

⁴⁹ πρὸς ὃ δύνασθε ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ – As the Ephesian Christians read what Paul is saying in this letter, they can grasp, or really continue to grasp, the biblical truth regarding the Jewish Messiah as Paul understands it—his life, death, resurrection, and reconciling both Jews and Gentiles to God for the purpose of their acquiring eternal life. When Paul was confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus, he must have thought very quickly about the fact that he had totally missed one of the main points in the OT, which he later had confirmed to him when he went back and restudied it—that 1) the Messiah would come *and die for people's sins as a propitiatory offering to God* and 2) this would lead to the relativizing of the Mosaic Covenant so that Gentiles could remain Gentile and not have to become Jewish to obtain the eternal blessing of God and the Jews could obtain God's promises through the New Covenant with Jesus and not the Old Covenant with Moses. This was the "mystery" that had now been revealed to him and that he preached constantly to Gentiles (and to Jews when the opportunity arose) on the basis of the appearance, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah.

⁵⁰ ὃ ἐτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἔγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἀγίοις ὁ ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι – While previous generations of people, through studying the OT, could have come to an understanding of what God is up to by means of His purposes for the Messiah, their level of understanding could not match that of those like Paul and even his Ephesian readers, for whom it is so much clearer now that the Messiah has appeared in the world. It is all this information from and through the Messiah that has been conveyed to his apostles and their associated teachers, e.g., Silvanus and Timothy, who are traveling companions and apostolic co-workers of Paul (cf. 2:20 regarding the interpretation of "prophets").

Their understanding is a result of the work of God within the creation, i.e., a result of His Spirit's work within the inwardness of the apostles and their associated teachers who now properly think about and understand Jesus as the Messiah. And it is this clarity of the information that Paul completely missed during his time with Gamaliel and studying the OT until Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus and he started rethinking the entire OT. In turn, the apostles and their associates convey this information to others such as the Ephesians and reveal what Paul goes on to talk about in the next verse.

⁵¹ εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἣ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Paul has already basically stated this in 2:11-22, that the clear message now is that the Jews are no longer

the only “chosen people of God.” Gentiles, who have embraced the *Jewish* Messiah Jesus as their advocate and king, are also (along with believing Jews), *without their having to live on the land of Israel and to follow the Mosaic Covenant*. Thus, believing Jews and believing Gentiles really are together what comprise the fullness of the chosen people of God. Being in Rome, where he is basically on trial for being a bad Jew according to the Jews in Jerusalem who wanted to kill him for stating that he believed in a crucified and risen Messiah and was assigned by him the responsibility to proclaim him to the Gentiles, Paul continues to be incredibly impressed with and surprised by the importance of his responsibility.

The Gentiles are co-heirs of both the earthly, restored Kingdom of Israel when Jesus returns and the new, eternal earth and kingdom after God destroys the present realm at the end of the millennial kingdom (cf. Revelation 20,21). They are co-body members of the gathering of God’s people as bona fide believers in Jesus the Messiah. And they are co-possessors of the promise in the Messiah Jesus of the blessing of eternal life.

⁵² οὐ ἐγενήθη διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ ‘τῆς δοθείσης’ μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ – Paul started here in v. 2 (with the grace of God) and again indicates that he has become gifted with the responsibility to be not only the Messiah’s servant, but also his authoritative spokesmen, and that God has accomplished this by extending His power towards Paul and making him such, i.e., by means of the work within the creation of the Spirit of God and within Paul when He changed his heart and caused him to become permanently committed to God and His purposes on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. This gift to be an apostle is according to God’s grace, according to His independently, sovereignly, and lovingly operating within Paul and outside him.

⁵³ Ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ὁγαίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη, ἵνα τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Here Paul picks up the thread that he started in 3:1 and finishes the statement. His responsibility is to talk to the Gentiles about the good news of Jesus the Messiah, but this was graced to him with eventually all the understanding necessary for doing so (cf. 3:2-7).

Paul does not think very highly of his former manner of life, where he was wholeheartedly committed to destroying the Christian movement. Therefore, when God called him to be not only an authentic believer in the Jewish Messiah, but also one of its authoritative spokesmen, indeed the only spokesman to the non-Jewish world in the 1st century Roman Empire, he considered himself to be the least likely and least deserving person for this role, not that any sinful person has been able to deserve anything good from God. Paul may consider himself the greatest sinner of all time because he was wholeheartedly committed to destroying the Christian movement, but anyone who has come to grips with his sin and need for God’s mercy through the inward work of the Holy Spirit probably thinks that he is running a very close second to Paul for winning the “most sinful person in the world” prize.

So God sovereignly, willingly, and independently gave Paul the role of apostle to the Gentiles, and God also presented Paul with and embedded in Paul an understanding of the beyond imagination magnificence of what the Messiah is all about and accomplishes through his own role. This is the “incomprehensible wealth of the Messiah.”

⁵⁴ καὶ φωτίσαι ὅ[πánτας] τίς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἔν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι – All these wonderful ideas about the Messiah coming and dying for the sins of people, both Jews and Gentiles apart from the Mosaic Covenant, were mentioned in the OT but not obviously set forth explicitly until the Messiah physically came for the first time as Jesus of Nazareth.

All this was the plan of God, who is writing the story of the creation according to His own desires, revealing more of what He is ultimately up to bit by bit through the Old Testament, through the history of the Jews, and now most explicitly through the Messiah himself. Thus, the “mystery,” i.e., Jesus with his death and resurrection for Jews and Gentiles explicitly revealed in the creation, was in the mind of God and mentioned in the OT until Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, along with his expressing through his teaching these very same ideas.

In other words, the mystery stopped being a mystery when Jesus appeared and lived all that the OT predicted of his first appearance.

⁵⁵ ἵνα γνωρισθῇ ὡνὺν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἢ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ – Taking ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις adverbially as meaning “on a permanent and incorruptible basis,” along with taking διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας adverbially as meaning “by means of the [Christian] gathering [or community],” God’s wisdom that constitutes His purposes for the creation and the appearance of the Messiah, which therefore has many elements to it because of the many people involved in God’s ultimate chosen people who obtain eternal life, both Jews and Gentiles, has been made known to all other religious rulers and authorities who think otherwise. It is these rulers who continue to set the tone of the spirit of the world during the history of this cosmos, and this tone is one of hostility towards God. However, Jesus, with his believing community within history, demonstrates on a permanent and incorruptible (“in the heavens”) basis that God’s plans and purposes will prevail over any intentions they might have to steer history in another direction. No religious authority or movement can eliminate God’s “gathering” of Christians [or Jews for that matter] in the world. God is always making religious rulers and their followers who are hostile to God and His people, whether the Jews in general or Christians specifically, face into the reality of His unchangeable plans and purposes which He will accomplish through Jesus.

Cf. [Ephesians 6:11](#) Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes [stratagems] of the devil. [12](#) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [it is not a physical struggle which Christians are engaged in], but against the [religious] rulers, against the powers, against the world [religious systemisms that are] forces [within our world] of this darkness [morally speaking], against the spiritual forces [elements] of wickedness in

the heavenly places [who are in permanent opposition to God].

We do not win against people who are hostile to biblical truth by fighting them physically, but by fighting them with the ideas of the gospel. And our fight is on our part the gentlest, kindest, and humblest fighting we can perform.

⁵⁶ κατὰ ῥα πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἣν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν – Paul indicates that God had planned all along for the Messiah to be the focal point of all history, both the history of the present, temporary realm and that of the future, eternal realm, because the Messiah is the ruler of creation as God’s proxy, the icon within the creation (cf. Colossians 1:20ff.), and the means by which God fulfills His promises to Abraham.

As a result, the Messiah appeared in the world, and the gathering of his believers continues to represent him in the world through the multifaceted wisdom of God (3:10), thus making clear that God is still forging history to play out His permanent plans and purposes. Every story of every believer (and actually every non-believer too) is a facet of God’s wisdom and works to demonstrate His wisdom, grace, mercy, and love (and justice), which ends up being beyond the comprehension of any created human being (cf. 3:18,19). The wealth of understanding which comes from studying the Bible and learning about Jesus is boundless but important to pursue.

⁵⁷ ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ προσαγωγὴν ἐν ῥα πεποιθήσει διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ – Paul states the bottom line idea regarding the existence and divine purpose of the Messiah, at least up to the point when a person actually enters into the eternal Kingdom of God. God uses the Messiah to bring about His eternal mercy to his believers and followers. Whereas before they lacked proper access to God and His mercy, now they do by means of the only priest and offering that makes this possible, Jesus and his death on the cross. Therefore, when a sinner is in Jesus, he can come before God boldly and with confidence receive His promises, blessings, and mercy, which will have their culmination in living in the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus.

⁵⁸ διὸ αἰτούμαι μὴ ῥαγκακεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν μου ὑπὲρ ῥαμῶν, ῥα ἥτις ἐστὶν δόξα ῥαμῶν – Assuming that Paul is under house arrest in Rome awaiting an audience with Emperor Nero, he knows that when Tychicus arrives in Ephesus to deliver this letter to the Christians there (cf. 6:21,22), he will inform them of Paul’s circumstances, and they will probably feel bad for him, maybe even thinking that if anyone should be able to avoid suffering, it is an apostle who is especially loved by God. However, Paul considers any hardship or suffering that he experiences to be part of his job and responsibility as the sole apostle to the Gentiles, because each moment of pain reminds him of the indescribable benefit of having Jesus as one’s Messiah and advocate before the Father for His eternal mercy. Paul also considers the suffering that he endures to be for the benefit of others and their belief, because it is typically accompanied by the authentic belief of Gentiles who hear about and become concerned about his difficult experiences.

The upshot for even these Ephesian Gentile believers is that they will enjoy the wonderful mercy and eternal salvation of God through Paul, his sufferings, and the proving out through his persevering belief of the value of the apostolic message. This is their glory and magnificence as connected to Paul’s suffering on behalf of the apostolic message.

⁵⁹ Τοῦτου χάριν κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα – Paul recognizes the sovereignty, goodness, and wisdom of God in His orchestrating the difficult kind of life that Paul has been assigned along with the beneficial effects of his experiences for the authentic belief of the Gentiles whom he influences through performing his apostolic responsibilities. Therefore, he grants to God with his inwardness the honor and respect that He deserves. He metaphorically bows his knees in heartfelt and mindful worship and humble submission to God.

⁶⁰ ἐξ οὗ πάντα πατρια ἐν ῥα οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀνομάζεται – If Paul is most likely using the concept of name in an OT and ANE sense where it stands for the role that a person plays in God’s cosmic story, then he is describing God as the Creator, the source and therefore “Father,” of each set of related human beings’ personal story within the history of the current realm. Thus, regardless of the present state of affairs that each “family” of this “Father” is experiencing, whether they are destined for immortality and permanence, i.e. in the heavens (ἐν ῥα οὐρανοῖς), or destined for mortality and destruction, i.e., on the earth (ἐπὶ γῆς), God ultimately is responsible for what is happening to them and how their roles within His story are contributing to His overall purposes of bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus as its king.

In Genesis 22:18, God says to Abraham and to Jacob in Genesis 28:14 that “in your descendants all the nations/families of the earth will be blessed,” and the LXX translates אֲרָצוֹת with τὰ ἔθνη and אֵלֵינוּ with αἱ φυλαὶ respectively.

However, Peter quotes these verses in Acts 3:25 when speaking to Jews in Jerusalem and uses αἱ πατριαὶ instead. Therefore, all three Greek works are synonymous, referring to the kinds of people on earth which we would label as “ethnic groups.” So it is all different peoples of human history who find their role in God’s story defined by God Himself, the storyteller, either with their proceeding towards a permanent, eternal, and incorruptible existence or with their being subject to only a temporary existence within the creation and then destroyed at the final judgment of God.

⁶¹ ἵνα δῶ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον – One of Paul’s main points in this letter is to remind his Ephesian readers that it is God’s actions within the Creation *and within them*, even as Gentiles who have now become authentic believers in the Jewish Messiah, that results in such great things as a sinful human being’s acquiring God’s mercy and eternal life through exercising authentic belief in the Messiah.

Therefore, Paul’s desire for all the Ephesian believers is that God would cause them to persevere in their belief by means of His miraculous work within them in the creation, work that is said by the Bible to be done by His Spirit, i.e., that aspect of Him which operates in the creation and carries out His most specific plans and purposes towards those who have been predestined to eternal life (cf. Ephesians 2:8). Indeed, Paul would want God to operate within these

believers in proportion to His own greatness and glory. That is a lot of power! And, again, this is power which God uses to cause the choices of set apart people to demonstrate that they are different from the rest of the humanity, i.e., that they are committed to God and the things of God and not to ignoring or rebelling against God by choosing to define good and evil themselves.

⁶² κατοικήσαι τὸν Χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι – Paul now indicates that the result of such a huge manner of God’s work within these Ephesian believers would be that metaphorically Jesus would reside in their hearts by their centralizing their belief in the crucified and resurrected Messiah in their own inwardness and lives. In addition, Paul probably means by Jesus’ dwelling in their hearts that they simply would be committed to love him and long to be with him in his eternal kingdom, the same way that Paul told the Philippians that they were in his heart (cf. Philippians 1:7). This would all be the effect of their having become fully entrenched in their status as believers in the Jewish Messiah that has come about because God had chosen to love them even before He brought the creation into existence in Genesis 1.

Thus, it is God’s love for them which becomes the basis for their authentic belief and its perseverance (cf. Romans 5:3-5). In other words, God graciously loves those whom He chooses, so that they center their existences on the role and purpose of the Jewish Messiah, resulting, on the basis of his death, in their repudiating evil, which is still a permanent part of their own defining essence this side of eternity, and pursuing moral obedience to God, which will be a permanent part of their defining essence in eternity.

⁶³ ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος – Here Paul points to God’s purpose in working so powerfully in certain people’s inwardness, in those whom He has set apart from the rest of the world by virtue of His changing their hearts—both Jews and Gentiles. There is a fundamental intellectual component to what God causes to happen within sinful human beings. They acquire a profound understanding of what God wants them to know about Himself and the Messiah (3:19).

⁶⁴ γινῶναι τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα ἡ πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ – The knowledge and understanding of God that Paul is talking about is specifically in regard to the Messiah and how much he has demonstrated his love for those who will take advantage of his advocacy before the Father by his dying for them on the cross. This level of love will certainly appear to be incomprehensible to those who ponder it properly. However, this knowledge and understanding by believers of the Messiah’s love for evil people leads to what Paul calls the *playroma* of God (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ), i.e., the fullness of God which will eventually be both immortality and moral perfection in eternity for all believers in God throughout all history.

In other words, all believers obtain *everything* which God has planned for them in eternity by knowing and comprehending as much as they can of God’s ultimate purposes, which involve mainly two things, 1) how much Jesus the Messiah has loved them by dying for them, which is also the greatest example of how much God has loved them, and 2) what are the ramifications of this love through Jesus’ death, especially the *eternal* ramifications of receiving God’s mercy along with life in the Kingdom of God for all believers throughout history, who constitute the *playroma* of God (cf. 1:22,23).

⁶⁵ Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὡπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν – A couple of options – 1) Even though authentic Christians ask of God for perseverance and entry into the eternal Kingdom of God, God can do much more than this if He wanted and if He were to include other humanly impossible things in His plans and purposes, because He is the transcendent Creator. 2) Because the fullness of God, which is basically eternal life for all believers, will be an experience that we cannot fully comprehend now, Paul refers to God’s transcendent greatness and connects it to the amount of power that God is using to operate through His Spirit in those whom He has chosen to be authentic believers. This amount is transcendent, causes perseverance of belief during the greatest suffering for Christians, and will result in eternal life for them.

Option #2 seems more coherent. This is a doxology, a praise of God that Paul is expressing, and his praise of Him is to the effect that God is truly beyond human comprehension but faithful to teach human beings now about His eternal plans and purposes to the effect that He will grant them eternal life. The key words are τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ — that God is able. For Paul, God’s “ableness” is His transcendence, much beyond any human being’s own “ableness” within the creation to understand and acquire eternal life on his own.

Therefore, what we sinful human beings can understand of God and His Messiah should absolutely stun us and remind us of what we not only do not know of God but also of what God will eventually bring about in our lives. We know that God has loved us and the Messiah has loved us through his death, resurrection, and ascension so as to qualify to gain eternal mercy for us—when all we deserved was God’s condemnation and destruction (cf. Romans 5:6-10).

⁶⁶ αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ὡκαὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰῶνων, ἀμήν – Because God is so great, especially towards those whom He has inwardly caused to become His rescued possessions as human beings, “the gathering” of believers throughout all history, with the Messiah Jesus as the king and priest, Paul would grant to God all the honor, respect, admiration, and applause that He deserves for all eternity.

Implicit here is Paul’s encouragement for his readers to join him in this doxology and praising of God. God’s whole project is to gather eventually all the eternal people of God and Jesus into the Kingdom of God and love them with an incomprehensible love forever.

⁶⁷ Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε – After explaining that God has eternal and permanent plans for people who embrace Jesus as the Messiah, and that God has graciously

chosen Paul to play the role of an authoritative spokesman for Jesus to the Gentiles, he continues the thought which he began in 3:1. This section of the letter is meant not only to encourage the Ephesian Christians to live in a manner that corresponds to their authentic belief in the Jewish Messiah, but also of spelling out for them what this looks like on a practical level. And it is the longest section of the letter, indicating that it is probably his main point to them. Thus, because Paul is an apostle and God is so deserving of the highest honor and respect, Paul exhorts his Christian readers to make choices in their lives that truly match the truth and significance of the apostolic message of eternal life, God's greatness, and their understanding of God's greatness. Paul mentions a second time that he is a prisoner. This time, he is explicit that he is chained so to speak to Rome and in Rome under house arrest, because he has gotten in trouble in Jerusalem for being a faithful apostle and spokesman for Jesus (cf. Acts 21ff.). Thus, he is chained not only to his calling and responsibility as the sole apostle to the Gentiles, but also to any consequent suffering which he endures at the hands of rebellious human beings. Theologically and morally, Paul has no choice but to act in his life as an apostle and authoritative spokesman on behalf of Jesus as the Messiah, regardless of the negative effects that this brings into his existence in the present realm.

The Ephesians' calling by God is mainly His appointment of them before He began the creation to become members of His eternal chosen people and secondarily His inviting them to become such when Paul first presented the gospel to them. The inference is that God's calling also results in living life in a very specific, moral way that is radically different from the world of unbelievers.

⁶⁸ μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραΰτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ – Paul now lists several identifying characteristics of a Christian's life that is commensurate with God's having appointed a person to have a changed heart and to become an authentic believer for the purpose of "bearing with" and being patient with one another as Christians.

The first characteristic is humility, being willing to acknowledge that one is a created "clay pot" who deserves eternal condemnation, such that the Potter, God, has the right to orchestrate one's life as He sees fit according to His eternal plans and purposes, using each person as a tool whereby He manifests His grace, mercy, and power in other people's lives—just as He did with Jesus. Thus, Christians are called to give precedence to other Christians as part of their loving behavior towards them. Cf. [1 Peter 5:6](#) Therefore humble yourselves (ταπεινώθητε) under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, [7](#) casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

[Colossians 3:12](#) So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, [13](#) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

The second characteristic is gentleness, handling other Christians with kid gloves, even when they are handling you with boxing gloves and treating you roughly and violently. But, because a person has grasped the significance of God's bringing this story of the creation into existence on a moment by moment basis according to His eternal plans, he does not have to get totally rattled and reactionary when other Christians mistreat him. He can take a deep breath and gently respond in the midst of watching and waiting to see what God will continue to create in the situation.

The third characteristic is bearing with one another with patience, being willing to watch and wait for what God is doing according to His eternal plans, instead of having to jump in immediately and control a situation or a person according to one's own desires, which usually is to express anger in pain and rid oneself of the pain as quickly as possible.

The fourth characteristic is love, which Paul goes on to describe in more detail in the next verse.

⁶⁹ σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης – For Paul, love towards other believers involves putting up a protective wall around the apostolic message that instructs all of them in what God is doing.

First, this message involves the Spirit of God, i.e., His operating within the creation which gives them a common divine factor in their lives. This is their unity or oneness. No one becomes an authentic believer without God's causing him to do so through the inward work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all believers share in God's divine work within them.

Second, this message indicates that they are looking forward to the same eternal destiny, shalom, i.e., an existence in the Kingdom of God that will be completely devoid of sin, evil, heartache, and disappointment. And the inference is that a person's knowledge of this kingdom comes from only the Bible and the message that Jesus conveyed to his apostles. Thus, Paul wants the Ephesian Christians (and all other Christians by extrapolation) to work hard at preserving and respecting their unity and oneness that ultimately comes from God's creative work of operating within them through His Spirit and that has its basis in the same destiny that each of them shares and that is taught in the Bible, the wonderful environment and experience of the eternal Kingdom of God.

Third, Christians work hard at preserving the Spirit-created unity while looking forward to eternal shalom "with love," i.e., by choosing to do what is helpful to the belief and obedience of their fellow Christians, encouraging them with the truth to obey God's moral commandments and to persevere in their belief.

Consequently, Christians' common and mutual eternal destiny of an existence of *shalom*, which has been brought about by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, becomes the very intellectual means and motivation to remain united in their ultimate goal and purpose, so that they love one another in spite of things which make it difficult to do so. In other words, Christians do not create their unity (as pastors are often tempted to say by urging people to follow the doctrines and programs of their particular church). Instead, Christians recognize that God has already created their unity and

oneness through His Spirit and the goal of the gospel, eternal life, to which they respond by loving one another and not allowing human differences to keep them from being unified inwardly as they await their eternal destiny of the Kingdom of God.

Colossians 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

⁷⁰ ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα, καθὼς ὁ καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν – Paul now lists several things of which there is only one of each, and he does so to emphasize how important it is for the Ephesian/Asian readers to labor to preserve their unity in spite of all sorts of things in their lives which could potentially break up their unity, especially their own sin.

First, there is one “body,” i.e., one group of believers, the community of those who have genuinely chosen to associate with Jesus as the Messiah and to wait for his advocacy in order to gain God’s eternal mercy. They are the fullness of him as the Messiah (cf. Ephesians 1:23). The implication as Paul will go on to explain is that these Ephesian Christians are like a human body, where each member of the body, an arm or leg or hand, for example, is important to the unified operation of the body.

Ephesians 1:22 And He placed everyone in submission under his feet, and He gave him as head above everyone to the gathering, **1:23** which is his body, the fullness of him who himself provides the fullness of everyone in the all.

Paul mentioned the Holy Spirit in the previous sentence as the inward unifying factor in these Christians’ lives. And now that he has likened their Christian group to a body, he likens their inner plans and purposes to the human spirit. Just as each human being’s body operates in conjunction with his “spirit,” i.e., his inward intents and purposes that exist within him and which constitute who this person really is (as designed by the mind of God), Paul wants the Ephesian believers to imagine themselves as connected to one another like the members of a human being with the same set of intents and purposes that align with that which God has caused them to hope and expect with confidence at some point in the future—their being granted His mercy and existential entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God. As a result, this provides them with a basis for their unity which they should labor to preserve.

Thus, their unity is also based upon confidently expecting the exact same result from their existential lives—eternal life and mercy.

⁷¹ εἰς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα – Paul now identifies three more elements of which there is only one and which help provide the basis for these Ephesian Christians to guard their unity. While the word “Lord” could refer to God because of its being the Greek substitute for Yahweh in the LXX, the word’s proximity to belief and baptism, along with Paul’s mentioning “one God...” in the next verse, would lead towards understanding him to mean Jesus by “Lord.” Therefore, Jesus, belief in Jesus, and water baptism by the Ephesian Christians as a public profession of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah (as was common in the 1st century Roman Empire among Christians), are all important unifying factors in their lives. Jesus is their primary leader and king within the creation. There is only one kind of belief in Jesus, that which is internally created by the Holy Spirit. The water baptism which each of them experienced is in light of one vital idea, that each one of them confesses that he is evil to the extent that God’s sovereign choice to be merciful towards him is necessary for gaining His mercy—as exemplified by Jesus’ death on the cross. Thus, the immerse themselves in water as a way to indicate outwardly that would be immersed in eternal death if it were not for Jesus’ death and resurrection whereby he qualified to be their advocate and high priest before the Father.

Thus, God’s operating in the creation that is causing them to look forward to a shared experience in eternity of a fully wholesome existence results in their having a single master among them as slaves, this master being Jesus the Messiah. Secondly, they also have one set of ideas that they believe and hold to be true, that constitutes their understanding of the nature of reality, and that is centralized in the Messiah. This set of ideas are all those expressed in the OT (and in the NT, too).

Thirdly, the water baptism has one meaning only, that they are repudiating their sinfulness which would result in their being immersed in eternal death and are acknowledging God’s granting them a coming up out of the water of death and gaining a cleansing of sorts which is the confident expectation of life in the Kingdom of God through Jesus’ advocacy at the final judgment.

All three of these they should look at as unifying factors in their lives as authentic Christians.

⁷² εἰς θεὸς ὁ καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πάσιν – In contrast to the many gods whom the Ephesian Gentiles worshiped and whom these Gentile Christians had worshiped, Paul lists the fact that their now acknowledging only the one, true God is obviously a hugely important unifying ingredient in their lives.

This is the same God whom they call Father, because He is the source of existence for everything else that exists that is not Him, that is not God in His transcendence.

This same unique God rules over the entire creation (“over all”), operates in the entire creation (“throughout out), and can be said even to reside in every element within the creation, because nothing apart from God can exist without His causing it to, so that He is literally “in” it (“in all”). God must inhabit whatever He makes in order for it to exist. Thus, these believers in Jesus as the Messiah possess these ideas as facts of reality, which should naturally motivate them to bind together as fellow travelers towards the eternal Kingdom of God.

The “inness” of God in everything is the flip side of the coin of our living, moving and existing in God as Paul says to the Greek philosophical community in **Acts 17:28** “for in Him we live and move and exist [have our being], as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’” Thus, both God is “in” us and we are “in Him.”

There is an intimate divine connection between God and us (and between God and everything and everyone else in the

created reality—even though we feel completely separate from Him).

⁷³ ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ – In chapter 4, Paul encourages the Ephesian believers to guard their unity as fellow travelers in the world towards their God-ordained destiny of eternal life. Here Paul speaks of the quantity of grace which God has given to “us” Christians, i.e., Paul and his Ephesian readers in the first century A.D. of the Roman Empire (“to each one of us” (ἐνὶ δὲ ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν)) and all other Christians by extrapolation as a means to keep us united with one another. This is the grace of salvation which ultimately results in God’s eternal mercy. Paul describes the quantity of God’s grace as “in accordance with the Messiah’s gift.” In the next verses he goes on to indicate exactly what Jesus’ gift is and to whom he makes this gift.

⁷⁴ διὸ λέγει ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις – Here Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, but he changes the wording slightly to suit his purposes of talking about the Messiah. David is the author of the psalm about Yahweh’s rising above His enemies on His chariots and taking with Him His captives, the Israelites as His people, for whom He cares and saves from their enemies. However, the Hebrew and LXX are different from Paul’s wording. [Psalm 68:18](#) reads, “You have ascended to the height, You have led captive Your captives. You have received gifts among men, even among the rebellious also, that Yah God may dwell there.” The Hebrew is **יָרַדְתָּ אֶל-הַיַּמִּים לְקַחְתָּ אֶת-הַשְּׂבִיָּוִת לְמַלְאֲכֶיךָ** (you have received) **אֶת-הַשְּׂבִיָּוִת לְמַלְאֲכֶיךָ**, while the LXX’s wording is ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος, ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔλαβες (you received) δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνώσαι. κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός, both of which say literally, “You received gifts in/among a man/mankind,” meaning that God received gifts in the form/in the manner of or among mankind, i.e., either human beings whom He Himself led as captives “up” as His permanent possessions or gifts from men who worship Him. In other words, the gifts are either human beings or what they bring to worship God.

In contrast, Paul uses ἔδωκεν (he gave) δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, which says, “he gave gifts with respect to (or, “in regard to”) men,” meaning that someone gave gifts to someone in the form or manner of (or from?) men. Again the gifts are either human beings or from them, but Paul is taking David’s point in Psalm 68 regarding God as the recipient of the gifts and making Him also the giver of the gifts. This is because God as the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who is the very icon of God and Son of God as God’s proxy within the creation (cf. Colossians 1:15), performs his responsibilities in such a way that he makes a gift of redeemed sinners to the Father, Yahweh.

An important question is, what does **יָרַדְתָּ אֶל-הַיַּמִּים** and εἰς ὕψος (to the height) mean? To heaven and the presence of the transcendent God so to speak? To Mt. Zion as the “highest” mountain (symbolically) among all the mountains of the Israel (and the earth by extrapolation)? In either case, Jesus leads his “captives” as a gift to the Father, Yahweh, and this through his death and resurrection (as the next verse indicates). And it is Jesus’ extreme actions of crucifixion and resurrection by the Father which are an indication of the measure of God’s grace which has “been given to each one of us” Christians, starting with Paul and the Ephesians in this letter. Just as Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice to qualify to rise up to his position of being at the right hand of the Father and ruling over the Kingdom of God comprised of God’s “captives,” which was a huge endeavor on his part, so also God has made each individual Christian a bona fide believer with His Spirit and power, also a huge endeavor on His part.

Jack Crabtree’s interpretation – Psalm 68:18 is talking about David, the current Messiah and Son of God, who descends from Jerusalem onto the plains of Israel to capture his enemies by winning the battle against them, and then he leads them to Jerusalem to become servants of the Levites who will perform menial jobs around the temple.

Jack’s outline of Psalm 68 – 1-3, God’s power to destroy his enemies [while the righteous exult over Him]; 4-6, [Singing about] God’s focus on the needy and His blessing them; 7-14, The God who leads Israel into battle is the God of Sinai [who confirms the land of Israel, His “inheritance” (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ – fem.), as His own and scatters the enemy’s dead soldiers like “snow on Mt. Zalmon,” east of Mt. Bashan (the Golan Heights which would include Mt. Hermon, the highest mountain there)]; 15-18, Irony of the smallness of Mt. Zion [God’s mountain] vs. height of Mt. Hermon [part of Mt. Bashan, the Golan Heights, which the pagan Gentiles considered the home of their gods because of the great height of these mountains in comparison to Mt. Zion], and David fought battles for Israel [and after conquering the Canaanites, God returned “to the height” of His dwelling as the transcendent God (or to Jerusalem?), having received tribute from the enemy nations]; 19-23, God is capable of destroying Israel’s enemies [bringing them from the height of their gods’ home, Mt. Bashan, so that the people of Israel bathe their feet in their blood and their dogs have even a portion of their enemies]; 24-31, the Messianic king and God proceed to Zion [with singers and musicians and the nations’ kings bringing gifts to His temple while they also seek peace with Him]; 32-35, the kings of the earth should praise Yahweh, [who gives strength and power to His people].

cf. Genesis 25:6 – ...**מְתָנִים אַבְרָהָם יָתַן**... (ἔδωκεν Ἀβραάμ δόματα), ...Abraham gave gifts...

cf. 2 Chronicles 21:3 – **וַיִּתֵּן אֲבוֹתָם לָהֶם מְתָנִים רַבּוֹת**... (καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ πατήρ αὐτῶν δόματα πολλά), and their father gave them many gifts...

⁷⁵ τὸ δὲ ἀνέβη τί ἐστίν, εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη ἑῖς τὰ κατώτερα ὁ [μέρη] τῆς γῆς – In Psalm 68, David is writing of Yahweh, the transcendent Creator. Here, Paul is saying in conjunction with this Psalm that the fact that God “has ascended” means that He has “descended to earth,” because Paul wants to speak of the Messiah’s gift to God in the midst of his ascending after his death and resurrection. This is to say that God has descended to earth as Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, who as a result of his death on the cross then ascended from the “lower regions of the earth” =

simply the earth as the fundamental place of operation by God within the created reality because it involves human beings towards whom He has chosen either to execute justice or to grant mercy. As a result, by his successful performance of his responsibilities and in line with how Paul changes Psalm 68:18 in 4:8 to suit his purposes, Jesus gives redeemed sinners to God, ready to receive His eternal mercy.

⁷⁶ ὁ καταβάς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβάς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα – Now Paul makes it clear that he is switching from the protagonist in Psalm 68 of Yahweh to Yahweh’s proxy, the Messiah. God has descended to the earth as Jesus the Messiah, who then as a result of his fulfilling his responsibility of offering himself to God and qualifying to be human beings’ priest and advocate, he has ascended from his death and resurrection on earth in order to fill out God’s project of bringing “the all” to God. The “all” are the “fullness,” the *playroma*, of the Messiah as mentioned in Ephesians 1:23, all those sinful human beings of genuine belief who will receive God’s eternal mercy and life through Jesus’ advocacy. This will include leading the “captives” of the quote from Psalm 68:18, i.e., sinful human beings who gain God’s eternal mercy and life through him, to God.

Paul also says that Jesus “ascends far above all the heavens,” meaning above in status anything or anyone else who may become a permanent living being within the eternal Kingdom of God. There is no one greater than Jesus in all created reality. Indeed, he is the very focal point of what God has made and what God is doing in all cosmic history. Thus, Jesus’ role is also what unifies Christians as they remember the necessity and importance of his role.

⁷⁷ Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους – Here is another thing which God has done to ensure the unity of Christians with one another. Paul switches from the Messiah’s gift to God of human beings to God’s gift of certain human beings with “equipping” (καταρτισμός) capability, so that their responsibility is to teach the apostolic message to the community of believers, in order that everyone gain as accurate and complete a knowledge and understanding as possible of God and what He is up to with respect to the Messiah, thus enabling everyone to advance God’s project of adding more parts, more Christians, to the Messiah’s “body” with him as the “head.”

The apostles were the only authoritative spokesman for the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and personally appointed such by him.

The prophets were mostly (cf. 1 Corinthians 11) the very close associates of the apostles, such as Timothy, whom the apostles trusted with declaring the same ideas with which they were entrusted so that they spoke for God in regard to Jesus as the Messiah.

The evangelists were those who simply stated the good news of the NT message as a means to encourage non-believers to believe it. They may have been like Paul who traveled quite a bit in order to encounter a fresh group of people who had not yet heard the NT message. Only Philip in Acts 21:8 and Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 are labeled as evangelists. Philip lived in Caesarea Maritima, while Timothy was a close traveling companion and apostolic co-worker of Paul.

The shepherds and teachers (probably both referring to one group) were local men (elders?) who continued to repeat to their Christian community what they had heard from an apostle, and probably were even appointed by an apostle (or a very close associate) to do such (cf. Acts 14:23). Thus, they are probably the same as “elders” as mentioned and described by Paul in Philippians and then 1 Timothy and Titus respectively.

But all these people and the definition of their roles as described by Paul here, because they were in contact with living apostles during the 1st century Roman Empire, are confined to only those of whom Paul is specifically thinking. After the death of the apostles, these roles collapse into one, that of anyone who takes the time to study and then help others with understanding the apostolic documents, but not as an apostle, prophet, pastor, or teacher himself or herself, but simply as a fellow student of these documents. Basically it makes sense that, after the death of the apostles and loss of personal and direct contact with them, there is no such thing as an apostle, prophet, pastor, or teacher in the sense that Paul means here. Nevertheless, every Christian’s goal is to learn about the Messiah and his message which came through the apostles and to use whatever available means and people to do so.

⁷⁸ πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – This is the only use of καταρτισμός in the NT. It is similar to κατάρτισις in 2 Corinthians 13:9, which I have translated “meaning that we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This indeed we pray for, i.e., your maturation (κατάρτισιν).” Thus, these words refer to helping someone reach the point where they can go no further in their goal of achieving something. In this case, the goal is to understand the good news message of Jesus as the Messiah as much as a human being can in the present realm and to add to the number of authentic believers until all those chosen by God have become believers. This constitutes “the upbuilding of the body of the Messiah,” building people’s knowledge and understanding so that they completely grasp who Jesus is and what it means for him to be the Messiah, which probably no one does. But Paul I would assume got the closest of any sinful human being in history, and we know that his responsibility was to increase the number of Christians by proclaiming the gospel whenever he had the opportunity.

Therefore, the idea is for each Christian to serve all other Christians so as to get all of them to the end of their lives with authentic belief and the best understanding of the gospel possible in order to obtain God’s eternal mercy and life and to add to the number of believers through each Christian’s taking advantage of God given opportunities to share the gospel with unbelievers who are truly interested in joining the “body” of the Messiah.

Thus, Paul indicates that the roles within the Christian gathering that people acquire through God’s grace are intended to lead people towards not only intellectually understanding God and the Messiah, but also serving and caring for both current believers and prospective believers, i.e., people who are showing a genuine interest in obtaining God’s

eternal mercy and life through Jesus the Messiah.

In this way Paul is talking about the building up of the community of Christians not only intellectually but also numerically, which both themselves are what God is doing to maintain the unity of Christians.

⁷⁹ μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul would have the Ephesian Christians and all others who will be added to Jesus’ body in the rest of history grow in their understanding of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah to the extent that is possible on this earth where they would remain steadfast in their grasp of reality that the Bible presents as they continue on their journey to their final goal of eternal life and mercy. Basically, Paul wants everyone’s understanding within the believing community to match that of the apostles and the apostolic message that was taught to these authoritative spokesmen by Jesus himself that equips the believers to convey this message to interested unbelievers. While this is theoretically possible and the earthly goal that each believer should have, obviously it has never occurred in Christian history, because, by definition, only the apostles had a completely accurate knowledge of biblical theology as part of their responsibility as the authoritative spokesmen for the Messiah. Therefore, this unity and parity of understanding will not actually take place until we all have the opportunity to think clearly and completely when we are transformed into immortal and morally perfect beings in the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:9-12). This also implies that Christians will vary in their understanding of the apostolic message and hence the Bible so that we should tolerate diverse beliefs with love and patience while helping one another to grow in our knowledge and grasp of the entire biblical message. But how difficult this is in practice, because it takes a great amount of time and patience to work through biblical passages when we disagree with one another.

For example, consider how difficult it was for the various groups of the Reformation to get along with one another—the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Zwinglians, the Anabaptists, not to mention the Roman Catholics. And most people just want to remain in their comfort zones of the doctrines they have already come to believe and not be disturbed by considering other ideas and exploring them for the mutual benefit of all Christians and with the possibility that they are incorrect in their understanding. Our pride and arrogance so easily gets in the way of thinking through and talking through biblical passages and others’ different interpretations.

Plus, most people are too unwilling to allow others to be in process when in fact we should all see ourselves as being in process, regardless of how much Bible study we have done and how convinced we have become that we are right. This is especially the case for those of us who now do not have any living apostles with whom to consult. Thankfully, we have their documents, but these require more thought and effort than if we were able to converse in person with an apostle as the 1st century Christians were able to do.

The entire community’s becoming “the man who has completed his goal” is the group of believers (“the Messiah’s body” of 4:12) throughout history having arrived at the judgment and obtaining God’s eternal mercy through Jesus, so that the total number which God chose in eternity past will enter into the eternal Kingdom of God—because this truly is our goal as Christians. This group who enter into eternal life constitute also “the Messiah’s fullness” and the “measure of the extent” of such for the gathering of people who profess Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. They will not only be filled out in their intellectual grasp of the truth that God has conveyed through the Bible and through the apostles and other teachers of their era, but they will also fully become the Messiah’s gift to Yahweh (cf. 4:7), the *playroma* of history who also belong to the Messiah—starting with at least Abel and proceeding all the way to the end of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

⁸⁰ ἵνα μηκέτι ὄμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης – Either people learn all there is to know about God’s Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, which provides them with the most important knowledge in all the creation so that with perseverance of belief they obtain eternal life, or they learn all the lies and falsehoods which are set forth by people who are hostile to Jesus and God’s truth so that with perseverance of unbelief they obtain God’s condemnation and destruction.

As a result, the opposite of people who maturely understand the apostolic message are people who childishly believe ideas that are promulgated and promoted by sinful human beings, who all trick one another into following lies in rebellion against God, so that they make truth sound like error and error sound like truth. They are crafty and deceitful, but sometimes it is difficult to discern their lies as they make them sound so believable and true.

Thus, believers in the Messiah must assume that every other human being will, at some level, scheme to sell him lies about God, the Bible, and Jesus. This is just the natural effect of the immoral condition of humanity, apart from Jesus and his apostles. However, the effect of an apostolic understanding of the biblical message would be that people could remain immune to the intellectual whims of other sinful and rebellious human beings, who love telling lies that they know are lies in order to further their own selfish agendas (cf. Romans 1). Thus, Paul presents avoiding the deceitful, intellectual and moral schemes of unbelievers as the goal of each individual within the Christian community.

A logical inference of what Paul is saying here is that so-called Christians who establish institutions that they call denominations and churches only institutionalize the promotion of the lies that have gone into their supposed need to form an institution instead of merely continuing to point to the apostolic documents of the NT and the prophetic documents of the OT, while allowing each person to deal with them as he wishes as part of his task of preparing himself for the final judgment. It is not that institutions are evil, but thinking that they are necessary and putting the effort into perpetuating them can be.

⁸¹ ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὅς ἐστιν ὡς κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός – Paul wants Christians to learn the truth about the Messiah so that they can live it out with biblical love towards one another—making choices which help bring about what is best intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually for them. This will mean that everyone in a Christian gathering will increase in knowledge of God together and understand just that much better the very “head” of their “body,” Jesus the Messiah. Thus, it is the combination of the authentic truth of the apostolic message, and the authentic living of the truth with actual biblical love that together comprise the necessary ingredients for helping an interested unbeliever, a current “child” in the world, to grow in the knowledge of the person of Jesus.

⁸² ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας ‘κατ’ ἐνέργειαν’ ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμέρους τὴν αὐξῆσιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ – It is the Messiah, Paul says, who is the focal point of understanding by his followers, so that the roles that God has given to people within the gathering, as “measured” by God and as they serve one another, will benefit each individual within the group with respect to his knowledge of God and the Messiah, thus making it just that much more likely that each person’s choices will be characterized by biblical love towards others.

In this way, the believers will also produce the growth in numbers of the community of believers, the “body” of the Messiah, which is also the “upbuilding” of the Messiah within the context of God’s love, which constitutes His project throughout the history of mankind.

⁸³ Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν – Paul is getting around to the main point of Ephesians, i.e., how should we live in light of being authentic believers in Jesus the Messiah, having described first what God’s purpose is in the created reality, to choose a people who will one day be members of His eternal people in the Kingdom of God. Here we have an exhortation to be righteous, to be good and right in our behavior towards others by not being and living like unbelievers.

Thus, Paul explicitly lays out an explanation of unbelief and urges his readers to shun such thinking and behavior, implying that we Christians are just as capable in our desires of pursuing evil and just as condemnable before God because of our personal sinfulness. We are no better than the Gentiles in the face of God’s judgment and justice. We, too, deserve His condemnation, punishment, and eternal destruction. It is only God and His inward work in our hearts who has caused us to repent of our ongoing immoral condition and has moved us toward obeying His moral commandments.

The Gentiles mentioned in this verse are obviously unbelieving Gentiles, in contrast to the believing Gentiles to whom Paul is writing. Paul also goes on to reemphasize in this section that he is urging his readers to abandon their former manner of living in accordance with pagan idolatry—lives of unrestrained immorality in every area. This lifestyle, in the final analysis, is theologically and eternally empty, futile, and worthless. It is like holding an empty glass of water in the desert. Its contents, or lack thereof, will do someone no good whatsoever in quenching any thirst and preventing death. Instead, it will simply contribute to the person’s demise eventually. An empty glass, like a mind empty of biblical ideas with true belief, is simply empty futility. The Gentiles’ minds lead them away from the truth, away from God, and away from obeying Him according to His moral commandments.

And Paul is providing these exhortations as one himself who is “in the Lord,” i.e., belonging to Jesus as a disciple and follower just as much as the Ephesian Christians are also.

⁸⁴ ἔσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν – The people with minds that are empty futility remain such, Paul says, because their hearts and inwardness are oriented towards rebelling against God in such a stubborn fashion that they are unwilling to change. Thus, they are intellectually dark people. As they seek to understand reality, they remain ignorant of who God is by willfully rejecting even the ideas that are obvious to all human beings (cf. Romans 1). In other words, there “ignorance” is their rejecting or ignoring ideas about God and the gospel to which they have been exposed and they are unwilling to learn about God such that they would worship Him for who He is and obey Him for what He says.

And they exist intellectually and morally separate from God’s promise of eternal life by being unwilling to obey His commandments. Life in the eternal realm is what God has intended as the ultimate goal for sinful human beings (cf. John 1:1-5), but people who stubbornly refuse to embrace biblical truth or even the truth they inherently derive from the creation (cf. Romans 1) will never attain this life.

There exists excusable ignorance and inexcusable ignorance. If I claim to be ignorant of quantum mechanics, my ignorance is excusable, because I have never studied the subject. If I claim to be ignorant of God, my ignorance is inexcusable, because the very existence of God as a righteous judge is self-evident from the creation (cf. Romans 1). Thus, we notice that Paul does not attribute the Gentiles’ condemned status before God to ignorance and lack of knowledge per se, but to lack of a willingness to submit to God, i.e., because of their stubbornness of their hearts. They are obstinately unwilling to change their view of God and themselves and submit to Him and His truth in the Bible.

1 Peter 1:14 As children of obedience, do not conform yourselves to the former strong desires which were dominant in the midst of your ignorance. **1:15** Instead, according to the Holy One who called you, indeed, be holy yourselves in all your behavior (ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ), **1:16** because it has been written, Be holy, for I am holy <Leviticus 19:2>.

⁸⁵ οἵτινες ἀπηλλαγμένοι ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελγείᾳ εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ‘ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ’ – Paul goes on to say that these same Gentile rebels, in their hard-heartedness, have lost all sense of guilt before God and

desire for biblical truth and have thrown themselves at immoral behavior with reckless abandon. They are literally greedy and have an insatiable desire for immorality so as to find every means to engage in it. But it also seems from the uses of *πλεονεξία* in the Septuagint and NT that this word can refer to having an insatiable desire for that which is morally neutral, such as material wealth. This kind of wealth is not evil, but being obsessed with it and pursuing it at all costs, even the cost of my eternal existence, is evil. It demonstrates a heart that is committed more to that which God has created than to the creator Himself. See the same at Ephesians 5:3.

They cannot wait for the next opportunity to gratify their immoral desires, and yet they are never satisfied after all the passions that they seem to fulfill, which sends them further on their way to rebelling against God according to their passions. Their passions are insatiable, meaning that they are never satisfied so that they conclude that they are finished pursuing sin.

Moral purity is acting in a way that is consistent with how God has properly designed human beings in all facets of their lives. It is acting in an appropriate way that is intended by God according to our design as rational and moral beings.

⁸⁶ ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν – This statement is simply Paul’s way of saying that his Ephesian Christian readers are now far, far different from their culture which is characterized by so much unbelief and immorality. They have ingested the ideas of the Jewish Messiah, and he knows this because he watched at least the Ephesians embrace the information of Jesus as the Messiah when he first introduced them to these ideas personally in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19). And he has also learned from others of the persevering belief of Christians in outlying cities surrounding Ephesus in western Turkey.

⁸⁷ εἴ γε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε, καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ – Paul identifies Jesus as the locale of truth. It is in Jesus, meaning that a proper understanding of the nature of reality that obviously includes God has the Messiah of God as its focal point. If one understands as much as is humanly possible about the Jewish Messiah, then one has “the truth,” which is of primary importance for escaping God’s condemnation, acquiring eternal life, and living a life of love and goodness towards others.

Thus, the Ephesians “have heard” about Jesus and “were taught” about him when Paul visited their city and stayed for two years.

⁸⁸ ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ ᾧ ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης – One question here is whether τὸν φθειρόμενον is referring to 1) inner corruption of a sinful human being or 2) eternal destruction as a result of God’s final judgment and condemnation? I think that the prepositional phrase κατὰ ᾧ ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης indicates that #1 is correct, that the “old man,” probably the “flesh” in Romans 6-8, is still in the process of being corrupted or made to rebel against God “in accordance with strong desires of deceit,” whereby the person is being led to think that lies are appropriate to believe and immoral behavior is appropriate to pursue and perform in conformity with the most of the world who are in hostile to God.

The metaphor of the “old man” as a piece of clothing that a person can choose to take off refers to our inner moral and spiritual commitment just as our clothes identify to a degree what kind of person we are. In other words, what kind of person am I resolved to be? Do I choose to “wear” the “old man” who is constantly being corrupted and resolved to rebel against God so that I gratify my insatiable, immoral desires with reckless abandon? Or do I “wear” the new man who is resolved to act in a manner that corresponds to God’s eternal destiny for me, i.e., a morally perfect person. So Paul’s exhortation is to strive to emulate this morally perfect person which a sinful Christian will eventually be.

Paul is not talking a new nature per se. It is not a matter of power, but of inward resolve and commitment to the new desire along with the wisdom and clarity regarding reality which we have acquired because God has changed our hearts and opened our minds to the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus which is for sinful human beings in this cosmos.

The result of not only being instructed about Jesus as the Messiah, but also believing this instruction to be the very basis of a proper worldview and understanding of the nature of reality and good behavior, is that a person chooses to leave behind his abject and unqualified rebellion against God. He resolves to think and live differently from the culture around him which is unwilling to submit to God and Jesus.

And He recognizes that apart from God’s grace he would continue to be unrestrained in his giving in to the immoral desires that exist in every sinful human being and that will lead to eternal condemnation and destruction. Rather than being deceived into thinking that it is a great thing (the best thing) to fulfill his insatiable, immoral desires, he resolves not to give in to them because they would only result in God’s wrath and eternal punishment if unchecked by His grace. Thus, the fight of the Christian is to do all he can to resist the pull of these persistent sinful desires and, instead, to choose to do what is good and right before God. In this way, he leaves behind what he used to be, a person committed to choosing his own definition of morality apart from God, and seeks to choose to be a person who is now committed to live in line with God’s definition of morality as the Spirit of God causes this within him.

In addition, Paul is promoting personal righteousness above social (societal) justice. He is promoting personal moral behavior, which includes sexual moral behavior above fighting against slavery, oppression, and even exploitation of others. It is a sinner’s coming to grips with himself that is most important, because this is the direct result of a changed heart and belief, i.e., repentance toward God and obedience to His moral commandments which address the individual. Also, of the more dramatic forms of sin, sexual sin is at the top. Lying is not as dramatic as sexual sin, where the natural response should be, “You did what?” Sexual sin crosses a line where it should be shocking for a civilized person to hear about. Probably because sexual desires are so strong and attractive to us as human beings when it comes

to fulfilling them, they also are easy to fall into. In addition, the consequences of sexual sin do not appear to be as grave as that of other sins such as murder, stealing, and any kind of violence. Sexual sin is potentially very disruptive in a society as it can destroy marriages and families, while it is certainly true that murder and stealing can be incredibly socially disruptive too.

⁸⁹ ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν – Paul is encouraging the Ephesians to take on a new and different manner of how they think about reality, especially God, Jesus, and morality. Thus, how we behave, what actions we choose to engage in, is determined by how we think about reality. If I think that I am merely a product of blind, natural forces of evolution and that there is no God, then I have no external or transcendent basis for morality, for what is good vs. evil. As Dostoevsky wrote, If there is no God, then everything is permissible—because there is no good reason ultimately not to do whatever I want to do.

But unlike their surrounding culture, Paul’s readers should think differently about reality and, thus, according to the biblical message of truth.

⁹⁰ καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι ‘τῆς ἀληθείας’ – Paul indicates that a definite and profound change has divinely occurred inside his Christian readers. The way that he puts it is that God has brought into existence something that did not exist before, just as God brought the whole creation into existence in Genesis 1. In this case, God has created a new mindset and fundamental desire in the Ephesian Christians because of His own desire and purpose to grant them a commitment to the truth of the biblical message that cannot be shaken and in the end eternal forgiveness. And their new desire now that they have become Christians is to be and do what is good and right before God, i.e., in the way God desires them to be and act, in the midst of their commitment to the truth of the gospel and the Bible.

Our culture has moved a long way away from how God desires us to be and act. We are consequentialists, choosing our actions based on only what the immediate, earthly outcome of our actions will be, i.e., whether or not what we do will “hurt” ourselves or somebody else—and in accordance with how people choose to define “hurt,” e.g., with simply the words that someone uses or the ideas which someone proposes are true in line with what is rational backed up by clear evidence. If someone’s actions will not “hurt” others as defined by society, then it is ok to engage in these actions. This is instead of deciding what we “ought” to do in line with what God desires and commands us to do in the Bible as it pertains to our eternal destinies and therefore in accordance with the good news of God’s eternal mercy, forgiveness, and life through Jesus’ own life, death, and resurrection.

⁹¹ Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη – cf.

Zech. 8:16 “These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another [וְדַבְּרִיתֶם אֱמֶת לְרֵעֵיכֶם]

[λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ]; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.”

Zechariah lived from 520-480 B.C. Therefore, in Zechariah 8 both kingdoms of Israel and Judah have been exiled from the land, and God is assuring the Jews that He will eventually fulfill His promise to make them a great nation on the land of Israel. And when He restores them from their exiles and creates the millennial kingdom of the Messiah, He expects them to treat each other in a high moral manner, i.e., without the falsehood and lies about God and themselves that caused the moral breakdown of their society in violation of the Mosaic Covenant.

Thus, the practical result of God’s changing Paul’s readers is that they are morally obligated to avoid any kind of lies or deception in their talking with one another as fellow Christians, i.e., with their “neighbor.” In other words, God and Paul are calling them to a moral standard whereby they tell each other truth. In this context, Paul is referring mainly to the ideas and commanded behavior of the Bible vs. the pagan ideas and accepted, immoral behavior of their culture, even though, by extrapolation, it would be important for them to be honest with each other about other issues in their lives, simply as part of a healthy transparency among one another. For example, they should not falsely accuse each other of improper behavior simply to get ahead in their community as was the case in ancient Israel and probably in the Roman Empire at the time of Paul’s writing this letter.

Paul also provides a specific reason for their speaking the biblical truth to one another. They are attached to each other as members of the body of the Messiah (with Jesus as their head). So, of course, just as Paul exhorted them in 4:11-16, they should keep repeating to each other the apostolic message that they have learned and believed.

Our fear today is that we will appear odd and different to our culture and be both mocked and rejected by people in our society. And we are headed towards being persecuted with hatred and violence, which is probably right around the corner. Therefore, we need to start deciding that we are going to stand against the culture and receive whatever they throw at us while encouraging each other to do so together.

⁹² ὀργίσεσθε καὶ μὴ αμαρτάνετε ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν – Now Paul begins a list of practical ways to obey God in contrast to the Roman and Greek pagan culture around them. The list will continue through 5:4.

Psa. 4:4 Tremble, and do not sin. Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still [עַל-מִשְׁכְּבֹכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלֶה]

[ὀργίσεσθε καὶ μὴ αμαρτάνετε λέγετε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ ταῖς

κοίταις ὑμῶν κατανύγητε]. In Psalm 4:4 David is exhorting his enemies to tremble before God and not sin. Instead, they should meditate about God on their beds and repent of their antipathy towards him, David, who is the Anointed One/Messiah, and therefore towards God and His plans and purposes regarding the Davidic Covenant.

The question is whether or not Paul is quoting Psalm 4:4 in its context to mean the same thing that David is? I do not

think so. Even if Paul is aware that he is quoting exactly the LXX translation of the first part of Psalm 4:4, the context of the two verses, vs. 26 & 27, leads in the direction of understanding Paul to encourage his Christian readers not to allow their anger against evil to cause them to usurp God’s authority and position as the transcendent Creator of the entire story of cosmic history. He is exhorting his Christian readers to fear God appropriately and not sin by behaving in such a way that they make themselves enemies of the Messiah. Keep your anger short in duration so that you do not do something you will regret, such as taking your own vengeance or harboring such intense resentment and bitterness that you are unwilling to forgive anyone who has done wrong against you and hurt you deeply. The underlying thought is that God will deal properly with sin and evil in His own time—even if the time is at the final judgment. Thus, vengeance is God’s, not ours, to complete at the right time.

Romans 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written [in Deuteronomy 32:35], “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.

⁹³ μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ – Satan is a destroyer, and he would love to destroy Christians in their faith and discredit their leader, Jesus the Messiah, by causing people to go beyond what they should do by expressing their anger in a completely inappropriate way. Of all people, Christians should recognize all true evil and then humbly say, “But for the grace of God, there go I” and be willing to entreat God to bless with eternal mercy and salvation those who are clearly currently rebelling against God and even disturbing them in their Christian faith.

Humility and patience in the face of mistreatment is vital to demonstrating authentic faith.

⁹⁴ ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω, μάλλον δὲ κοπιάτω ἐργαζόμενος ‘ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν τὸ ἀγαθόν’. ἵνα ἔχη μεταδιδόναι τῷ χρείαν ἔχοντι – Whether or not there were actually former thieves who were a part of the Ephesian Christian community, it is hard to say, particularly if we think about the harsh justice system of the Roman Empire that probably would have executed them. Paul is, at least, exhorting his readers not to be freeloaders, which was perhaps a major effect of the biblical message with its call for all Christians to be incredibly caring and charitable towards one another, beyond what any of the people had experienced before, thus making it very tempting to take undue advantage of the biblical call to love.

A freeloader is someone who takes from others without giving back anything in return when he is perfectly capable of earning his own living and has the opportunity to do so. Instead, Paul is laying the foundation of a work ethic whereby people put as much effort as possible into avoiding having to be cared for by others, while also actually putting themselves in a position where they can both provide something for others which they need for their own lives and be capable of caring for those who require charity in order to survive. In this way they are doing what is good, i.e., earning their own living instead of relying on others for their subsistence, and producing something which can contribute to others and their lives through a fair commercial transaction. What is good is when people who can work and make their own living actually do so, being productive towards those who can afford to pay for their productivity while they are also being charitable towards the genuinely poor.

This is what the Protestant Reformers were trying to get at that resulted in the Protestant work ethic. The priesthood of all believers involves everyone’s serving God regardless of whether a person is teaching the Bible or making shoes. Certainly, people should be fair in their commercial transactions and not cheat people. Fostering productivity without also fostering compassion is not righteous, just as fostering dependence on others through a welfare state is a false kind of compassion and is not righteous either.

This is an interesting juxtaposition and almost an oxymoron. Christians should do everything they can not to be in need, while also doing everything they can to be able to help those who are in need. And, yet, church organizations fail miserably to demonstrate this truth by ripping tithing out of the context of the Mosaic Covenant and misusing it to justify the existence of their institutions and pastors’ being paid, thus avoiding this truth and exhortation from Paul whereby people’s money should go towards helping the truly needy. If it is good enough for former thieves to work outside the community of believers in order to make themselves capable of providing for others who are need, one would think that it is good enough for modern pastors and other church personnel, but denominations and churches neglect this uncomfortable truth by turning churches into regular business operations.

⁹⁵ πᾶς λόγος σαπρὸς ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν μὴ ἐκπορευέσθω, ἀλλὰ εἴ τις ἀγαθὸς πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἰχρείας, ἵνα δῶ χάριν τοῖς ἀκούουσιν – Paul has made it abundantly clear in the beginning of chapter 4 that continuing to speak the truth of the biblical and apostolic message to one another is of paramount importance for these Christians in the communities of fellow believers, especially as a means to help each other both think and live in a manner that corresponds to the God of the biblical truth. Therefore, just as Paul has already encouraged them to speak the truth of the biblical message to each other, he continues to exhort them to think about whatever they say, so that it emulates this truth and not the error of their worldly culture and rebellious mankind.

A “worthless word” is a lie about reality that comes from the father of lies, Satan, and is leading people away from God in their surrounding culture.

In other words, this verse is not an injunction against cussing and using swear words. Instead, Paul is exhorting his readers to repeat the biblical message to one another which will produce a proper “building up” towards their community’s becoming mature (cf. 4:11-16) and more confident in their understanding the depth and breadth of the meaning of God’s “grace,” even as they demonstrate the grace of kindness and forgiveness to each other in their relationships. This is the greatest “need” during their temporary existences before Jesus returns—to know the truth of God and have it modeled by Paul and their fellow Christians in order to mimic their thoughts and their behavior.

Thus, Paul is concerned about the ideas coming out of people's mouths that originate in their minds, not the actual words. And he is concerned about how people behave towards one another in line with the ideas which people express to each another and that should correspond to the truth of the gospel. Therefore, as Paul will say in v. 32, they should be kind, patient, and forgiving towards their fellow Christians as God has been towards them.

This is in contrast to telling people what they want to hear that may not actually be good, biblical wisdom and truth like the demagogues of their day and our day. Instead, Paul wants his Christian readers to tell people what they need to hear that makes them more established and mature in their understanding of the gospel and for the sake of their obtaining eternal life.

⁹⁶ καὶ ὁμὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρόσεως – Paul says that God has a negative emotional reaction, sadness, to Christians' sin and failing to communicate ideas that are in line with the ideas that He has set down through the biblical authors. Yet, this is the same God who is operating within the creation and that the Bible calls His "Spirit," who has changed the inwardness of authentic believers and who then remains committed to His initial work whereby He will make sure that these sinful, authentic believers will persevere in their belief in order to qualify at the judgment for God's eternal mercy and entrance into the Kingdom of God after death. Thus, the Spirit "seals" sinners "for the day of redemption," the day when Jesus returns, intercedes for authentic believers, and frees people from the terrible situation of being deserving of God's wrath, condemnation, punishment, and destruction.

This verse is telling us that God is a genuinely emotional person. He most certainly does not experience fear, anxiety, and despair as we human beings do. However, our sin as Christians makes Him sad, while fortunately it does not make Him angry. Instead, His anger is reserved for those who continue to commit themselves to ignoring or explicitly rebelling against Him and who do not care about the people of God. Rather than being willing to say and do what is theologically and biblically best for people, which is the same as loving them and speaking to them in such a way that they are improving their understanding of the gospel, the people of the world ignore God, even politely, while also speaking half-truths about reality ("Yes, murder is evil."), thus demonstrating their unwillingness to submit wholeheartedly to Him.

⁹⁷ πᾶσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ' ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ – Here Paul is quite explicit about the kinds of things that will come out of even Christians' mouths and the fact that he knows that they are going to be hurtful towards one another and will need each other's forgiveness in order to remain unified, maintaining "the unity of the Spirit" (4:4), in their continuing to grow in their understanding of the gospel as they all seek to persevere in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

He lists the kinds of behavior in their relationships with one another that they should avoid—resentful mistreatment and words that come from harsh feelings, rage and accompanying words that envelops our whole body, angry shouting (obviously also with words), and putting each other down, especially with false accusations in the midst of an argument that is filled with words too.

This, in turn, will allow them to avoid all kinds of evil to the degree that they humanly can. The inference is that harsh feelings, angry shouting, and putting people down were regular modes of behavior in the 1st century Roman Empire, especially among Gentiles and certainly is common as even a deepfelt desire in all human beings. We can assume, therefore, that where these actions prevail, we are witnessing abject rebellion against God.

We can probably also infer that this paragraph of 4:31-5:2 contains moral actions which are good to demonstrate towards non-believers too.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as those who are the chosen of God, set apart and loved, certainly put on an inwardness of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, **3:13** bearing with one another and forgiving one another, whoever has a complaint against someone. Just as the Lord forgives you, so also should you forgive others. **3:14** Above all these, put on love, which is the bond that makes for reaching the goal (*telos*) (τῆς τελειότητος). **3:15** And let the peace/shalom of the Messiah, to which you were called in one body, dominate in your hearts, and be thankful.

⁹⁸ γίνεσθε [δὲ] εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὐσπλαγχνοὶ, χαρίζομενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν – Paul now exhorts his readers to have God be their model of behavior in contrast to what he said in the previous verse. God has forgiven them and not required that they pay the eternal penalty of destruction that they deserve for their rebellion against Him. Paul says that his readers should not require that those who mistreat them endure the just and eternal penalty of their immoral and evil behavior. Instead, they should treat others with grace, forgiveness, and an understanding of what it means for God to forgive them even though they do not deserve His mercy. In this way they can leave it up to God to deal with the hurtful behavior of others as He sees fit in eternity, hopefully with mercy since Paul is talking about all this within the context of how Christians should behave towards one another.

Thus, it is "in the Messiah," i.e., within the circle of God's believers in Jesus as the Messiah and all that this produces for sinners, which here Paul mentions explicitly is forgiveness of sins from God.

⁹⁹ Γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ – God has "loved" His "children" by making the sovereign choice to forgive them for their sins and grant them eternal life. Paul exhorts and commands his readers to imitate God and make the same kind of choices towards their fellow believers.

This is the bottom line of what Paul has been saying. He exhorts his readers to act like God and choose to love others as God has loved them and adopted them into His family through His changing their inwardness and making them authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. In other words, children typically do act like their parents, because they

learn from them how to behave, whether for good or evil.

Because the Ephesian Christians are now “children of God,” adopted into His family, they should learn from their parent, the Father of all reality and of Christians, how to behave—at least when it comes to the love. They should choose to be kind and forgiving, not being vengeful and demanding justice in regard to their fellow Christians who have mistreated and hurt them. Obviously this latter way of behaving is reserved for the Father, God, in eternity, except for the divinely given responsibility to human governments as Paul explains in Romans 13 and Peter explains in 1 Peter 2:13,14.

¹⁰⁰ καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἑμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας – The greatest example of love within the creation is that of the Messiah himself. He willingly allowed himself to suffer the pain of death on a cross in order to produce the greatest benefit for those who would embrace him as their advocate and intercessor before God at the judgment. The crucifixion was the only way that Jesus could pull off his qualifying for this role. He had to choose to love people this way if he was going to fulfill his role as Messiah and high priest. Therefore, Paul is saying that we should love people by sacrificing ourselves, our desires, and our human goals that may conflict with God’s plans and purposes for us in order to gain eternal life.

Just as Jesus’ purpose for suffering was to qualify as priest for us, our purpose for suffering when we give up our desires and aspirations for the sake of God’s purposes is to qualify for Jesus’ acting in his role as priest for us. Jesus qualified for his role of being our priest and advocate/intercessor by earning it through his obedience to God when he willingly suffered death on the cross. We qualify for our role of being granted mercy and life in the eternal Kingdom of God through Jesus’ priesthood by our demonstrating a vital and clear correspondence between our desire for loving forgiveness from God and God’s commandment to us to be lovingly forgiving towards others who need His grace and mercy just as much as we do. In this way, we do not earn our role of being recipients of mercy in eternity. We simply meet the required condition that reveals the inward work of the Spirit of God within us.

In the OT, a ὁσμὴ εὐωδία = soothing and calming aroma from a burnt offering made to God was what pleased and appeased Him with respect to man’s sin. Cf. **Exodus 29:18** “You shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the Lord: it is a soothing/calming/placating aroma (קָרְבַּן עֹשֶׂה רִיחַ) (εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας), an offering by fire to the Lord.” Consequently, Jesus’ death on the cross, along with his performing the role of priest and advocate that the final judgment pleases and appeases God so that He grants eternal mercy to sinful human beings. Paul is thus speaking metaphorically about Jesus since he was not burned up with fire so that the smoke could be smelled by God. Instead, Jesus’ death soothes and calms God’s anger towards believing sinners so that He is gracious and kind to them.

¹⁰¹ Πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πάντα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις – Paul continues in the same vein to repeat that his readers should avoid evil at all costs (cf. 4:19 and sexual impurity). The three words πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, and πλεονεξία are used quite often by Paul in his list of the immoral actions which God prohibits.

The first word refers to sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married, what is usually labelled fornication. The second is the opposite of something that is clean. In other words it is dirty, but in this case morally dirty and therefore opposite to biblical morality. In the OT, it is used to translate the Hebrew פְּסוּלִים which refers to actions which are contrary to the moral commandments of God. The Gentile nations were particular adept at pursuing unclean acts (cf. Ezra 9:11).

The third word Paul used in Ephesians 4:19 and refers to craving something and going after it with reckless abandon while God is saying no to this action and to one’s using whatever means to acquire it.

Thus, Paul is exhorting his readers to avoid any kind of these categories of immorality within the specific arena of sexual use of our bodies. They should not allow the strongest of their immoral desires which are in conjunction with wanting things and doing things that are contrary to biblical, sexual morality to be a part of their experience.

In other words, people who have been set apart by the Spirit of God, i.e., by being inwardly changed in regard to their hearts and minds should move away from these kinds of disobeying God, not towards them. And indeed the fact that they will, albeit not perfectly, is Paul’s perspective on the continuous work of God inside His people. This makes Paul’s commandments doable, at least to the extent that God’s grace allows in each individual Christian.

Colossian 3:5 Therefore, put to death the “members” on earth—sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and boundaryless evil, which constitutes the worship of idols. **3:6** On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience **3:7** among whom you also formerly acted as a way of life when you were living by means of these things.

¹⁰² καὶ αἰσχρότης ἢ καὶ μορολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία, ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία – Paul now refers to what people say about sexuality and the cravings that accompany it, that they should talk about them only in a biblically appropriate manner. Since the context is all about sexual morality, Paul is saying that references in conversations to human sexuality should always be in a respectful way with a giving of thanks to God for this gift of relating to another human being of the opposite sex within the proper context of marriage.

¹⁰³ τοῦτο γὰρ ἵστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλόλατρες, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ – Here Paul uses the adjectival forms of the three words in 5:3.

Thus, no person who is committed to engaging in sexual immorality, unclean (morally speaking) living before God, or following through on his insatiable cravings for what God does not permit is a *bona fide* follower of the Messiah. Paul calls this kind of person a “worshiper of idols.” This person is taking the things of the creation and making them their source of life and satisfaction. Thus, serving our unbounded desires in the manner that Paul is prohibiting is to worship the creation, the portions of which the ancient peoples made figurines in order to represent them. By doing so and placing their trust in the creation instead of in the creator is to reject God and rebel against Him. And the eternal outcome for such a person who is remains rebelliously committed to sexual immorality, etc. is not the Kingdom of God but condemnation and destruction.

Paul also is implying that a commitment to the message of Jesus as the Messiah is reflected in a commitment to pursuing morality, so that morality per se is a very serious issue.

¹⁰⁴ Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω κενοῖς λόγοις διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας – Who would be trying to convince the Ephesian Christians that immorality is ok? Probably their worldly and non-believing friends who are still committed to pagan idolatry and rebelling against God. For example, people who would say that human beings’ behavior is none of God’s business, and He needs to just bug out. Or who would say that there is no god but the gods of the Greeks who basically inhabit creation, i.e., people who deify the creation instead of acknowledging the Creator. Or even Jews who might try to rationalize their immoral behavior in the light of their being the chosen people and having the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant to keep them in God’s good graces. Or people who just ignore God altogether.

However, Paul is very clear that avoiding God and not submitting to Him with a humble heart is futile. And it is exactly this kind of rebellion that God will judge and condemn with wrath and anger. Therefore, no one will get away with this perspective.

Cf. Revelation 20:11ff. and the second resurrection where unbelievers will be raised from the dead to stand trial before God and be condemned eternally.

Plus, it could be that there are people right within the Christian community who are arguing for ignoring Paul’s teaching on sexual morality, because they are more committed to satisfying their insatiable desires than to biblical morality.

¹⁰⁵ μὴ οὖν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν – The logical conclusion of knowing the fact of the coming judgment is to avoid joining people who are ignoring it and rebelling against God with their immoral behavior, of which there were plenty of examples in the 1st century Roman Empire and throughout all human history everywhere. These are people who are deceiving themselves with empty and futile ideas and words (v. 6).

¹⁰⁶ ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε – Paul reminds his readers of the radical change that has occurred within them. They used to be “darkness,” i.e., pointed intellectually and morally in their spiritual blindness towards the lies of the world and its evil, so that they embraced these lies and rejected the truth about God that He has provided us in the Hebrew scriptures. Now Paul’s Ephesian readers are “light in the Lord,” i.e. pointed towards biblical truth and its goodness in their association with Jesus, which implies that their change was because of what God has done within them, changing their hearts through His Spirit, and because of what He has done outside them, sending the Jewish Messiah to die on their behalf.

Therefore, Paul commands them to live as those who have become “children of light,” which is to say those to whom God with His truth have given birth as like the light, like the truth which God has provided in the scriptures. They have become people who are now pointed towards truth and goodness by pursuing goodness and avoiding the evil lifestyles of their non-believing friends, lifestyles in which they wholeheartedly participated.

¹⁰⁷ ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθῶσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ – Paul simply adds that the effect for people who are oriented towards truth and embracing it is the pursuit of biblical goodness in agreement with God and an increase in the knowledge of God and His truth. The “light” of God within a changed-of-heart human being produces the fruit of moral behavior that is good and in line with God’s biblical commandments, along with a desire and understanding of God’s truth as presented in the Bible.

This is the necessary result of the work of the Spirit of God within people. Indeed, they are exhorted to make decisions which are moral, but even though they will not do this 100% of the time, nevertheless, the Holy Spirit will cause them to bring this kind of fruit out of their new orientation towards truth and God. We just do not know how often this will happen in any specific person’s life.

¹⁰⁸ δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστὶν εὐάρεστον τῷ κυρίῳ – Assuming then that God is working in these Ephesian Christians, Paul also assumes that they will provide clear evidence of such by their good and righteous behavior that will be in line with God’s truth.

Thus, the fundamental change that God has produced in these believers results in their demonstrating what God actually likes and is pleased with—their embracing His truth about their individual sinfulness along with the need for mercy which is accompanied by a pursuit of goodness and morality.

¹⁰⁹ καὶ μὴ συγκαινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάριοις τοῦ σκότους, μάλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγγετε – Again, Paul urges his Christian readers to avoid any actions of unbelievers which are contrary to biblical morality. Instead, believers in the Messiah, with their proper pursuit of immorality, cannot help but, by their actions, expose not only the immorality of unbelievers, but also their foolishness in rejecting God’s truth, while also avoiding the evil that others are doing that

has vacuous results by virtue of its not only being unable to result in eternal mercy and life, but also resulting in eternal condemnation.

Cf. John 7:7, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.”

¹¹⁰ τὰ γὰρ κρυφῆ γινόμενα ὑπὸ αὐτῶν αἰσχρόν ἐστὶν καὶ λέγειν – It seems unusual that people in the 1st century Roman Empire would feel compelled to pursue their immorality secretly when all the different kinds of things people did were so well known in their society. But this behavior must have made even the Romans ashamed to make them public, and Paul does not want to talk about them explicitly.

¹¹¹ τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτὸς φανεροῦνται – However the truth of God comes to us in the world, it exposes our evil and sin. But when it does and we repent of our sin, then the light of truth reveals that we are members of the group whom Paul calls “the all,” those whom God has changed inwardly and who will obtain His eternal mercy and the Kingdom of God.

¹¹² πᾶν γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστὶν. διὸ λέγει· ἔγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσκει σοὶ ὁ Χριστός –

Is. 26:19 Your dead will live. Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

Is. 51:17 Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk from the Lord’s hand the cup of His anger; The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.

Is. 52:1 Awake, awake, clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion. Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer come into you.

Is. 60:1 Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

With the “it” of “it says,” Paul is certainly referring to the OT. However, he must be conflating at least two of the above passages and adding the thought that it is the Messiah who will be the glory of Yahweh which rises on the people and shines as the “light” on them by virtue of their belief in the information about him as the one who brings about God’s forgiveness for them. Therefore, the sleep of these people is their spiritual deadness which manifests itself in unbelief. The Messiah is a light in the sense that the truth about him enlightens people, so that, when they gain authentic belief, they also will obtain eternal salvation.

Paul is saying that each sinner who is exposed appropriately by truth such that the person ends up becoming an authentic, repentant believer also has Jesus the Messiah shine on him with his truth and role as advocate before God. People must wake up from their spiritual slumber and embrace the truth about reality for the purpose of obtaining mercy and eternal salvation from God.

¹¹³ Βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι ἀλλ’ ὡς σοφοί – As Paul continues, his encouragement to the Ephesians is to investigate carefully how they are living so that it is according to what he is exhorting them. Thus, they will live with the intent to obey God and thus be wise people, in contrast to those who reject God and the Bible and are unwise, indeed even foolish because they will incur eventually only God’s wrath and condemnation. But Paul’s readers will be wise, and the outcome of such a life will be that of God’s mercy in the eternal Kingdom of God instead of His justice, condemnation, and destruction. Deliberately embracing any lie about the nature of reality as revealed by the Hebrew scriptures according to God is to be a fool. Instead, true wisdom is based on only biblical knowledge and nothing else. This is what Paul has been emphasizing with the ideas about the Messiah being at the core of good, enlightening knowledge. To know Jesus and all that he is about is to have the correct and only important knowledge as an existing human being in this realm.

¹¹⁴ ἔξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσὶν – Paul wants his readers to use their time for the best possible reasons, knowing that the passing of time in the present realm is characterized more by evil than by good, because most people in this world remain unwilling to submit to God and therefore remain committed to evil, which will cause them to incur God’s condemnation. And this will never change, because this realm is intended to be merely a temporary habitation characterized more by man’s rebellion until Jesus returns, not a permanent one characterized by goodness.

In addition, the final outcome of the present realm is judgment, even after Jesus has set up his Messianic Kingdom in Israel. There will still be one last rebellion against him and God that will be crushed and destroyed in the end.

Therefore, those who embrace biblical truth and base their lives on it should and will make the most of their existence in the present realm that is more characterized by evil than by goodness. Nevertheless, fortunately, the Spirit of God is definitely working to change the hearts of those chosen by God and to cause them to persevere in their belief and obedience.

¹¹⁵ διὰ τοῦτο μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες, ἀλλὰ ἴσυνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου – Paul is saying that fools reject God’s purposes and desire, His θέλημα, for the present and future realm and pursue immorality instead with reckless abandon—right in line with our culture, which by definition is led by Satan and pursues rebellion against God. We notice, also, that Paul’s appeal is to his readers’ minds. He wants them to understand what is true about the nature of reality which can be found in the Bible, so that they can then choose to live wisely.

¹¹⁶ καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνω, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἄσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι – Drunken orgies were commonplace in the Roman Empire. Paul wants his readers to avoid the practice of unbelievers of using drunkenness as a means to get through life. Drunkenness clouds people’s judgment and prevents them from thinking well about life and morality, and Paul wants people to avoid this. Instead, he would have them fill their bellies so to speak (and minds) with the wine

of the Holy Spirit, i.e., with the biblical truth that rightly directs them towards true joy, true contentment, and pursuing morality while shunning evil, worshiping God, and being grateful to Him for the eternal mercy that they will acquire at Jesus' return and the judgment by means of the advocacy of Jesus as the Messiah.

The context does not lend itself to deriving a meaning for being filled with the Holy Spirit that involves the ability to be victorious over sin simply by drawing upon the power of the Holy Spirit. Nor does it indicate that people can tap into this power whenever they make the choice to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as though Paul were presenting his readers with a technique for doing what is good vs. doing what is evil. Instead, the context simply shows that Paul has used all sorts of metaphors to refer to the same thing, i.e., learning and embracing the biblical truth about God's hatred of evil and His having changed certain people inwardly, so that they will now pursue a moral lifestyle while remaining sinful at a fundamental level of their beingness. The Spirit will cause them to pursue morality, but not all the time. They will still experience their sinfulness so that repentance will be just as important a part of their "morality" before God transforms them into morally perfect people at the second coming of Jesus.

Therefore, these passages are all about a Christian's knowing truth with his mind while pursuing morality with his choice making mechanism and body, knowing that God has oriented him in this direction through the inner work of His Spirit.

¹¹⁷ λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ὅ[ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς ῥπνευματικαῖς, ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες ἑτῆ καρδίᾳ ὕμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ – We can imagine that, just as in our own culture, heavy drinking in the 1st century Roman Empire led to raucous singing of probably somewhat inappropriate songs. These songs, consequently, communicated the mindset and worldview of the drunken singers. Paul, referring to this kind of event in his own day, encourages the Ephesian Christians to communicate their worldview of the biblical truth because of their being drunk on God, i.e., filled in their bellies (and minds) with the Spirit of God by virtue of God's having changed their hearts and moved them to embrace the ideas of the Bible.

Thus, their hearts should constantly be "singing songs of praise" that leads to their speaking to one another about their understanding of the nature of reality which involves the key ideas about God and His purposes from the Bible of bringing grace and mercy to undeserving sinful human beings through the Messiah. So there is a level of joy which comes from knowing that God is lovingly working within us for the purpose of leading us to the eternal Kingdom of God.

¹¹⁸ εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ ἑθεῷ καὶ πατρὶ – Paul is saying that a key element of the mindset of a Christian is his thanking God for His grace, mercy, and salvation through the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus. Thus, gratitude for God's grace and mercy through the Messiah constitutes an important part of a correct understanding of the nature of reality, and it is in the midst of all circumstances. The quiet gratitude of the Christian's inner being is in contrast to the inappropriately comical drunken songs of the unbelievers in the Roman Empire culture.

Again, all this contributes to the unity of the Christian community which Paul is encouraging in chapters 4-6.

¹¹⁹ Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ ῥΧριστοῦ – There are ordinary relationships between human beings, and there are extraordinary relationships, meaning, first, that some relationships are between those of the same and equal status and position—with respect to God and with respect to other human beings. The relationship between two Christian men or two Christian women or a Christian man and Christian woman who are not married is an ordinary relationship with respect to God. God considers both parties in the relationship to be of equal status and position before Him, especially in the light of their both eventually receiving the same ultimate gift from God, eternal life and mercy.

[Galatians 3:28](#) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

[Colossians 3:11](#) a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

The relationship between two people in society who do not have any authority within the prevailing government is an ordinary relationship, because each person has (or at least should have) equal status and position in the eyes of the government. Yet, Paul is going to say that the husband/wife, parent/child, and master/slave relationships are extraordinary in nature in that there is one party in the relationship who is superordinate to the other who is subordinate to the first person, whether within an institution created by God with this extraordinariness, i.e., the marriage relationship and family relationship, or within an institution created by man, even an evil institution like slavery.

Plus Paul is probably viewing slavery in the 1st century Romans Empire as something which is not going to disappear anytime soon. But certainly the existence of Christian masters, who treat their slaves with dignity and care, and Christian slaves, who obey their masters with dignity and love, may actually influence the entire culture so that eventually this evil institution is abolished in the Roman Empire as it was later in England and America.

Thus, Paul switches gears slightly here in 5:21 to encourage the believers in the Ephesian and Asian community to continue in the divinely valid roles they had when they became Christians and not to think that becoming followers of God means that a person should never subordinate himself to anyone else.

By mentioning Jesus as the Messiah explicitly eight times in his explanation of the three relationships of husband/wife, parent/child, and master/slave, Paul will argue that just as it is important and makes perfect theological sense to subordinate oneself to the very human Jesus the Messiah, even as he was also the human icon of God on earth, it is important to continue to subordinate oneself to other human beings where it is divinely valid. Thus, God has created

certain relationships to be the way they are, i.e., husband/wives and parents/children, and there is a certain relationship which has been imposed on some Christians by evil human beings, i.e., slavery, and it is perfectly ok for a Christian to live out his/her obedience to God and Jesus within the context of these relationships as they currently stand—either this side of the new heavens and new earth for the marital and family relationships, or this side of slavery’s being abolished in the Roman Empire (or anywhere else, e.g., in the United States until the Civil War). In other words, becoming one who belongs to God does not release a person from all obligations to subordinate himself to other human beings, because we all become and remain subordinate to the most important human being, Jesus the Messiah.

Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, “**17** Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. **18** Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. **19** Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. **20** Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. **21** Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. **22** For he who was called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free is Christ’s slave. **23** You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. **24** Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.”

The above passage speaks to the appropriateness of submitting to God’s sovereign plan and will, His *thelayma*, with respect to religious rituals and even social roles and position that cannot be changed within a particular government or social context. Of course the basis for such a perspective is the fact of a future, eternal existence that renders all but a sinner’s inward change, faith, and obedience to God completely secondary to them. Indeed, a person’s belief in Jesus the Messiah and obedience to God which accompanies it is primary and the only things worth having as that which is known and affirmed by other human beings. A person’s economic status, academic achievements, ethnic origin, gender, location of his home, etc. are nothing in comparison to his faith in God and Jesus with the ultimate outcome of salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life.

¹²⁰ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ – Continuing with the notion of being appropriately subordinate to another human being, Paul now goes on first to talk about the husband/wife relationship, where he will argue that the husband should act towards his wife the way that the Messiah acts towards his followers called the “church” (in our English Bibles), and could just as easily be translated as gathering, i.e., the collection of authentic believers in Jesus who have heard and embraced the apostolic message. And Paul is saying that wives should remain subordinate to their husbands who are superordinate in their relationship just as the wives are subordinate to the Messiah who is superordinate in his relationship with them. However, the “just as” certainly does not refer to a complete equivalence. We all are willing to be completely subordinate to Jesus because he is morally perfect and the very icon of God on earth. However, husbands are sinners, and it would not make sense for wives to see themselves as completely and absolutely subordinate to their husbands. Paul is talking about granting legitimacy to the husband/wife subordinate relationship “just as” a wife grants legitimacy to the Jesus/wife subordinate relationship.

¹²¹ ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἔστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναίκος ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος – Paul lays out the theological teaching/learning structure of the marital relationship that is unique. Just as the Messiah has the responsibility and role of being the very human being to whom all Christians subordinate themselves because he saves them from God’s wrath and condemnation, so also the husband, by definition and theological design, 1) has been created first, and 2) should see his wife as created by God to be a helper for him (cf. Genesis 2).

Therefore, most likely these ideas have been implanted in our human psyches by God and are therefore “natural” for all human beings, male and female, whether or not we are willing to acknowledge them. And how should the wife help her husband? By supporting him in his obedience to God so that the woman contributes all that she can to help “this man” become the man whom God wants him to be—faithful, moral, truthful, persevering in faith, and pursuing the calling in the world which God has given him.

But this is also asymmetrical, in that the husband is not theologically the “helper” of the wife, but she is the “helper” of the husband. The man can be completely alone to find his way through life, while the woman has her husband as her assignment to find her way through life. She could be and sometimes has to be completely alone, too, but if she chooses to marry a man, then she is choosing this particular man and his path through life to define what her life is going to be about—especially morally. Thus, a single woman has chosen a life path which is like a single man’s where she must pursue it as one who is subordinating herself completely to Jesus.

And just as the Messiah is the primary party in the relationship with his gathering, the husband is the primary party in the relationship with his wife. Each one, the Messiah or the husband, basically defines who those are who subordinate themselves to him and what they are to be all about. This does not make the wife less important in God’s eyes or of less status with respect to acquiring eternal life, and certainly the husband’s primary position does not give him license to abuse his responsibility, role, and wife. Instead, the subordinate position is simply the setup within marriage which God has designed for marriage and desires.

Thus, we also see that Paul adds the statement that Jesus “is the savior” of his body, the gathering of believers. Rather than referring to only Jesus’ death on the cross, Paul here is talking about Jesus’ being the heroic rescuer, the champion, for all his followers so that their subordinating themselves to him is because they expect him to lead them victoriously through death into the eternal Kingdom of God by his interceding for them before God (the role for which he qualified by dying on the cross!).

All this is what Paul means by the Messiah's being the "head" of his followers and the husband's being the "head" of his wife. Being the "head" carries with it the responsibility of being the strong hero of anyone who is subordinate to him, and this is the man's responsibility and role with respect to his wife to lead her into her following God to the best of her ability.

Clearly, Jesus' role as leader of his followers is because he has earned the right to rescue them from God's eternal condemnation at the judgment. However, it is not that a husband can earn *per se* his role and right to lead his wife, but he needs to take seriously his divinely assigned role of loving his wife by taking her down the path which God has given him and by directing her towards the biblical truth as Jesus took seriously his role of dying for all his followers.

¹²² ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί – The logical inference of the Messiah's being the "head" of his gathering by being the primary party and by being their heroic leader is that all his followers, including wives, recognize his role of leading them towards mercy so that they subordinate themselves to him. Therefore, if the husband/wife relationship is analogous to the Messiah/gathering relationship as Paul is saying, then wives should recognize their husband's divinely assigned role of leading them towards God down the path which God has given him (and therefore her).

The "in everything" is all that the marital relationship involves because of what kind of life God has assigned to the husband that takes advantage of his particular giftedness in comparison to other men. But, again, none of this means that the wife must submit absolutely to her husband, so that she would either be deceived into or compelled to act immorally. She is his helper, not his doormat. And he is her loving heroic leader, not her abusive tyrant.

¹²³ Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας ὡς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς – In this paragraph, Paul goes into more detail about what is the purpose of the Messiah's and the husband's being the "head" of the Christian gathering and the wife respectively. In the first place, Jesus loved his followers, and the next statement connected by the καί, "he gave himself up" for them defines how he loved them. He suffered death on the cross for those who subordinate themselves to him and obey him. Paul is saying that, likewise, husbands in their superordinate position have a huge responsibility to love their wives by behaving towards and teaching their wives as Jesus the Messiah behaved towards and earned the right to teach his followers. Ultimately, this was allowing himself to be killed on the cross. In this way, husbands should be willing to give up any personal comfort in order to lead their wives and teach them well regarding the Messiah. Thus, husbands should never abuse their position by mistreating their wives. In the midst of their own sinfulness but also in the midst of their faith in the Messiah, husbands should love their wives as Jesus loved all of us Christians—sacrificially!

¹²⁴ ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιασῇ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι – The Messiah made it possible for sinful human beings of authentic belief in God to be radically different from other sinful human beings in this world, by providing for the means of their obtaining God's mercy and forgiveness, i.e., by "being cleansed" to use OT language of the Mosaic Covenant's offerings and sacrifices. And it is Jesus' appealing to God for mercy on our behalf at the final judgment at this return that becomes the all important means for human beings' acquiring God's eternal mercy. When God hears Jesus speak on our behalf at this judgment, we become those who were not only set apart and different in this world during our lives because of our belief and obedience to God, but also those who then enter into eternal life and not eternal destruction.

¹²⁵ ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπῖλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ' ἵνα ᾖ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος – Jesus' love for his followers was to fulfill his divinely appointed purpose of making them acceptable to God at the final judgment in order that He would grant them eternal mercy and forgiveness. He did this by giving up his own life when he was crucified on the cross, thus providing God with the only acceptable eternal offering that further qualified him to be people's intercessor. Therefore, even though his followers as believers show up at the judgment as sinful human beings, nevertheless, Jesus becomes the very means of their escape from God's wrath and condemnation by mediating on their behalf so that they become glorious, morally perfect, immortal human beings in the eternal Kingdom of God, who are without defect before by God, that is, the defect of abject rebellion and unbelief, and as a result welcomed into His kingdom.

¹²⁶ οὕτως ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες ὑποτάσσονται τῷ Χριστῷ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ – Paul is saying that because the husband's role is to emulate the Messiah, then the husband's motivation is to fulfill his moral obligation to his primary role just as Jesus did by suffering death on the cross. By doing so, the husband is actually loving himself, because, as Paul will say in v. 31 by quoting Genesis 2:24, there is no theological separation with respect to the believed worldview and path in life between the husband and the wife, just as there is no theological separation with respect to the believed worldview and ultimate path between Jesus and his followers.

It does not make any sense within God's purposes and story of the creation for there to be a Jewish Messiah without those for whom the Messiah is their mediator at the judgment and whom he teaches through the apostles. Likewise, it does not make any sense for there to be a husband who does not lead his wife towards biblical truth and eternal life by means of the apostolic message and by being willing to give up any comfort in order to make himself available to lead and teach his wife.

Thus, the husband's work is to enhance his wife's biblical life with his calling from God and the truth of God, so that in turn he enhances his own biblical life.

¹²⁷ Οὐδεὶς γάρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν – As above, Paul is saying that Jesus’ spurning his followers by refusing to mediate between God and them after suffering death on the cross for them does not make any sense. What makes sense is that he provides his followers with his role and responsibility as high priest, for which he qualified by suffering death on the cross. This is the end result of Jesus’ nourishing and taking care of the gathering of believers that started with his life on earth, continued through his death on the cross, and perseveres throughout the rest of history with God’s Spirit at work in them until his second coming.

The assumption for husbands is, no matter how a person is treating his body, he thinks that he is taking care of it properly, within the confines of his own purposes, even if his purposes are not altogether genuinely healthy. Therefore, once a husband understands what is a healthy man/woman relationship within marriage, he then grasps the theological connection between his wife and him, that they are one “body” so to speak with the husband as the head, just as believers are one body with Jesus as its head. Consequently, it will make sense for the husband to take care of his wife in the best possible way, i.e., by tenderly loving her and communicating as carefully and completely as possible the apostolic message of Jesus the Messiah, and to do this within any experience of suffering that is necessary to accomplish it—persecution, physical affliction, financial catastrophe, just plain estrangement from the world, etc.

¹²⁸ ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ – Paul gives the reason why it makes sense that Jesus intercede for his followers at the judgment. It is because his followers are a part of him. They are him in the same way that our bodies are who we are in connection with our heads. Jesus’ headship means that he sources his followers with good information, he guides them down the path of righteousness towards eternal life, and he suffers for them if it is necessary, which it was by dying on the cross in order to be their head. Thus, his followers’ being the members of his body means that they listen to and ingest the ideas that he sends their way through the apostles, both the ideas of what is proper biblical morality and the ideas about the purposes and effects of his suffering death to qualify to be people’s advocate before an angry God. And then they end up receiving God’s mercy when Jesus intercedes for them at the first resurrection of Revelation 20.

¹²⁹ ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος ὁ πατέρα καὶ ὁ μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν – Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, which explicitly pertains to the husband/wife relationship but also can be used to explain the relationship between Jesus the Messiah and his gathering, i.e., his followers. Thus, God’s purpose for creating both a male human being and a female human being is in order to produce a relationship that is so intimate that the two think and act in conjunction with one another in their pursuit of understanding reality correctly and being obedient to God and following the path of life which God has given to the husband primarily and the wife secondarily—and this in the midst of both the husband’s and wife’s inherent sinfulness. Paul is saying that God’s purpose for creating both males and females who marry one another is to use them to teach the more important relationship of the superordinate Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and of the subordinate Christian gathering, whom we commonly call the church. As people watch a Christian husband and Christian wife interact, they should be able to see how Christians interact with Jesus by their belief and obedience and how Jesus interacts with Christians through God’s Spirit.

Genesis 2:24 – אִישׁ יַעֲזֹב-אִשׁ אֶת-אָבִיו וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד (ἐνεκεν τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν). This verse does not speak specifically of the husband’s “headship” over his wife. However, it makes sense that Paul derives this concept from the verse. To leave one’s parents and be united to one’s wife is, for the man, to take on the role of caring for, teaching, and suffering on behalf of the wife, of being her head, as implied by the fact that Adam was created first before Eve and Eve was created to be his helper (cf. 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2). Paul then draws the parallel in the next verse to the Messiah’s relationship with his followers. They are his “wife” so to speak in that he cares for them, leads them, teaches them truth, and suffers for them in order to ensure that his truth has eternal consequences for them. Cf. Revelation 19 for the imagery of Jesus’ being the groom of his bride, his Jewish followers in the immediate context.

¹³⁰ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ ἡ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν – Paul states that these ideas, especially within the pagan culture of the first century Roman Empire, are great ideas, i.e., of great importance. They are, indeed, the most important ideas for any human being to learn and embrace. These are the ideas regarding God’s purposes for the Jewish Messiah within the creation vis-à-vis his followers.

“Mystery” refers to an idea that was revealed a long time ago but was not made clear in its entirety until later on. In other words, the statement about husbands and wives in Genesis 2 eventually had significance for the relationship between the Messiah and his followers once the Messiah arrived on earth and fulfilled his role of becoming the leader and advocate for sinners. Thus, there was an idea revealed long ago in the OT and made clear by the appearance and experience of Jesus the Messiah, making the OT ideas no longer a mystery.

An important ramification of this is that to distort the biblical ideas about relationships between men and women, e.g., by condoning homosexuality, is to reject the significance of such ideas with respect to the Messiah and God’s purposes for him. God has designed men to marry women just as he has designed the Messiah to marry his followers at his return and now is leading and teaching them through his apostles (their documents) and the Spirit. It does not make any sense for the Messiah to lead and teach himself—and stop there. Neither does it make any sense for the followers to lead and teach each other—and stop there. The Messiah makes sense only if he has followers to whom he is intimately related.

And the followers of the Messiah make sense only if they have a Messiah, who is their “head.” There is no other Messiah to “marry” the Messiah, and the followers of the Messiah cannot “marry” themselves, leaving God and the Messiah out of the equation. To think otherwise is eternally dangerous. If we play with fire, especially in the realm of ideas, we get burned—by God and His wrath.

¹³¹ πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ’ ἓνα, ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβῆται τὸν ἄνδρα – Because the ideas about the Messiah and his followers are great ideas, Paul wants a husband and wife to work on learning them together from the Messiah, which in and of itself makes the whole notion of the oneness of husband and wife a very important idea, too. Thus, the statement in Genesis 2:24 about husbands and wives factors into the relationship between the Messiah and his followers, which, consequently shows where Paul got the whole idea of the headship of the husband that he introduced back in v. 23. For the husband to “leave his father and mother,” so that, in turn, he is “united to his wife,” means that his responsibility is to care for and communicate truth to this wife, while also being willing to go through whatever suffering is necessary in order for him to do so and to accomplish enhancing his wife and helping her obey God towards her eternal destiny of salvation in the eternal Kingdom of God.

And notice how much time Paul spends on explaining the love of the husband towards his wife in comparison to the subordination of the wife to the husband. Why? Because the superordinate person can pervert their position and abuse their responsibility so quickly and easily. Plus, if the husband loves his wife as Jesus loves us, how much easier will it be for the woman to subordinate herself to her husband?

¹³² Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν ὑμῶν ὅτι ἐν κυρίῳ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν δίκαιον – While the comments in 5:22-33 were with respect to wives’ subordinating themselves (ὑποτάσσω) to their husbands, the encouragement to children to obey (ὑπακούω) their parents and to slaves to obey (ὑπακούω) their masters is a slightly different issue. Certainly, such obedience is based only upon knowing the truth about the nature of reality as God has revealed it in the Bible, which eliminates any child’s or slave’s responsibility to obey instructions from their parents or masters respectfully that are contrary to the Bible.

In addition, unlike the husband in relationship to his wife, Paul does not say that parents are the “head” of their children and does not say that masters are the “head” of their slaves. Nor does he liken the parent/child or master/slave relationship to the Jesus/church relationship, as if these two kinds of relationships are intended by God to illustrate that of the church to Jesus.

It would seem, then, that, after talking about the wife’s responsibility to subordinate herself to her husband, Paul’s mind segued to these other two important instances in the Roman Empire where Christian children and Christian slaves should follow their parents and masters respectively—as it pertains to being obedient to the ideas of the biblical truth of the gospel, whether or not parents and masters are explicitly conveying these ideas to their respective followers.

There is also the question of whether or not ὑπακούω that Paul uses to address children and slaves means the same thing as ὑποτάσσω? The following verses in the NT contain either the former or latter word –

[Luke 2:51](#) He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and he continued in subjection to them (καὶ ἦν ὑποτασσόμενος αὐτοῖς). And his mother kept all these things in her heart.

[Romans 13:1](#) Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities (πάσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω). For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

[Titus 2:9](#) Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything (δούλους ἰδίοις δεσπόταις ὑποτάσσεσθαι), to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,

[Titus 3:1](#) Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities (ὑπομίμησκε αὐτοὺς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ἐξουσίαις ὑποτάσσεσθαι), to be obedient (πειθαρχεῖν), to be ready for every good deed,

[1Peter 2:18](#) Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ τοῖς δεσπόταις), not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

[1Peter 3:6](#) just as Sarah obeyed Abraham (ὡς Σάρρα ὑπήκουσε τῷ Ἀβραάμ), calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

[1Peter 5:5](#) You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders (ὑποτάγητε πρεσβυτέροις). And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

These verses reveal the fact that these two words are very closely synonymous, but not completely. As mentioned above, the parent/child relationship is different from the husband/wife relationship as the master/slave relationship is also quite different. Therefore, the subordinating obedience of a child to his parents is not because there is a relational unity like the marital relationship, but because it simply makes sense that within the family relationship, children, who are less sophisticated in their understanding of reality, should listen to, respect, and even obey what people, their parents, who have a greater understanding, have to say. God has given parents, who are hopefully Christians, to children who are hopefully Christians to help them become adults who follow God and obtain eternal life.

Pauls’ commandment is not an absolute “obey your parents,” because some parents are not wise but fools instead. However, when a Christian child figures out that he should not go down the path of the “wisdom” of the parents, because theirs is not biblical wisdom, he should follow his conscience and do what is biblically right.

Then, slaves in the 1st century Roman Empire are simply in a social and demographic position that requires that they obey their masters’ orders or risk harsh recriminations and consequences. This is not to say that Paul condones slavery that is instituted by evil, immoral human beings. It is to say that within the 1st century Roman Empire it does not look as though slavery is going to disappear anytime soon, and it is more important for slaves to see that it is not only valid

but also incumbent on them to be willing to subordinate themselves to their masters until their circumstances change. Thus, children, because of their subordinate position within a household, should respect their parents' directions in how they are to live life before God, both within the household and without. However, Paul is talking about this in the context of Christian communities and, therefore, is assuming that the parents are Christians, too. This makes it all the more important for the children to obey their parents, if the latter truly understand and communicate by their words and their actions the biblical ideas of the gospel of the Messiah. Parents are not the "head" of their children, but they certainly are the primary instructors and leaders of biblical truth for their children. And this can be the case for slaves, that within the local Christian community as both the masters and the slaves are instructed further in the gospel (by Paul, his co-workers, et al.), then the masters have the opportunity to continue this instruction to their slaves in their homes, and vice versa. If the slaves are by the design of God more knowledgeable in the gospel, then it behooves the masters to take advantage of this and learn from their slaves. Probably this could have been the case in southern U.S. if the plantation owners were appropriately sensitive to their situations.

Also, certainly Jewish parents within the nation of Israel and under the Mosaic Covenant were morally obligated to help their children learn to become genuine followers of Yahweh, the one true God. Therefore, Paul is probably hitchhiking off this fact and expecting Christian parents to sense their own moral obligation to help their children to learn to become authentic followers of the Jewish Messiah. As a result, Paul exhorts Christian children to respect and follow their parents' instruction in being obedient to God. And he exhorts fathers, i.e., the parents, to provide loving teaching to their children that will lead them to obey appropriately God and the Messiah. This would clearly be in contrast to mistreating their children, abusing them emotionally, psychologically, or physically thus making them angry because of the pain and suffering they cause them.

¹³³ τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα, ἣτις ὁ ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ – Paul quotes the fifth of the Ten Commandments which God gave to the Israelites within the Mosaic Covenant. He wants to demonstrate further the importance of even Gentile children's taking very seriously their response to their parents before God. Paul also editorializes to a degree by commenting on the fact that this particular commandment was the first one to be connected verbally to the promise of God in Genesis 12:1-3 to Abraham to give the land of Canaan/Israel to his descendants. This connection explicitly reveals that the Jews' obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, which should include children's obedience to their parents, has a national and long-term effect. It results in the Israelites' living long and well on the land which God is giving them. This is quite an effect, which from the rest of the Bible it becomes clear that this will be fulfilled when Jesus returns, restores the Kingdom of Israel, and all the Jews become authentic believers in God and Jesus during the entire time of the millennial kingdom.

Is Paul saying exactly the same thing here to his Ephesian Christians—that they will live long lives if parents teach their children well and children obey their parents? No, he is merely showing how important obedience to God is. Just as the Jews will live long and well on the land of Israel when they obey God via the Mosaic Covenant during the millennial kingdom after Jesus returns, so also Gentiles can expect to live long and well in the eternal Kingdom of God when they obey the biblical message of the Jewish Messiah. Thus, the effect of proper obedience of *Gentile* children to *Christian* parents, which is proper obedience to the gospel, is an eternal one for these Ephesian Christians.

Exodus 20:12a – תִּימָה אֶת־אֲבִיךָ אֶת־אִמְךָ (LXX – τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα)

¹³⁴ ἵνα εὖ σοι γένηται καὶ ἔσῃ μακροχρόνιος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – Exodus 20:12, לְמַעַן יִיטֵב לְךָ וְאָרְכָה יְמֵיךָ לְמַעַן יִיטֵב לְךָ וְאָרְכָה יְמֵיךָ, LXX – ἵνα εὖ σοι γένηται, καὶ ἵνα μακροχρόνιος γένη ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τῆς ἀγαθῆς, ἧς κύριος ὁ θεός σου δίδωσίν σοι. Here is the promise connected to the fifth commandment in Exodus 20:12. Paul shortens the statement simply to make the point that proper (inward!!) obedience to God results in receiving His promises—whether earthly in the present realm in the case of the nation of Israel or “heavenly” and eternal in the case of Christians (whether Gentiles or Jews).

Thus, all believing parents have the responsibility to pass on wisdom from one generation to the next so that the promise of God may be fulfilled in each generation's lives, first for the Jews on the land of Israel as part of the first promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, and second for both Jewish and Gentile Christians with respect to the second promise and entering into the eternal Kingdom of God. As a result, Christian children's learning from their parents does not need to stop when these children acquire their ultimate parent, God, through their own personal and authentic belief. Just as Christian children subordinate themselves to the most important human being, Jesus the Messiah, so also does it make sense that they subordinate themselves to human beings of lesser importance, their parents within the God-provided institution of the family, as the children grow up towards the time when they become adults and independent of their parents.

¹³⁵ Καὶ οἱ πατέρες, μὴ παροργίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφετε αὐτὰ ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νοουθεσίᾳ κυρίου – Paul provides here a specific exhortation to fathers not to treat their children in a less than biblical and loving way. Instead of treating them harshly, abusing them emotionally, psychologically, or physically, which naturally results in resentment towards their fathers, Paul is certain that fathers who understand the gospel and its call to grace, mercy, patience, and love towards other people will apply the gospel to their relationships with their children, thus, ultimately, instructing their children in the biblical truth with grace, mercy, patience, gentleness, and love.

Just as sinful husbands may abuse their superordinate position over their wives, so also fathers (and mothers) may do the same thing in regard to their children. Parents can become so demanding and authoritarian in relation to their

children that they usurp God's position and role and seek (demand!) to control them. Eventually the children will become angry and hopefully properly rebel against their parents. In other words, this is good anger, but Paul would like that the parent/child relationship never reaches this stage.

And the correct antidote to this is the parents' instructing the children from a proper biblical understanding to encourage them to become what God wants them to be, not what the parents selfishly want them to be. Parents usually try to control their children and make them in their image rather than permitting and giving them the freedom to figure out exactly what God wants them to become as mature adults.

¹³⁶ Οἱ δούλοι, ὑπακούετε τοῖς ἑκατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ἐν ἀπλότητι ὁτῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ – Christianity introduced a whole new perspective on human beings into the Roman Empire. While people were used to granting honor and status to others strictly on the basis of external factors, e.g., Roman citizen vs. non-citizen, wealthy vs. poor, master vs. slave, man vs. woman, husband vs. wife, parent vs. child, government ruler vs. common citizen, etc., Christianity taught that all people arrive at eternal life on the same basis and condition, Jesus' advocacy through his death and resurrection and then genuine, inward belief. Therefore, all people have equal status and honor before God, because they all receive the same compensation—if they have genuine belief in God and His Messiah for the sake of gaining the Kingdom of God. This compensation is eternal life with moral perfection.

As a result, it was probably tempting for slaves to take their new-found status before God that was equal to their masters, especially because they probably rightly deduced that slavery was an evil institution created by evil human beings, and to misuse it by thinking that they did not have to obey their masters as strictly (or at all) as they had done so before. However, Paul explains that their obedience to their masters should be even more genuine and heartfelt, because, now, their obedience to their earthly masters is a reflection of their obedience to Jesus as their king and priest, especially under the umbrella of God's sovereignty in their lives—that ultimately He is the one who has placed them in this situation for the sake of demonstrating their belief under what could be rather harsh circumstances. They should obey their masters “with fear and trembling,” not of their earthly masters, but of God if they were to incur His wrath and condemnation. Thus, they should always be checking their hearts, minds, and actions to make sure as much as is humanly possible that they are operating from the standpoint of genuine belief.

Paul is saying that this demonstrates an understanding of the biblical message that requires a sinful human being to want one and only one thing out of life—God's mercy and forgiveness through Jesus that includes eternal life. In fact, as difficult as it is for us to grasp and accept, this is the ultimate proper response to the evil of the institution of slavery (and to any evil we may experience). Certainly, getting rid of slavery (and all evil) is a good and right endeavor within the context of existence in the present world. But a sinful slave's humble willingness to obey his sinful master corresponds to his obeying the morally perfect and eternal Messiah. For the sake of obeying the Messiah, a slave should be willing to obey his sinful and evil master. This is because God wants people to be a certain kind of person, which Paul has described in the previous section—tender-hearted, gentle, humble, caring, patient, loving, forgiving, gracious, moral, etc.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, those whom I love, just as you always obey, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **2:13** for it is God who is accomplishing in you both the desiring and the working for His good satisfaction.

Colossians 3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in all things (ὑπακούετε ἑκατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις), not as men-pleasers when they are watching, but with a single-mindedness of heart (ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας), because you fear the Lord (φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον).

The word ἀπλότης in other uses in the NT carries the notion of freely choosing with a generous effect. Therefore, even here Paul probably is referring to a spontaneous, relatively easy choice on the part of slaves who are generous with their obedience to their masters. It is “easy” only because they truly understand the gospel and are committed to it. It is as though they basically go overboard, not so that their masters will be pleased with them, but so that God, who is their ultimate master, will be pleased with them by recognizing that their obedience to their earthly masters is from genuine inwardness (which, of course, God alone has produced and created). This is genuine and not fake obedience, because it comes from a heart that has been changed by God and that is now truly subservient ultimately to God and Jesus.

¹³⁷ μὴ κατ' ὀφθαλμοδοσίαν ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀλλ' ὡς δούλοι Χριστοῦ ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκ ψυχῆς – Paul implies that sinful human beings' propensity is to follow the orders of sinful human leaders in order to receive the affirmation of these leaders, not necessarily because obeying the leaders is inherently good and moral. However, to the extent possible, Christians should follow leaders strictly in order to do God's *thelasma* (His moral desire for them) and to receive His affirmation, because inwardly they know that following God and His Messiah will result in His mercy and eternal life. This means even complying with their restrictive mandates if it seems wise for the sake of promoting the truth of the gospel, i.e., that the Christian is being loving while also ultimately submitting to God and not the sinful human leader.

I have translated the phrase ἐκ ψυχῆς (literally “out of existence”) “out of inwardness” because the overall message of the Bible is that people who properly obey God are capable of doing so because God has “circumcised their hearts” (cf. Romans 2:28ff.; Deuteronomy 30:6). This is to say that He has changed them inwardly and the kind of existence which they are not living, so that they not only desire to embrace the ideas of the Bible as true, but also desire to pursue outward obedience to God as even Paul is explicitly describing in this letter. Whereas before their existence meant

eternal condemnation from God, now their existence means authentic belief, obedience, and eventually eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

¹³⁸ μετ' εὐνοίας δουλεύοντες ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις – As strange as this sounds to us in a culture which is being bombarded by Critical Theories, following the orders of sinful human beings, even as a slave subordinating himself to his master, translates into following the orders of God. A slave's obedience of his master in the 1st century Roman Empire equals a slave's obedience of God, when this slave is an inwardly changed human being who is single-mindedly, freely, and generously intent on obtaining God's eternal mercy.

¹³⁹ εἰδότες ὅτι ἕκαστος ἐάν τι ποιῆσῃ ἀγαθόν, τοῦτο κομίζεται παρὰ κυρίου εἴτε δούλος εἴτε ἐλεύθερος – Paul says that a Christian slave (or free citizen) should realize that whatever he does that is appropriately obedient to sinful masters (or sinful human leaders) will result in receiving the greatest compensation from the greatest person, i.e., God's eternal mercy and life.

Paul draws the conclusion and also says that this will happen regardless of the person's station in life, i.e., whether he is a master or a slave (or government ruler or common citizen, or boss and underling in a business, etc.). In other words, a slave's obedience of his master and a master's biblical treatment of his slave will have the same outcome—eternal mercy and life, because both instances of obedience derive from the same basis and condition, Jesus' advocacy and the person's biblical inwardness as demonstrated through belief and obedience.

¹⁴⁰ Καὶ οἱ κύριοι, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς, ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ὑμῶν ὁ κύριός ἐστιν ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ προσωποληψία οὐκ ἔστιν παρ' αὐτῷ – It may have been culturally popular for masters to threaten slaves as the means to get them obey. But, continuing with the thought in the last verse that people will be compensated equally by God with eternal life for a life well lived, Paul urges masters to treat their slaves biblically, i.e., with dignity, honor, respect, kindness, and awareness of their equal eternal status before God—as befits the Christian gospel.

Interestingly enough, these are the “same things” of the slave's treatment and obedient response to his master—both of which should see themselves as ultimately serving Jesus the Messiah when it comes to human relationships. In other words, a person's station in life might call for actions that are different from another person's of another station in life, e.g., the master gives orders and the slave follows them, but they should never be outside the boundaries of what can be construed as equal and proper biblical obedience. In this way, their different actions actually constitute “the same actions” when it comes to God's assessment of the appropriateness of their actions, because God's ultimate response to them is the same—granting them eternal mercy and life. Thus, His assessment of their actions is the same. Their actions come from belief in the Messiah with genuine inwardness, and the Jewish Messiah is no respecter of persons. Anyone, regardless of his ethnic origin, is welcome to be saved from God's eternal condemnation by Jesus as his advocate and priest.

As a result, because God and Jesus are not impressed with a person's worldly status but judge all people with the same standard of a genuine internal desire to embrace biblical truth and obey it, masters who treat their slaves well will receive the same response from their heavenly Master, God, as the slaves who treat their masters well—eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God (cf. Galatians 3:28, There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female, because you are all one in association with the Messiah Jesus).

Indeed, if both the masters and slaves were to treat each other as Paul commands here, slavery per se (a human being's being forced against his will by another human being to subordinate himself and all his choices to him) becomes logically untenable because both of them are of equal eternal status before God. Any kind of slavery, even by governments of their citizens, is therefore an evil institution that simply should not exist.

However, the Mosaic Covenant seems to condone slavery. But it was a covenant made with a particular group of people at a particular time in history. The mistake is to see the Mosaic Covenant as righteous Law in its entirety for either the Jews or every people in every time in history. Instead, the covenant is mitigating the effects of even evil institutions such as slavery in the 16th century B.C., and God was asking the Jews to become His people of changed hearts who would love their neighbors, including their slaves within the collective group, as themselves. Biblically speaking, a changed heart in each individual that results in authentic love and caring towards all other human beings is more important than abolishing slavery, even though the latter is certainly a good and proper goal. Plus, a changed heart resulting in genuine love will logically lead to abolishing slavery, even if a person chooses to remain a “slave” for his own personal reasons.

Also, is Paul morally inferior to people who today demand that we all stand up against all the social injustices in our world and make this the primary mark of authentic Christianity, i.e., making the world a more righteous place in the name of Christ? Cf. the effect of Marxism and Hegelian philosophy on Christianity starting in the 19th century, making the goal of Christianity the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. However, a just society will happen only once in history, when Jesus rules over the Kingdom of Israel during the millennium when every Jew will be changed of heart and live on the land of Israel. In addition, this just society will not actually occur in any other part of the world at that time, except that things will be better for the Gentile nations because Jesus will rule them with a “rod of iron” (cf. Psalm 2). We, however, do not have a clear picture from the Bible of exactly what this will look like of the Gentile nations. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Israel will also be a society of sinners. Thus God's project is not to bring about a just, global, and perfectly utopian society this side of the eternal earth of Revelation 21, but to bring about the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel under the rule of Jesus until he destroys the present realm and creates a new one

where only moral perfection will exist.

In Chapter VII of Works of Love, a chapter entitled “Mercifulness, a Work of Love Even If It Can Give Nothing And Is Able to Do Nothing,” Soren Kierkegaard provides a helpful explanation of this same issue. If Christians only preach that the wealthy should be generous towards the poor, but they fail to preach that the poor should be inwardly merciful towards the wealthy, then this is a distortion of the gospel. The most important element of our human existence is not what we do, but how we do it. The wealthy must be charitable give of their material wealth generously to the poor with a changed heart that results in genuine belief in God and Jesus as the Messiah. And the poor must give of their mercy and kindness generously to the wealthy by being kind, forgiving, patient, and gracious towards them with the same kind of heart (inwardness, as Kierkegaard calls it). Thus, both the wealthy and the poor exhibit mercifulness, which is more important for eternity’s sake for each individual than making any external changes in the social injustices of the world.

Again, this is very difficult to grasp and accept for us sinful human beings who all want everything to be right (even suffering and pain free) immediately. It is hard to wait patiently for Jesus return, but this is what we must do, while also seeking to make appropriate changes in the world that will never be completely satisfying had good.

¹⁴¹ Τοῦ λοιποῦ ἴ, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ – Paul now likens a Christian’s intellectual and spiritual stance to a soldier’s having to oppose his enemy, which he does successfully only if he has the right armor and weapons. In other words, a Christian’s role in this world is to stand against the world, as influenced by Satan, and against its rebellion against God, even as the world tries to overwhelm the Christian with its power and strength of false ideas by trying to pressure everyone to condone, support, and comply with its ideas and actions. Paul is saying that a Christian’s ability to face into the world’s hostility against biblical truth and God is ultimately dependent on his belonging to God and His working within him, so that the power of the human being to stand firm in his belief comes from God and the power He is employing within him.

However, it is vital to recognize that Paul is not intimating that the Christian controls the power of God. The Christian must merely keep in mind that any ability which he has to pursue thinking and doing what is right requires God’s powerfully causing him to do so, which God has definitely promised for those whom He changes inwardly. However, in accordance with God’s sovereignty, sometimes the Christian will think better and act better in opposition to the world’s lies and pressure than at other times. He simply needs to keep trusting God that to some degree he will stand against the world and prevail by persevering in his belief. As a result, Paul can exhort his readers to “be strong” in their belief, ideas, and actions.

1 John 4:4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome (νεκικήκατε) them [false teachers of the world]; because greater (μείζων) is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

5:4 For whoever is born of God overcomes (νικᾷ) the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world (ἡ νίκη ἢ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον)—our faith. **5:5** Who is the one who overcomes (ὁ νικῶν) the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

¹⁴² ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου – Here Paul explicitly likens the adversarial relationship between an authentic believer of biblical truth and the world that is hostile to it as that of a soldier fighting against an enemy. It takes proper intellectual armor to fend off the ideas and strategies of other sinful human beings who want the Christian to rebel against God in the same manner and with the same intensity with which they are doing so and not believe in Jesus as the Messiah properly. Protecting oneself from the ideas of their world is particularly difficult when the strategies which people use to convince and encourage others to rebel against God are so cunning and shrewd, such as how homosexuality cannot be wrong because these people are being so loving towards one another. But this is simply consequentialism (and hedonism as one kind of consequentialism in addition to utilitarianism) and, while looking at only the possible temporary consequences, fails to take into account the eternal consequences involving God’s final judgment of all human beings when Jesus returns and at the end of the millennial kingdom (cf. Revelation 20).

The *diabolos* (adversary) is the biblical Satan, that one who lives in the invisible, spiritual realm and who somehow influences entire cultures and their religious leaders to persist in their rebellion against God by strategizing how they may do so.

In this section, Paul is not calling Christians to fight against and vanquish evil spiritual beings who are at work in the world influencing people and institutions, as is the popular view of “spiritual warfare.” Nor is he saying that God needs our help through prayer (and fasting or other religious activity) to counteract the purposes of these evil beings. Instead, Paul is calling on individual Christians to arm themselves with the truth of the gospel in order to resist the temptation to buy into the false ideas of the world and give up believing in only the truth of the gospel.

¹⁴³ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πᾶλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους ἰ τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἢ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις – While one option is that Paul is talking about invisible rulers and authorities among the spiritual beings who are behind the lies and evil of the world’s cultures, as in 2:2 (i.e., Satan specifically as the head of all invisible, evil authority), here it makes more sense to interpret him as referring to earthly religious rulers whose power and force in the context of their man-made religious systems influence people away from God.

Thus, Paul views the religious rulers of this world, those who rise to the highest level of power and authority in their

respective religious organizations and movements, etc. to be the prime examples of rebellion against God and who influence others the most in rebelling against God. Paul would have in mind, for example, the rulers of Judaism who are featured in the gospels as opposing Jesus while claiming to be proponents of the OT Mosaic Covenant, and other Jews who reacted in a hostile manner to Paul’s message wherever he went. He would also have in mind the religious rulers of the pagan religions in the Roman Empire who reacted in like manner to Paul.

In our day, Paul would have in mind the religious rulers who are secularists and even scientists who deny the existence of God and promote and condone behavior in opposition to God’s moral commandments. Their gods are themselves, which is true of all false religions, that they are merely different ways that human beings worship themselves by seeing themselves as the ultimate source of their existence, well-being, and definitions of good and evil (and where their definitions typically reverse those of the Bible, calling good evil and evil good – [Isaiah 5:20](#) Woe to those who call **evil good**, and **good evil**; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!). Thus, all these kinds of religious rulers place themselves in line with the *diabolos* (adversary) who lives in the invisible, spiritual realm. Therefore, the enemy of the Christian is the collection of false religions in the world, any kind of “religion” whether explicitly worshipping other “gods” or implicitly worshipping the natural world, which would seek to seduce us away from the purity and simplicity of belief in Jesus the Messiah and buy into a “system” of religion that actually distorts the biblical message of belief and love of God and people.

Paul has definitely implied that an authentic believer in the Messiah will have to wrestle with his own persistent evil as long as he lives in the present realm. Therefore, here, he is not saying that the believer’s struggle is against only outside forces, even spiritual forces, but that, in the midst of a believer’s struggle with his own sinfulness, there will also be the ideas, messages, and actions of others, who attempt to dominate people’s religious views with their falsehood and denial or distortion of the one true God, even by inventing false religious systems, with which the believer must struggle. Rather than believing the ideas of these religious rulers, the believer in Jesus as the Messiah is exhorted to focus on and believe the ideas regarding him only—the gospel. Today it could even be the case that people love the organizations of Christianity rather than Christianity itself. There are also the loud and powerful voices of secularism, consequentialism, materialism, science, and totalitarianism (all of them being religions because they demand people’s complete loyalty and obedience instead of promoting proper worship of the biblical God) that seek to seduce everyone into their mindset and worldview.

Here “in the heavens” refers to the permanent opposition to God in the present realm—until God destroys this realm and creates the eternal one after the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. The earthly rulers come and go, but the heavenly beings such as Satan who influences them are permanent, at least until God has finished with the present realm at the end of the millennial kingdom. And fortunately even Satan will be bound and thrown into the abyss during the millennial kingdom until its very end when he will be released for a short time to deceive the nations one last time before he is destroyed along with all unbelievers after the Great White Throne Judgment.

Cf. [Ephesians 3:10](#) This was so that the multifaceted wisdom of God could now become known in the heavens [permanently and incorruptibly] through the gathering to the [religious] rulers and authorities, [3:11](#) in line with the plan of the ages, which He devised to include the Messiah Jesus our Lord, [3:12](#) in whom we have boldness and confident access in the light of our belief in him.

¹⁴⁴ διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στήναι – Again, Paul encourages his readers to put on God’s complete intellectual armor as a means to counteract every contact with religious evil and its temptation to abandon God and His truth with its lies. This will allow the Christian to persevere in his belief, being fully committed to the biblical message. Every day in some sense is “the evil day,” but certainly some days seem more evil than others in the experience of a Christian.

[Ephesians 5:15](#) Therefore, look carefully at how you are behaving, not as people who are unwise, but wise, [5:16](#) making the most of the season, because the days are evil.

¹⁴⁵ στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὄσφυν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης – [Isaiah 11:5](#) Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist (יְהוָה יָסַד חֶסֶד וְיִשְׁרָאֵל יָסַד אֱמוּנָה) (καὶ ἔσται δικαιοσύνη ἐζωσμένος τὴν ὄσφυν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀληθεία εἰλημένος τὰς πλευράς).

[Isaiah 59:17](#) He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head (וְכִי בָעָבַר יְהוָה בְּרִשְׁוֹתָיו וְיָסַד אֱמוּנָה) (καὶ ἐνέδυσάτο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα καὶ περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς); and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

In this paragraph, Paul presents the fact that ideas are the most important elements of the creation for influencing how people not only think but also act. People act appropriately only if they have the true ideas. Paul wants his readers to arm themselves with the biblical message in order to be able to combat all the intellectual influences that come from the overall evil and rebellion that exists within the present creation.

It is like the OT Israelites who could be said to have wrapped the truth of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants around their waists as a way to keep themselves obedient to God in their opposition to the pagan idolatry of their surrounding cultures. This, along with how authentic belief will result in God’s eternal forgiveness, which is worn like a bulletproof vest, will further keep the believer properly protected from succumbing to the rebellious pressures of the various religious systems available and their inherent evil whereby they ultimately have rejected God.

So we clothe ourselves in the truth of the gospel which declares that we are justified and forgiven by God. This is the most important thing that defines us as human beings. By clothing ourselves with God's promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, then the things that Satan and the world present as more interesting and more important will not be as interesting or important so that we would be distracted from the gospel.

¹⁴⁶ καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης – Paul adds proper footwear to his intellectual armor of protection against lies and evil in the religious systems in the world. It is the footwear of the good news of the promise of shalom, i.e., a life of wholesomeness and moral perfection in the eternal Kingdom of God, which enables a Christian soldier to walk into battle against the world and its ideas and win the battle which will result in eternal salvation and life.

¹⁴⁷ ἐν πάσιν ἀναλαμβάνοντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ ὅ[τ]α πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι – Certainly, as Paul is saying here, belief in the truth, indeed genuine, inward belief in the biblical message, that results in intellectual knowledge and understanding of God and His plans and purposes is what helps a person fend off the lies and evil influences of the present realm that come flying at him like flaming arrows, seeking to kill him, i.e., to destroy his belief in the gospel. All these lies scream at the believer, “Believe me, believe me,” and are intended to crush his belief in the biblical gospel. But the Christian keeps believing the gospel and will not allow the false ideas of the world to penetrate his soul and mind the way that arrows would penetrate his body. Indeed, he deflects these false ideas with the truth and thinks clearly about who God is and what He is doing within the creation—bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God through Jesus and both his first appearance and his second appearance.

¹⁴⁸ καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου ὁδέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ – **Isaiah 59:17** He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head (יְקַיֵּם כְּרִצְיָא וְיָשִׁיב עָלָיו כִּסֵּי יְשׁוּעָה) (καὶ ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα καὶ περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς); and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

Filling out the Christian's armor is a helmet which represents his knowledge of the promise of eternal salvation from God's condemnation, as well as a sword, an offensive weapon, that represents attacking the lies and evil influences of the world with an intellectual inwardness that comes from within him from the Spirit of God and is characterized by understanding the ideas that God has been intent on communicating to human beings by means of the Bible and related elements within the creation and which the Spirit of God has convinced the authentic Christian to believe. This is all the proper armor provided by God as He works within the creation and in Christians.

The word πνεύματος is typically interpreted as the Spirit of God (capital S), so that Paul would be saying that just as the Spirit has caused Paul's readers to become authentic believers, the Spirit also leads them to embrace the set of ideas which instruct them in the correct and accurate understanding of the nature of reality—that this is a story which God is telling ultimately about Himself and the high priest and king whom He has provided sinful mankind to rescue them from eternal destruction and provide them with an eternal environment where they will live with this priest and king who is called the Messiah.

Paul has used the neuter relative pronoun ὃ in the phrase ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ. The neuter can refer to only the word πνεύματος, so that Paul is saying that the sword, the message of God, *comes ultimately from* God's Spirit (by means of a genitive of source) who works within Christians to cause them to believe and embrace the biblical message, so that the Christian fights false ideas from that which he has become convinced is true in his inwardness. Thus, the ῥῆμα θεοῦ, the message of God, is basically the gospel. Therefore, in this case, Paul is saying that God's activity in the created realm has established the set of ideas that constitute the gospel in the believer's mind that gives him hope in this world which offers so many other ideas for people to believe and follow as the basis for their lives. Thus, the ideas of the gospel truth are part and parcel of who the Christian is and become a vital weapon against the ideas of the world. God's purpose is to save His people, and this is what the believer counts on as his hope and uses to “extinguish” the false and evil ideas of the world as influenced by Satan.

¹⁴⁹ Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων – Paul certainly wants his readers to “pray in every season in [their] spirit,” which is to pray repetitively towards God. And, in the midst of their prayers and through their prayers, he ultimately wants them to be alert with perseverance of belief, so that it is also this that he wants them to pray on behalf of themselves, other believers, and Paul.

In addition, Paul is very aware of the uniquely important role that God has given him as the one and only apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Ephesians 3). And with Paul's perspective that the return of the Messiah was imminent (coming forthwith, i.e., at the exact moment which God has planned), it should not surprise us that he wants the Ephesian Christians to pray for him as he continues fulfilling this role so that those who have been set apart in God's mind before the beginning of the creation will embrace the gospel in the near future as a result of his proclaiming it during his travels in the Roman Empire and in his current imprisonment in Rome (cf. 6:20). Thus the Ephesian Christians, other existing Christians which include Paul, and future Christians most importantly must remain alert and persevering in their belief, and Paul is saying that this should be their prayer.

cf. Matthew 25 and the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom provide themselves with enough oil for their lamps to wait long enough for the bridegroom, while five do not.

It is also important to recognize how fragile our faith is, that we need to pray as Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray,

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” i.e., lead us not into abandoning our faith when a particularly difficult test of it in the form of some evil from the evil one in this world, whether the evil itself or its effects, comes along (cf. Matthew 6:13).

Cf. Matthew 26:41, **Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

Jesus is saying that the dichotomy which exists in sinful human beings who are believers makes it just that much more important that they pray that God will powerfully sustain their belief through the trials and afflictions of life. It is theoretically possible for them to give in to the lies of the world and cease to believe the gospel, while fortunately it is theologically guaranteed that God will provide them with the strength to persevere in their belief.

¹⁵⁰ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῆ λόγος ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Paul is also very mindful that God uses two elements of reality to ensure that some of the Gentiles become authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. 1) The first is that God has set apart certain people to become believers within the story of creation. 2) The second is that as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul articulates the ideas regarding Jesus to them, and they respond inwardly with genuine belief as God’s Spirit works within them to do so. Thus, Paul wants his readers to pray exactly along these lines, so that, when Paul does speak about the biblical message of the Messiah, he may do so with confidence and courage as God also continues working within him in a way that corresponds to the very responsibility that He has given Paul and he does not shy away from this responsibility at all. As a result, Paul will fulfill his responsibility, and people will respond with true belief according to God’s having predestined them and set them apart. Then these new Christians will need to remain alert and persevere in their faith, too.

This is a good example of the very nature of prayer—that it is appealing to God for that which He has promised to do—no more, no less, and that the focus of prayer is the spread of the gospel as we approach the coming of the Messiah to set up his millennial kingdom.

Here, “the mystery of the good news” is the message about Jesus who cleared up the mystery presented in the OT, the predictions of the Messiah, when he finally appeared and showed the world exactly who the Messiah is.

¹⁵¹ ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δεῖ με λαλήσαι – Paul knows that he is morally obligated to proclaim the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah, because he is the apostle to the Gentiles. However, Paul also knows that he is human and frail. Therefore, he has no problem with people who would pray that God would grant him courage to do that which God has called him to do, even if God already has in mind to provide Paul with such courage according to the way His story is going to be written. This is the proper interaction between our prayers and God. God is orchestrating the story of salvation for mankind, and we pray for that which He is orchestrating as part of our own genuine belief in God.

This the second time in two verses that Paul mentions how he wants to speak with “boldness,” which probably indicates that he, too, felt some level of timidity when it came to presenting such a controversial message as the gospel of Jesus in the midst of a hostile world.

Paul also indicates that he is “in prison,” which is house arrest in Rome while he awaits an audience with Emperor Nero as a result of the events in Acts 21-26.

¹⁵² Ἰνα δὲ εἰδῆτε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ κατ’ ἐμέ, τί πράσσω, πάντα ἴγνωρίσει ὑμῖν Τύχικος ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ πιστὸς διάκονος ἐν κυρίῳ – Tychicus is also mentioned in Acts 20:4 as a companion of Paul when he traveled from Corinth to Jerusalem. He is originally from Asia, meaning most probably from Ephesus. Paul mentions him too in Colossians 4:7 as the one bringing information about Paul to them, indicating most likely that he carried both Ephesians and Colossians to their respective recipients, along with the letter Philemon to its recipient by this name in Colossae.

Acts 20:1-6, After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. **2** When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. **3** And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. **4** And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. **5** But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. **6** We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

Colossians 4:7, As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information.

¹⁵³ ὃν ἐπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλέση τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν – Paul is counting on Tychicus to be an accurate spokesman of the apostolic message, most likely because Paul has been a good teacher of it to him, and Tychicus has been a good student. In the process of encouraging them with the truth, Tychicus will also provide the Ephesians with news specifically about Paul and others who are with him in Rome while he is under house arrest and awaiting an audience with Emperor Nero.

¹⁵⁴ Εἰρήνη τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς καὶ ἀγάπη μετὰ πίστεως ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The syntax of this verse clearly indicates that Paul wants “love” to come from both the transcendent Creator and the Messiah, thus presenting a basis for the case that the verses at the beginning of, for example, Galatians and Ephesians (Galatians 1:3;

Ephesians 1:2) are Paul's expressions of his desire that grace and shalom come from both of them, too, instead of God's being "our" Father and the Father of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

Paul is stating that the two things that he would have God grant the Ephesians is an environment of shalom which ultimately will come only in the eternal Kingdom of God, which Jesus will bring about when he returns at the directive of God. Thus, Paul is saying that he expects and wants God to provide his readers with eternal life and mercy. He wants God also to give them His love that results in genuine belief within them. Thus, Paul wants God to work lovingly towards them and continue granting them genuine inwardness which manifests itself in their persevering in their belief in the message of Jesus as the Messiah and therefore in Jesus himself.

¹⁵⁵ ἡ χάρις μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἀγαπώντων τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν ἀφθαρσία – Paul ends with mentioning the concept of grace, God's independent love and kindness towards sinful human beings who do not deserve them. Paul wants those who have come to love Jesus as their Messiah because of God's grace to continue to experience this grace, which, of course, is exactly what God has promised will happen for those to whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world—to extend His grace to them for the purpose of their acquiring eternal life and indestructible immortality.

Something that every human being finds himself wanting is an existence where neither he nor that which he loves can be destroyed and go out of existence. We all want to hold on to our lives and our stuff so that we never experience any loss. This is exactly what the Kingdom of God will provide. People will not die, and things will neither deteriorate nor be destroyed. Everyone and everything will be eternally preserved by God so that no one will lose anyone or anything. And the experience will be perfect and perfectly wholesome and enjoyable without end.