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## Ephesians

In the ancient world, not many people wrote letters from prison. Ephesians is one of only five that we have from the time of the early Roman Empire. The other four are also New Testament letters. It was shameful to be a prisoner. Friends and relatives would often turn away from those in prison. But for Paul and other believers, it was a great honour to be in prison for following Jesus. For most people, prison was a place without hope. But Paul used even his time in prison to tell others about the new life that Jesus offers. His letter to the Ephesians is a beautiful example of how God uses hard times for good.

When Paul wrote this letter, groups of non-Jewish believers in Jesus were gathering in many places throughout Asia Minor (western Turkey). The church in Ephesus was one of these groups. And it may not have been the only church that received this letter. Many early Greek copies of Ephesians do not have the words “in Ephesus”. And the letter does not deal with the special problems of a single church. So perhaps it was sent to all the churches in the area. Paul writes to welcome and encourage these non-Jewish believers. He lets them know that God’s family is for everyone, Jews and non-Jews. Yes, God loves all people. And his plan is to rescue them from the power of sin through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. God’s grace (kindness)

is for all. So his plan involves the whole universe.

But Paul also shows what God’s plan means for families and individuals. All believers are part of God’s family because they belong to Jesus. And in their own families, Jesus is Lord. He replaces the powerful father, husband and slave owner. And God prepares every believer for life’s battles. Believers must use their gifts to serve each other. They must continue to grow strong in faith. And they must follow the example of God’s love in the way they live.

Unity is an important idea in this letter. Paul says that all believers are united with Jesus. Jesus is their Lord and Christ (God’s Chosen King). So they must learn how to live together in peace. Paul describes the church as a body with Jesus as the head. It is also a temple where God lives through the Spirit. And it is God’s family. Paul also says the church is like a wife who is united with Jesus as the husband.

In this letter Paul writes to believers in and near Ephesus about...

Christ and the church in God’s great plan for the world (1:1 – 2:22)

God’s plan and its meaning for the church in the world (3:1 – 5:20)

God’s plan for families in the church (5:21 – 6:9)

Preparing for battle in the fight against evil (6:10-20)

His plan to send Tychicus and his prayers for them (6:21-24)

**1** Greetings from Paul, an apostle for Christ Jesus.\* I am an apostle because that is what God wanted.

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\***1:1 Christ Jesus** Or “King Jesus”. The term “Christ” is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah”, a royal title. See Mark 15:32; Luke 23:2. See also Christ and Messiah in the Word List.

To God's holy people in Ephesus,<sup>†</sup> believers who belong to Christ Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Blessings From God

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! When God joined us to Christ, he blessed us with all the benefits of heaven that come through his Spirit. <sup>4</sup> Before he made the world, God chose us who belong to Christ to be his very own people. Because he loves us, he chose us to be people who have the right to enter into his presence and stand before him without any fault. <sup>5</sup> From the beginning, he decided to adopt us as his children through Jesus Christ. This was what God wanted, and it pleased him to do it. <sup>6</sup> And this brings praise to God because of his wonderful grace. God gave that grace to us freely. He gave us that grace in Christ, the one he loves.

<sup>7</sup> Christ gave his life for us. He bled and died to make us free. Yes, our sins are forgiven because of God's rich grace. <sup>8</sup> God gave us that grace fully and freely. With full wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he let us know his secret plan. This was what God wanted, and he planned to do it through Christ. <sup>10</sup> God's goal was to finish his plan when the right time came. He planned that all things in heaven and on earth be joined together with Christ as the head.

<sup>11</sup> In Christ we were chosen to be God's people. God had already planned for us to be his people, because that is what he wanted. And he is the one who is always working to make everything agree with what he decides and wants. <sup>12</sup> We Jews were the first to put our hope in Christ. And we were chosen so that we would bring praise to God in all his glory. <sup>13</sup> It

is the same with you. You heard the true message, the Good News about the way God saves you. When you heard that Good News, you believed in Christ. And to show that you belong to him, God put his special mark on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he promised. <sup>14</sup> The Spirit he gives us is the first payment to guarantee that God will also give us all the rich blessings he promises to his children. We will all enjoy the complete freedom that is for those who belong to him. And this will bring praise to God in all his glory.

### Paul's Prayer

<sup>15-16</sup> That is why I always remember you in my prayers and thank God for you. I have done this ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. <sup>17</sup> I always pray to the great and glorious Father, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that he will give you the Spirit, who will let you know truths about God and help you understand them so that you will know him better.

<sup>18</sup> I pray that God will open your minds to see his truth. Then you will know the hope that he has chosen us to have. You will know that the blessings God has promised his holy people are rich and glorious. <sup>19</sup> And you will know that God's power is very great for us who believe. It is the same as the mighty power <sup>20</sup> he used to raise Christ from death and put him at his right side in heaven. <sup>21</sup> He put Christ over all rulers, authorities, powers and kings. He gave him authority over everything that has power in this world or in the next world. <sup>22</sup> God put everything under Christ's power and made him head over everything for the church. <sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>†</sup>1:1 in *Ephesus* Some Greek copies do not have the words "in Ephesus".

church is Christ's body. It is filled with him. He makes everything complete in every way.

### From Death to Life

**2** In the past you were spiritually dead because of your sins and the things you did against God. <sup>2</sup>Yes, in the past your lives were full of those sins. You lived the way the world lives, following the ruler of the evil powers<sup>‡</sup> that are above the earth. That same spirit is now working in those who refuse to obey God. <sup>3</sup>In the past we all lived like that, trying to please our sinful selves. We did all the things our bodies and minds wanted. Like everyone else in the world, we deserved to suffer God's anger just because of the way we were.

<sup>4</sup>But God is rich in mercy, and he loved us very much. <sup>5</sup>We were spiritually dead because of all we had done against him. But he gave us new life together with Christ. (You have been saved by God's grace.) <sup>6</sup>Yes, God raised us from death to life with Christ Jesus and seated us together with Christ in the heavenly places. <sup>7</sup>God did this so that his kindness to us who belong to Christ Jesus would clearly show for all time to come the amazing richness of his grace.

<sup>8</sup>I mean that God saved you by grace because you believed. You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. <sup>9</sup>You are not saved by the things you have done, so there is nothing to boast about. <sup>10</sup>God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would spend our lives doing the good things he had already planned for us to do.

### Christ Has United Us All

<sup>11</sup>You were not born as Jews. You are the people the Jews call "uncircumcised".<sup>†</sup> Those Jews who call you "uncircumcised" call themselves "circumcised". (Their circumcision is only something they themselves do to their bodies.) <sup>12</sup>Remember that in the past you were without Christ. You were not citizens of Israel, and you did not know about the agreements<sup>§</sup> with the promises that God made to his people. You had no hope, and you did not know God. <sup>13</sup>But now you are united with Christ Jesus and have been brought near to God through the blood sacrifice of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>Yes, Christ is the reason we are now at peace. He made us Jews and you who are not Jews one people. We were separated by a wall of hate that stood between us, but he broke down that wall. By giving his own body, <sup>15</sup>he ended the law with its many commands and rules. His purpose was to make the two groups become one in him. By doing this he would make peace. <sup>16</sup>Through the cross Christ ended the hate between the two groups. And after they became one body, he wanted to bring them both back to God. He did this with his death on the cross. <sup>17</sup>He came and brought the message of peace to you non-Jews who were far away from God. And he brought that message of peace to those who were near to God. <sup>18</sup>Yes, through Christ we all have the right to come to the Father in one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup>So now you non-Jewish people are not strangers or foreigners, but you are citizens together with God's holy peo-

<sup>‡</sup>2:2 *ruler of the evil powers* See Satan in the Word List.

<sup>†</sup>2:11 *uncircumcised* People not having the mark of circumcision like the Jews have.

<sup>§</sup>2:12 *agreements* The agreements with special promises that God gave at various times to people in the Old Testament. See agreement in the Word List.

ple. You belong to God's family. <sup>20</sup>You believers are like a building that God owns. That building was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself is the most important stone\*\* in that building. <sup>21</sup>The whole building is joined together in him, and he makes it grow and become a holy temple†† for the Lord. <sup>22</sup>United with him, you are being built together with his other people. You are being made into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

### Paul's Work for the Non-Jewish People

**3** So I, Paul, am a prisoner because I serve Christ Jesus for you who are not Jews. <sup>2</sup>Surely you know that God gave me this work through his grace to help you. <sup>3</sup>God let me know his secret plan by showing it to me. I have already written a little about this. <sup>4</sup>And if you read what I wrote, you can see that I understand the secret truth about Christ. <sup>5</sup>People who lived in other times were not told that secret truth. But now, through the Spirit, God has made it known to his holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup>And this is the secret truth: that by accepting the Good News, those who are not Jews will share with the Jews in the blessings God has for his people. They are part of the same body, and they share in the promise God made through Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>By God's special gift of grace, I became a servant to tell that Good News. He gave me that grace by using his power. <sup>8</sup>I am the least important of all God's people. But he gave me this gift—

to tell the non-Jewish people the Good News about the riches Christ has. These riches are too great to understand fully. <sup>9</sup>And God gave me the work of telling all people about the plan for his secret truth. That secret truth has been hidden in him since the beginning of time. He is the one who created everything. <sup>10</sup>His purpose was that all the rulers and powers in the heavenly places will now know the many different ways he shows his wisdom. They will know this because of the church. <sup>11</sup>This agrees with the plan God had since the beginning of time. He did what he planned, and he did it through Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup>Because we belong to Christ, we come before God with freedom and without fear. We can do this because of our faith in Christ.‡‡ <sup>13</sup>So I ask you not to be discouraged because of what is happening to me. My sufferings are for your benefit—for your honour and glory.

### The Love of Christ

<sup>14</sup>So I bow in prayer before the Father. <sup>15</sup>His entire family in heaven and on earth gets its true name from him. <sup>16</sup>I ask the Father with his great glory to give you the power to be strong in your spirits. He will give you that strength through his Spirit. <sup>17</sup>I pray that Christ will live in your hearts because of your faith. I pray that your life will be strong in love and be built on love. <sup>18</sup>And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love—how wide, how long, how high and how deep that love is. <sup>19</sup>Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you

\*\*2:20 *most important stone* Literally, "cornerstone". The first and most important stone in a building.

††2:21 *temple* God's house—the place where God's people worship him. Here, it means that believers are the spiritual temple where God lives.

‡‡3:12 *our faith in Christ* Or "because of his faithfulness".

will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with everything God has for you.

<sup>20</sup> Praise be to God! It is his power that is working in us. And with that power he can do much, much more than anything we can ask or even think of. <sup>21</sup> Let all who will ever be part of the church and belong to Christ Jesus give honour to God for ever and ever. Amen.

### The Unity of the Body

**4** So, as a prisoner for the Lord, I beg you to live the way God's people should live, because he chose you to be his. <sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient and accept each other with love. <sup>3</sup> You are joined together with peace through the Spirit. Do all you can to continue as you are, letting peace hold you together. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, and God chose you to have one hope. <sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. <sup>6</sup> There is one God and Father of us all, who rules over everyone. He works through all of us and in all of us.

<sup>7</sup> Christ gave each one of us a special gift. Everyone received what he wanted to give them. <sup>8</sup> That is why the Scriptures say,

“He went up high into the sky; he took prisoners with him, and he gave gifts to people.”<sup>¶¶</sup>

<sup>9</sup> When it says, “He went up,” what does it mean? It means that he first came down low to earth. <sup>10</sup> So Christ came down, and he is the same one who went up. He went up above the highest heaven in order to fill everything with himself. <sup>11</sup> And that same Christ gave these gifts to people: he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and

tell the Good News, and some to care for and teach God's people.<sup>§§</sup> <sup>12</sup> Christ gave them to prepare God's holy people for the work of serving, to make the body of Christ stronger. <sup>13</sup> This work must continue until we are all joined together in what we believe and in what we know about the Son of God. Our goal is to become like a fully grown person—to look just like Christ and have all his perfection.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be like babies. We will not be people who are always changing like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from people who are trying to deceive us—those who make clever plans and use every kind of trick to fool others into following the wrong way. <sup>15</sup> No, we will speak the truth with love. We will grow to be like Christ in every way. He is the head, <sup>16</sup> and the whole body depends on him. All the parts of the body are joined and held together, with each part doing its own work. This causes the whole body to grow and to be stronger in love.

### The Way You Should Live

<sup>17</sup> I have something from the Lord to tell you. I warn you: don't continue living like those who don't believe. Their thoughts are worth nothing. <sup>18</sup> They have no understanding, and they know nothing because they refuse to listen. So they cannot have the life that God gives. <sup>19</sup> They have lost their feeling of shame. They have given their lives to seeking sexual pleasure. More and more they want to do all kinds of indecent things. <sup>20</sup> But that way of life is nothing like what you learned when you

<sup>¶¶</sup>4:8 Quote from Ps. 68:18.

<sup>§§</sup>4:11 *to care for ... people* Literally, “to be shepherds and teachers”.

came to know Christ. <sup>21</sup> I know that you heard about him, and in him you were taught the truth. Yes, the truth is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught to leave your old self. This means that you must stop living the evil way you lived before. That old self gets worse and worse, because people are fooled by the evil they want to do. <sup>23</sup> You must be made new in your hearts and in your thinking. <sup>24</sup> Be that new person who was made to be like God, truly good and pleasing to him.

<sup>25</sup> So you must stop telling lies. “You must always speak the truth to each other,”\* because we all belong to each other in the same body. <sup>26</sup> “When you are angry, don’t let that anger make you sin,”† and don’t stay angry all day. <sup>27</sup> That would give the devil a way to defeat you. <sup>28</sup> Whoever has been stealing must stop it and start working. They should use their hands for doing something useful. Then they will have something to share with those who are poor.

<sup>29</sup> When you talk, don’t say anything bad. But say the good things that people need—whatever will help them grow stronger. Then what you say will be a blessing to those who hear you. <sup>30</sup> And don’t make the Holy Spirit sad. God gave you his Spirit as proof that you belong to him and that he will keep you safe until the day he makes you free. <sup>31</sup> Stop being bitter or angry. Don’t lose your temper. Never shout angrily or insult anyone. Avoid doing anything hurtful. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and loving to each other. Forgive each other just as God forgave you through Christ.

**5** You are God’s dear children, so try to be like him. <sup>2</sup> Live a life of love. Love others just as Christ loved us. He gave

himself for us—a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> Never let it be said that there is sexual sin among you. Let no one think that you are indecent in any way or always wanting more sexual pleasure. God’s holy people should have nothing to do with such sin. <sup>4</sup> Also, there must be no evil talk among you. Don’t say things that are foolish or filthy. These are not for you. But you should be giving thanks to God. <sup>5</sup> You can be sure of this: no one will have a place in the kingdom of Christ and of God if that person commits sexual sins, or does evil things or is a person who selfishly wants more and more. A greedy person like that is serving a false god.

<sup>6</sup> Don’t let anyone fool you with words that are not true. God gets very angry when people who don’t obey him talk like that. <sup>7</sup> So don’t have anything to do with them. <sup>8</sup> In the past you were full of darkness, but now you are full of light in the Lord. So live like children who belong to the light. <sup>9</sup> This light produces every kind of goodness, right living and truth. <sup>10</sup> Try to learn what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have no part in the things that people in darkness do, which produce nothing good. Instead, tell everyone how wrong those things are. <sup>12</sup> Actually, it is shameful to even talk about the things those people do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But the light makes clear how wrong those things are. <sup>14</sup> Yes, everything is made clear by the light. This is why we say, “Wake up, you who are sleeping! Rise from death, and Christ will shine on you.”

<sup>15</sup> So be very careful how you live. Live wisely, not like fools. <sup>16</sup> I mean that you should use every opportunity you

\*4:25 Quote from Zech. 8:16.

†4:26 Quote from Ps. 4:4 (Greek version).

have for doing good, because these are evil times. <sup>17</sup> So don't be foolish with your lives, but learn what the Lord wants you to do. <sup>18</sup> Don't be drunk with wine, which will ruin your life, but be filled with the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Encourage each other with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord. <sup>20</sup> Always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Wives and Husbands

<sup>21</sup> Be willing to serve each other out of respect for Christ.

<sup>22</sup> Wives, be willing to serve your husbands the same as the Lord. <sup>23</sup> A husband is the head of his wife, just as Christ is the head of the church. Christ is the Saviour of the church, which is his body. <sup>24</sup> The church serves under Christ, so it is the same with you wives. You should be willing to serve your husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives the same as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. <sup>26</sup> He died to make the church holy. He washed her with water and announced that she belongs to him. <sup>27</sup> Christ did this to present the church to himself as a bride in all her beauty. He wanted the church to be holy and perfect, without any ugly spots, faults or any other thing wrong.

<sup>28</sup> And husbands should love their wives like that. They should love their wives as they love their own bodies. The man who loves his wife loves himself, <sup>29</sup> because no one ever hates his own body, but feeds and takes care of it. And that is what Christ does for the church <sup>30</sup> because we are parts of his

body. <sup>31</sup> The Scriptures say, "That is why a man will leave his father and mother and join his wife, and the two people will become one."<sup>‡</sup> <sup>32</sup> That secret truth is very important—I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> But each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself. And a wife must respect her husband.

### Children and Parents

**6** Children, obey your parents the way the Lord wants, because this is the right thing to do. <sup>2</sup> The command says, "You must respect your father and mother."<sup>¶</sup> This is the first command that has a promise with it. <sup>3</sup> And this is the promise: "Then all will go well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth."<sup>§</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Fathers, don't make your children angry, but raise them with the kind of teaching and training you learn from the Lord.

### Slaves and Masters

<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your masters here on earth with fear and respect. And do this sincerely, just as you obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> You must do this not just to please your masters while they are watching, but all the time. Since you are really slaves of Christ, you must do with all your heart what God wants. <sup>7</sup> Do your work, and be happy to do it. Work as though it is the Lord you are serving, not just an earthly master. <sup>8</sup> Remember that the Lord will give everyone a reward for doing good. Everyone, slave or free, will get a reward for the good things they do.

<sup>9</sup> Masters, in the same way, be good to your slaves. Don't say things to scare

<sup>‡</sup>5:31 Quote from Gen. 2:24.

<sup>¶</sup>6:2 Quote from Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.

<sup>§</sup>6:3 Quote from Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.

them. You know that the one who is your Master and their Master is in heaven, and he judges everyone the same.

### **Wear the Full Armour of God**

<sup>10</sup> Here is one last word of advice: depend on the Lord for your strength. Put your trust in his great power. <sup>11</sup> Wear the full armour of God. Wear God's armour so that you can fight against the devil's clever tricks. <sup>12</sup> Our fight is not against people on earth. We are fighting against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world's darkness. We are fighting against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> That is why you need to put on God's full armour. Then on the day of evil, you will be able to stand strong. And when you have finished the whole fight, you will still be standing.

<sup>14</sup> So stand strong with the belt of truth tied around your waist, and on your chest wear the protection of right living. <sup>15</sup> On your feet wear the Good News of peace to help you stand strong. <sup>16</sup> And also use the shield of faith with which you can stop all the burning arrows that come from the Evil One. <sup>17</sup> Accept God's salvation as your helmet. And take the sword of the Spirit—that sword is the

teaching of God. <sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times. Pray with all kinds of prayers, and ask for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready. Never give up. Always pray for all of God's people.

<sup>19</sup> Also pray for me—that when I speak, God will give me words so that I can tell the secret truth about the Good News without fear. <sup>20</sup> I have the work of speaking for that Good News, and that is what I am doing now, here in prison. Pray that when I tell people the Good News, I will speak without fear as I should.

### **Final Greetings**

<sup>21</sup> I am sending you Tychicus, our dear brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. He will tell you everything that is happening with me. Then you will know how I am and what I am doing. <sup>22</sup> That's why I am sending him—to let you know how we are and to encourage you.

<sup>23</sup> I pray that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give peace and love with faith to all the brothers and sisters there. <sup>24</sup> I pray that God's grace will be with all of you who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love that never ends.