

Ephesians

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Chapter 1

Part 1: Ephesians 1:1-12

If we want to be people who are filled with the power of God (so that we can accomplish the things that He wants us to accomplish, and so that we can bring Him glory) we need to be Biblically literate. We need to be people who are learning theological truth and doctrine and applying it to our lives. When we apply God's truth to our lives, God's power can be released, and people will see the glory of God through His people.

Verse 1: *"Paul, an apostle of Messiah Yeshua by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Messiah Yeshua:"*

An apostle: An apostle is one who has been sent by God to perform a service. When Paul uses this term 'apostle' he is not trying to impress people with a title. Paul was not emphasising a title but a position (a role, a service) that he had been appointed to.

The saints ... faithful: There is a relationship between faith and saints. These people are called 'saints' because of their faith (belief) in God.

Verse 2: *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Messiah Yeshua."*

Grace...peace: This is a familiar order in all of Paul's letters. Without the grace of God, we cannot experience the peace of God. Peace is not just the absence of violence, but we experience peace as a fulfilment of God's will. Until we are recipients of God's grace, we will never be able to carry out His purposes and plans and so would not be able to fulfil His will.

Verse 3: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Messiah Yeshua, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Messiah. "*

The heavens: 'Heavens' is synonymous with the Kingdom. By using this term, Paul is teaching us that we need to have a Kingdom perspective. God blesses us so that we can exemplify and demonstrate Kingdom truth and Kingdom character to others.

Blessed us with every spiritual blessing: We only receive this blessing when we are IN Messiah – i.e. when we are saved and are being sanctified.

IN Messiah: (In the Beloved...In Him...) Paul repeats (and therefore emphasises) that those who are saved are IN Messiah. There is no salvation outside of Messiah. In this chapter Paul also emphasises that there is no sanctification apart from being IN Messiah. It is only when we are IN Messiah that the holiness and righteousness of God (His glory) can be manifested through His people.

Verse 4: *“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”*

He chose us: He elected us. We need to remember that God’s choice or election of people is **only relevant** to those who are IN Messiah. It is only through exercising faith that we find ourselves IN Him. However, He is the source of that faith. God provides faith to us, but it is up to us to take hold of the faith that He offers to us. Salvation is given to us as an outcome of God’s grace. Receiving that grace does not mean that we, in any way, participated in our salvation. For example: when we are given a gift, we did nothing in regard to that gift (the purchasing of it, the wrapping of it, etc – all the work was done by the giver of the gift). All we did was take the gift, open it and enjoy it. This taking, opening and enjoying would not be considered work. In the same way, receiving salvation does not mean that we, in any way, contributed to our salvation. We merely received what had already been completely done for us.

Note: It is important to be aware of a doctrine espoused by some Protestant theologians - the doctrine of total depravity. Those who adhere to this doctrine believe that all people are born with a corrupt nature (because of original sin) and they are unable to choose God, avoid evil or accept salvation without the grace of God. These theologians believe that people cannot do any good. This doctrine is only true in the sense that we cannot save ourselves by doing good. However, what this doctrine does not take into consideration is that God has given every human being a conscience. A conscience is the equivalent of a moral compass within an unbelieving person. A conscience gives us the ability to understand, to a degree, right and wrong. It is through our conscience that we are able to say “yes” to the grace of God. When we say “yes” to God, He chooses us. God knows all things, so when we choose God, it does not take Him by surprise. Even though God knows all things it does not mean that He has caused all things (God allowed sin, but He did not cause it). A very important thing we need to realize about God's sovereignty is that it is not undermined by free will.

Before the foundation of the world: This does NOT mean that before the world was even created God chose those He wanted to save and rejected those He did not want to save. Before the foundation of the world God chose that those who accepted Messiah (those who would be considered “IN HIM”) would be saved. Before the foundation of the world God chose that those who rejected Messiah would be those who would be rejected. God's desire is that ALL people would choose Messiah. God does not desire that any would perish (2 Peter 3:9). God does not take any delight in the death of the wicked, but He desires that ALL would repent and live (Ezekiel 33:11). God’s grace that brings salvation has appeared to ALL men (Titus 2:11). We can conclude, therefore, that God does not create a person only to have chosen to reject that person. This would be against the very nature and character of God. Predestination is only relevant to believers – those who are IN Messiah (those who choose Messiah are considered chosen/elect). Again, God has not chosen that some go to heaven and others go to hell. God gives every man an opportunity to repent. With our consciences helping us, we choose to accept or reject the salvation that God has offered to us. Based on our choice (our choice, which God, being Sovereign, knew from before time), God chooses or rejects us.

Many are called to repentance, few however choose to follow God, so only a few are considered “chosen” (Matthew 22:14). Those who do not use their conscience, who do not respond in faith and who do not take hold of the gift of God – the gift of salvation that He has offered to every man and woman – are not considered chosen.

He chose ... that we should be holy and without blame before Him: Those who choose Messiah are chosen to be holy and blameless in His sight.

In love: Those who are IN Messiah become recipients of His love.

Verse 5: *“having predestined us for adoption as sons through Messiah Yeshua for Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,”*

Predestined: In many theological circles it is taught that God has predetermined (predestined) who will be in His Kingdom and who will not be in His Kingdom. This teaching cannot be backed up Scripturally. In Greek, this word ‘predestination’ is made up of two words. The first word (‘pro’) means ‘before’. The second word (‘horizo’) means ‘to see’. Literally, the word predestination means ‘to see before(hand)’. God saw something before it happened. What did He see? He saw that when people were IN Messiah, they would be holy and blameless before Him. He also saw (and therefore made it into a reality through the gospel) that those who were IN Messiah would be *adopted as sons by Messiah Yeshua*. Being holy, blameless and adopted as sons is only relevant to those who are IN Messiah. Predestination is only relevant for those who are IN Messiah.

Note: Let us look at an example of this in everyday life. When a dressmaker wants to make a dress, she chooses her material and a pattern. Before this material even begins to be laid out and cut, that dressmaker knows (she ‘sees beforehand’) what the finished product is going to look like. Messiah is the pattern that God saw ‘beforehand’. We are patterned on Messiah. We, who are IN Messiah, are predestined to be like Messiah. This is the reality that God is going to bring about in the life of every believer (1 John 3:2).

Verse 6: *“to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has been gracious to us IN the Beloved.”*

Praise...glory...grace: When we are IN Messiah, we praise Him. As we praise Him, we manifest His glory. We are only able to praise God and manifest His glory because of His grace.

Gracious: The word used here is not the word for ‘accepted’. It is the word for ‘grace’ in its verbal form.

The Beloved: Referring to Messiah Yeshua.

Verse 7: *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”*

Him: Messiah Yeshua

Redemption through His blood: Redemption (which has a relationship to grace) does not come about because of our good works. It is ONLY through the blood of Messiah that we can find forgiveness for our sins.

According to the riches of His grace: Grace causes so many outcomes in our lives. It brings about salvation and redemption (God's purchased possession). When we are owned by God (i.e. redeemed), there is an expectation that our lives are going to glorify God. Those who respond to God's grace are those who have a desire to turn away from sin (turning away from a sinful lifestyle as well as from the consequences of sin). It is only when we turn away from sin that we are able to manifest God's glory.

Verse 8: *"which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and knowledge."*

Abound: God's grace toward us is exceedingly great.

In all wisdom and knowledge: If grace was only for the purpose of salvation (i.e. entering into the Kingdom of God) why would it be so important that we have an abundance of wisdom and knowledge? Because grace not only has a saving influence in our lives, but it also has a sanctifying influence in our lives (Titus 2:11-14). Grace sets us apart so that we are enabled to fulfil the purposes of God, so that we can serve God in this present age and manifest His character (i.e. His glory). When we manifest God's glory, others are turned towards Him.

Verse 9: *"having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set beforehand in Himself,"*

The mystery: The mystery that Paul is referring to is Messiah and His role in bringing about salvation for not only Israel but also for the Gentiles (the nations). God did not enter into a covenant with Israel for Israel's sake alone, but He entered into the covenant also for the sake of the nations (the body of believers, the church). The church does not replace Israel, but she fulfils Israel's call (to be a light and a blessing to the nations – Genesis 12:3). In the last days, the church is going to provoke Israel to take hold of the call that God has called her to (Deuteronomy 32:21, Romans 10:19).

Set beforehand: All of this has been predetermined, purposed beforehand.

In Himself: All of these things are going to come about - but they are all conditional on being IN Messiah. If we are not IN Messiah the promises, purposes and will of God are not going to be realized in our lives.

Verse 10: *"that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together under His head all things in Messiah, those things which are in heaven and those things which are on earth—in Him."*

Dispensation: This is a word that speaks of management, administration (economy).

Under His head: Under His Lordship. It is only through God's grace that we have the ability to submit to Messiah.

In Him: These truths (which we are reading about throughout Ephesians) are conditional. They are all based upon the condition of being IN Messiah. Left to ourselves (our own imaginations, wills and wisdoms) none of these things would be a reality in our lives.

Verse 11: *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being seen beforehand, according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,”*

An inheritance: This inheritance is related to the Kingdom of God. God saw beforehand this inheritance we, who are IN Messiah, are going to obtain.

Verse 12: *“that we who first hoped in Messiah should be to the praise of His glory.”*

Hoped: The word ‘hope’, in Biblical language, is related to promise. God set His promises beforehand (before the foundation of the world He marked them out). These promises are going to become a reality, and we (who are *IN Messiah*) are going to inherit them. All of what God has predetermined is conditional upon being in Him.

Chapter 1

Part 1: Ephesians 1:13-23

There are so many benefits to being IN Messiah. It is the grace of God that enables us to be IN Him. Predestination is not about who will be in the Kingdom and who will not be in it. Predestination is about what those who are IN Messiah will become – holy, blameless and like Messiah. Being like Messiah does not mean that we become divine. When we look in a mirror, we see an image like ourselves, but that image is not the real us. That image is merely a reflection of the reality. In the same way, we are like that image in the mirror – we are not God, but we reflect Him, we are created to look like and be like Him (to become a new creation who exemplifies the plans and purposes of God).

Verse 13: *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,”*

You: Paul is primarily speaking to the Gentiles – those who had newly responded to this word of truth.

The word of truth: The word of the promise. The word used here (logos) does not necessarily only mean the written word. We get the word ‘logic’ from this word. The Gentiles had seen and heard the word, and they understood the reckoning or mindset of God associated with or behind that word. The Gentiles understood what God wanted to bring about among His people when He spoke His promises to them.

The gospel of your salvation: God’s promises to us are initiated by means of the gospel. Salvation is important. We cannot be IN Messiah without salvation. However, once we are saved, we begin the journey of sanctification – our lives being set apart for the purposes of God.

Having believed: Without faith it's impossible to be saved.

Promise: Those who are from a Jewish background know that a promise is related to a covenant. We do not have to guess what these promises are.

If we look at the covenants, and the promises associated with those covenants, we will know what the promises from God to us are. It is important to note that all God's covenantal promises point to one place – the Kingdom of God.

Sealed with the Holy Spirit: We receive the Holy Spirit as an outcome of salvation.

Verse 14: *“who is the guarantee of our inheritance for redemption of the purchased possession, for the praise of His glory.”*

Who is the guarantee of our inheritance: God's message, here, has a promise attached to it. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee. He guarantee's that the promises of God will be fulfilled in our lives.

Redemption: Redemption has to do with becoming God's possession (He has brought us with the blood of Messiah). God becomes responsible for us because He has purchased us, and therefore owns us. The Holy Spirit is the One who guarantees God's ownership of us. Once we are saved, we are eternally secure. When we are saved, God owns us. He seals us and gives us a guarantee by the Holy Spirit. Once we are His, He has covenanted/promised to never leave us or forsake us

For the praise of His glory: This phrase has been repeated in this chapter and is therefore being emphasised. How do we become the 'praise of His glory'? Initially we are sinners – engaged in all sorts of evil activities. Then we hear the message of salvation, we repent, and we become God's purchased possession. God causes His Name to dwell in us, and we develop a reputation of being associated with Him and in a covenantal relationship with Him ('Christ – Ins'). This transformation in our lives brings about the praise of His glory (God's glory is His Presence – others begin to see God's Presence in us and it leads them to praise).

Verse 15: *“On account of this, I also heard of your faith in the Lord Yeshua and your love for all the saints.”*

Heard of your faith: Paul heard of their response to the redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives to sanctify them. Salvation and sanctification led to them responding in faith to the Lordship of Messiah (they submitted to Messiah as their Master) and it led to them displaying love for others.

Note: We received God's grace because of His love for us (John 3:16). This same love is transferred to us once we believe. This love enables us to love others.

Verse 16: *“I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:”*

Verse 17: *“in order that the God of our Lord Messiah Yeshua, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,”*

The Father of glory: The manifestation of God's glory comes about because of God in us. God's glory is not manifest in us because of who we are. It is manifest in us because of who we become – children of the living God, His purchased possession.

Give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation: We are not saved solely for the purpose of getting into the Kingdom of God.

Once we are saved, God equips us with wisdom and begins to work in our lives, revealing spiritual truth, so that we might manifest His glory to others. There is a relationship between the glory of God and the power of God. It is when God's glory is manifest that the power of God goes to work in situations. When God's glory was manifest in the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11, 2 Chronicles 7:1-3) the priests could not work. The people bowed down before the Lord – worshipping and praising Him for His goodness and mercy. When God's glory filled the temple, the people became recipients of the great things of God.

Verse 18: *“Illuminating the eyes of your heart; that you may know what the hope of His calling is, the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints,”*

Note: Salvation is not the endgame. For most of us, when we become saved, we are not instantly transported into heaven. Most people on earth, although they are alive (in that they are breathing, talking, etc), live dead. When we become saved, we live life truly alive. Salvation is the foundation for life. It is just the beginning of the only true life we can experience on this earth.

Heart: Biblically, a heart is not associated with the organ that pumps blood. A heart refers to a thought process (Proverbs 23:7). When we are saved, when God's glory is manifest in our lives, God illuminates spiritual truth to us (He illuminates/gives light and understanding to us in regard to how we think – we begin to think differently). This truth changes and transforms us.

That you may know what the hope of His calling is: Salvation assures us of a place in the Kingdom of God and it assures us of Kingdom blessing. However, once we are saved (owned by God, as we are purchased by Him through the blood of Yeshua, we become His responsibility), He begins to work out His will and His purpose through our lives. He begins to make known to us what He has called us to do.

Hope: Biblically, hope is related to promise.

His calling: When we become saved, we should not just sit around waiting to die so that we can go to heaven. One of the incredible outcomes of salvation is receiving God's call upon our lives. When we walk in obedience to the call of God in our lives, we are going to experience His promises (the 'hope' to which we are called).

Note: God saves us. He gives us a call. If we follow His call, we are going to be recipients of His promise – the full measure of these promises (our inheritance) will be given to us in His Kingdom (Hebrews 11:39-40). Ultimately our inheritance is not in this world or of this world. While we are alive on earth, we are aliens, foreigners, sojourners.

Verse 19: *“and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”*

Exceeding: Surpassing. This is referring to a greatness that is above and beyond what would be considered usual or normal.

His power toward us: His power toward us (those who believe) is very great. It is through God's mighty power that His glory is manifest. His power only becomes evident in our lives when we are submitted to Him.

Note: Salvation, once received, is guaranteed (we become His purchased possession). However, His power, blessings and promises in our lives is conditional.

It is contingent upon us walking in Him and submitting to His power. Only then do they become a reality in our lives.

Verse 20: *“which He worked in Messiah when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavens,”*

The heavens: God’s power, blessings and promises are all tied to Kingdom truth. God wants to bring these things into our lives for the purpose of reflecting or bringing His Kingdom into this world (Matthew 6:10).

Verse 21: *“far above all rule and power and authority and lordship, and all things which can be given a name, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”*

Far above all rule and power and authority and lordship: In this world we have opposition – principalities and powers. Messiah, however, is far above all of these. It is IN Messiah, then, that we are more than conquerors over these things too.

All things which can be given a name: All things which can be named are true, they are a reality.

Not only in this age but also in that which is to come: With Messiah’s power in us not only will we be overcomers and inheritors in this age, but also in the Kingdom to come.

Verse 22: *“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,”*

Under His feet: This is an expression of victory and of ruling over. God is going to rule over and have victory over all things. This power and victory over all things is available to us. We are called to live out the Kingdom character and walk in Kingdom power today. This is the outcome of those who are truly saved. Salvation is not limited to “when I die I’ll go to heaven”. Although this is true, salvation is so much more than this! It is through salvation that we are able to know the power of God, out of being a vessel of the Holy Spirit in this age.

Church: The church is more than just the assembling together of believers. The word ‘church’ comes from the Greek word ‘ecclesia’. It is a word which means to ‘be called out’. Abraham is a good example of this word. He received a call to leave his culture, environment and even his family and go to the place where God had called him to go. As believers, we have a new reality. God has called us into this new reality so that we are able (as His purchased possession) to be used by Him for His purposes and for His glory in this world.

Verse 23: *“which is His body, that the fullness of all things in all should be full.”*

Which is His body: The church (the called-out ones) is Messiah’s body in this world. As His body, we are no longer ruled over by sin, but we have been set free to utilize His power to reflect Kingdom truth.

The fullness of all things in all should be full: Isaiah 6:3. The whole earth is going to be full of the Lord’s glory – the whole earth is going to see the holiness of God.

What this verse is emphasising is that the church (the body of believers) has a responsibility to bring the fullness of God (His holiness, His character, His very essence) into our lives and into everything that comes into contact with our lives.

Chapter 2

Part 1: Ephesians 2:1-11

Verse 1: *“And you were dead in trespasses and sins,”*

Dead: Sin is synonymous with death (Romans 6:23). When we are outside of God's will, we are unable to receive His influence, truth and power into our lives.

Verse 2: *“in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world, according to the principalities and the authorities of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,”*

The age of this world: The ages change, but each age is geared toward the world, and it has the same outcome as the world – it leads to death. When we were dead in our trespasses and sins we were attached to this world. This means that we lived in such a way as to reflect the climate, culture, etc of the world.

The air: Paul makes a very subtle change in his language here. Paul does not use the phrase ‘heavens’ but he uses the word ‘air’ to show the distinction between the two. When Paul speaks of the Kingdom of God, he uses the term ‘heavens’. The use of this word ‘air’ talks about something that is devoid of the influence of God.

The spirit who...works in the sons of disobedience: There is the Holy Spirit and then there is the spirit of this age – this age being synonymous with satan.

Disobedience: The word used here in the Greek is the word for ‘apathy’. An apathetic person is uninterested in what is going on around them. They do not feel anything deeply and nor do they live life in an excited way, but they appear to be detached from it. Those who are dead in trespasses are under the influence of this world. They are uninterested, uncaring and disconnected from the things of God. When we are disobedient, we become separated from the things of God and from His influence in our lives.

Verse 3: *“among whom also we all once behaved in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”*

All: Jew and Gentile.

Our flesh: This is a New Covenant term. In the Old Covenant the term/concept more frequently used was ‘evil inclination’. The inclination of our hearts (our flesh) – left to our own devices – is always opposed to the things of God. The flesh cannot receive the spiritual, and the spiritual cannot tolerate that which is fleshly/carnal.

The desires of the flesh and of the mind: Paul draws a very important connection between the flesh and the mind – our thought processes. satan begins his attack against us in our minds.

Our flesh begins to manifest what we are convinced of in our minds/thoughts. When satan seduces our minds, we begin to give in to our fleshly desires.

Children of wrath: Every person, Jew or Gentile, in their unregenerate state, will be subjected to the wrath or judgment of God. When satan controls our minds, and we function according to his will and purposes, we walk in the flesh and are dead in our trespasses and sins. The reward/wage for sin is eternal death.

Just as the others: The remaining ones, i.e. those who have not come to faith.

Verse 4: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,”*

But: This is a word that speaks about a contrast – something different/new is happening. When we are dead in our sins, there is only ONE way that change can come about in our lives.

Mercy: Mercy is related to grace. Mercy begins with a desire. We reach a point in our lives when we realise that we need the mercy and grace of God. We do not deserve mercy, and we cannot demand it, but we can petition God for His mercy - based on the fact that He is rich in it.

Because of His great love: The mercy of God is not based upon whether we merit it or not. God’s mercy is based on love – not on merit. God is merciful toward us because of His great love toward us. Love is synonymous with a choice. God, true to His character of being abundant in love, chooses to be merciful to those of us who repent and ask Him for His mercy.

Verse 5: *“and being dead in our trespasses He has made us alive for Messiah (for by grace you have been saved),”*

Made us alive for Messiah: There is only one purpose or motivation why God would make a dead person alive – and that is so that they can be brought to Messiah in order to be submitted to Him (IN Him).

Messiah: Messiah is the head of all things. He is the source of life. He is our Redeemer and Saviour. We are made alive for Him.

Have been saved: This is written in the passive tense. This means that this is not something we could do for ourselves. We cannot save ourselves and we are totally unable to change our own spiritual condition. God acted in order to save us. The word used here is also written in the Greek perfect tense. The Greek perfect tense speaks about something that has happened in the past, the outcome is a reality in the present and it extends on into the future. God saved us in the past. This is true today, and that salvation will extend on into the future - forever and ever.

Verse 6: *“and He raised us up and seated us in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua,”*

The heavenly places: There is a connection between heaven and the Kingdom. ‘Heaven’ speaks of that which is out of reach right now to us. However, through Messiah, we have become connected to that heavenly domain whereby we become citizens of heaven.

In Messiah Yeshua: Becoming citizens of heaven, while we are still alive on the earth, is only possible because of a relationship we have with Messiah. If we were not in Messiah none of these things would be our reality.

Verse 7: *“that He might make manifest, in this coming age, the surpassing riches of His grace in His graciousness toward us in Messiah Yeshua.”*

This coming age: This is another expression for the Kingdom.

Note: Looking at the grace of God from a Kingdom perspective should leave us amazed as we consider its power, outcomes and the implications it has in our lives. One of the purposes of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our lives is to help us to be able to demonstrate God’s grace to the world. When we demonstrate God’s grace to the world, we manifest His glory.

Verse 8: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”*

By grace you have been saved: Grace has multiple purposes. One of the purposes of grace is to save us (this is the eternal purpose of grace). Another of the (present) purposes of grace is to teach us how to live Godly and holy lives while we are still in this world (Titus 2:11-14).

Saved through faith...not of yourselves: What the tenses have been alluding to in the previous verses (passive and perfect) are now stated clearly here. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot merit or earn God’s salvation. This is something that is done for us.

Faith: Belief. God gives us the ability to believe, but we have a free will which enables us to accept or reject what God makes clear to us. God does not force us to believe in Him, and nor does He force us to reject believing in Him. Belief or unbelief is OUR choice.

For example: In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had free will. They had a choice – to accept what God had said and stay away from temptation, or they could choose to reject what God had said and give in to temptation. It was NOT God’s will for them to choose sin. God is not the author of sin. However, because God is Sovereign, He knew that Adam and Eve would choose sin. This was neither His plan nor His will.

Nevertheless, sin does not defeat the plans of God, and so He was able to use Adam and Eve’s sin for His purposes. Just as God uses good to fulfil His purposes, so too can He use evil to fulfil His purposes. He is not limited and restricted by evil (evil is literally those things which are against God’s will. From a human perspective they may not seem evil, but to God anything which is against His will is evil).

Verse 9: *“not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

Not of works: We cannot earn salvation by any of our works, however that does not mean that salvation is unrelated to works. Once we are saved, works are a fruit of salvation. When we are saved, we will be interested in doing good works. Good works have nothing to do with the means of salvation, but they have everything to do with the outcome of salvation.

Verse 10: *“For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

His workmanship: This means that in this age, in the bodies we are in, God is going to work to bring about a change in us. When we are saved, we do not go through individual raptures. God leaves us in the world. Part of God’s reason for saving us is so that we can do the good works that He created for us to do – while we are still alive.

In Messiah Yeshua: Everything is dependent upon being IN Messiah.

Walk: The Jewish mindset is that a ‘walk’ is synonymous with a lifestyle. This goes back to the life of Enoch (Genesis 5:22-24). Enoch walked with God. This means that Enoch lived in a way that resembled the character of God.

Verse 11: *“Therefore remembering that you in the past were Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—”*

Note: In this verse there is a very important transition that is key to us understanding the rest of this chapter. Up to this point, Paul has written about salvation, the work of the Holy Spirit, the purposes of God and the plans for His congregation of Redeemed (as one body). Now, however, Paul shifts to a very important aspect of God’s plan – Israel.

Circumcision: Circumcision reminded the Israelites that they were in a covenantal relationship with God. Those who were uncircumcised did not have a covenantal relationship with God – in fact, they were far removed from Him. Those who do not have a covenantal relationship with God (i.e. those who reject His plan for salvation) do not have any hope - the promises of God are not offered to them.

Made in the flesh by hands: Even in Judaism today there is a (physical) division between Jew and Gentile. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reminded the people that Abraham (the father of the Jewish people) had not been born Jewish. In fact, he was 99 years old before he was circumcised (Genesis 17). Abraham had lived by faith and been considered righteous before his circumcision even took place (Genesis 15:6). Abraham, who came from an idolatrous family, responded to the call of God for his life and this call was rooted in a covenant. This covenant marked the beginning of a new people - a people that God would use as His instruments to manifest blessing to the world. IN Messiah there is neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised (Colossians 3:11). In the New Covenant, those who are considered to be ‘Israel’ are those who are in a covenantal relationship with Messiah (Romans 9:6-8, 22-26) – whether they are physically circumcised or uncircumcised.

Note: The physical act of circumcision relates to the death of the flesh. Circumcision reminded the Jewish people that they weren't supposed to walk in the flesh (i.e. they weren't supposed to live in sin). Gentiles were different from the household of Israel. They were separated from God. However, all of this came to an abrupt end when grace appeared to the Gentiles. This is the reason why Paul left his society and his people – so that he could fulfil a unique call upon his life – a call to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul exemplified what it means to be a child of Abraham – i.e. to belong to the commonwealth of Israel.

Chapter 2

Part 2: Ephesians 2:12-22

A covenant (with God) is God's agreement to work in our lives to bring about a change - to make us pure and holy and to bring us into His family. God's family has two distinct components. Paul wants us to understand that it is only through the grace of God that these two distinct components of His family (who are often at odds/enemies with one another) can come together and be one.

Verse 12: *“that at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*

Note: In this verse Paul is speaking primarily to the Gentiles.

You were without Messiah: These Gentiles were sinners who were separated from God. They did not have any hope or any expectation of the promises of God because they were without a covenant.

Aliens: Non-citizens

Commonwealth: Literally: Politics

Israel: The term ‘Israel’ is such a significant term. When we look at the prophets, it’s Israel that God is going to use to establish the Kingdom of God (Matthew 23:37-39). Israel, when spoken of in the New Covenant, is made up of the remnant of the Jewish people (Zechariah 13:8-9) and a remnant of the Gentiles – those Gentiles who were grafted into Israel – Romans 11:17-27. God’s Kingdom will only be established on earth when Yeshua returns to the earth. Yeshua will only return to earth after God’s Judgment and wrath has been poured out on the world. Yeshua’s first coming was to redeem – to save us from being the children of wrath. Yeshua’s second coming is for the purpose of establishing His Kingdom on earth for the millennial reign of Messiah.

The covenants of promise: Here we see an undeniable link between the covenants of God and the promises of God. Covenants were often entered into because of a dispute or a pulling apart of relationships. Most people entered into a covenant to maintain relationships. Initially the Gentiles had no covenantal relationship with God. Therefore, they had no expectations for receiving the promises of God. It is important to note that covenants with God are made by Him (Hebrews 6:13). Man does not have the power to ratify a covenant made with God. Neither does man set the terms of the covenant. God sets the terms. Man can only accept or reject these terms.

Without God: The word used here is the word for an atheist. Atheists are not simply people who are without God, they are people who are generally against God.

Verse 13: *“But now in Messiah Yeshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah.”*

But now: This is a word of contrast. There has been a change.

In Messiah Yeshua: This book is saturated with this phrase...IN Messiah. What Paul is writing about in this book is conditional to those who are believers – those who are IN Messiah.

You who formerly were far off: Referring to the Gentiles.

Brought near by the blood of Messiah: There is a connection between blood and redemption. Without blood there is no redemption. The blood of sheep and goats did not have an eternal outcome. This means that there had to be a continual sacrifice being made for sin (atonement – a covering over of the sin). Yeshua’s blood only had to be shed once for all. Yeshua’s blood purchases us eternally (propitiation – the complete removal of sin).

Verse 14: *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, the enmity, in His flesh”*

Our: Paul is speaking to two groups here - those who are far off (i.e. the uncircumcised) and those who are near (the circumcised). It is important to note that just because the Jewish people were considered ‘near’ to God, it did not mean that they had hope if they were left in the condition that they were in. Circumcision did not save them. What the Jewish people did have, which gave them an advantage over the Gentiles, was revelation. They had the Word of God (Romans 3:1-2). People who have a revelation of God (i.e. those who have the truth of God manifested to them) are able to respond and move in the direction of God. When we respond to God and move in His direction, He goes to work in our lives to bring about change - to make us new.

Made both one: ‘Both’ refers to Jew and Gentile.

The middle wall of separation: In Messiah – by being IN His flesh/IN His body - the enmity between man and God is broken down. A by-product of this is that there is also a restoration in human relationships when we are IN Messiah – a breaking down of the enmity between human beings (Jew and Gentile). It’s only when a Jew is connected to God and a Gentile is connected to God that there’s going to be peace between them. However, first and foremost, the peace that is being emphasised here is the peace between man and God.

Note: In ancient manuscripts there is no verse division. It is difficult to know (and debatable) as to where verse 14 ends and verse 15 begins.

Verse 15: *“the law of the commandments contained in the statutes, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,”*

The law of the commandments contained in the statutes: Here Paul is using the term ‘law’ as a doctrine, as a rule or as a standard. Paul is not speaking here of Messiah abolishing the law/commandments. Messiah did not come to abolish/destroy the law, but He came to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17). We can understand what Paul is speaking of here by looking at Romans 7:4-6. The law has an effect on us. When we are in the flesh and we hear God’s command, that command stirs rebellion in our hearts and causes us to do, or want to do, the exact opposite of what we have been told (this is seen very clearly in the behaviour of a child. When told not to touch something, the child touches it) – this is true for Jew or Gentile. What Paul is saying is that when we are IN Messiah God brings our desires into alignment with His desires. IN Messiah, when we are commanded to not do something, rebellion no longer rises up within us, but instead we desire not to do that thing as we begin to desire to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

To create: This is written in the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood is the mood of possibility or the mood of condition. This can be the reality in our lives, but it is only a reality on the condition that we are IN Messiah.

One new man: In Messiah, the two (Jew and Gentile) become ONE new man. This has really important implications. This means that, IN Messiah, Jew and Gentile have equal access to God. No longer does a Jew IN Messiah have an advantage over a Gentile who is IN Messiah (Romans 3:1-2). Both Jew and Gentile are now positioned in such a way as to have a better understanding of God. Being ONE new man does NOT mean that there is a lifestyle for a Jewish believer that is different to the lifestyle of a Gentile believer. God wants His truth and righteousness, under the leadership and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be applied to our lives. This makes no difference to whether we are of Jewish descent or not of Jewish descent.

Verse 16: *“and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, having put to death enmity.”*

Reconcile them both to God ... through the cross: The primary reason for Yeshua dying on the cross was so that there could be peace between man and God. Although it was a by-product, Yeshua did NOT go to the cross primarily so that there could be peace between Jew and Gentile. If Yeshua’s purpose in going to the cross had been to reconcile man to man, then we would be a people unified in our lostness. This is not what these verses are speaking about. When we are unified with God (the primary purpose of Yeshua dying on the cross), a by-product of that is being unified and at peace with those who are IN Messiah.

Verse 17: *“And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.”*

Preached peace: This is not talking about a peace between men. This peace being preached about is peace between God and man.

You who were afar off: The Gentiles.

Those who were near: The Jews.

Verse 18: *“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”*

We both: Jew and Gentile.

One Spirit: There is only ONE Holy Spirit. There is not one Spirit for the Jews and another for the Gentiles.

Access ... to the Father: Messiah’s purpose was to make access to the Father a reality for those who previously had had no covenant - no hope or expectation of the promises of God. Not only did God make it possible for the Gentiles to have access to the Father, but He also fulfilled the Covenant promises to Israel. He offered them redemption through His blood.

Verse 19: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens and saints of the household of God,”*

Now, therefore: As a result of having access to the Father.

You: The Gentiles

Foreigners: The Greek word used here literally means ‘outside the house’.

Fellow citizens: The believing Gentiles have become part of the commonwealth of Israel. Part of Israel’s purpose was to be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:3). This now becomes the purpose of the believing Gentiles too. We are called out (out of our cultures, out of our previous ways of life, etc) to be a blessing to the nations.

The household of God: This is one of the terms used for Israel – Israel is the household of God. This household of God (therefore) is comprised of both Jew and Gentile. Not all Jews (descendants of Jacob) are automatically part of Israel (Romans 9:6). ‘Israel’, in the New Testament writings, refers to both the believing Jews as well as the believing Gentiles – all those who are IN Messiah (those who have experienced and accessed the grace of God by faith in the promises of God).

Verse 20: *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the chief cornerstone,”*

The foundation of the apostles and prophets: In this verse (as he does fairly frequently) Paul unites the apostles and the prophets. We are not being true to Scripture if we focus only on the teachings of the apostles and pay no attention to the prophets. Likewise, if we only pay attention to the prophets we are also in error. Scripturally there is a connection between the message of the apostles and the teachings of the prophets. Both the (New Testament) apostles and the (Old Testament) prophets reveal Messiah Yeshua – the chief cornerstone (i.e. every book in the Bible points to Messiah).

Verse 21: *“in which all is built up, being fitted together, growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord,”*

A holy sanctuary: There was a two-fold purpose for the sanctuary – it was the place of the Presence and manifestation of God, and it was also the place of worship. The manifestation of God leads to worship. God is building us up, growing and maturing us, so that when people see us there will be a revelation of the glory of God. They, the people, will be moved to worship God (Matthew 5:16).

Verse 22: *“in whom you also become tightly fit together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”*

Tightly fit together: This speaks of unity.

In the Spirit: Submitting to the Holy Spirit is key for us to be built up and to become united with others. When we are saved, we receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. The anointing of the Holy Spirit enables us to become a new creation who manifests the glory of God.

Chapter 3

Part 1: Ephesians 3:1-13

As believers, it is very important that we are people of integrity. Integrity has to do with a set of beliefs that we are absolutely committed to, and no matter what happens we will not change that commitment. Paul had integrity for the gospel of Messiah Yeshua. He understood the power and the outcome of the gospel. He understood that there was no hope outside of the gospel. He was willing to endure all things for the sake of the gospel.

Verse 1: *“On account of this, I, Paul, am a `bondservant of Messiah Yeshua on your behalf Gentiles—”*

This: Referring to the gospel

I...am a `bondservant ... on your behalf Gentiles: Paul is personifying Israel in this epistle. He is demonstrating what a faithful Israelite was called to do. God created Israel to be a blessing to the nations – Genesis 12:3. They were called to bring light (the revelation of God) to the Gentiles. Israel was created by God for the purpose of spiritually benefitting the Gentiles. Paul was, therefore, willing to endure prison for the sake of the Gentiles.

Verse 2: *“if indeed you have heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given to me for you,”*

Given to me for you: Paul was called, in a special way, to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul did what God had called him to do. If God (in His Sovereignty) wanted Paul in prison, Paul was willing to be in prison for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the Gentiles.

Verse 3: *“how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,”*

By revelation He made known to me: God gives revelation (truth) to those whom He has called. This truth guides us and shapes us into the people that He wants us to be.

I have briefly written already: Paul has already briefly touched on this mystery in the writing of this book – namely the mystery of Messiah, and part of this mystery having to do with Israel – through the blood of Messiah, the Gentiles, who believe, being brought into the commonwealth of Israel.

Verse 4: *“by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Messiah),*

Verse 5: *“which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:”*

Other generations: Earlier generations

His holy apostles and prophets: The gospel (God’s plan for redemption/salvation) is one message. The New Testament message is congruent with the Old Testament message.

Verse 6: *“that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Messiah through the gospel,”*

In Messiah: Receiving the blessings and promises of God are conditional. If we are not IN Messiah then His promises will never be a reality in our lives and we would be a people without hope.

Verse 7: *“of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the effectual working of His power.”*

Note: There is a relationship between these - the Spirit of God and the effectual working of the power of God.

Verse 8: *“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Messiah,”*

Me...less than the least of all the saints: Paul could trace his lineage back to the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Pharisee among Pharisees and had been trained by one of the best rabbis in his day - Gamliel (Philippians 3:4-7). However, Paul counted all of these things as nothing. In fact, they had been a hinderance to him, as they had caused him to struggle against the plans and purposes of God (Messiah Yeshua).

The unsearchable riches of Messiah: The greatest pursuit is to pursue the unsearchable riches of the grace of God. When we pursue the grace of God we are going to experience the intimacy of Messiah.

Verse 9: *“and to enlighten all administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things;”*

Verse 10: *“So that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,”*

The manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church: God desires for us to be given the mind of Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:16). This means that He desires for us to see things from His perspective. God needs to raise us up (Philippians 3:14-16) so that we can respond to things according to the truth of God.

The church: The church refers to those who are called out of this world, by means of the grace of God. By faith, the church, which is the body of Messiah, has become a partaker of the Spirit of God. Because of this, the church has been given a very important role to play.

The principalities and powers: Previously, Paul has spoken of the principalities and authorities, in this present age, as those who stand against the purposes of God. What Paul is saying here is that God has an instrument in this dispensation – the body of believers (comprised of both Jew and Gentile) – who are going to be used by God to make His plans and purposes known to the principalities and authorities. The body of believers are going to be used by God to bring these principalities into submission, by being victorious over them, by overcoming them (Romans 8:37-39, Revelation 2&3).

Verse 11: *“according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Messiah Yeshua our Lord,”*

Note: There is no way that we can be part of God's eternal purposes if we are separated from Messiah. Over and over in this passage of Scripture, Paul is reiterating the blessings, the privilege, the benefits of being in Messiah Yeshua.

Lord: This name of God is synonymous with submissiveness. In many verses preceding this one, Paul has written about knowledge, wisdom and understanding. The danger is that we could come to the conclusion where we begin to think that it is all about knowing. It is partly about knowing, but it is much more than that – it is about submitting. Knowledge about God, about the Bible, etc is valuable but becomes worthless if it is not coupled up with a behaviour which is in submission to God.

Verse 12: *“in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”*

Boldness: Having power and a call from God will not do us any good unless we are bold in this world. As the church, God has set us apart so that we might bring down (overcome) the authorities and principalities of this age. This is why we need to be bold.

Access: The only way we become bold is through having access to God – we realise that we are not alone.

Confidence: Being secure.

Faith: Faith is more than just a belief system. Faith is belief that bears itself out in action. We are not saved by our conduct, but we are saved in order to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

Verse 13: *“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”*

Do not lose heart: Do not be faint hearted. Paul, knowing that they were going to suffer, was an example to them of how to behave while going through suffering.

Note 1: The world put Paul into prison because they did not like the message he was proclaiming. A time is fast approaching when the world will not like the message that we are proclaiming, and we are going to suffer for it.

Your glory: Paul is warning us to get ready for suffering, and not to become faint-hearted, because suffering can ultimately manifest God's glory through us.

Note 2: When we are IN Messiah, the chains of this world do not enslave us. What really enslaves a man is his own pride, selfishness and fleshly desires.

Chapter 3

Part 2: Ephesians 3:14-21

What does it take for us to submit to the plans and purposes of God for our lives?

Verse 14: *“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father,”*

This reason: The fact that God was using Paul to fulfil the call of Israel – to be a blessing to the Gentiles (Genesis 12:3).

I bow my knees: This is an act of submission. Paul understood what a privilege it was to minister to the Gentiles. Inherently, that is what God has called Israel to do. God supplied Israel with everything that she needed to accomplish this call. He gave her His Word (truth), His covenants, His plan of salvation, etc. Israel needed to take God’s message, which He had given them, and proclaim it to the nations.

Father: Word choice is so important in the Bible. Like ‘bow my knees’, the word ‘father’ also implies submission to an authority. If we are going to grow and mature spiritually, we need to be in submission to our Father God (listening, hearing and obeying).

Verse 15: *“from whom all the family in heaven and earth is named,”*

Family: This is the same word for ‘father’ except written in a slightly varied way. Those who want to be in the family of God have to be submissive to the Father. They have to recognize Authority. If we are not willing to submit to Kingdom authority our lives are going to grow very empty. We will lose any joy we had. However, when we are submitted to the will of God, we are going to be excited about life.

Heaven: Heaven is related to Kingdom.

In heaven and earth: What is a reality in heaven is going to become the reality upon earth. God’s will is going to be done on earth, just as His will is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Verse 16: *“that He would give to you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,”*

You: Jew or Gentile. There is no difference. Every man has to go through the same process of renewal. As we are renewed, we begin to exhibit Kingdom character. This renewal comes about through our allegiance to the family of God – recognising the Father’s authority over us.

The riches of His glory: Are we interested in displaying or demonstrating God’s glory?

Strengthened with might through His Spirit: If we are vessels who delight in bringing glory to God, He (through His Holy Spirit) is going to strengthen and empower us.

The inner man: The battle to submit to authority is a battle that is fought within our inner man. It is in our inner man that we need to be renewed, empowered and conformed into the likeness of Messiah Yeshua.

Verse 17: *“that Messiah may dwell, through faith, in your hearts; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”*

Hearts: The seat of our thoughts (Proverbs 23:7). Submitting to authority begins within us (in our inner man) – in the way that we think. God’s power is going to be aimed toward changing our thought processes. God communicates with us through His Holy Spirit. He wants us to begin to think in light of what we are hearing from the Holy Spirit.

Being rooted and grounded in love: This is written in the perfect, passive, tense. This means that this is not something we can do for ourselves but is something which is done for us. All we need is a desire to submit to God. Through our submission, God begins to move in our lives to root and establish us on the right foundation (namely, Messiah Yeshua). God goes to work on us – His workmanship.

Love: It is God’s love for us that prompts Him to respond and move in our lives when we submit ourselves to Him.

Verse 18: *“will have strength to be able to receive with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—”*

Will have strength: This is a strength that does not come from within ourselves. It is a strength that only God can provide.

To be able to receive: Literally to “seize” or “possess”. Being able to receive implies that although some people may be saved, they are in a position of rebellion where they will not be able to receive or comprehend this power of God. Paul is praying that this would not be the case for the people that he was writing this to.

The width and length and depth and height: Paul is talking here about the parameters of the power of God.

Note: Some people believe that salvation is a step toward them achieving their own wills. They believe that God becomes the middleman to achieving their dreams and fulfilling their destiny. This is simply spiritual idolatry - sprinkled with Biblical terminology. What Paul is saying is that we have got to be conformed to God’s will. God, if we allow Him to, strengthens and prepares us so that we are in a position whereby His will becomes our will. When His will becomes ours, we are able to understand the parameters of His power. God wants to do so much more in our lives, but He has to prepare us first.

Verse 19: *“that you might know the surpassing knowledge of the love of Messiah; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

The surpassing knowledge of the love of Messiah: Paul comes back to, and therefore emphasises, the love of Messiah. When we know the love of Messiah it changes our lives. People who do not feel loved go looking for love in all the wrong places. This leads to them feeling emptier and emptier. Love transforms and changes us into who God wants us to be.

Filled with all the fullness: Most believers today are not living in the fullness of God. They are receiving a fraction of what God wants them to have. When we do not live in the fullness of God, we will not be prepared for the width, length, height and depth of the power of God.

Verse 20: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”

To Him who is able to do: All of these things that Paul is writing about are things which are not dependent upon us but are wholly dependent upon Him - God. All we have to do is make ourselves available to God - submitted to Him and willing to be used by Him.

The power that works in us: God wants to work powerfully in the lives of every single person who is submitted to Him.

Verse 21: “to Him be glory in the church in Messiah Yeshua to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

To Him: Throughout Ephesians it has been “IN Him” that has been emphasised. Now there is a slight change – “TO Him”. When we are IN Messiah we are going to respond TO Him.

The church: The body of believers.

The church in Messiah Yeshua: There is an inherent relationship between the church and Messiah. What God does in the body of believers, He is doing through, and in, Messiah. God's work in our lives is always mediated through Messiah Yeshua and the Holy Spirit.

Amen: The word ‘amen’ is a call. It comes from the word for belief but is also rooted in the word for truth. We are called to believe the truth that God has graciously revealed to us. This is something that goes against our sinful natures. Naturally we tend to believe lies above truth (Adam and Eve knew Truth, but because they did not have a respect for the truth, they chose the lie).

Chapter 4

Part 1: Ephesians 4:1-13

As believers we should want to grow and mature. We want to be individuals who measure up to adulthood in the spirit (i.e. to be like our Heavenly Father - God Almighty). We will never be divine, but we are called to be holy.

Verse 1: “I beseech you, as the bondservant in the Lord, to walk in a worthy manner to the calling by which you have been called,”

Beseech: This is a strong word and alludes to something that it is very important.

A bondservant: Paul does not identify himself by name, but he identifies himself as a servant/prisoner of the Lord. Even though Paul was a mature believer and a leader, he did not elevate himself. He knew that he was a purchased possession and that he was indebted to the One who had brought him with His own blood.

Worthy: Appropriate. We should be people who live appropriately.

To the calling by which you have been called: When we accept the gospel, we do not only receive salvation, but a call is placed upon our lives. Salvation has an eternal/future aspect to it. Eternally we become citizens of the Kingdom of God. Calling, on the other hand, is applicable to us in this present age (i.e. while we are still alive on this earth). Calling relates to how we conduct ourselves on the earth – maturing, growing and reaching the full stature of a true believer.

Verse 2: *“with all humility and quietness, with longsuffering, bearing one another with love,”*

Note: Many people do not know what they are called to do once they are saved.

Oftentimes, this needs to be revealed to us.

Humility and quietness: Humble people do not draw attention to themselves. Humble people do not need to be the centre of attention.

Longsuffering: Patience. We need to be people who are willing to wait and willing to endure. We only mature and grow when we hear from God. Sometimes hearing from God takes time. We need to wait for Him to communicate His truth to us.

Love: Agape. This word for love is a word that involves sacrifice. This is the kind of love that gives (John 3:16). Behaving in love toward others does not mean that we give them exactly what they want. Behaving in love toward others means to be looking out for their best interests so that they are able to grow and mature.

Verse 3: *“striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

Unity: Unity is a precious thing. In Genesis 11, at the Tower of Babel, the Lord confused the languages of the nations so that the people would no longer be able to communicate with one other and therefore would no longer have unity. Communication and unity go hand-in-hand.

The bond: The word used here is a word that alludes to being a servant to or in bondage to (like a bondservant). We are tasked to do this. It is our duty and obligation.

Peace: Peace is not simply the absence of problems, conflict or violence. Peace is the fulfilment of God's will. When we have a desire for the will of God to be present in our lives, we are going to endure. We are going to be humble and quiet. We are going to act in love – thinking about what is best for other people so that the will of God might be realised in their lives.

Verse 4: *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;”*

One..one...one: This is a number that alludes to unity. Scripturally, it is also a number that speaks of God. If we are not hearing and submitting to God, we are not going to have oneness with Him. Although He has promised to never leave us or forsake us, we will not experience His activity in our lives and nor will we be recipients of His ministry - we will not be empowered or equipped by Him to do what He has called us to do.

One body: The body of believers.

One Spirit: Referring to the Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in us individually, but it is for a collective purpose – to make us ONE body with our fellow believers.

One hope of your calling: Textually we see a relationship drawn between hope and calling. God has a general calling for us as believers – a call to conduct our lives in a manner worthy of His Kingdom. However, God also has an individual call on the life of each believer specifically. The hope of our call is rooted in being unified with the purposes of God. Our hope is to carry out the will of the Lord (generally and specifically) so that we can be recipients of His promises.

Note: For most believers, we only find out the specific call that God has for our lives as we begin to live according to His general call. As we respond to God's general call (obeying His commands etc) we are going to grow and mature. An outcome of maturity is that God begins to reveal to us the specific call that He has for our lives. When people do not obey God's general call for their lives, they grow confused, frustrated and empty in their walk with the Lord. God will not reveal His specific call to them when they are in this state.

Verse 5: *“one Lord, one faith, one baptism;”*

Lord: Master.

Faith: Faith has to do with truth. The Lord is the author of truth. He is the One who decides what is right and wrong. Truth is NOT what we think seems right or what seems to make sense in our own minds. God has explicitly revealed truth to us through His Word.

Baptism: Baptism is a preparation for service. Baptism is not unique to the New Testament but is an Old Testament concept. Before a Levite could serve in the temple he had to be immersed in water or baptised. Baptism causes a change in status. What was unholy before and unfit for service, becomes set apart (holy) and fit for service after immersion.

Note: All of these (Lord, truth and baptism) require us to have a submissive heart.

Verse 6: *“one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

God: Supreme Authority. This name of God also reminds us that God is the Creator.

Father: Biblically a father is seen as the provider. There is only one source of provision – only ONE that we can turn to to provide us with what we need to live a life of obedience.

Above all, and through all, and in you all: God is absolutely sovereign. Everything in this world is subjected to Him.

Verse 7: *“But to each one grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Messiah.”*

To each one grace was given: Left to ourselves, we would not be in a position to be able to carry out the call of God. The Lord needs to equip us so that we can carry out His call for our lives. God gives us grace so that His promises might be realized in our lives (i.e. so that we can be recipients of those promises).

According to the measure: This is not talking about God giving more to some and less to others. God gives each person exactly what they need, so that they are able to perfectly do what He has called them to do.

The gift of Messiah: It is only through Messiah that grace is available to us.

Verse 8: *“Therefore He says: “He went up to the very heights, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.”*

He says: This phrase lets us know that Paul is going to quote a Scripture from the Old Testament (Psalm 68:18).

He went up to the very heights: Yeshua humbled Himself to death. Therefore, God His Father highly exalted Him and gave Him the name above all names (Philippians 2:8-9). No one, except Messiah, has ever achieved this before.

He led captivity captive: Yeshua used this greatness that He was given for a purpose: To release the people, who had lived lives filled with faith, from Sheol – the place of the dead. Yeshua descended so that He could redeem the people He loves.

Note: There were two specific compartments in Sheol: Hades/hell – a place of torment – and a place known as ‘Abraham’s bosom’. People who had had the faith of Abraham went to this place (‘Abraham’s bosom’) when they died. When Yeshua died and rose again, He emptied out Abraham’s bosom. People who are IN Messiah no longer go to this waiting place. When we die, we are absent from the body but immediately present with the Lord – i.e. in the heavenly places (2 Corinthians 5:8, Ephesians 2:6).

Gave gifts to men: Messiah’s work set us free from the bondage of sin. We were captives to sin, but Yeshua freed us from this captivity and enabled us to be free – to be captive to Him.

Verse 9: *“Now this, “He ascended” —what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?”*

He ascended: i.e ‘He went up to the very heights’ (Ephesians 4:8). The One who went up is the same One who came down.

Descended: Came down

The lower parts of the earth: Referring to Sheol.

Verse 10: *“He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.”*

The One who ascended far above all the heavens: Yeshua was raised up over all things. He is preeminent and has absolute superiority.

That He might fill all things: Yeshua fills us with everything that we need so that we are able to walk with God and manifest His glory.

Verse 11: *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,”*

Apostles, some prophets...: This is a list of some of the specific callings that people can have on their lives.

Some pastors and teachers: Grammatically in the Greek these two callings are grouped together. There is a closer relationship between pastors and teachers than there are between the other callings. Good pastors protect their people. Part of protecting them is by nourishing them with the Word of God. Pastors need to also be teachers – able to teach truth.

Verse 12: *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Messiah,”*

Equipping...the saints: These callings prepare and equip the body of Messiah – growing and maturing them in the faith so that the body of Messiah is edified.

Verse 13: “till we all might arrive to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the full measure and stature of Messiah;”

We all: All believers

The full measure and stature of Messiah: We are all called to be like Messiah. We have great potential. However, it is only when we begin to submit to what God has called us to do generally (ie. obeying His commands which are found in His Word) that we will begin to hear from God and He begins to direct our paths in a very personal (specific) way. We are called to be people who represent Messiah in this world.

Chapter 4

Part 2: Ephesians 4:14-23

Verse 14: “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of teaching, by the dice of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”

Should no longer be children: The Word of God demands that we mature and grow spiritually. Our works should become more and more in line with what is expected of a mature believer.

Children: The word used here is a word that speaks of immaturity. An immature child cannot take care of itself and cannot be left alone.

Carried about with every wind of teaching: People who are immature in their knowledge of Scripture may have a great desire to learn to know truth. However, if they are not studying the Word for themselves and are only listening to the words and comments regarding the Word from others, they are going to think that something makes sense – until they listen to another person who sways them to believe otherwise.

The dice: People used dice to gamble, the desire behind this being to win. However, the person who rolled the dice would use sleight of hand to manipulate the results – a distortion of truth. This is the concept that is being alluded to here.

Cunning craftiness: The word for craftiness is very similar to satan’s behaviour in Genesis 3:1. This is the kind of behaviour that leads to destruction and death. These people who speak with cunning craftiness do not speak truth. They try to control things for their benefit and want to manipulate others into doing what they want done.

Note: satan himself has wisdom, insight and discernment. He knows what our flesh wants. He understands the rational mind and can create a pitch for us regarding an offer that just seems so right. He can manipulate situations to get us to respond to him. If our objective in life is to get what we want, and to accomplish our own desires (rooted in what we think is best or right in our own eyes), we are in grave danger.

Verse 15: “but, speaking the truth in love, that we may grow in Him, all things in every way, who is the head—Messiah—”

But: A word of contrast

Speaking the truth in love: True teachers/servants of God want to speak the truth. We do not use sleight of hand, roll false dice or try to plot against others for their destruction.

Love: Agape. A word related to sacrifice. We are to be people who are willing to give of ourselves to obey God. When this is our attitude, God begins to move in our lives, and we begin to grow.

The head: Messiah is not only our Saviour, He is also our Authority. When we make important life-decisions, we need to make them recognising Messiah's Lordship in our lives.

Verse 16: *"from which the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint, that we might be supplied according to the works, for every part that might share in the increase of the body, making for the edification of itself in love."*

From which: Referring to this concept of recognising the headship/rule/authority of Messiah.

The whole body: This is not just applicable to some believers but is applicable to all believers.

Joined and knit together: When we submit to Messiah, the body of believers is joined and knitted together – united. The image being alluded to here is that of being woven together. This conveys an image of great intimacy with one another. This is also an image portrayed in regard to the building of the temple - each stone or part of the temple was fitted tightly together (Ephesians 2:21-22). As believers, part of our calling is to be woven tightly to each other.

Joint: An image of connection.

Note: When we are submitted to the headship of Messiah we are going to be well fitted together with other believers (i.e. we will have unity). Unity positions us to become recipients of what we need in order to grow and mature. It is through unity that we are strengthened and rooted – not easily swayed or destroyed when the winds of opposition blow against us.

Verse 17: *"Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,"*

This I say: Paul is saying this emphatically.

Testify: Bear witness. Paul is not just repeating what he has heard. He has seen this first hand. He has witnessed this truth and so can speak from experience.

Gentiles: In the New Covenant, Gentiles are those who have no covenantal relationship with God. Gentiles followed idolatry (they worshipped in a way that satisfied the desire of their own flesh) and had no understanding of God.

Walk: Lifestyle.

The vanity of their mind: The source or base for all idolatry begins within the thought process of man. When man's thoughts are only based on self and self-gratification, they are thoughts which are empty.

Verse 18: *“having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, they were agnostic, because of the hardness of their heart;”*

Their understanding darkened: When Eve was in the Garden of Eden, the serpent played on her fleshly desires, and she was deceived in her thoughts. This deception led to a darkened understanding.

Alienated from the life of God: Their consciences were darkened so they could not see things from God’s perspective.

Agnostic: Those who are agnostic know about God and about the things of God, but they choose to be against knowing. Agnostics have made a cognitive decision to be against knowing the things of God. They reject the truth of God’s Word and do not respond to the things that God reveals to them. Because of this, they cannot be positioned in a place where they can see things from God’s perspective.

The hardness of their heart: When a person’s heart becomes hard, it does not become hard in a vacuum. When people hear the Word of God, but they reject it, their hearts begin to harden. Each time they are exposed to the truth and each time they reject it their hearts grow harder and harder (eg Pharoah in Exodus 7-11).

Verse 19: *“who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to callousness, to work all uncleanness with covetousness.”*

Given themselves over to callousness: When we continuously reject God, our hearts become hard, and we become callous.

To work all uncleanness: When we do not get what we want, we begin to get desperate and turn toward unclean things. This in turn leads to someone becoming a covetous person. However, if we experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are going to be content.

Verse 20: *“But you have not so learned Messiah,”*

Note: Those who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine do not truly know who Messiah is.

Verse 21: *“if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth resides in Yeshua:”*

The truth: Truth is like a pattern. It guides us into the things of God. Who we become is more important than what we possess.

Verse 22: *“putting far from you the former conduct of the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,”*

Putting far from you the former conduct: Those who turn to Messiah and truly repent no longer want to continue to live in the way that they were living. We are called to put our past conduct far behind us. We are called to become new creations.

Deceitful lusts: These desires are not rooted in truth. Deceitful desires cause us to be manipulated and controlled by the enemy instead of walking in truth.

Verse 23: *“but be renewed in the spirit of your mind,”*

But: A word of contrast. We are called to live differently.

Note: Because of sin, when we are born (children of Adam), our minds are in a fallen state. We think according to our desires and according to what seems right in our own eyes. Our minds need renewal. Renewal implies a change, a newness. The only source of that change is the Spirit of God. It is only as the Spirit moves in our lives to bring revelation - order from chaos - that our minds can begin to be renewed, and we begin to see things more clearly.

Chapter 4

Part 3: Ephesians 4:24-32

For many people, change is a very fearful thing and, so, many people resist change and the unfamiliarity it brings. Being unwilling to change goes against the truth of Scripture. God is constantly in the business of making changes in our lives. God works in our lives to grow and mature us – to change us in such a way that we can begin to resemble His character and have His attributes.

Verse 24: *“and that you put on the new man which God has created in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Put on the new man: Throughout Scripture – ie in the Old and in the New Testaments – we are given commandments. Commandments are good for us (John 14:15).

Commandments help us to grow and mature. Obedience, and applying the truth of the commandments to our lives, is key to experiencing intimacy with God. Every morning, we have a decision to make – do we go into the day putting on the new man (the new garments that we are given in Messiah – the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness – Isaiah 61:10) or do we take up the wrinkles and crinkles of the old man and wear that instead? The word ‘new’ is related to life (‘old’ is related to corruption and decay, which ultimately leads to death).

Holiness: Piety. Obedience to the truth. A pious person is someone who is very concerned about every aspect of the truth - doing everything properly (from the smallest thing to the greatest).

Verse 25: *“Therefore, put away all falsehood, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour, for we are members of one another.”*

Put away all falsehood: This is another command. We need to put away from our lives those things which are in conflict with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit wants to filter out those things in our lives which rob us of peace. He wants to convict us of doing things which are not pleasing to God, and He wants to help us to do those things which are pleasing to Him. Truth benefits everyone. When a person lies, they are not interested in anyone but themselves. Selfishness is far removed from the character of God.

We are members of one another: We are all related to one another – we are one body. If the fist starts beating up the face the whole body hurts. Paul wants us to understand that we are mutually dependent upon one another. We need to do what is best for the entire body and not just for ourselves. What benefits the entire body will also be of benefit to us.

Verse 26: *“Be wrathful, but do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,”*

Be wrathful: Sometimes truth is violated, and it is acceptable for that to make us angry. We do not have to like or receive everything that happens. Many things are not good – not according to the will of God. Wrath is related to judgment. God moves to deal with sin, and so should we move to confront sin.

But do not sin: When we move to confront sin (a violation of God’s Word) we must not be led into sinning ourselves.

Verse 27: *“do not give place for the devil.”*

Devil: The word used here in Greek is where the English word ‘diabolical’ comes from. This speaks of something related to trickery. God hates sin but He does not hate the sinner. God is wrathful/angry toward sin, and He deals with it radically, but His anger is temporary. Once the sin is dealt with (judged and consumed) God is no longer wrathful and He begins to speak about His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness and His great ability to restore. In the same way, it is not a sin for us to be angry toward sin. But once we have radically dealt with the sin there is no longer a need for that anger. If we continue to be consumed by anger, then we have allowed that anger to go into an unhealthy space and it is then, in that place, that we would give the devil a foothold in our lives.

Verse 28: *“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him toil and work with his own hands for goodness, that he may have something to give him who has need.”*

Goodness: That which is ‘good’ is related to the will of God. It is very important that we invest ourselves in the will of God.

Have something to give him who has need: Ministering to others brings about unity and love.

Verse 29: *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”*

Corrupt: Rots and decays. This is something which is contrary/opposite to the spirit of renewal. No words of decay or rottenness should come out of our mouths. Sometimes we may want to say something to someone else, and even though it is the truth they might not be in a place to hear that truth. Saying that truth, at the wrong time or in the wrong season of that person’s life, could also cause decay in their lives. Our words need to be true, apt and timely.

What is good: We need to be sensitive and speak to others within the will of God.

Necessary edification: What we say needs to build people up. We need to listen carefully to the Holy Spirit and follow His guidance in speaking to others.

Impart grace to the hearers: If people have faults and we blurt out all their faults to them in one sitting they are going to become very discouraged. Instead, when we speak to others, we need to sometimes almost drip feed truth to them so that they are able to grasp it in little ‘bite sized and manageable pieces’, can then accept it and respond to it appropriately. This gives hope (grace) to the hearer and not discouragement.

Verse 30: “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in which you were sealed for the day of redemption.*”

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit: We must not hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is greater and more powerful than we are. However, there are circumstances/criteria that we need to meet in order for Him to function in our lives.

The day of redemption: There is a connection between redemption and the Kingdom. Redemption is a word that speaks of purchasing. However, all purchases are made for a purpose. God has redeemed us (purchased us) for a Kingdom purpose. This ‘day of redemption’ is referring to the day that the Kingdom is established on earth. If we are sealed for this day of the Kingdom, then we need to be people who are living out Kingdom truth today. It is only with the help of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to live in the way that we are meant to live as Kingdom people. The Holy Spirit convicts us, empowers us and equips us to live in the way that we have been purchased to live.

Verse 31: “*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice.*”

Clamour: Noise. This word is sometimes also translated ‘boasting’. We should not be people who call attention to ourselves.

Blasphemy: When people are angry with God (they get angry with Him because they do not get what they want, they don’t agree with God, etc) they lash out at other people.

Put away from you: Let all these things be removed.

Malice: This is a word which speaks of a desire to inflict suffering upon someone else. We must inflict suffering on bitterness, wrath, anger, etc – not on people.

Verse 32: “*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Messiah forgave you.*”

Be kind: This is a commandment. We need to be agreeable to one another. We need to look for ways to agree with others.

Tender-hearted: This word means to have the ability to fill up the hurts of other. It is a word that means that our hearts and thoughts are very concerned for others.

Forgiving one another: When our hearts are tender toward others, we do not want judgment to fall on them.

Even as God in Messiah forgave you: God did not walk away from us after forgiving us. He invested Himself in our lives. This is how we need to act in the lives of those we have forgiven. Forgiveness is not forgiveness if we say we forgive someone but then we walk away and want nothing more to do with that person. When we truly forgive someone, we extend grace to them – we stay involved in their lives, working for and with them for their good.

Chapter 5

Part 1: Ephesians 5:1-13

How do we know God's basic expectations for us (i.e. what are we supposed to do? What are we supposed to read? How are we supposed to behave?)? All of these questions are answered in the Bible. Paul makes growth and spiritual maturity very simple to comprehend. If we can comprehend basic spiritual principles, we can apply them to our lives. As we apply them to our lives, maturity will begin to manifest itself – and we will grow and mature into the perfect man (woman) that we are called to be – Matthew 5:48.

Verse 1: *“Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children.”*

Therefore: Paul makes a summary statement. This is the bottom line of what we need to do/our objective or goal – i.e. God's expectation for us.

Be imitators of God: We cannot imitate God if we do not know what God is like – His attributes and character. We get to know God's attributes and character through studying His Word.

As beloved children: We do not imitate God so that we can be loved by Him. We imitate Him because we ARE loved by Him. When we are loved by God, and we have understood His love for us, we are able to respond to Him by imitating Him. When children imitate their parents, it shows that they are looking up to their parents, they are acknowledging the authority their parents have in their lives. This is the same principle at play here.

Verse 2: *“And walk in love, as Messiah also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”*

Messiah also has loved us and given Himself for us: Messiah perfectly demonstrated the relationship between love and submission – giving of Himself unto death.

An offering: Offerings are given for the sake of drawing close to. We are only able to make an offering if our attitude is one of wanting to draw near to God.

A sacrifice: To make a sacrifice means to give up or to surrender. Making a sacrifice is acknowledging that we want God to be the priority in our lives (i.e. He is FIRST).

A sweet-smelling aroma: Offerings made to God, not out of obligation and not because of sin, are pleasing to God. Yeshua offered Himself up as a sacrifice not simply because God so loved the world (although this was part of it), but because Yeshua also wanted to be pleasing – a sweet aroma - to His Heavenly Father.

Verse 3: *“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;”*

Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness: These are things which are all rooted in what the flesh wants. Are we going to walk according to the flesh, or will we walk according to the Spirit?

Not even be named: These things are not things which should ever be linked to those who love God. Fornication, uncleanness or covetousness should not be our reputation.

Verse 4: *“neither indecency, nor foolishness, nor crudeness, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”*

Giving of thanks: Not everything that happens is of God. There are times that we are called to be wrathful/angry (Ephesians 4:26). When we are giving thanks, we need to have discernment. God is always worthy of praise; however we need to discern when He is working and moving in situations and it is in those things which are fitting that we are to give thanks. We do not give thanks for those things which are not fitting – indecency, foolishness, etc.

Verse 5: *“For this you know, that no adulterer, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Messiah and God.”*

Covetous: Greedy.

An idolater: Adultery, uncleanness and greed are all rooted in idolatry – the gratification of self.

Verse 6: *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of apathy”*

Let no one deceive you: When we are walking in the desires of our flesh, pursuing what we want and what seems right in our own eyes, it makes it easy for us to be deceived.

Empty words: These words sound logical and seem to make sense but in reality, they are empty promises which never reach fulfilment.

Apathy: People who live apathetic lives are people who are not passionate about the things of God – the Kingdom of God, the attributes of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, etc. Apathetic people are easily moved by the enemy. They are moved into a position whereby they are easily defeated by the enemy. Repeated defeats lead to a sense of futility and hopelessness. This in turn leads to compromise and living in a way that delights our enemy, the devil.

Verse 7: *“Therefore do not be partakers with them.”*

Verse 8: *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”*

You were once darkness: Before coming to Messiah, we lived in darkness.

But now: Through the grace of God and through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord: It is when we are walking in submission to God (our Master) that we are going to be those who walk in the light. This is not talking about salvation but about living a mature life as a believer. Submission to Messiah causes illumination (revelation) in our lives.

Verse 9: *“for the fruit of the light is all goodness, righteousness, and truth,”*

Goodness: When we walk in the light, we are able to walk in the will of God. When we submit to God the ‘light comes on’ and we begin to respond and behave according to His will for our lives. Submission is related to faith and trust. Fruit does not happen instantaneously. It is a process – a growing and a maturing over time.

Righteousness: When we submit to God, His will for our lives is illuminated. As we walk in His will (that which is ‘good’) we are able to manifest righteousness. Righteousness is always an outcome of the will of God.

Truth: Truth is related to the Scripture. If we want to grow and mature, if we want to have discernment, if we want to recognise the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we need to be firmly grounded in the Scripture – the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Verse 10: *“documenting what is well pleasing to the Lord.”*

Documenting: Demonstrating. Having a testimony of.

Well pleasing to the Lord: Every morning we have a decision to make: are we going to live in a way to please ourselves or other human beings (Galatians 1:10), or are we going to live in a way which pleases God? We cannot live both ways simultaneously.

Pleasing to the Lord: Pleasing to our Master.

Verse 11: *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”*

Reprove them: Those who are maturing in the Lord are those who will be able to discern truth. They will be able to expose that which is not truth – that which is not good, that which is not according to God’s will.

Verse 12: *“For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.”*

Shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them: We need to be able to discern and expose unfruitful things, but we do not focus and dwell on (or study) unfruitful things – i.e. the deeds of darkness. We need to study the things which are pleasing to God – not the things which violate His principles and will.

Verse 13: *“But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”*

Things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: What God wants us to do is to shine the light of truth and righteousness into every given situation.

Whatever makes manifest is light: We are called to live our lives in such a way that we are able to recognise and discern what is of God and what is not of God. We are not called to focus on that which is filthy, but we are called to shine the light of God’s truth on situations so that the dirt can be exposed and dealt with. When light shines, darkness flees (Isaiah 9:2). Like Messiah, part of our ministry is to shine light in darkness.

In situations that we find ourselves in, we do not just point out what is wrong, but we live in such a way that we demonstrate what is right. Darkness is defeated by light. Evil is defeated by right.

Chapter 5

Part 2: Ephesians 5:14-29

In the Scripture, light is very important. Light is the first thing that God created (Genesis 1:3-5). Light and truth are inherently related. Messiah is called the 'Light of the world' (John 8:12). We are called to walk while there is light, not to walk in darkness (John 12:35-36, 1 John 1:5-7). Light brings change.

Verse 14: *"Therefore He says: "Arise O sleeper, stand up from the dead, For Messiah has shined upon you."*

Sleeper...dead: Oftentimes, those who are dead are spoken of as those who are sleeping. Many are dead (sleeping) in their trespasses and sins. However, those who have accepted the gospel message are no longer dead, but we have been made alive. We are, therefore, supposed to walk as children of light - everywhere we go we should be illuminating/revealing truth.

Stand up from the dead: We should no longer be living corrupt and sinful lives. There is a connection between sin and death (Romans 6:23).

Messiah has shined upon you: In Genesis 1, when God started to bring order and 'good' into the world, the first thing He created was light.

Verse 15: *"Watch out that you walk circumspectly, not as the unwise but as wise."*

Watch out: This is a phrase of warning. When God warns us about something, we need to take it to heart. It is only when we have our lives illuminated by the Holy Spirit (the light of God) that we are going to be able to watch out for what are we supposed to watch out for.

Walk circumspectly: Walk in the correct manner. When we are walking in light, God has expectations for us – He expects our lifestyles to become ordered, to be marked by wisdom.

Wise: Although wisdom is dependant upon knowledge (from a Biblical standpoint), wisdom is not knowledge in and of itself. Wisdom is the ability to put knowledge into action. Wisdom is rooted in discernment – able to use knowledge properly and appropriately in any given situation. God expects us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to be able to discern, to be wise.

Verse 16: *"redeeming the time, because the days are evil."*

Redeeming the time: When we live our lives, based upon human understanding or perspective, we waste so much time. We do not apply the right solution to the right problem and become very frustrated as we seem to be getting nowhere fast.

However, when we are operating in wisdom (having discernment, intelligence and judgment from God) we are able to 'redeem the time'. Redemption has to do with ownership. When we are living in the way that God expects us to live, He gives us authority over time so that it can be effectively used for His purposes.

Days: Refers to a time period.

Evil: Anything which is outside of God's will. So much is happening right now that is against the will of God. That which is good is called evil by the world. That which is evil is called good (Isaiah 5:20).

Verse 17: *"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*

Unwise: Literally: Against knowledge. We should not be people who are against the truth of God.

The will of the Lord: i.e. that which is good.

The Lord: The One who is our Master. The One we are to be submitted to. When we are in submission to God (our Lord) He gives us His wisdom and makes known to us His will.

Verse 18: *"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is recklessness; but be filled with the Spirit,"*

Do not be drunk with wine: Another commandment. Empty people try to fill themselves up, but they do so with the wrong spirit.

Recklessness: Alcohol causes people to become reckless. They do and say things that they would never do or say in their natural state.

Be filled with the Spirit: When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are also going to do things that we cannot do naturally. However, through the Holy Spirit we have a positive outcome; through alcohol there is a negative outcome.

Verse 19: *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,"*

Note: One of the signs of being filled with the Spirit of God is that we desire to praise and worship Him – our Lord and Master.

Verse 20: *"giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Messiah Yeshua and in God the Father,"*

The Father: A father is a provider. When we submit to the Lordship of Messiah we experience God's provision in our lives.

Verse 21: *"submitting to one another in the fear of Messiah."*

Submitting: It is so important to have the ability to submit. Messiah submitted Himself to His Father's plans and purposes (Philippians 2:6-8) for our sakes. When we are right with God, and are in submission to Him, we should display what Messiah displayed – considering others more important than ourselves, giving others priority in our lives.

Fear: Giving priority to.

Verse 22: *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”*

Note: The man is the head of the wife just as the Lord is head of the church. The wife needs to submit to the man’s leadership in the home. Through submission we show dependence upon God.

Verse 23: *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Messiah is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body.”*

The husband is head of the wife: Men are not given the position of leadership and authority in their homes so that they can exploit it.

The Saviour of the body: Messiah gave Himself up completely on behalf of the church. In the same way, men ought to give themselves up completely for their wives.

Verse 24: *“Therefore, just as the church is subject to Messiah, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”*

Note: It is important to note that if a man demands something of his wife that is outside of God’s will, she should not comply (similarly, as citizens of a country, we do not do what our governments command, if what they command is outside of the will of God/what Scripture commands).

Verse 25: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the church and gave Himself for her,”*

Love: Love gives. Love sacrifices.

Verse 26: *“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,”*

The washing of water by the word: Spiritual leadership is derived from only one source - the Word of God.

Verse 27: *“that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having a stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blame.”*

He might present her to Himself a glorious church: The attitude of a husband toward his wife should be the same attitude that Messiah displayed toward the church. A husband should want to lift up his wife. He should encourage her to demonstrate spiritual principles in her life.

Verse 28: *“So it is profitable for a husband to love his own wife as he loves his own body; he who loves his wife loves himself.”*

It is profitable: When a husband ministers to his wife it greatly benefits him. When a husband gives to his wife it in his best interest as he is, in effect, also giving to himself.

When a husband does not care for his wife and show concern for her spiritual condition, he is injuring himself.

Verse 29: *“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”*

Chapter 5&6

Part 3: Ephesians 5:30-33, Ephesians 6:1-4

The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12) is the foundational premise for the work of Messiah – that all the families on earth might be blessed. There is a relationship between God’s plans and purposes and the family. God did not create man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). In fact, God said that it was not good (it was not His will) for man to be alone. And so, God created a helper for the man. A woman was created to assist a man in the things of God. From the union between a man and a woman, a family was birthed. Every person in a household is called to be in submission – to God and to one another (Ephesians 5:21). A husband’s chief responsibility in the household is his wife’s spiritual condition. When he stands before God one day he is going to present her to Him. A husband is NOT responsible for his wife’s salvation (only God can save) but when God judges/evaluates for eternal rewards the wife is a reflection of her husband, and he will be judged according to what can be seen/not seen.

Verse 30: *“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”*

Flesh and ... bones: Woman was taken out of man (Genesis 2:21-22). In order to get a wife, the man had to give up something of himself. The two then become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). A man is called to present his wife’s spiritual condition before the Lord. Whether he measures up to God’s standards (he is being judged for reward) is reflected in his wife’s spirituality. That is why it is so important for the husband to nourish his wife with the Word of God and also that he cleanses, purifies and sanctifies his wife through the Word. No man hates his own flesh. He nourishes and cherishes his flesh. Likewise, this is the attitude that a husband should display toward his wife – He is called to minister to her and bless her (love her).

Verse 31: *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*

Note: This is a quote from Genesis 2:24

Cling: Clinging speaks about unity. God has placed within the nature of man a desire to cleave (being brought together) to his wife.

Verse 32: *“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Messiah and the church.”*

A great mystery: We might not understand all the things that God is calling or commanding us to do but when we begin to understand, and to do, God is going to bring about the exact thing that He said He will.

I speak concerning Messiah and the church: Paul is using marriage as an example, but he is not speaking first and foremost about men and women in marriage. Paul is highlighting and emphasising the union between Messiah and the church – His bride, His called out one. Order comes about in a household when the members in the household submit to one another – and to the husband as the head of the home. Order comes about in the church when we submit to one another and to Messiah - the head/leader/spiritual authority of the church.

Verse 33: *“Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she fears her husband.”*

Love his own wife: God desires that a man loves his wife – that he puts her first.

Fears: A wife needs to give priority to her husband.

Chapter 6

Ephesians 6:1-4

Verse 1: *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”*

Obey: The word used here is a word for ‘to listen under’ (i.e. to be under/submitted to authority).

Obey ... in the Lord: If a parent tells a child to do something illegal or something against the commands of God then it is the duty of the child to (respectfully) not obey their parents in those circumstances. We submit for Godly purposes, under the authority of Scripture.

Verse 2: *“‘Honour your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise:”*

Honour your father and mother: Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 5:16

Verse 3: *“that it may be well with you, and your time should be lengthened on the land.”*

Note: This verse does NOT mean that if we honour our parents we are going to live to a ripe old age. In context, this was not a promise given to an individual, but it was a promise given to the children of Israel collectively. When the family is ordered properly, and when the parents teach the children, and when the children submit and obey, then the nation begins to live righteously. A righteous nation is a nation who is generally at peace with their enemies – their time in the land is lengthened (they do not go into exile) due to the fact that they are not at war but are at peace with their enemies.

Verse 4: *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but guard them in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

Fathers, do not provoke: A father provokes his child when he commands him to do something simply for the fact that he said so – commanding his children to do things which have no Biblical basis.

Guard them: Nurturing or grow them

The Lord: It is so important that we let our children know and see that our lives are lived in submission to the Lord. When parents are submitted to the Lord it is naturally easier for a child to accept authority in his life.

Admonition: This word is related to the word 'fear' – to respect or to give priority to. We need to teach our children to give priority to the Lord in all things. We need to help our children develop a respect for God.

Chapter 6

Part 1: Ephesians 6:5-16

Slavery is a very controversial topic – especially when we do not understand it in the Biblical sense of the word. Depriving people of basic human rights and owning and treating people like property is never appropriate to the Lord. This kind of slavery is a sin. Biblical slavery is different to the slavery we know of today. 'Biblical slavery' (probably better understood today by the use of the word 'servant') in its truest (purest) form was a type of welfare system. People who got into debt, and who could not pay off this debt, would go and work for an individual until this debt was paid off or until the end of six years – whichever came first. At the end of 6 years, the person who owed the debt could go free.

Verse 5: *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Messiah;”*

Your masters according to the flesh: i.e. Human masters/employers

Fear: Give them priority.

In sincerity of heart: Obey them for the simple reason that obedience is the right attitude to have.

As to Messiah: Serve others well. Demonstrate Biblical character when serving others. Aim to be the best servant or employee. We need to manifest God's Presence in our lives.

Verse 6: *“not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Messiah, doing the will of God from the heart,”*

Not with eyeservice: Don't just do things in order to look good or so that you can be seen. Behave/work excellently, even in the chores which will remain unseen.

Doing the will of God from the heart: Put your whole being into whatever job you are doing. Be wholehearted.

Verse 7: *“with a good mindset doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,”*

A good mindset doing service: We need to consider our employers and work for them in the way that we would work for the Lord – i.e. not cutting corners but doing the best work for them that we can. When we work in this way people will see that we are different.

Verse 8: *“knowing that to each one who does good he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”*

Each one who does good: This is applicable to everyone who responds to the will of God – employer or employee, master or servant.

The Lord: Referring to Messiah Yeshua. When we respond to do God’s will, He responds to reward us.

Verse 9: *“And you, masters, do the same things to them, removing the threat, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”*

You, masters: Paul has spoken to the servants, now he speaks to the masters – the employers, etc

Removing the threat: Employers should not abuse the authority that they have been given.

There is no partiality with Him: God is not a respecter of persons.

Note: When the family (husband, wife and children) and society (employers and employees) are right with God – submitted to their roles in obedience to God – God is able to move within a nation. The admonition being taught to parents, children, employees, masters etc goes beyond the household. it deals with the well-being of the people of God collectively. Ultimately our battle is not against one another, but it is against something far bigger.

Verse 10: *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”*

Finally: Paul is reaching the conclusion, the real point. Submitting to one another prepares us for spiritual warfare. Our ultimate battle is not against each other, but it is against the principalities and the rulers of heavenly places (i.e. beyond this dimension). If we are unable to lay down our pride and submit to one another (who we can see) we are going to be easy prey for the enemy.

In the power of His might: We are strong in the Lord by using His power. Paul is teaching us that we need to learn how to function in our role in our families and in our role in society. We need to put into practice the Biblical principles of submission, not quenching or hindering the Holy Spirit, etc. If we cannot do this in everyday life, we will never be prepared for the spiritual battle we find ourselves in.

Verse 11: *“Putting on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

The whole armour: The purpose for armour is protection. God has taught us these principles not because He wants everyone to just submit for the sake of submission. God teaches us these principles for our own well-being, for our protection. If we do not know how to submit, we are going to be easily defeated by the enemy. Living right in the home and in society prepares us for a greater battle.

Able to stand: God wants us to be able to stand against something. We are not called to stand against our family or society members (in fact, we are called to lay ourselves down for each other), but we are called to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Wiles: The methodology, the schemes, the plans.

Devil: The diabolical one. Against satan, without God, we are outmatched. It is not human wisdom that defeats satan, but it is being in submission (or being obedient) to God's principles that equip us to stand against the devil.

Verse 12: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the principalities, against the powers of darkness which have seized this world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

Principalities: Authorities.

The heavenly places: These are the places which are outside of our natural domain. We are up against an enemy that we cannot see, and he is greater than us. 1 John 4:4 tells us that the One in us is greater than the one in this world. However, in these spiritual battles, we only have access to God's power (His help and assistance) when we are in obedience to Him and to His principles (submission to one another etc). Obedience to God is our protection – our armour.

Verse 13: *"Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the day of evil, and having done everything, to stand."*

Take up the whole armour of God: This armour is "taken up and put on" through submission.

The day of evil: The days which are contrary to the will of God. We will never be able to withstand evil (that which is against the will of God) in and of ourselves. We are only able to stand against it when we have been equipped by God (being in submission to Him and to His principles).

Having done everything: Wholeheartedly done what we needed to do.

Verse 14: *"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,"*

Stand: Being able to 'stand' is a word related to victory.

Girded your loins: This is an expression related to the preparation a servant undergoes just before his work is performed. If we have 'girded our loins' it implies that we are ready for work. If we are not prepared to work or to serve, we are going to be easily defeated by the enemy. Defeat looks like this: we will not be bearing good fruit, we will not be rich in good deeds, we will not be accomplishing the things God has called us to accomplish, etc.

Truth: Foundational, for going into the battle against our enemy, is truth. If we do not know the truth or Word of God, we are going to be easily defeated by the enemy. When we do not know truth, we cannot hear and interpret the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The breastplate of righteousness: It is when we have equipped ourselves (protected ourselves) with the truth of God that we are able to take up righteousness. The truth of God produces righteousness in our lives.

Verse 15: *"and having fastened your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"*

The gospel: The gospel is all about the grace of God. It is the good news about victory. Ultimately every victory belongs to God. When we do what God has called us to do, He allows us to participate (walk) in His victory.

Peace: What we experience when God's purposes are fulfilled.

Verse 16: "above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery missiles of the wicked one."

Faith: Faith is related to the Word of God (Romans 10:17). When we are utilizing the Word of God it is a shield of defence for us. We are in the safest place when we are obeying the Word of God.

Able to extinguish all the fiery missiles: The potential is there for our enemy to hurt and wound us when he attacks us. However, when we act in faith (being submitted, being obedient), believing God, the faithfulness of God extinguishes the attack of our enemy. God renders null and void (without power) these missiles hurled at us. God has equipped us with all that we need to be protected from the attacks of the enemy, and for us to be overcomers – victorious. Are we going to be people who submit to the truth and utilize the principles whereby we can overcome the attacks of the enemy?

Chapter 6

Part 2: Ephesians 6:17-24

As the people of God, the Bible instructs us, as much as it depends on us, to live peacefully with all people (Romans 12:18). This is not always possible, as sometimes we are called to battle. As we move toward the last days, we are going to see that more and more battles, opposition and conflicts are going to take place. Are we prepared (or preparing ourselves for) these battles? Will we be able to stand in faithfulness and display to others that we are victorious children of God?

Verse 17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;"

The helmet of salvation: We need to protect our head – our thought processes and mindsets. Salvation is foundational. We need to remember that we have been saved for a purpose.

The sword: This is the first time that Paul mentions a weapon. Everything else, up to this point, has been equipment that guards and protects us. However, mention of the sword is now alluding to us having the ability to strike back – launch an offensive.

The Spirit...the Word of God: There is a connection between the Spirit and the Word of God. We cannot be spiritually empowered unless we are obedient to the Word of God. If we are not walking in the truth of Scripture we are going to be grieving, hindering or quenching the work of the Holy Spirit. It is only when we begin to acknowledge the truth of Scripture that we will begin to understand and discern the words of the Holy Spirit in our lives – communicating to us God's will for our lives.

Verse 18: *“praying in all seasons with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—”*

Supplication in the Spirit: We need to pray out of what the Holy Spirit tells us to pray. He is our leader and champion as far as prayer is concerned (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit assists us in our prayer life.

Supplication for all the saints: We are not in a personal battle. We are all intimately related – one body - and so we need to pray for one another. We need to intercede on behalf of other people in regard to the spiritual battles that they are facing.

Verse 19: *“and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,”*

Utterance may be given to me: Paul asked them to also pray for him. His desire and prayer was that the right words to speak would be given to him.

The mystery of the gospel: The mystery of the gospel is the message of the suffering Messiah. Messiah had to suffer. He had to lay down his life so that we could have life. Paul desired to have opportunities to share this truth boldly with others.

Verse 20: *“for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

Ambassador: The word used here is the word that we get ‘presbytery’ from. It is a word that is rooted in the term for an elder.

As I ought to speak: Paul did not want anything to hinder him. He wanted freedom to serve God. He knew that this would be made possible through the intercession of other people. Paul was trying to teach the Ephesians that we are mutually dependant on each other (when we are weary other people can hold up our arms so that the victory is won together).

Verse 21: *“But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make all things known to you;”*

Note: Paul begins to conclude this epistle in this verse.

You also may know my affairs...Tychicus...will make all things known to you: Even though Paul was beseeching them to pray for him, he was still thinking about and concerned about their spiritual condition.

Verse 22: *“whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.”*

Note: Paul was in chains, in prison. He was not thinking about his own comfort. He was concerned about the Ephesian church, and he wanted them to receive comfort and encouragement. Therefore, he sent his friend Tychicus to them to tell them how he (Paul) was doing.

Verse 23: *“Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Messiah Yeshua.”*

Peace: A word that has to do with the fulfilment of God’s will.

Love: One of the fruits of being in God’s will is that we are going to love others, and we are going to experience the love of God.

The Father: Our Provider.

Verse 24: *“Grace be with all those who love our Lord Messiah Yeshua with all sincerity. Amen”*

Grace: Grace is necessary for salvation (Titus 2:11) but then grace also helps us to grow and mature (Titus 2:12-14). Grace helps us to submit to the truth of the Lord.

With all sincerity: Everything that Paul said and did he said and did with all sincerity. Paul did not have a head knowledge of Messiah (knowing Messiah through ‘hear-say’), but he spoke and ministered to others from out of a place of experiencing Messiah. Paul could speak with authority because he had a relationship with Messiah and so knew, from personal experience, that what he was speaking about was true.