

Ephesians

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

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

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

With all wisdom and understanding,⁸ **1:9** He made known to us the mystery of His desire according to His satisfaction, which He purposed beforehand in him,⁹ **1:10** for the management of the fullness of the times, i.e., bringing about the bottom line for everyone in the Messiah, everyone in the heavens and everyone on the earth—in him,¹⁰ **1:11** in whom we have indeed been given an inheritance, after having been predestined according to the prior purpose of Him who produces all things in line with that which He considers good and right of His own choosing,¹¹ **1:12** with the result that we, who were the first to hope in the Messiah, exist for the admiration of His magnificence.¹²

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

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

2:1 Plus, you were dead because of your evil behavior and immoral actions,²⁴ **2:2** in which you formerly lived in line with the era of this cosmos, in line with the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now in operation in the sons of disobedience,²⁵ **2:3** among whom we all formerly behaved in response to the strong cravings of our flesh, as

we performed the desires of the flesh and of its intentions. Indeed, we were by nature children of wrath just like the rest.²⁶

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

2:8 You have been saved by grace in view of your belief, and this is not from you. It is a gift from God,³¹ **2:9** not by virtue of works, so that no one may boast.³² **2:10** For we are His creation, created in the Messiah Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, so that we will conduct ourselves within them.³³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4:7 Now, grace was given to each one of us in accordance with the measure of the Messiah's gift.⁷³ **4:8** Therefore, it says,

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

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

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

4:14 In order that we may no longer be children who are tossed by the sea and carried here and there by every wind of teaching because of the trickery of men, because of

craftiness for the purpose of being deceitful schemers,⁸⁰ 4:15 while thinking and living truth with love, let us cause everyone to grow towards him who is the head, the Messiah,⁸¹ 4:16 from whom the whole body, being joined and brought together through every supporting joint according to the measured working of each one of the parts, produces the growth of the body for the building up of itself within the context of love.⁸²

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

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

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

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

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

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

5:3 Let no sexual immorality, any impurity, or insatiable craving be named among you, just as it is appropriate for those who are set apart.¹⁰¹ 5:4 This includes obscene comments, foolish talk, or vulgar talk, things that are not appropriate. Instead, be people who give thanks.¹⁰² 5:5 Know this for sure, that no sexually immoral, impure, or craving person, who is an idolator, has an inheritance in the Kingdom of the Messiah and of God.¹⁰³ 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words. It is on account of these things that the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.¹⁰⁴ 5:7 Therefore, do not be participants with them.¹⁰⁵

5:8 You were formerly darkness, but now you are light because of the Lord. Conduct yourselves as children of light.¹⁰⁶ 5:9 The fruit of light is found in all goodness,

righteousness, and truth.¹⁰⁷ **5:10** As you prove out what is pleasing to the Lord,¹⁰⁸ **5:11** do not take part in the unfruitful actions of darkness, but rather reprove them,¹⁰⁹ **5:12** because it is disgraceful even to talk about the things that are done by them in secret.¹¹⁰ **5:13** But the all becomes manifest when they are exposed by the light.¹¹¹ **5:14** In fact, each one which is revealed is light. Therefore, it says,

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

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

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

5:25 Husbands, love your wives as, indeed, the Messiah has loved the gathering and given himself up for it.¹²³ **5:26** in order that he may set it apart, cleansing it with the washing of water with the message,¹²⁴ **5:27** in order that he may present the gathering in all its glory, having no stain, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, but so that it may be set apart and acceptable.¹²⁵

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

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

5:32 This mystery is great, but I am speaking to the point about the Messiah and the gathering.¹³⁰ **5:33** Consequently, let each one of you love his own wife as himself, and the wife's purpose is to respect her husband.¹³¹

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

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

which is the first commandment with a promise,¹³³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6:21 In order that you may indeed know of my circumstances, Tychicus, the brother who is loved and a faithful servant because of the Lord, will make you aware of everything.¹⁵²

6:22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us and so that he may encourage your hearts.¹⁵³

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

Appendix A – Regarding the Writing of This Letter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

² χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – As in several other letters, Paul mentions that he would want God to extend His grace to his readers, in this case, in Asia. Thus, this grace would come from both the transcendent Creator, the Father, and His instrument of mercy within the creation, Jesus the Messiah, who will stand with believing morally depraved human beings at the judgment and act as their savior and advocate, resulting in eternal life for them, which is God's shalom, the complete package of God's promise of bringing "blessing" to Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). Thus, God's grace works in conjunction with Jesus' qualifying to be our advocate through his death by God's choosing to change our hearts and cause to persevere in our belief in Jesus the Messiah in order that we may reach our goal of eternal shalom—life and mercy from God.

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

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

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

Because Paul did not include anyone else in his introduction as a co-author of this letter, e.g., Silvanus or Timothy (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1), it makes sense to interpret the "us in the Messiah" as *all* authentic believers in his day who had associated themselves with Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah for the divine purpose of his being their king and advocate before God. Thus, Paul is stating in this first paragraph that God grants every good thing that He has planned for those whom He brings into the eternal Kingdom of God. In other words, this is not a situation in the letter where Paul uses "we/us" to refer to his apostolic workers and himself while referring to his readers with "you/you"—at least not yet. Thus, God's plan to grant all authentic believers in Jesus entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God is on account of His plan involving the ultimate Anointed One of the Jews, who is the most important person and object within the created reality, the Messiah, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth. By extrapolation, all the first person plural references to Paul and his

contemporary believers can apply to authentic believers who follow them in history, as long as the references are to ideas that are universally theological and not merely cultural.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ – Paul now says that the effect of and purpose for God’s fulfilling His plans to His own satisfaction will be that both He and the people, at least those who respond positively to the truth about Him, will admire and applaud Him for what a wonderful and awesome God that He is, especially because of His grace, i.e., His independent desire and actions to reach out and embrace morally depraved human beings who do not deserve anything from Him but His anger, justice, condemnation, and destruction.

Thus, God can personally admire what He has done, while also the people's admiring His grace will be at the forefront of their minds not only during their lives here in the present realm but also on into eternity. And the personal satisfaction of understanding just how magnificent and wonderful His grace is will always be a motivating factor in every believer's life each day.

Paul also states that the basis and reason for God's autonomous, loving, and gracious actions towards unworthy human beings is the love and concern that the Messiah Jesus himself has shown by willingly dying for sinners who deserve only God's condemnation and destruction. All this truly feels satisfying to God, and He admires what He does.

⁷ Ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἡγάπης αὐτοῦ, ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς – Paul then gives a more detailed explanation for why Jesus is important to the whole process of God's satisfying His own desires. It is only by being associated with Jesus ("in him") that any sinner can be rescued by God from His justice, condemnation, and destruction, which every human being deserves. But, in order for Jesus to bring about the rescue of evil people, he had to die a horrible death on the cross with "his blood" as an allusion to the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant as an appeal to God for His mercy. And it was by Jesus' death that he qualified to be people's advocate at the judgment (cf. Hebrews). Jesus' rescuing them from God's justice and condemnation results in God's granting them mercy and forgiveness for their rebellion against Him, meaning that He does not require that they pay the debt that they owe His justice.

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

⁸ ἐν πίστει σοφία καὶ φρονήσει – It is clear because of the concepts in this paragraph mostly pertain to the apostles so that Paul is transitioning from speaking of both the Ephesian Christians and himself to just himself and his apostolic co-workers in v. 12. Thus, he changes to the second person plural pronoun following this paragraph in v. 13 as referring to the Ephesian readers. Consequently, Paul is saying that God presented him and, by extrapolation, his apostolic co-workers with the biblical message of the Messiah and provided them with the responsibility to proclaim it to the Gentiles. And He did this with all the wisdom and understanding that is possible for a human being to have as a created being. In other words, Paul and his co-workers (but really, mainly Paul) knows the biblical message as well as it is humanly possible, just as Jesus did also. Thus, we can count on Paul's being the premier biblical theologian and author of all time, except for Jesus. Nevertheless, it is also true that God grants wisdom and understanding to people who hear the apostolic message and become authentic believers who grasp not only what God's eternal plans and purposes are but also who are able to live life in this realm in such a way that corresponds to the gospel, i.e., mostly morally and survive this life with all its suffering and pain that is possible for even Christians.

⁹ γινώσκοντας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν ἧν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ – Paul is saying that something that truly satisfies God is His communicating to Jesus' apostles the information about Jesus as the Messiah and all the ramifications of using him as king and priest to gather together a group of people who receive His mercy and eternal life (cf. v. 10). This is information which Paul calls a "mystery," not because it is impossible or even difficult to understand, but because it is contained as various written statements in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah, which are not easy to put together into a completely coherent picture of the Messiah. But now God has made everything clear by the actual first appearance of Jesus. Learning about Jesus through the gospel message allows one to put together all the messianic passages in the OT in such a way that a person has as full an understanding of him as God intends (cf. Colossians 1:13-29). Thus, God has taught the biblical message and His plans and purposes to the apostles, both through the Old Testament and through Jesus when he was on earth and supernaturally appeared to and tutored Paul after the latter's conversion on the road to Damascus (cf. Galatians 1:15-2:5). As a result, this message involves that which God made known about the Messiah through the writings of the Old Testaments and that which God made known by the very appearance of Jesus at his first coming. The former was, in a sense, a partial and somewhat difficult to put together explanation of the Messiah, i.e., a "mystery," while the latter was definitely a full and clear explanation of him, because it involved the very person of the Messiah, Jesus himself.

In addition, Paul reveals that, when God devised the story of the creation prior to His beginning to make it and that would satisfy Him completely, He set out before the creation to satisfy Himself with the Messiah. Thus, it is those sinners who find themselves associated with the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, ("in him") that ultimately bring great satisfaction to God. Thus, it is Jesus and the ramifications of his existence, death, and resurrection for underserved sinners that constitute "the mystery of [God's] will."

¹⁰ εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ – Paul says here that God's "will" (v. 9) is to use the Messiah as the basis for how He is going to manage the gathering together throughout all history ("the times") the entirety of the group of people who will be associated with him into all eternity. This group of people are the "fullness" of the Messiah as Paul makes clearer in 1:23. They are also "everyone" (τὰ πάντα – cf. Galatians 3:22) who are "in him," i.e., in association with Jesus those who are already dead and whose next waking moment will be eternal and those who are still on the earth and waiting for either death or Jesus' return.

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

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

This involved God’s having predestined Paul and the other apostles/apostolic co-workers in line with what He intended during the time that He conceived of the story of the creation which was before He even started making it. Paul also identifies God as the one who brings about every single element of the creation into existence as that which corresponds to what He wisely chooses and believes to be good and right as each constituent element participates in the overarching purpose of the whole creation—the featuring of the Jewish Messiah as its central element along with the specific group of people from all ethnic backgrounds to be authentic believers in the Jewish Messiah for the sake of obtaining God’s mercy and participating in His promises of Genesis 12:1-3.

τὴν βουλὴν is usually translated “counsel,” but God’s counsel is always good, right, and wise advice that He is giving Himself. Therefore, I have translated it “that which He considers good and right.”

τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ is usually translated “His will,” but God’s will is not only what He wants, but also what He chooses. Therefore, I have translated it “of His own choosing.”

¹² εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προηλπικότες ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ – This verse shows that Paul is focusing on his apostolic co-worker and himself. He calls them “the first to hope in the Messiah.” Certainly, Paul is not referring to his Ephesian readers. He is talking about only the apostles and their very close associates who help them. Paul also understands that his own existence as an apostolic spokesman for Jesus is the outcome of God’s wisely choosing to use Jesus and announce Jesus as the central feature of the creation, so that for the second time Paul talks about God’s being admired for His magnificence and greatness by both God and human beings who hear what Paul has to say about the Jewish Messiah and who become people who connect to him with authentic belief in him, thus responding positively to the information that the apostles disseminate and which culminates in their all being rescued from God’s anger and condemnation, while being granted citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God in the new creation. Thus, God has brought the creation into existence primarily for Himself as a way to reveal and demonstrate Himself to Himself and to reveal and demonstrate Himself to all other creatures who can grasp intellectually His existence.

In this way, the apostle and their co-workers become tools in God’s hand to hammer out His eternal plans and purposes vis-à-vis the Messiah.

Alternatively, Paul could be referring to Jewish believers who first became believers in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, in contrast to the Ephesian believers who were Gentiles, or at least mostly Gentiles. Cf. Ephesians 2:11-22.

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

In was in the Upper Room Discourse in the gospel of John that Jesus mentions that God will send His Spirit as the *parakletos* to the apostles and people to mark them.

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

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

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

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

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

Notice also in this verse that Paul once again sums up the two primary pieces of evidence for people’s authentic Christianity, their belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and their Lord, as well as their care and concern for fellow believers in Asia, that, like the rest of the Roman Empire, was consumed with pagan idolatry and polytheism, which rejected the idea of a transcendent Creator, as the only way to view reality correctly, to the extent that people associated it with the well-being of the Roman Empire. Thus, “all those who have been set apart” refers to the Christians in Asia. ¹⁶ οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μνησθῆναι τὸ ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου – In the light of what Paul says throughout his letters, it makes the most sense that Paul prayed for the continuing perseverance of the belief of his fellow Christians, as well as for more opportunities to visit them and encourage them in their belief with his continuing to lay out for them the apostolic message, even if it was repeating it over and over. In addition, as he prays for them, he is extremely grateful for God’s having changed them inwardly and granted them authentic belief and the expectation of eternal life. He does not thank the people, but God, who is the one who causes people to be both believers in Jesus and those who love their fellow Christians. As a result, here he mentions that he prays for them that they may have wisdom and continued awareness of how powerfully God is working in them and of how wonderful eternal life will be.

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

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

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

Paul also says that the first purpose of their knowing these biblical ideas is that they clearly grasp the guaranteed nature of the future, eternal destiny to which God has both invited and appointed them. This is their hope and that of which they can be confident they will receive from God. It is also that for which they are eagerly waiting. In other words, the only reason to have a hope, especially a biblical hope, is to wait expectantly for it with confidence that God will certainly follow through on His promises and provide it.

The “hope” to which God has called the Ephesian Christians, i.e., to which He has prepared them as inwardly changed human beings, is first of all “the riches of the glory of His inheritance.” Thus, the second purpose for their knowing the biblical ideas is that they understand clearly the wealth and full extent of how magnificent will be the experience of eternal life as morally perfect beings for Christians. This will truly be a “Wow” experience for them. Nothing in the present realm and experiences of life is more valuable and can compare to the wonderful and fulfilling effect on people of eternal life.

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

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

It is important to realize that God’s power within us as believers is not gas in a car’s fuel tank that we draw upon whenever we choose. Instead, our choices flow out of God’s powerfully working to cause us to be committed to Him, His plans, and His purposes in the midst of our continued inherent moral depravity and hostility towards God. Therefore, we do not cause God’s power to work, but God causes His power to work and continue to move us perseveringly towards qualifying for our ultimate goal of eternal salvation and life.

²⁰ ἦν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ ἑκάθισας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις – Paul goes on to say that the power which God uses sovereignly to accomplish His purposes with respect to the Ephesian Christians is the same power that He used in the case of Jesus, when He raised him from the dead and caused him to ascend into heaven so to speak to take his permanent position as the ruler of the created cosmos (cf. Acts 1:9, “And after he said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking at him. And a cloud received him from their eyes.”). This is Jesus’ “sitting at the right hand of God,” a metaphorical statement for Jesus’ ruling over God’s creation with just a little less authority than Yahweh, the transcendent God, but as God’s proxy (cf. Psalm 8,110). As a created being, Jesus cannot transcend the created reality as Yahweh does but remains within it. To be “in the heavens” is for Jesus to have the permanent and incorruptible role of ruler over the universe. Thus, Jesus has qualified to receive his kingdom even though it has not come into existence yet (cf. Hebrews 2:8, “...but we do not yet see all things subjected to him”). But it will when he returns and establishes the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel with the Jews’ finally having become the “great nation” which God promised in Genesis 12 that they would be.

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

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

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

First use of ἐκκλησία in LXX is for the nation of Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the gathering of the people of God. So here Jesus gives definition to the community of believers as their head.

Cf. Psalm 8:6 – “You have made him to rule over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet” (וְתַמְשִׁילָהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדְיָיָהוָה כָּל־תַּחְתֵּי־רַגְלָיו) (καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ). Paul quotes Psalm 8 where David is describing the marvelous nature of God’s covenant with him to the effect that David’s son, e.g., Solomon as the first one, is God’s son and His proxy in the

universe. This means that God's son rules over all of His creation, symbolized by everything's being the son's footstool, including his enemies whom he suppresses.

²³ ἥτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου – Thus, with Jesus as their head, the Christian community, as the body of Jesus, fills out his human purposes on earth with respect to them and his message. He provides the fullness of knowledge and understanding with respect to everyone whom God brings into existence in the creation who will be eternally associated with Jesus. Thus, he provides the fullness of his followers' existence, which will be eternal salvation and life in the Kingdom of God. This is why it makes so much sense that Christians love Christians, because they have a common purpose, to follow Jesus as their Messiah and high priest with the common knowledge of the nature of reality that only he can provide as the very center of God's plans and purposes for the creation and which includes their eternal destiny of mercy and life. Thus, more and more people are being added to the body and full complement of Jesus, so that all who are supposed to be a part of the body of Jesus. And these people, the little people who are in association with Jesus, are involved in the most important project which God is engaged in within the creation, even if hardly anyone knows who we are. Cf. James 1:9-11; 2:5. In addition, these people are also looking to add to the body of Christ by being sensitive to when someone may truly be interested in the gospel.

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

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

²⁵ ἐν αἷς ποτε περιπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργούντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας – The Ephesian Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, lived in rebellion towards God before their inwardness was miraculously changed by Him, whether they lived in conformity to the OT derived Judaism of their day or the pagan polytheism of their day. Paul is saying that their rebellion lined up with the inwardness and manner of operation of all human beings, who exist at one time or another within this creation, which is temporary. Their aggregate and agglomeration of evil and rejection of God constitutes that which commands all human beings by virtue, in Greek terms, of the fact that they all breathe the same air and atmosphere just above the surface of the earth. It is as though this “air” that they breathe leads them to be and act in a certain way, i.e., in rebellion against God, because Paul is saying that they are all made of the same immoral and depraved stuff, and they inhabit the same realm of which they are physically dependent for existence. This then constitutes the “spirit” or the manner, morally speaking, of how those, who are fully committed in Paul's day (and ours by extrapolation) to rebelling against God, act as persons. They form a culture of rebels who encourage each other to continue to rebel against God. In addition, Paul labels all those of the present creation “sons of disobedience,” i.e., the progeny of a kind of father who teaches and encourages his children to do evil only, and, in this case, within the context of being unable to do otherwise. As a result, all Christians are in some way counter-cultural, because every culture is fundamentally rebellious against God.

²⁶ ἐν οἷς καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἀνεστράφημέν ποτε ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν ποιοῦντες τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν, καὶ ἡμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ – Here Paul confines his comments regarding the contemporary and universal evil of mankind to himself and the Ephesian Christians, all of whom used to pursue a course of evil in their lives, being led by their inherent and overwhelming evil desires that were always in rebellion against God. Paul also comments that this made him and other Christians, who were merely following the lead of the source of their rebellion within them, deserving of the anger and condemnation of God. This is just the way they were as human persons, stuck in their commitment to deciding for themselves what is right vs. what is wrong instead of willingly submitting to God's definition of morality. Paul and his fellow believers among all the Asians were no different from everyone one else who is inherently a committed rebel against God.

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

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

within them.

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

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

³⁰ ἵνα ἐνδείξηται ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπέρχομένοις 'τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος' τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Paul also says that God's purpose in making him and the other morally depraved Christians the constant companions and fellow rulers of sorts of Jesus, the primary ruler of the cosmos, is so that He may show forth into eternity the greatness of His sovereign and independent kindness towards them on the basis of Jesus as His instrument of mercy, because he will act as high priest and advocate for them at the final judgment. Could we, therefore, say that this is God's *ultimate* purpose for having created the whole cosmos? Indeed. This is like Paul's statements at the beginning of this letter to the effect that God has chosen and predestined Christians in order that they admire the magnificence of His grace (cf. 1:3-6). God's showing forth His willingness to rescue sinners from His eternal condemnation will be a wonderful and beautiful aspect of the eternal Kingdom of God.

³¹ Τῇ γὰρ χάριτι ἔστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ τὴν πίστει καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον – Paul now states categorically that his Ephesian readers have been rescued from God's condemnation and destruction (the "this" of which Paul speaks) by means of His independent kindness towards them by changing them into people who exhibit genuine belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah. It is their belief that has become the one human element that they possess that qualifies them for eternal life. Paul also emphasizes that this whole change on their behalf, i.e., their salvation by grace, and in them, i.e., their belief, did not come from them *per se*. It was not there inherent human doing as morally depraved and rebellious human beings. Instead, God merely gave them salvation through belief without asking them or anybody else if it was ok to do so.

It makes sense to interpret the word "this" (τοῦτο) as mainly salvation by grace because first of all the word is neuter and second belief is contrasted with works in the next verse, indicating the means by which "this" has occurred. It is not Paul's and the Ephesian Christians' religious and moral performance which is made them worthy of "this," but it is their "belief," which itself by nature is a gift from God, that has qualified them for salvation by grace.

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

³³ αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν ποιήματα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν – Paul now includes himself in this whole point of God's grace salvation to the Ephesians, by putting it in terms of what God has created. As the author of the story of the whole cosmos, God has written into it Paul and the Ephesian Christians for the very purpose of changing them from abject rebels against God to humble penitents who are "in the Messiah" now and who will perform "good works" as a result of their being different from the world (and certainly good works in the future Kingdom of God where they will be morally perfect and perform morally perfect actions). This will be part of their salvation now. Indeed, God formulated the whole story of the creation prior to His bringing it into existence as said in Genesis 1, including whatever Paul and the Ephesians as authentic believers will do now that will result from their genuine belief now so that they will demonstrate that they are "saved," i.e., granted mercy along with immortality and moral perfection. Therefore, they will walk right into these "good works" that are waiting for them now, because these works already exist in the transcendent mind of God as He tells His story by bringing these good works into existence when He so chooses. Consequently, people of genuine belief fulfill or fill

out the whole story that is in God's head and is always forever still waiting to come into existence, because it never ends.

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

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

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

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

³⁶ νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul says that things have changed for these Gentile believers. They used to be outside God's "people" so to speak, i.e. they used to be separated from God and His mercy and farther away from God than Jews who are physical descendants of Abraham. Now, these Gentile believers are as close to God and His Messiah as any human being can be, because they have embraced Jesus of Nazareth as the one who has qualified, through his death on the cross ("his blood"), to be their advocate at the final judgment because he has offered himself to God to extinguish His anger towards sinners.

Therefore, God accepts the Gentile believers as His people with equal status as all other believers throughout history, like His "chosen people" of Israel, at least those among the Jews who have authentic belief like them. Later, God will welcome them into the eternal Kingdom of God.

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

³⁷ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἐν καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἐχθρὰν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ – Now Paul focuses on the effects of Jesus' being the Messiah. First, he is "our shalom," i.e., our peace, referring to that which in this realm ultimately provides a person with a wholesome and friendly relationship with the transcendent Creator God and in the next realm will provide a person with eternal salvation and life. Second, Jesus has brought believing Jews and Gentiles together into one group of people, whom he called in v. 12 the "citizenry of Israel." Thus, we notice that it is not the Mosaic Covenant and Gentile's obeying it that unites them with Jews. It is only the Messiah who does so by connecting them through their belief with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

according to God's promises in Genesis 12:1-3 that "in [him] all the families of the earth will be blessed." Third, he has broken down what he calls "the barrier of the dividing wall, the hostility/cause of hatred." The next verse could make it seem as though this is the Mosaic Covenant. Instead, it makes more sense that Paul is referring to mankind's moral depravity and rebellion against God. God does not destroy the Mosaic Covenant in the present realm, because He continues to use it as the identifying factor in the Jews' lives as authentic believers in the millennial kingdom when Jesus reigns over them and the world in Jerusalem. Therefore, Paul is saying that the effect of man's moral depravity is to alienate people from God by making Him furious with their rebellion against Him, with the eternal effect that God punishes and destroys those who remain hostile towards Him in their immoral condition throughout their entire lives. Jesus "destroyed" God's hostility towards man by dealing with man's rebellion so to speak when he qualified through his death ("his blood") to be people's high priest and advocate as their propitiation, the offering that assuages God's anger towards all people who have rebelled against Him (cf. Hebrews). The means of this destruction was his "flesh," i.e., his body on the cross when he died and earned himself the right to be the Messiah and priest of morally depraved human beings.

³⁸ τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἔν δόγμασιν ἠ καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα ἑκαὶνὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιοῦν εἰρήνην – Paul goes on to say that Jesus' activity of qualifying to be the high priest and advocate of both Jews and Gentiles, in some sense, demonstrates the eternal irrelevance of the Mosaic Covenant in the lives of believing Jews (and believing Gentiles, for that matter), because it is only the Messiah who molds *believing* Jews and *believing* Gentiles into one new group, the group who obtain God's eternal mercy, regardless of whether or not they have been following the Mosaic Covenant. Cf. Galatians 2:11-21. Thus, it is Jesus and not the Mosaic Covenant that brings shalom to the relationship between God and morally depraved human beings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul is thus connecting the Mosaic Covenant with man's moral rebellion which is the very division and barrier between

God and the Jews, even though the covenant was given to the Jews as the specific agreement between God and them. One might expect God to make an agreement with people that worked by producing peace and friendship between Him and them! However, this agreement only exacerbated the problem by perpetuating the hostility that God felt towards them, which actually was His purpose for it in order for it to be just that much clearer that a new high priest, a new sacrifice, and a new covenant was necessary for the Jews to acquire His mercy and eternal life (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 7-10). This is why it will finally make sense that the Jews obey properly, i.e., with changed hearts, the Mosaic Covenant on the land during the reign of Jesus after his second coming, because God will no longer be hostile towards them—not on the basis of their performing the Mosaic Covenant, but on the basis of Jesus and his having qualified to be their high priest for all eternity.

³⁹ καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ – Paul again declares that, by his death on the cross (“by means of [his] one body”), Jesus has eliminated any hostility between God and morally depraved human beings who take advantage of his role as their high priest at the final judgment. Jesus “killed” the hostility between God and sinners by providing the only means to God’s granting them forgiveness and being at peace with them.

As stated earlier, the Mosaic Covenant, in the final analysis, perpetuates the hostility between God and the Jews, indeed, between God and all human beings, i.e., even Gentiles who join the Jews on the land of Israel and bring their sacrifices and offerings to God at the temple in Jerusalem. This perpetuation is not because the Mosaic Covenant is bad and needs destroying, but because in God’s plans it was never intended to solve the problem of man’s needing God’s mercy (cf. Romans 7,8; Hebrews). Therefore, Jesus, by his death on the cross as an offering to God, basically also eliminated the shortcomings of the Mosaic Covenant both for Jews who believe in the Messiah and for Gentiles who believe in the Messiah. Later, Paul will encourage believing Jews and believing Gentiles to see each other as members of the same unified group of people by means of the Messiah, the group who have been reconciled out of a hostile relationship with God into a friendly relationship with God that results in both believing Jews’ and believing Gentiles’ obtaining God’s eternal mercy through him.

Thus, Paul is implying that this is a whole new arrangement between Jews and Gentiles. While there is an historical divide between Jews and Gentiles as stipulated by the Mosaic Covenant, there will be an eternal unification of these two groups in the Messiah, because of their both obtaining God’s eternal mercy through the one method of the Messiah’s death and advocacy at the final judgment. Because God has changed His relationship with both Jews and Gentiles through their belief to one of friendship instead of one of hostility, having done so with the Messiah as His instrument of reconciliation, He has brought peace between Himself and all believers and, therefore, even between Jewish believers and Gentile believers (indeed all believers of all time going back even before Abraham and the inception of the Jewish people through him).

⁴⁰ καὶ ἐλθὼν εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς – cf. Isaiah 57:19, וְיִהְיֶה הַרְפָּאָתְיִי לְרֵיחַ אֲנָרִי [גִּבּוֹר] בְּרֵיחַ נֹבַח (LXX – εἰρήνην ἐπ’ εἰρήνην τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ τοῖς ἐγγύς οὖσιν καὶ εἶπεν κύριος Ἰάσομαι αὐτούς), ““creating the fruit of lips, “Shalom, shalom,” to those who are far away and to those who are near,” declares Yahweh, “and I will heal them.”” Paul has been saying that the Gentiles have been “far away” from God because of their pagan idolatry and rejection of Him along with their not being physical descendants of Abraham, while the Jews have been “near” God because of His having chosen them as an ethnic group and given them the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, the Messiah’s purpose was to announce for both Jews and Gentiles that they both could be at peace with God apart from the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, believing Jews and believing Gentiles are combined into one group of eternal believers.

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

Indeed, the inference from what Paul is saying here is that the Spirit’s work, Jesus as advocate before God, and a common personal and individual inwardness are the only legitimate means to peace even between people of different ethnic groups (and, by extrapolation, between people who are different on *any* basis). And the Tower of Babel is the explicit biblical teaching that God simply will not allow human beings to all be at peace with one another—until the death of the two witnesses of Revelation and the 2nd coming of the Messiah, after he has destroyed all those following the Man of Lawlessness in the Middle East who have rebelled against God. But this peace will be only temporary until the end of the “1,000 years” of Jesus’ reign on earth when a final uprising against God will take place, and then He will destroy eternally all remaining unbelievers and will create the eternal earth and second stage of the Kingdom of God for only believers.

⁴² Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἔστε συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ – Now, Paul says clearly that his Gentile Ephesian readers, by virtue of their belief in the Jewish Messiah, are no longer outside the bounds of the “chosen people” of God. Indeed, they can consider themselves, in a sense, citizens of the nation of Israel, i.e., Israel that is made up of authentic believing Jews and Gentiles who both will enjoy the fulfillment of God’s

promises to Abraham (cf. 2:9 and Romans 11). Thus, they join the believing Jews in the “Israel” of God, so that these Ephesian believing Gentiles are obviously different from the rest of the world and can think of themselves as God’s children and family. They live together with believing Jews in the same spiritual house, the house of God. They all, in fact, are the house of God as Paul goes on to describe with respect to the concept of the temple of God.

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

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

⁴⁴ ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὖξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ – Paul repeats the fact that the Messiah constitutes the basis for this building by being its cornerstone. It is he who makes the people one group and one building, whether Jews or Gentiles, who have been inwardly changed by the Spirit of God and exercised authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah, thus pointing them towards the goal of the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham.

⁴⁵ ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι – The inference from what Paul is saying by his use of the building metaphor is that both Jewish believers and Gentile believers constitute this building, with the ramification being that they are all ONE building and, therefore, one group of people with no division between them, which the Mosaic Covenant by itself could not produce because it is inadequate to provide eternal mercy for any human being, thus, *by itself*, perpetuating the hostility between God and the Jews. This hostility will end completely only when Jesus returns and the believing Jews on the land of Israel perform the covenant with genuine belief.

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

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

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

He begins to discuss the role that God has assigned him of being the apostle to the Gentiles after labeling himself a prisoner of the Messiah, thus referring to the fact that he is divinely and morally obligated to carry out this responsibility, or he would be rebelliously disobedient to God. It makes sense to think of Paul’s bringing up this subject to underscore his encouragement to the Ephesian Christians to listen to what he has to say and to obey it. He is chained to the Messiah, while also being chained to the Romans as their prisoner, awaiting an audience with Nero. However, Paul stops mid-sentence, before going on to exhort his Christian readers to make choices that are in line with the good news of the apostolic message of Jesus, and he will pick up the thread in 4:1. He feels the need to restate the fact that his role was graced to him by God, his understanding was taught to him by God, and the result is the combining of Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah with Jewish believers for a common eternal destiny.

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

Paul says that the apostolic responsibility that God has assigned him is an effect of God's grace. This is always Paul's emphasis apart from Jesus as the crucified Messiah. Paul's job is what God has arranged through His independent and kind choice, so that God has given to Paul the role of being the apostle to the Gentiles. He also indicates that God's purpose was for Paul eventually to travel to Ephesus and present the ideas concerning Jesus as the Messiah to these very people who have become genuine believers.

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

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

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

⁵⁰ ὃ ἐτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἔγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἀγίοις ὀπισθοτόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι – While previous generations of people could have come to some understanding of what God is up to by means of His purposes for the Messiah, especially by reading the OT, their level of understanding could not match that of those like Paul and even his Ephesian readers, for whom it is so much clearer now that the Messiah has come. It is all this information from and through the Messiah that has been conveyed to his apostles and their associated teachers, e.g., Silvanus and Timothy, who are traveling companions and helpers of Paul (cf. 2:20 regarding the interpretation of "prophets"). Their understanding is a result of the work of God within the creation, i.e., a result of His Spirit's work within the inwardness of the apostles and their associated teachers who now properly think about and understand Jesus as the Messiah. In turn, they convey this information to others and reveal what Paul goes on to talk about in the next verse.

⁵¹ εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἧς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Paul has already basically stated this in 2:11-22, that the clear message now is that the Jews are no longer the only "chosen people of God." Gentiles, who have embraced the *Jewish* Messiah Jesus as their advocate and king, are also (along with believing Jews), *without their having to live on the land of Israel and to follow the Mosaic Covenant*. Thus, believing Jews and believing Gentiles really are together what comprise the chosen people of God. Being in Rome, where he is basically on trial for being a bad Jew according to the Jews in Jerusalem who wanted to kill him for stating that he was assigned by the Messiah the responsibility to proclaim him to the Gentiles, Paul continues to be incredibly impressed with and surprised by the importance of his responsibility.

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

⁵³ Ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ὁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη, ἵνα τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Here Paul picks up the thread he started in 3:1 and finishes the statement. His responsibility is to talk to the Gentiles, but this was graced to him with all the understanding necessary for doing so (cf. 3:2-7). Paul does not think very highly of his former manner of life, where he was wholeheartedly committed to destroying the Christian movement. Therefore, when God called him to be not only an authentic believer in the Jewish Messiah, but also one of its authoritative spokesmen, indeed the only spokesman to the non-Jewish world in the 1st century Roman Empire, he considered himself to be the least likely and least deserving person for this role, not that any morally depraved person has been able to deserve anything good from God. Paul may consider himself the greatest sinner of all time because he was wholeheartedly committed to destroying the Christian movement, but anyone who has come to grips with his sin and need for God's mercy through the inward work of the Holy Spirit probably thinks that he is running a very close second to Paul for winning the "most sinful person in the world" prize.

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

⁵⁴ καὶ φωτίσαι ὅ[πάντας] τίς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ὅτι ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι – All these wonderful ideas about the Messiah coming and dying for the sins of people were mentioned in the OT but not obviously set forth explicitly until the Messiah physically came for the first time as Jesus of Nazareth. All this was the plan of God, who is writing the story of the creation according to His own desires, revealing more of what He is ultimately up to bit by bit through the Old Testament, through the history of the Jews, and now most explicitly through the Messiah himself. Thus, the “mystery,” i.e., Jesus with his death and resurrection explicitly revealed in the creation, was in the mind of God and mentioned in the OT until Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, along with his expressing through his teaching these very same ideas.

⁵⁵ ἵνα γνωρισθῆ ὁὖν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἢ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ – Taking ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις adverbially as meaning “on a permanent and incorruptible basis,” along with taking διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας adverbially as meaning “by means of the gathering,” God’s wisdom that constitutes His purposes for the creation and the appearance of the Messiah, which therefore has many elements to it because of the many people involved in God’s ultimate chosen people who obtain eternal life, has been made known to any other religious ruler or authority who thinks otherwise. It is these rulers who continue to set the tone of the spirit of the world during the history of this cosmos, and this tone is one of hostility towards God. However, Jesus with his believing community within history demonstrate on a permanent and incorruptible (“in the heavens”) basis that God’s plans and purposes will prevail over any intentions they might have to steer history in another direction.

⁵⁶ κατὰ ῥόθου τῶν αἰώνων ἦν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν – Paul indicates that God had planned all along for the Messiah to be the focal point of all history, both the history of the present, temporary realm and that of the future, eternal realm, because the Messiah is the ruler of creation as God’s proxy and icon within the creation (cf. Colossians 1:20ff.). As a result, the Messiah appeared in the world, and the gathering of his believers continues to represent him in the world through the multifaceted wisdom of God (3:10), thus making clear that God is still forging history to play out His permanent plans and purposes. Every story of every believer (and actually every non-believer too) works to demonstrate God’s wisdom, grace, mercy, and love that ends up being beyond the comprehension of any created human being (cf. 3:18,19).

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

⁵⁸ διὸ αἰτούμαι μὴ ἔγκακεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσίν μου ὑπὲρ ὅμων, ἥτις ἐστὶν δόξα ὄμων – Assuming that Paul is under house arrest in Rome awaiting an audience with Emperor Nero, he knows that when Tychicus arrives in Asia to deliver this letter to the Christians there (cf. 6:21,22), he will inform them of Paul’s circumstances, and they will probably feel bad for him, maybe even thinking that if anyone should be able to avoid suffering, it is an apostle who is especially loved by God. However, Paul considers any hardship that he experiences to be part of his job and responsibility as the sole apostle to the Gentiles, because each moment of pain and suffering reminds him of the indescribable benefit of having Jesus as one’s Messiah and advocate before the Father for His mercy. Paul also considers the suffering that he endures to be for the benefit of others and their belief, because it is typically accompanied by the authentic belief of Gentiles who hear about and become concerned about his difficult experiences. The upshot for even these Ephesian Gentile believers is that they will enjoy the wonderful mercy and eternal salvation of God through Paul, his sufferings, and the proving out through his persevering belief of the value of the apostolic message. This is their “magnificence” as connected to Paul’s suffering on behalf of the apostolic message.

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

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

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

However, Peter quotes these verses in Acts 3:25 when speaking to Jews in Jerusalem and uses αἱ πατριαὶ instead.

Therefore, all three Greek works are synonymous, referring to the kinds of people on earth which we would label as “ethnic groups.” So it is all different peoples of human history who find their role in God’s story defined by God Himself, the storyteller, either with their proceeding towards a permanent, eternal, and incorruptible existence or with their being subject to only a temporary existence within the creation.

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

Therefore, Paul’s desire for all the Asian believers is that God would cause them to persevere in their belief by means of His miraculous work within them in the creation, work that is said by the Bible to be done by His Spirit, i.e., that aspect of Him which operates in the creation and carries out His most specific plans and purposes towards those who have been predestined to eternal life (cf. Ephesians 2:8). Indeed, Paul would want God to operate within these believers in proportion to His own greatness. That is a lot of power! And, again, this is power which God uses to cause the choices of set apart people to demonstrate that they are different from the rest of the humanity, i.e., that they are committed to God and the things of God and not to ignoring or rebelling against God by choosing to define good and evil themselves.

⁶² κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι – Paul now indicates that the result of such a huge manner of God’s work within these Ephesian believers would be that metaphorically Jesus would reside in their hearts by their centralizing their belief in the Messiah in their own inwardness and lives. In addition, Paul probably means by Jesus’ dwelling in their hearts that they simply would be committed to love him and long to be with him in his eternal kingdom, the same way that Paul told the Philippians that they were in his heart (cf. Philippians 1:7). This would all be the effect of their having become fully entrenched in their status as believers in the Jewish Messiah that has come about because God had chosen to love them even before He brought the creation into existence in Genesis 1. Thus, it is God’s love for them which becomes the basis for their authentic belief and its perseverance (cf. Romans 5:3-5). In other words, God graciously loves those whom He chooses, so that they center their existences on the role and purpose of the Jewish Messiah, resulting in their repudiating evil, which is still a permanent part of their own defining essence this side of eternity, and pursuing moral obedience to God, which will be a permanent part of their defining essence on the other side of eternity.

⁶³ ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πάνσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τὸ πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος¹ – Here Paul points to God’s purpose in working so powerfully in certain people’s inwardness, in those whom He has set apart from the rest of the world by virtue of His changing their hearts—both Jews and Gentiles. There is a fundamental intellectual component to what God causes to happen within morally depraved human beings. They acquire a profound understanding of what God wants them to know about Himself and the Messiah (3:19).

⁶⁴ γινῶναι τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς¹ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ – The understanding of God that Paul is talking about is specifically in regard to the Messiah and how much He has demonstrated his love for those who will take advantage of his advocacy before the Father by his dying for them on the cross. This level of love will certainly appear to be incomprehensible to those who ponder it properly. However, this understanding by believers of the Messiah’s love for evil people leads to what Paul calls the *playroma* of God (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ), i.e., the fullness of God which will eventually be both immortality and moral perfection in eternity for all believers in God throughout all history. In other words, a person obtains *everything* which God has planned for him by comprehending as much as God’s ultimate eternal people can, i.e., two things, 1) how much Jesus the Messiah has loved him by dying for him, which is also the greatest example of how much God has loved them, and 2) what are the ramifications of this love through Jesus’ death, especially the *eternal* ramifications of receiving God’s mercy along with life in the Kingdom of God for all believers throughout history, who constitute the *playroma* of God.

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

Option #2 seems more coherent. This is a doxology, a praise of God that Paul is expressing, and his praise of Him is to the effect that God is truly beyond human comprehension but faithful to teach human beings now about His eternal plans and purposes to the effect that He will grant them eternal life. The key words are τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ — that God is able. For Paul, God’s “ableness” is His transcendence, much beyond any human being’s own “ableness” to understand and acquire eternal life on his own. Therefore, what we morally depraved human beings can understand of God and His Messiah should absolutely stun us and remind us of what we not only do not know of God but also of what God will eventually bring about in our lives. We know that God has loved us and the Messiah has loved us through the latter’s death, resurrection, and ascension so as to qualify to gain eternal mercy for us—when all we deserved was God’s condemnation and destruction (cf. Romans 5:6-10).

⁶⁶ αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ὡκαὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν – Because God is so great, especially towards those whom He has inwardly caused to become His rescued possessions as human beings, “the gathering” throughout all history, with the Messiah Jesus as the king and priest, Paul would grant to God all the honor, respect, admiration, and applause that He deserves for all eternity. Implicit here is Paul’s encouragement for his readers to join him in this doxology and praising of God. God’s whole project is to gather eventually all the eternal people of God and Jesus into the Kingdom of God and love them with an incomprehensible love forever.

⁶⁷ Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατήσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε – After explaining that God has eternal and permanent plans for people who embrace Jesus as the Messiah, and that God has chosen Paul to play the role of an authoritative spokesman for Jesus to the Gentiles, he continues the thought which he began in 3:1. This section of the letter is meant not only to encourage the Ephesian Christians to live in a manner that corresponds to their authentic belief in the Jewish Messiah, but also of spelling out for them what this looks like on a practical level. And it is the longest section of the letter, indicating that it is probably his main point to them. Thus, because Paul is an apostle and God is so deserving of the highest honor and respect, Paul exhorts his Christian readers to make choices in their lives that truly match the truth and significance of the apostolic message of eternal life, God’s greatness, and their understanding of God’s greatness. Paul mentions a second time that he is a prisoner. This time, he is explicit that he is chained so to speak to Rome and in Rome under house arrest, because he has gotten in trouble for being a faithful apostle and spokesman for Jesus. Thus, he is chained not only to his calling and responsibility as the sole apostle to the Gentiles, but also to any consequent suffering which he endures at the hands of rebellious human beings. Theologically and morally, Paul has no choice but to act in his life as an authoritative spokesman on behalf of Jesus as the Messiah, regardless of the negative effects that this brings into his existence in the present realm.

The Ephesian’s calling is mainly God’s appointment of them before He began the creation to become members of His eternal chosen people and secondarily His inviting them to become such when Paul first presented the gospel to them.

⁶⁸ μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραύτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας – Paul now lists several identifying characteristics of a Christian’s life that is commensurate with God’s having appointed a person to have a changed heart and to become an authentic believer for the purpose of “putting up with” other Christians. The first characteristic is humility, being willing to acknowledge that one is a created “clay pot” who deserves eternal condemnation, such that the Potter, God, has the right to orchestrate one’s life as He sees fit according to His eternal plans and purposes, using the person as a tool in other people’s lives of His manifesting His grace, mercy, and power—just as He did with Jesus. Thus, Christians are called to give precedence to other Christians as part of their loving behavior towards them.

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

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

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

⁶⁹ σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης – For Paul, love towards other believers involves putting up a protective wall around the apostolic message that instructs all of them in what God is doing. First, the Spirit of God, i.e., His operating within the creation, gives them a common divine factor in their lives. This is their unity or oneness. No one becomes an authentic believer without God’s causing him to do so. Therefore, all believers share in God’s divine work within them. Second, they are looking forward to the same eternal destiny, shalom, i.e., an existence in the Kingdom of God that will be completely devoid of evil, heartache, and disappointment. Thus, Paul wants these Ephesian Christians to work hard at preserving and respecting their unity and oneness that ultimately comes from God’s creative work of operating within them through His Spirit and that has its basis in the same destiny that each of them shares, the wonderful environment and experience of the eternal Kingdom of God. Consequently, their common and mutual eternal destiny of an existence of shalom which has been brought about by the inward work of the Holy Spirit becomes the very intellectual means and motivation to remain united in their ultimate goal and purpose, so that they love one another in spite of things which make it difficult to do so. In other words, Christians do not create their unity (as pastors are often tempted to say by gently (?) demanding that people follow the doctrines and programs of their particular church). Christians recognize that God has already created their unity and oneness to which they respond by loving one another and not allowing human differences to keep them from being unified inwardly and with respect to their eternal destiny.

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

First, there is one “body,” i.e., one group of believers, the community of those who have genuinely chosen to associate with Jesus as the Messiah and to wait for his advocacy in order to gain God’s eternal mercy. The implication as Paul

will go on to explain is that these Ephesian Christians are like a human body, where each member of the body, an arm or leg or hand, for example, is important to the unified operation of the body.

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

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

⁷¹ εἰς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα – Paul now identifies three more elements of which there is only one and which help provide the basis for these Ephesian Christians to guard their unity. While the word "Lord" could refer to God because of its being the Greek substitute for Yahweh in the LXX, the word's proximity to belief and baptism, along with Paul's mentioning "one God..." in the next verse, would lead towards understanding him to mean Jesus by "Lord." Therefore, Jesus, belief in Jesus, and water baptism by the Ephesian Christians as a public profession of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, are all important unifying factors in their lives. Jesus is their primary leader and king within the creation. There is only one kind of belief in Jesus, that which is internally created by the Holy Spirit. The water baptism which each of them experienced is in light of one vital idea, that each one of them confesses that he is evil to the extent that God's sovereign choice to be merciful towards him is necessary for gaining His mercy—as exemplified by Jesus' death on the cross.

Thus, God's operating in the creation that is causing them to look forward to a shared experience in eternity of a fully wholesome existence results in their having a single master among them as slaves, this master being Jesus the Messiah. Secondly, they also have one set of ideas that they hold to be true, that constitutes their understanding of the nature of reality, and that is centralized in the Messiah. This set of ideas are all those expressed in the OT (and in the NT, too). Thirdly, the water baptism has one meaning only, that they are repudiating their moral depravity which would result in eternal death and are acknowledging God's granting them a coming up out of the water of death and gaining a cleansing of sorts which is the confident expectation of life in the Kingdom of God through Jesus' advocacy at the final judgment. All three of these they should look at as unifying factors in their lives as authentic Christians.

⁷² εἰς θεὸς ὁ καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν – In contrast to the many gods whom the Ephesian Gentiles worshiped and whom these Gentile Christians had worshiped, Paul lists the fact that their now acknowledging only the one, true God is obviously a hugely important unifying ingredient in their lives. This is the same God whom they call Father, because He is the source of existence for everything else that exists that is not God. This same unique God rules over the entire creation, operates in the entire creation, and can be said even to reside in every element within the creation, because nothing apart from God can exist without His causing it to, so that He is literally "in" it. God must inhabit whatever He makes in order for it to exist. Thus, these believers in Jesus as the Messiah possess these ideas as facts of reality, which should naturally motivate them to bind together as fellow travelers towards the eternal Kingdom of God.

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

⁷⁴ διὸ λέγει ἀναβάς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἣ ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις – Here Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, but he changes the wording slightly to suit his purposes of talking about the Messiah. David is the author of the psalm about Yahweh's rising above His enemies on His chariots and taking with Him His captives, the Israelites as His people, for whom He cares and saves from their enemies. However, the Hebrew and LXX are different from Paul's wording. Psalm 68:18 reads, "You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives. You have received gifts among men, even among the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell there." The Hebrew is אֶלְהִים אֲלֵהֶם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם לְמַרְוֵם | שָׁבִי לְקַחְתָּ מִתְּנוּת בְּאָדָם וְאֶת־כֹּדְרֵיהֶם לְשָׁפָן, while the LXX's wording is ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος, ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκευῶσαι. κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός, both of which say literally, "You received gifts in a man," meaning that God received gifts in the form or manner of mankind, i.e., human beings whom He Himself led as captives "up" as His permanent possessions. In other words, the gifts are human beings. In contrast, Paul uses ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, which says, "he gave gifts with respect to (or, "in regard to") men, meaning that someone gave gifts to someone in the form or manner of men." Again the gifts are human beings, but Paul is taking David's point in Psalm 68 regarding God as the recipient of the gifts and making Him also the giver of the gifts. This is because God as the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth who is the very icon of God and Son of God as God's proxy within the creation (cf. Colossians 1:15) performs his responsibilities

in such a way that he makes a gift of redeemed sinners to the Father, Yahweh.

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

Jack's outline of Psalm 68 – 1-3, God's power to destroy his enemies; 4-6, God's focus on the needy and Hius blessing them; 7-14, The God who leads Israel into battle is the God of Sinai; 15-18, Irony of smallness of Mt. Zion vs. height of Mt. Herman, and David fought battles for Israel; 19-23, God is capable of destroying Israel's enemies; 24-31, the Messianic king and God to Zion; 32-35, the kings of the earth should praise Yahweh.

cf. Genesis 25:6 – ...**מַתָּנָה** **אֲבְרָהָם** **לְיִצְחָק**... (ἔδωκεν Ἀβρααμ δόματα), ...Abraham gave gifts...

cf. 2 Chronicles 21:3 – **מַתָּנֹת רַבּוֹת** **אֲבֹתָם** **לְיִצְחָק**... (καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ πατήρ αὐτῶν δόματα πολλά), and their fathers gave them many gifts...

⁷⁵ τὸ δὲ ἀνέβη τί ἐστίν, εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη ἑῖς τὰ κατώτερα ὁ[μέρη] τῆς γῆς – In Psalm 68, David is writing of Yahweh, the transcendent Creator. Here, Paul is saying in conjunction with this Psalm that the fact that God “has ascended” means that He has “descended to earth,” because Paul wants to speak of the Messiah's gift to God in the midst of his ascending after his death and resurrection. This is to say that God has descended to earth as Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, who as a result of his death on the cross then ascended from the “lower regions of the earth” = simply the earth as the fundamental place of operation by God within the created reality because it involves human beings to whom He has chosen either to execute justice or to grant mercy. As a result, by his successful performance of his responsibilities, Jesus gives redeemed sinners to God, ready to receive His eternal mercy.

⁷⁶ ὁ καταβάς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβάς ὑπὲρ ἅνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα – Now Paul makes it clear that he is switching from the protagonist in Psalm 68 of Yahweh to Yahweh's proxy, the Messiah. God has descended to the earth as Jesus the Messiah, who then as a result of his fulfilling his responsibility of offering himself to God and qualifying to be human beings' priest and advocate, he has ascended from his death and resurrection on earth in order to fill out God's project of bringing “the all” to God, including leading “captives,” i.e., human beings who gain God's eternal mercy and life through him, to God. This group is the same as the *playroma*, the fullness,

⁷⁷ Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους – Now, Paul switches from the Messiah's gift to God of human beings to God's gift of certain human beings with “edifying,” i.e., teaching of the apostolic message as their roles to the community of believers, in order that everyone gain as accurate and complete a knowledge and understanding as possible of God and what He is up to with respect to the Messiah, thus enabling everyone to advance God's project of adding more parts to the Messiah's body with him as the “head.”

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

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

The evangelists were those who simply stated the good news of the NT message as a means to encourage non-believers to believe it. They may have been like Paul who traveled quite a bit in order to encounter a fresh group of people who had not yet heard the NT message. Only Philip in Acts 21:8 and Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 are labeled as evangelists. Philip lived in Caesarea Maritima, while Timothy was a close traveling companion and apostolic co-worker of Paul. The shepherds and teachers (probably both referring to one group) were local men who continued to repeat to their Christian community what they had heard from an apostle, and probably were even appointed by an apostle (or a very close associate) to do such (cf. Acts 14:23).

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

⁷⁸ πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – The idea is to get all Christians to the end of their lives with authentic belief and good understanding of the gospel in order to obtain God's eternal mercy and life and to add to the number of believers through each Christian's taking advantage of God given opportunities to share the gospel with unbelievers who are truly interested in joining the “body” of the Messiah. Thus, Paul indicates that the roles within the Christian gathering that people acquire through God's grace are intended to lead people towards not only intellectually understanding God and the Messiah, but also serving and caring for both current believers and prospective believers, i.e., people who are showing a genuine interest in obtaining God's eternal mercy and life through Jesus the Messiah.

⁷⁹ μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οί πάντες εις την ένότητα της πίστεως και της έπιγνώσεως του υίου του θεου, εις άνδρα τέλειον, εις μέτρον ήλικίας του πληρώματος του Χριστου – Paul would have the Ephesian Christians and all others who will be added to Jesus’ body in the rest of history grow in their understanding of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah to the extent that is possible on this earth where they would remain steadfast in their grasp of reality that the Bible presents as they continue on their journey to their final goal of eternal life and mercy. Basically, Paul wants everyone’s understanding within the believing community to match that of the apostles and the apostolic message that was taught to these authoritative spokesmen by Jesus himself that equips the believers to convey this message to interested unbelievers. While this is theoretically possible and the earthly goal that each believer should have, obviously it has never occurred in Christian history, because, by definition, only the apostles had a completely accurate knowledge of biblical theology as part of their responsibility as the authoritative spokesmen for the Messiah. Therefore, this unity and parity of understanding will not actually take place until we all have the opportunity to think clearly and completely when we are transformed into immortal and morally perfect beings in the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:9-12). The entire community’s becoming “the man who has completed his goal” is the group of believers throughout history having arrived at the judgment and obtaining God’s eternal mercy through Jesus, so that the total number which God chose in eternity past will enter into the eternal Kingdom of God. This would constitute also “the fullness of the Messiah” and the “measure of the extent” of such for the gathering of people who profess Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. They would not only be filled out in their intellectual grasp of the truth that God has conveyed through the Bible and through the apostles and other teachers of their era, but they would also fully become the Messiah’s gift to Yahweh (cf. 4:7), the *playroma* of history who also belong to the Messiah.

⁸⁰ ίνα μηκέτι όμειν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι και περιφερόμενοι παντι άνέμω της διδασκαλίας εν τη κυβεία των άνθρώπων, εν πανουργία προς την μεθοδείαν της πλάνης – Either people learn all there is to know about God’s Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, which provides them with the most important knowledge in all the creation so that with perseverance of belief they obtain eternal life, or they learn all the lies and falsehoods which are set forth by people who are hostile to Jesus and God’s truth so that with perseverance of unbelief they obtain God’s condemnation and destruction. As a result, the opposite of people who maturely understand the apostolic message is people who childishly believe ideas that are promulgated and promoted by morally depraved human beings who all trick one another into following lies in rebellion against God, who can make truth sound like error and error sound like truth.

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

A logical inference of what Paul is saying here is that so-called Christians who establish institutions that they call denominations and churches only institutionalize the promotion of the lies that have gone into their supposed need to form an institution instead of merely continuing to point to the apostolic documents of the NT and the prophetic documents of the OT, while allowing each person to deal with them as he wishes as part of his task of preparing himself for the final judgment.

⁸¹ αληθεύοντες δε εν άγάπη αύξησωμεν εις αυτον τα πάντα, ός έστιν ο ή κεφαλή τ, Χριστός – Paul wants Christians to learn the truth about the Messiah so that they can live it out with biblical love towards one another, will mean that everyone in a Christian gathering will increase in knowledge of God together and grasp just that much better the very “head” of their “body,” Jesus the Messiah. Thus, it is the combination of the authentic truth of the apostolic message, and the authentic living of the truth with actual biblical love that together comprise the necessary ingredients for helping an interested unbeliever, a “child,” to himself grow in the knowledge of the person of Jesus.

⁸² έξ ου πάν το σώμα συναρμολογούμενον και συμβιβαζόμενον δια πάσης αφής της έπιχορηγίας ‘κατ’ ενέργειαν’ εν μέτρω ένός έκάστου τμήρους την αύξησιν του σώματος ποιείται εις οικοδομήν εαυτου εν άγάπη – It is the Messiah, Paul says, who is the focal point of understanding by his followers, so that the roles that God has given to people within the gathering, as they serve one another, will benefit each individual within the group with respect to his knowledge of God and the Messiah, thus making it just that much more likely that each person’s choices will be characterized by biblical love towards others.

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

⁸³ Τουτο ουν λέγω και μαρτύρομαι εν κυρίω, μηκέτι ύμās περιπατείν, καθός και τα τ έθνη περιπατείν εν ματαιότητι του νοος αυτων – Paul is getting around to the main point of Ephesians, i.e., how should we live in light of being authentic believers in Jesus the Messiah, having described first what God’s purpose is in created reality, to choose a people who will one day be members of His eternal people in the Kingdom of God. This is an exhortation to be righteous, to be good and right in our behavior towards others.

Now, Paul explicitly lays out an explanation of unbelief and urges his readers to shun such thinking and behavior, implying that we Christians are just as capable in our desires of pursuing evil and just as condemnable before God because of our personal moral depravity. We are no better than the Gentiles in the face of God’s judgment and justice.

It is only God and His inward work in our hearts who has caused us to repent of our ongoing immoral condition and moved us toward obeying His moral commandments.

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

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

⁸⁴ ἔσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πῶρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν – The people with minds that are empty futility remain such, Paul says, because their hearts and inwardness are oriented towards rebelling against God in such a stubborn fashion that they are unwilling to change. Thus, they are intellectually dark people. As they seek to understand reality, they remain ignorant of who God is by willfully rejecting even the ideas that are obvious to all human beings (cf. Romans 1), and they exist intellectually and morally separate from God's promise of eternal life by being unwilling to obey His commandments. Life in the eternal realm is what God has intended as the ultimate goal for morally depraved human beings (cf. John 1:1-5), but people who stubbornly refuse to embrace biblical truth or even the truth they inherently derive from the creation (cf. Romans 1) will never attain this life.

There is excusable ignorance and inexcusable ignorance. If I claim to be ignorant of quantum mechanics, my ignorance is excusable, because I have never studied the subject. If I claim to be ignorant of God, my ignorance is inexcusable, because the very existence of God as a righteous judge is self-evident from the creation (cf. Romans 1). Thus, we notice that Paul does not attribute the Gentiles' condemned status before God to lack of knowledge, but to lack of a willingness to submit to God, i.e., because of their stubbornness of their hearts.

⁸⁵ οἵτινες ἠπληγῆκότες ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελείᾳ εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης 'ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ' – Paul goes on to say that these same Gentile rebels, in their hard-heartedness, have lost all sense of guilt before God and desire for biblical truth and have thrown themselves at immoral behavior with reckless abandon. They are literally greedy for immorality and do everything they can to engage in it. They cannot wait for the next opportunity to gratify their immoral desires, and yet they are never satisfied after all the passions that they seem to fulfill, which sends them further on their way to rebelling against God according to their insatiable passions.

Moral purity is acting in a way that is consistent with the way God has designed human beings in all facets of their lives. It is acting in a way that is intended by God according to our design.

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

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

⁸⁸ ἀποθέσθαι ὑμᾶς κατὰ τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φθειρόμενον κατὰ 'τὰς ἐπιθυμίας' τῆς ἀπάτης – The metaphor of clothing is as metaphor is a commitment as our clothes are a form of identification. What kind of person am I resolved to be? The old man is having been resolved to rebel against God and gratify one's immoral desires with reckless abandon. The new man is being resolved to act in a manner that corresponds to God's destiny for you, i.e., a morally perfect person. So strive to emulate this morally perfect person which you will be. Paul is not talking a new nature per se. It is not a matter of power, but of inward resolve and commitment to the new desire along with the wisdom and clarity regarding reality which we have acquired because God has changed our hearts. The result of not only being instructed about Jesus as the Messiah, but also believing this instruction to be the very basis of a proper worldview and understanding of the nature of reality, is that a person chooses to leave behind his abject and unqualified rebellion against God that correlates with his basic culture and that not only continues at an important level to be unrestrained in its giving in to the immoral desires that exist in every morally depraved human being, but also has a destructive effect of eternal condemnation and destruction, which results from strong, immoral desires that deceive us into thinking that it is a great thing to fulfill them while they in actuality will get us only God's wrath and eternal punishment. Thus, the fight of the Christian is to do all he can to resist the pull of these persistent immoral desires and, instead, to choose to do what is good and right before God. In this way, he leaves behind what he used to be, a person committed to choosing his own definition of morality apart from God, and seeks to choose to be a person who is now committed to live in line with God's definition of morality as the Spirit of God causes this within him.

Paul is promoting personal righteousness above social justice, is promoting personal moral behavior, which includes sexual moral behavior above slavery, oppression, and even exploitation of others. Of the more dramatic forms of sinfulness, sexual sin is at the top. Lying is not dramatic, but one where a response would be, “You did what?” crosses the line. It is shocking for a civilized person to hear about, and probably because sexual desires are so strong and attractive to us as human beings when it comes to fulfilling them. In addition, the consequences of sexual sin do not appear to be as grave as that of other sins such as murder, stealing, and any kind of violence. Sexual sin is potentially very disruptive in a society as it can destroy marriages and families, while it is certainly true that murder and stealing can be incredibly socially disruptive too.

⁸⁹ ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν – How we behave is determined by how we think about reality. If I think that I am merely a product of blind, natural forces of evolution, then I have no external or transcendent basis for morality. As Dostoevsky wrote, If there is no God, then everything is permissible. Unlike their surrounding culture, Paul’s readers should think differently about reality and, thus, according to the biblical message of truth.

⁹⁰ καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι ‘τῆς ἀληθείας’ – Paul indicates that a definite and profound change has divinely occurred inside his Christian readers. The way that he puts it is that God has brought into existence something that did not exist before, just as God brought the whole creation into existence in Genesis 1. In this case, God has created a new mindset and fundamental desire in the Ephesian Christians because of His own desire and purpose to grant them eternal forgiveness and a commitment to the truth of the biblical message that cannot be shaken. Their new desire is to be and do what is good and right before God, i.e., in the way God desires them to be and act, in the midst of their commitment to the truth of the gospel and the Bible. Our culture has moved a long way away from the way God desires us to be and act. We are consequentialists, choosing our actions based on only what the outcome of our actions will be, whether or not what we do will “hurt” somebody. If they will not “hurt” others, then it is ok to engage in these actions. This is instead of deciding what wse “ought” to do in line with what God desires to do.

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

Zech. 8:16 “These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another [וְדַבְּרִיתֶם אֱמֶת אִתְּכֶם וְאִתְּכֶם] [λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ]; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.”

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

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

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

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

⁹² ὀργίσεσθε καὶ μὴ αμαρτάνετε ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ ὀ[τῶ] παροργισμῶ ὑμῶν – cf. **Psa. 4:4** Tremble, and do not sin. Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still [וְיָגֵדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת עַל-בְּלִבְבְּכֶם וְאִתְּכֶם וְאִתְּכֶם] [ὀργίσεσθε καὶ μὴ αμαρτάνετε λέγετε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ ταῖς κοίταις ὑμῶν κατανώγητε]. In Psalm 4:4 David is exhorting his enemies to tremble before God and not sin. Instead, they should meditate about God on their beds and repent of their antipathy towards him, David, the Messiah, and therefore towards God.

The question is whether or not Paul is quoting Psalm 4:4 in its context to mean the same thing that David is? I do not think so. Even if Paul is aware that he is quoting exactly the LXX translation of the first part of Psalm 4:4, in the context of the two verses, vs. 26 & 27, leads in the direction of understanding Paul to encourage his Christian readers not to allow their anger against evil to cause them to usurp God’s authority and position as the transcendent Creator of the entire story of cosmic history. He is exhorting his Christian readers to fear God appropriately and not sin by behaving in such a way that they make themselves enemies of the Messiah. Keep your anger short in duration so that you do not do something you will regret. The underlying thought is that God will deal properly with sin and evil in His own time. Thus, vengeance is God’s, not ours, to complete at the right time.

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

⁹⁴ ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω, μᾶλλον δὲ κοπιᾶτω ἐργαζόμενος ‘ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν τὸ ἀγαθόν’, ἵνα ἔχη μεταδιδόναι τῷ χρεῖαν ἔχοντι – Whether or not there were actually former thieves who were a part of the Ephesian Christian community, it is hard to say, particularly if we think about the harsh justice system of the Roman Empire that probably would have executed them. Paul is, at least, exhorting his readers not to be freeloaders, which was perhaps a major effect of the biblical message with its call for all Christians to be incredibly caring towards one another, beyond what any of the people had experienced before, thus making it very tempting to take undue advantage of the biblical call to love. Instead, Paul is laying down a work ethic whereby people put as much effort as possible into avoiding having to be cared for by others, while also actually putting themselves in a position where they can both provide something for others which they need for their own lives and be capable of caring for those who require charity in order to survive. In this way they are doing what is good, i.e., earning their own living instead of relying on others for their subsistence, and producing something which can contribute to others and their lives through a fair commercial transaction. What is good is when people who can work and make their own living actually do so, being productive towards those who can afford to pay for his productivity and being charitable towards the genuinely poor. This is what the Protestant Reformers were trying to get at that resulted in the Protestant work ethic. The priesthood of all believers involves everyone’s serving God regardless of whether a person is teaching the Bible or making shoes. Certainly, people should be fair in their commercial transactions and not cheat people. Fostering productivity without also fostering compassion is not righteous, just as as fostering dependence on others through a welfare state is a false kind of compassion and is not righteous either.

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

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

In other words, this verse is not an injunction against cussing and using swear words. Instead, Paul is exhorting his readers to repeat the biblical message to one another which will produce a proper “building up” towards their community’s becoming mature (cf. 4:11-16) and more confidently understanding the depth and breadth of the meaning of God’s “grace,” even as exhibited by each other in their relationships. Paul is concerned about the ideas coming out of people’s mouths, not the actual words. And he is concerned about how people behave towards one another in line with the ideas which people express to one another that correspond to the truth of the gospel. Thus, they should be kind, patient, and forgiving towards one another as God has been towards them.

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

⁹⁶ καὶ ἵνα μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρόσεως – Paul says that God has a negative emotional reaction, sadness, to Christians’ sin and failing to communicate ideas that are in line with the ideas that He has set down through the biblical authors. Yet, this is the same God who is operating within the creation and that the Bible calls His “Spirit,” who first changed the inwardness of authentic believers and who remains committed to His initial work whereby He will make sure that these morally depraved authentic believers will persevere in their belief in order to qualify at the judgment for God’s eternal mercy and entrance into the Kingdom of God after death. Thus, our sin as Christians makes God sad, but it does not make Him mad. His anger is reserved for those who continue to commit themselves to ignoring or explicitly rebelling against Him and who do not care about the people of God instead of loving them and speaking to them in such a way that they are improving their understanding of the gospel.

⁹⁷ πᾶσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ’ ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ – Here Paul is quite explicit about the fact that he knows that Christians are going to be hurtful towards one another and will need each other’s forgiveness in order to remain unified in their continuing to grow in their intellectual understanding of the

gospel as they all seek to persevere in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. He list the kinds of behavior in their relationships with one another that they should avoid—resentful mistreatment that comes from harsh feelings, rage that envelops our whole body, angry shouting, and putting each other down in the midst of an argument. This, in turn, will allow them to avoid all kinds of evil to the degree that they humanly can. The inference is that harsh feelings, angry shouting, and putting people down were regular modes of behavior in the 1st century Roman Empire, especially among Gentiles and certainly is common as even a deep felt desire in all human beings.

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

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

⁹⁹ Γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ – This is the bottom line of what Paul has been saying. He exhorts his readers to act like God and love others as God has loved them and adopted them into His family through His work of changing their inwardness and making them authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. In other words, children typically do act like their parents, because they learn from them how to behave, whether for good or evil. Because the Ephesian Christians are now “children of God,” adopted into His family, they should learn from their parent, the Father of all reality and of Christians, how to behave—at least when it comes to the love, but not justice. Obviously this latter way of behaving is reserved for the Father, God, in eternity, except for the divinely given responsibility to human governments as Paul explains in Romans 13.

¹⁰⁰ καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἑμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας – The greatest example of love within the creation is that of the Messiah himself. He willingly allowed himself to suffer the pain of death on a cross in order to produce the greatest benefit for those who would embrace him as their advocate before God at the judgment. It was the only way that Jesus could pull off his qualifying for this role. He had to love people this way if he was going to fulfill his role as Messiah and high priest. Therefore, Paul is saying that we should love people by sacrificing ourselves, our desires, and our human goals that may conflict with God’s plans and purposes for us in order to gain eternal life. Just as Jesus’ purpose for suffering was to qualify as priest for us, our purpose for suffering is to qualify for Jesus’ acting in his role as priest for us. Jesus qualified for his role of being our priest and advocate/intercessor by earning it through his obedience to God when he willingly suffered death on the cross. We qualify for our role of being granted mercy and life in the eternal Kingdom of God through Jesus’ priesthood by our demonstrating a vital and clear correspondence between our desire for loving forgiveness from God and God’s commandment to us to be lovingly forgiving towards others who need His grace and mercy just as much as we do. In this way, we do not earn our role of being recipients of mercy in eternity. We simply meet certain conditions that reveal the inward work of the Spirit of God within us.

In the OT, a ὁσμὴ εὐωδία = soothing aroma from a burnt offering made to God was what pleased and appeased Him with respect to man’s immorality. Cf. Ex. 29:18 “You shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the Lord: it is a soothing aroma (קָרְבָּן עֹשֶׂה עֹשֶׂה) (εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας), an offering by fire to the Lord.”

Consequently, Jesus’ death on the cross, along with this performing the role of priest and advocate that the final judgment pleases and appeases God so that He grants morally depraved human beings eternal mercy.

¹⁰¹ Πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πάντα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις – Paul continues in the same vein to repeat that his readers should avoid evil at all costs (cf. 4:19 and sexual impurity). The three words πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, and πλεονεξία are used quite often by Paul in his list of the immoral actions which God prohibits. The first word refers to sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married. The second is the opposite of something that is clean. In other words it is dirty, but in this case morally dirty and therefore opposite to biblical morality. In the OT, it is used to translate the Hebrew פְּנֵי עֲוֹנוֹתָיִם which refers to actions which are contrary to the moral commandments of God. The Gentile nations were particular adept at pursuing unclean acts (cf. Ezra 9:11). The third one Paul used in Ephesian 4:19 and refers to craving something that God is basically saying no to one’s having and then using whatever means to acquire it. Thus, Paul is exhorting his readers to avoid any kind of these categories of immorality within the specific arena of sexual use of our bodies. They should not allow the strongest of their immoral desires which are in conjunction with wanting things and doing things that are contrary to biblical, sexual morality to be a part of their experience.

Set apart people, i.e., inwardly changed people by God should move away from these kinds of disobeying God, not towards them. And indeed the fact that they will, albeit not perfectly, is Paul’s perspective on the continuous work of God inside His people.

¹⁰² καὶ αἰσχρότης καὶ μωρολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία, ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία – Paul now refers to what people say about sexuality and the cravings that accompany it, that they should talk about them only in a

biblically appropriate manner. Talk of human sexuality should always be in a respectful way with a giving of thanks to God for this gift of relating to another human being of the opposite sex.

¹⁰³ τούτο γὰρ ἵστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλόλατρες, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ – Here Paul uses the adjectival forms of the three words in 5:3. Thus, no person who is committed to engaging in sexual immorality, unclean (morally speaking) living before God, or following through on his cravings for what God does not permit is a *bona fide* follower of the Messiah. Serving our unbounded desires in the manner that Paul is prohibiting would be to worship an idol and not God. And the eternal outcome for such a person who is committed to sexual immorality, etc. and does not repent of their sexual immorality is not the Kingdom of God but condemnation and destruction. He also is implying that a commitment to the message of Jesus as the Messiah is reflected in a commitment to pursuing morality, so that morality per se is a very serious issue.

¹⁰⁴ Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω κενοῖς λόγοις διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας – Who would be trying to convince the Ephesian Christians that immorality is ok? Probably their worldly and non-believing friends who are still committed to pagan idolatry and rebelling against God. For example, people who would say that human beings' behavior is none of God's business, and He needs to just bug out. Or who would say that there is no god but the gods of the Greeks who basically inhabit creation, i.e., people who deify the creation instead of acknowledging the Creator. However, Paul is very clear that this is a futile perspective. It is exactly this kind of rebellion that God will judge and condemn in anger. Therefore, no one will get away with it. Cf. Revelation 20:11ff. and the second resurrection where unbelievers will be raised from the dead to stand trial before God and be condemned eternally.

It could be that there are people right within the Christian community who are arguing for ignoring Paul's teaching on sexual morality.

¹⁰⁵ μὴ οὖν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν – The logical conclusion of knowing the fact of the coming judgment is to avoid joining people who are ignoring it and rebelling against God with their immoral behavior, as was plenty the case in the 1st century Roman Empire and really throughout all human history everywhere.

¹⁰⁶ ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε – Paul reminds his readers of the radical change that has occurred within them. They used to be morally pointed in their spiritual blindness towards the lies of the world and its evil, so that they embraced these lies and rejected the truth about God that He has provided us in the Hebrew scriptures. Now Paul's Ephesian readers are pointed towards biblical truth and its goodness because of what God has done within them, changing their hearts, and because of what He has done outside them, sending the Jewish Messiah to die on their behalf. Therefore, Paul commands them to live as people who are pointed towards truth and goodness by pursuing goodness and avoiding the evil lifestyles of their non-believing friends.

¹⁰⁷ ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθῶσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ – Paul simply adds that the effect for people who are oriented towards truth and embracing it is the pursuit of biblical goodness in agreement with God and an increase in the knowledge of God and His truth. This is the necessary result of the work of the Spirit of God within people. Indeed, they are exhorted to make decisions which are moral, but even though they will not do this 100% of the time, nevertheless, the Holy Spirit will cause them to bring this kind of fruit out of their new orientation towards truth and God. We just do not know how often this will happen in any specific person's life.

¹⁰⁸ δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστὶν εὐάρεστον τῷ κυρίῳ – The fundamental change that God has produced in these believers results in their demonstrating what God actually likes—their embracing His truth about their individual moral depravity along with the need for mercy which is accompanied by a pursuit of goodness and morality.

¹⁰⁹ καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάρποις τοῦ σκότους, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε – Believers in the Messiah, with their proper pursuit of morality, cannot help but, by their actions, expose not only the immorality of unbelievers, but also their stupidity in rejecting God's truth, while also avoiding the evil that others are doing that has vacuous results by virtue of its not only being unable to result in eternal mercy and life, but also resulting in eternal condemnation.

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

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

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

¹¹² πᾶν γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστὶν. διὸ λέγει ἔγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ Χριστός – cf. **Is. 26:19** Your dead will live. Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. **Is. 51:17** Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger; The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs. **Is. 52:1** Awake, awake, clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion. Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer come into you. **Is. 60:1** Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

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

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

¹¹³ Βλέπετε οὖν ἄκριβως πῶς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι ἀλλ’ ὡς σοφοί – As Paul continues his encouragement to the Ephesians to investigate carefully how they are living so that it is according to what he is exhorting them. Thus, they will live intentionally and be wise people. They will be wise because the outcome of such a life will be that of God’s mercy in the eternal Kingdom of God instead of His justice, condemnation, and destruction. Deliberately embracing any lie about the nature of reality as revealed by the Hebrew scriptures according to God is to be a fool. Instead, true wisdom is based on only biblical knowledge and nothing else. This is what Paul has been emphasizing with the ideas about the Messiah being at the core of good, enlightening knowledge.

¹¹⁴ ἔξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσιν – Paul wants his readers to use their time for the best possible reasons, knowing that the passing of time in the present realm is characterized more by evil than by good, where people who remain committed to evil will incur God’s condemnation. And this will never change, because this realm is intended to be merely a temporary habitation characterized more by man’s rebellion until Jesus returns, not a permanent one characterized by goodness. In addition, the final outcome of the present realm is judgment, even after Jesus has set up his Messianic Kingdom in Israel. There will still ensue rebellion against him and God that will be crushed and destroyed in the end. Therefore, those who embrace biblical truth and base their lives on it should and will make the most of their existence in the present realm that is more characterized by evil than by goodness. Nevertheless, fortunately, the Spirit of God is definitely working to change the hearts of those chosen by God and to cause them to persevere in their belief and obedience.

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

¹¹⁶ καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἀσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι – Drunken orgies were commonplace in the Roman Empire. Paul wants his readers to avoid the practice of unbelievers of using drunkenness as a means to get through life. Drunkenness clouds people’s judgment and prevents them from thinking well about life and morality, and Paul wants people to avoid this. Instead, he would have them fill their bellies so to speak with the wine of the Holy Spirit, i.e., with the biblical truth that rightly directs them towards true joy, true contentment, and pursuing morality while shunning evil, worshiping God, and being grateful to Him for the eternal mercy that they will acquire at the judgment by means of the advocacy of Jesus as the Messiah.

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

Therefore, these passages are all about knowing truth with one’s mind while pursuing morality with one’s choice making mechanism and body, knowing that God has oriented him in this direction.

¹¹⁷ λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ὅ[ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ – We can imagine that, just as in our own culture, heavy drinking in the 1st century Roman Empire led to raucous singing of probably somewhat inappropriate songs. These songs, consequently, communicated the mindset and worldview of the drunken singers. Paul, referring to this kind of event in his own day, encourages the Ephesian Christians to communicate their worldview of the biblical truth because of their being drunk on God, i.e., filled in their bellies with the Spirit of God by virtue of God’s having changed their hearts and moved them to embrace the ideas of the Bible. Thus, their hearts should constantly be “singing songs of praise” that leads to their speaking to one another about their understanding of the nature of reality which involves the key ideas about God and His purposes from the Bible of bringing grace and mercy to undeserving morally depraved human beings through the Messiah. So there is a kind of joy which comes from knowing that God is lovingly working within us for the purpose of leading us to the eternal Kingdom of God.

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

¹¹⁹ Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ ῥιστοῦ – There are ordinary relationships between human beings, and there are extraordinary relationships, meaning, first, that some relationships are between those of the same and equal status and position—with respect to God and with respect to other human beings. The relationship between two Christian men or two Christian women or a Christian man and Christian woman who are not married is an ordinary relationship with respect to God. God considers both parties in the relationship to be of equal status and position before Him, especially in the light of their both eventually receiving the same ultimate gift from God, eternal life and mercy. The relationship between two people in society who do not have any authority within the prevailing government is an ordinary relationship, because each person has (or at least should have) equal status and position in the eyes of the government. Yet, Paul is going to say that the husband/wife, parent/child, and master/slave relationships are extraordinary in nature in that there is one party in the relationship who is superordinate to the other who is subordinate to the first person, whether within an institution created by God with this extraordinariness, i.e., the marriage relationship and family relationship, or within an institution created by man, even an evil institution like slavery.

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

Thus, Paul switches gears slightly here in 5:21 to encourage the believers in the Ephesian and Asian community to continue in the divinely valid roles they had when they became Christians and not to think that becoming followers of God means that a person should never subordinate himself to anyone else, especially any other human being. By mentioning Jesus explicitly four times in his explanation of the three relationships of husband/wife, parent/child, and master/slave, Paul will argue that just as it is important and makes perfect theological sense to subordinate oneself to the very human Jesus the Messiah, even as he was also the human icon of God on earth, it is important to continue to subordinate oneself to other human beings where it is divinely valid. Thus, God has created certain relationships to be the way they are, i.e., husband/wives and parents/children, and there is a certain relationship which has been imposed on some Christians by evil human beings, i.e., slavery, and it is perfectly ok for a Christian to live out his/her obedience to God and Jesus within the context of these relationships as they currently stand—either this side of the new heavens and new earth for the marital and family relationships, or this side of slavery’s being abolished in the Roman Empire (or anywhere else, e.g. in the United States until the Civil War). In other words, becoming one who belongs to God does not release a person from all obligations to subordinate himself to other human beings, because we all become and remain subordinate to the most important human being, Jesus the Messiah.

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

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

¹²¹ ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἔστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναίκος ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος – Paul lays out the theological teaching/learning structure of the marital relationship that is unique. Just as the Messiah has the responsibility and role of being the very human being to whom all Christians subordinate themselves, so also the husband, by definition and theological design, 1) has been created first, and 2) should see his wife as created by God to be a helper for him (cf. Genesis 2). Therefore, most likely these ideas have been implanted in our human psyches by God and are therefore “natural” for all human beings, male and female, whether or not we are willing to

acknowledge them. And how should the wife help her husband? By supporting him in his obedience to God so that the woman contributes all that she can to help “this man” become the man whom God wants him to be—faithful, moral, truthful, persevering in faith, and pursuing the calling in the world which God has given him. But this is also asymmetrical, in that the husband is not theologically the “helper” of the wife, but she is the “helper” of the husband. The man can be completely alone to find his way through life, while the woman has her husband as her assignment to find her way through life. She could be completely alone, too, but if she chooses to marry a man, then she is choosing this particular man and his path through life to define what her life is going to be about—especially morally. Thus, a single woman has chosen a life path which is like a single man’s where she must pursue it as one who is subordinating herself to Jesus.

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

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

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

Clearly, Jesus’ role as leader of his followers is because he has earned the right to rescue them from God’s eternal condemnation at the judgment. However, it is not that a husband can earn *per se* his role and right to lead his wife, but he needs to take seriously his divinely assigned role of loving his wife by taking her down the path which God has given him and by directing her towards the biblical truth as Jesus took seriously his role of dying for all his followers. ¹²² ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί – The logical inference of the Messiah’s being the “head” of his gathering by being the primary party and by being their heroic leader is that all his followers, including wives, recognize his role of leading them towards mercy so that they subordinate themselves to him. Therefore, if the husband/wife relationship is analogous to the Messiah/gathering relationship as Paul is saying, then wives should recognize their husband’s divinely assigned role of leading them towards God down the path which God has given him.

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

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

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

¹²⁵ ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ’ ἵνα ἡ ἀγία καὶ ἄμωμος – Jesus’ love for his followers was to fulfill his divinely appointed purpose of making them acceptable to God at the final judgment in order that He would grant them eternal mercy and forgiveness. He did this by giving up his own life when he was crucified on the cross, thus providing God with the only acceptable eternal offering that further qualified him to be people’s intercessor. Therefore, even though his followers as believers show up

at the judgment as morally depraved human beings, nevertheless, Jesus becomes the very means of their escape from God's wrath and condemnation by mediating on their behalf so that they become glorious, morally perfect, immortal human beings in the eternal Kingdom of God, who are accepted by God.

¹²⁶ οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες ἠγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα. ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ – Paul is saying that because the husband's role is to emulate the Messiah, then the husband's motivation is to fulfill his moral obligation to his primary role just as Jesus did by suffering death on the cross. By doing so, the husband is actually loving himself, because, as Paul will say in v. 31 by quoting Genesis 2:24, there is no theological separation with respect to the believed worldview and path in life between the husband and the wife, just as there is no theological separation with respect to the believed worldview and ultimate path between Jesus and his followers. It does not make any sense within God's purposes and story of the creation for there to be a Jewish Messiah without those for whom the Messiah is their mediator at the judgment and whom he teaches through the apostles. Likewise, it does not make any sense for there to be a husband who does not lead his wife towards biblical truth and eternal life by means of the apostolic message and by being willing to give up any comfort in order to make himself available to lead and teach his wife.

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

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

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

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

¹²⁹ ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος ὁ [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ ὁ [τὴν] μητέρα ἑκατέρωθεν καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν – Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, which explicitly pertains to the husband/wife relationship but also can be used to explain the relationship between Jesus the Messiah and his gathering, i.e., his followers. Thus, God's purpose for creating both a male human being and a female human being is in order to produce a relationship that is so intimate that the two think and act in conjunction with one another in their pursuit of understanding reality correctly and being obedient to God and follow the path of life which God has given to the husband primarily and the wife secondarily—and this in the midst of both the husband's and wife's inherent moral depravity.

Paul is saying that God's purpose for creating both males and females who marry one another is to teach the more important relationship of the superordinate Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and of the subordinate Christian gathering, whom we commonly call the church.

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

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

“Mystery” refers to an idea that was revealed a long time ago but was not made clear in its entirety until later on. In other words, the statement about husbands and wives in Genesis 2 eventually had significance for the relationship between the Messiah and his followers once the Messiah arrived on earth and fulfilled his role of becoming the leader and advocate for sinners.

An important ramification of this is that to distort the biblical ideas about relationships between men and women, e.g., by condoning homosexuality, is to reject the significance of such ideas with respect to the Messiah and his purposes. God has designed men to marry women just as he has designed the Messiah to marry his followers at his return and now lead and teach them through his apostles and the Spirit. It does not make any sense for the Messiah to lead and teach himself—and stop there. Neither does it make any sense for the followers to lead and teach each other—and stop there. The Messiah makes sense only if he has followers to whom he is intimately related. And the followers of the Messiah make sense only if they have a Messiah, who is their “head.” There is no other Messiah to “marry” the Messiah, and the followers of the Messiah cannot “marry” themselves, leaving the Messiah out of the equation. To think otherwise is eternally dangerous. If we play with fire, especially in the realm of ideas, we get burned—by God.

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

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

¹³² Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κυρίῳ· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν δίκαιον – While the comments in 5:22-33 were with respect to wives’ subordinating themselves (ὑποτάσσω) to their husbands, the encouragement to children to obey (ὑπακούω) their parents and to slaves to obey (ὑπακούω) their masters is a slightly different issue. Certainly, such obedience is based only upon knowing the truth about the nature of reality as God has revealed it in the Bible, which eliminates any child’s or slaves’ responsibility to obey instruction from their parents or masters respectfully that is contrary to the Bible. In addition, unlike the husband in relationship to his wife, Paul does not say that parents are the “head” of their children and does not say that masters are the “head” of their slaves. It would seem, though, that, after talking about the wife’s responsibility to subordinate herself to her husband, Paul’s mind segued to these other two important instances in the Roman Empire where Christian children and Christian slaves should follow their parents and masters respectively—as it pertains to being obedient to the ideas of the biblical truth of the gospel, whether or not parents and masters are actually conveying these ideas to their respective followers.

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

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

Rom. 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities (πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτάσσέσθω). For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

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

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

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

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

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

These verses reveal the fact that these two words are very closely synonymous, but not completely. As mentioned above, the parent/child relationship is different from the husband/wife relationship as the master/slave relationship is also quite different. Therefore, the subordinating obedience of a child to his parents is not because there is a relational unity like the marital relationship, but because it simply makes sense that within the family relationship, children, who

children that they usurp God's position and role and seek to control them. Eventually the children will become angry and hopefully properly rebel against their parents. In other words, this is good anger, but Paul would like that the parent/child relationship never reaches this stage. And the antidote to this is the parents' instructing the children from a proper biblical understanding to encourage them to become what God wants them to be, not what the parents selfishly want them to be. Parents usually try to control their children and make them in their image rather than permitting and giving them the freedom to figure out exactly what God wants them to become as mature adults.

¹³⁶ Οἱ δούλοι, ὑπακούετε τοῖς ἰκατά σάρκα κυρίοις³ μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ἐν ἀπλότηι ὁτῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ – Christianity introduced a whole new perspective on human beings into the Roman Empire. While people were used to granting honor and status to others strictly on the basis of outward factors, e.g., Roman citizen vs. non-citizen, wealthy vs. poor, master vs. slave, and probably husband vs. wife, Christianity taught that all people arrive at eternal life on the same basis and condition, Jesus' advocacy and genuine, inward belief, and that all people have equal status and honor before God, because they all receive the same compensation if they have genuine belief in the Kingdom of God, and this compensation is eternal life with moral perfection. Therefore, it was probably tempting for slaves to take their new-found status that was equal to their masters, especially because they probably rightly deduced that slavery was an evil institution created by evil human beings, and misuse it by thinking that they did not have to obey their masters as strictly as they had done so before. However, Paul explains that their obedience to their masters should be even more genuine and heartfelt, because, now, their obedience to their earthly masters is a reflection of their obedience to Jesus as their king and priest.

Paul is saying that this demonstrates an understanding of the biblical message that requires a morally depraved human being to want one and only one thing out of life—God's mercy that includes eternal life, as the ultimate proper response to the evil institution of slavery. Thus, a sinful slave's humble willingness to obey his sinful master corresponds to his obeying the morally perfect and eternal Messiah. For the sake of obeying the Messiah, a slave should be willing to obey his sinful and evil master. This is because God wants people to be a certain kind of person, which Paul has described in the previous section—tender, caring, patient, loving, forgiving, gracious, moral, etc.

cf. Colossians 3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in all things, not as men-pleasers when they are watching, but with a single-mindedness of heart (ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπλότηι καρδίας), because you fear the Lord.

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

¹³⁷ μὴ κατ' ὀφθαλμοδουλίαν ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀλλ' ὡς δούλοι Χριστοῦ ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκ ψυχῆς – Paul implies that morally depraved human beings' propensity is to follow the orders of morally depraved human leaders in order to receive the affirmation of these leaders, not necessarily because obeying the leaders is inherently good and moral. However, to the extent possible, Christians should follow leaders strictly in order to receive the affirmation of God, because inwardly they know that following God and His Messiah will result in His mercy and eternal life.

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

¹³⁸ μετ' εὐνοίας δουλεύοντες ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις – Thus, following the orders of human beings translates into following the orders of God. A slave's obedience of his master in the 1st century Roman Empire equals a slave's obedience of God, when this slave is an inwardly changed human being who is single-mindedly, freely, and generously intent on obtaining God's eternal mercy.

¹³⁹ εἰδότες ὅτι ἕκαστος ἐάν τι ποιῆσῃ ἀγαθόν, τοῦτο κομίζεται παρὰ κυρίου εἴτε δούλος εἴτε ἐλεύθερος – Paul says that a Christian should realize that whatever he does that is appropriately obedient to morally depraved human leaders will result in receiving the greatest compensation from the greatest person, i.e., God's eternal mercy and life. Paul also says that this will happen regardless of the person's station in life, i.e., whether a master or a slave. In other words, a slave's obedience of his master and a master's biblical treatment of his slave will have the same outcome—eternal mercy and life, because both instances of obedience derive from the same basis and condition, Jesus' advocacy and the person's biblical inwardness.

¹⁴⁰ Καὶ οἱ κύριοι, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς, ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ὑμῶν ὁ κύριός ἐστιν ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ προσωποληψία οὐκ ἔστιν παρ' αὐτῷ – It may have been culturally popular for masters to threaten slaves as the means to get them obey. But, continuing with the thought in the last verse that people will be compensated equally by God with eternal life for a life well lived, Paul urges masters to treat their slaves with dignity, honor, respect, and kindness—as befits the Christian gospel. Interestingly enough, these are the “same things” of the slave's treatment and obedient response to his master—both of which should see themselves as ultimately serving Jesus

the Messiah when it comes to human relationships. In other words, a person's station in life might call for actions that equal biblical obedience but are different from another person's of another station in life, but their different actions actually constitute "the same actions" when it comes to God's assessment of the appropriateness of their actions, because God's response to them is the same—granting them eternal mercy and life. And His assessment is the same. Their actions come from belief in the Messiah with genuine inwardness, and the Jewish Messiah is no respecter of persons. Anyone, regardless of his ethnic origin, is welcome to be saved from God's eternal condemnation by Jesus as his advocate and priest.

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

Indeed, if both the masters and slaves were to treat each other as Paul commands here, slavery becomes logically untenable because both of them are of equal status before God. Slavery is therefore an evil institution that simply should not exist.

The Mosaic Covenant seems to condone slavery, but it is a covenant with a particular group of people at a particular time in history. The mistake is to see the Mosaic Covenant as righteous Law in its entirety for every people in every time in history. Instead, the covenant is mitigating the effects of even evil institutions such as slavery in the 16th century B.C., and God was asking the Jews to become His people of changed hearts who would love their neighbors as themselves. Biblically speaking, a changed heart in each individual that results in authentic love and caring towards all other human beings is more important abolishing slavery, even though the latter is certainly a good goal.

Also, is Paul morally inferior to people who today demand that we all stand up against all the social injustices in our world and make this the primary mark of authentic Christianity, i.e., making the world a more righteous place in the name of Christ? Cf. the effect of Marxism and Hegelian philosophy on Christianity starting in the 19th century, making the goal of Christianity the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. However, a just society will happen only once in history, when Jesus rules over the Kingdom of Israel during the millennium. And this just society will not even occur in any other part of the world at that time. Plus, the Kingdom of Israel will also be a society of sinners. Thus God's project is not to bring about a just, global utopian society, but to bring about the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel under the rule of Jesus until he destroys the present realm and creates a new one where only moral perfection will exist.

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

¹⁴¹ Τοῦ λοιποῦ τ, ἔνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ – Paul now likens a Christian's intellectual and spiritual stance to a soldier's having to oppose his enemy, which he does successfully only if he has the right armor and weapons. In other words, a Christian's role in this world is to stand against the world and its rebellion against God, even as the world tries to overwhelm the Christian with its power and strength of false ideas by trying to pressure everyone to comply with its ideas and actions.

Paul is saying that a Christian's ability to face into the hostility of the world towards truth is ultimately dependent on his belonging to God and His working within him, so that the power of the human being to stand firm in his belief comes from the power of God. However, Paul is not intimating that the Christian controls the power of God. The Christian must merely keep in mind that his ability to pursue thinking and doing what is right requires God's causing him to do so, which God has definitely promised for those whom He changes inwardly. As a result, Paul can exhort his readers to "be strong" in their belief, ideas, and actions.

¹⁴² ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου – Here Paul explicitly likens the adversarial relationship between an authentic believer of biblical truth and the world that is hostile to it as that of a soldier fighting against an enemy. It takes proper intellectual armor to fend off the ideas and strategies of other morally depraved human beings who want the Christian to rebel against God in the same manner and with the same intensity with which they are doing so and not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Protecting oneself from the ideas of the world is particularly difficult when the strategies which people use to convince and encourage others to rebel against God are so cunning.

The *diabolos* (adversary) is the biblical Satan, that one who lives in the invisible, spiritual realm and who somehow influences entire cultures to persist in their rebellion against God.

In this section, Paul is not calling Christians to fight against and vanquish evil spiritual beings who are work in the world influencing people and institutions, as is the popular view of "spiritual warfare." Nor is he saying that God needs

our help through prayer (and fasting or other religious activity) to counteract the purposes of these evil beings. Instead, Paul is calling on individual Christians to arm themselves with the truth of the gospel in order to resist the temptation to buy into the false ideas of the world and give up believing in only the truth of the gospel.

¹⁴³ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλῃ πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἄρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις – While one option is that Paul is talking about invisible rulers and authorities among the spiritual beings who are behind the lies and evil of the world’s cultures, as in 2:2 (i.e., Satan specifically as the head of all invisible, evil authority), here it makes more sense to interpret him as referring to earthly religious rulers whose power and force in the context of their man-made religious systems influence people away from God. Thus, Paul views the religious rulers of this world, those who rise to the highest level of power and authority in their respective religious organizations and movements, etc. to be the prime examples of rebellion against God and who influence others the most in rebelling against God. Paul would have in mind, for example, the rulers of Judaism who are featured in the gospels as opposed to Jesus while claiming to be proponents of the OT Mosaic Covenant. Thus, they place themselves in line with the *diabolos* (adversary) who lives in the invisible, spiritual realm. Therefore, the enemy of the Christian is religion which would seek to seduce us away from the purity and simplicity of belief in Jesus the Messiah and buy into a system of religion that actually distorts the biblical message of belief and love of God and people.

Paul has definitely implied that an authentic believer in the Messiah will have to wrestle with his own persistent evil as long as he lives in the present realm. Therefore, here, he is not saying that the believer’s struggle is against only outside forces, even spiritual forces, but that, in the midst of a believer’s struggle with his own moral depravity, there will also be the ideas, messages, and actions of others, who attempt to dominate people’s religious views with their falsehood and denial of the one true God, even by inventing false religious systems, with which the believer must struggle. Rather than believing the ideas of these religious rulers, the believer in Jesus as the Messiah is exhorted to focus on and believe the ideas regarding him only—the gospel. Today it could even be the case that people love the organizations of Christianity rather than Christianity itself.

Here “in the heavens” refers to the permanent opposition to God in the present realm—until God destroys this realm and creates the eternal one after the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. The earthly rulers come and go, but the heavenly beings such as Satan who influences them are permanent, at least until God has finished with the present realm at the end of the millennial kingdom.

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

¹⁴⁵ στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης – Cf. **Is. 11:5** Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist (וְהָיָה אֱמֻנָתוֹ אֲרֻבֹתָיו וְהָיָה יְרֵכָתוֹ חֵסֶד וְהָיָה חֹסֶם אֵפוֹסָיו וְהָיָה חֵסֶד אֲרֻבֹתָיו) (καὶ ἔσται δικαιοσύνη ἐξωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀληθεία εἰλημένος τὰς πλευράς). Cf. **Is. 59:17** He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head (וְהָיָה צְדָקָתוֹ חֹסֶם אֵפוֹסָיו וְהָיָה יְרֵכָתוֹ חֵסֶד וְהָיָה חֹסֶם אֵפוֹסָיו וְהָיָה חֵסֶד אֲרֻבֹתָיו) (καὶ ἐνδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα καὶ περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς); and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

In this paragraph, Paul presents the fact that ideas are the most important elements of the creation for influencing how people not only think but also act. People act appropriately only if they have the true ideas. Paul wants his readers to arm themselves with the biblical message in order to be able to combat all the intellectual influences that come from the overall evil and rebellion that exists within the present creation. It is like the OT Israelites who could be said to have wrapped the truth of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants around their waists as a way to keep themselves obedient to God in their opposition to the pagan idolatry of their surrounding cultures. This, along with how authentic belief will result in God’s eternal forgiveness, which is worn like a bullet proof vest, will further keep the believer properly protected from succumbing to the rebellious pressures of the various religious systems available and their inherent evil whereby they ultimately have rejected God. So we clothe ourselves in the truth of the gospel which declares that we are justified and forgiven by God. This is the most important thing that defines us as human beings. By clothing ourselves with God’s promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, then the things that Satan and the world present as more interesting will not be as interesting so that we would be distracted from the gospel.

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

¹⁴⁷ ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ ὅ[τα] πεπρωμένα σβέσαι – Certainly, as Paul is saying here, belief in the truth, indeed genuine, inward belief in the biblical message, that results in intellectual knowledge and understanding of God and His plans and purposes is what helps a person fend off

the lies and evil influences of the present realm that come flying at him like flaming arrows, seeking to kill him, i.e., his belief in the gospel. All these lies scream at the believer, “Believe me, believe me,” and are intended to crush his belief in the biblical gospel. But the Christian keeps believing the gospel and will not allow the false ideas of the world to penetrate his soul and mind the way that arrows would penetrate his body.

¹⁴⁸ καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου ὁδέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ – Cf. **Is. 59:17** He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head (יָשָׁן כְּרִשְׁתֵּי יְקֻבֵּעַ יְשֻׁרִים וְיָשָׁן כְּרִשְׁתֵּי יְקֻבֵּעַ) (καὶ ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα καὶ περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς); and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

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

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

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

¹⁴⁹ Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσῃ καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων – Paul certainly wants his readers to be prayerful towards God, but in the midst of their prayers and through their prayers, he ultimately wants them to be alert with perseverance of belief, so that it is also this that he wants them to pray on behalf of other believers, including Paul.

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

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

It is also important to recognize how fragile our faith is, that we need to pray as Jesus encourage his disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” i.e., lead us not into abandoning our faith when a particularly difficult test of it in the form of some evil in this world, whether the evil itself or its effects, comes along (cf. Matthew 6:13). Cf. Matthew 26:41, **Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

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

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

