



*Peter Carl Geissler, Jesus Christ knocking at the door, 19th century, steel engraving. Image via Wikimedia Commons.*

# EPHESIANS

COME TO CHRIST IN WORSHIP (CA. AD 61–63)

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## **Introduction**

### *Theme*

The central theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians is coming to Christ. The author addresses who the Savior is and how we can become like Him. The epistle also shares guidelines for a Christian lifestyle. It is filled with hymns and prayers and is tied together by vocabulary of worship.

### *Title and audience*

This letter to the Ephesians was probably a circular or general letter to those living across Asia Minor (like Peter), not a letter to the Ephesian Saints.<sup>1</sup> Evidence for this claim comes from the lack of personal names or greetings to any specific Saints in the letter (only this epistle fails to mention Paul's friends by name). This is odd because Paul served with the Ephesian Saints for three years, and "God did extraordinary

Table 1. Outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians

1:1–2	Greetings in Christ
1:3–14	Spiritual blessings in Christ
1:15–23	Prayer for revelation to know Christ
2:1–10	Become alive in Christ
2:11–18	Worship as one in Christ
2:19–22	Citizens of God’s house, an holy temple
3:1–13	The mystery of God’s plan of salvation for all humans
3:14–21	Paul prays for all to know Christ’s love
4:1–16	Become one in Christ
4:17–5:7	Instructions to live in Christ’s light
5:8–14	Live as Christ’s children by the Spirit
5:15–20	Live with the Spirit’s power
5:21–33	Instructions for Christian marriage
6:1–4	Instructions for children and parents
6:5–9	Instructions for servants and masters
6:10–20	Put on the whole armor of God
6:21–24	Personal news and final greetings

miracles through Paul” while he was in Ephesus (Act 19:11 NIV). Also, the letter seems to imply that the audience did not know Paul personally.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in three of the oldest Greek manuscripts of this epistle, the word *Ephesians* is missing. Other versions add *Ephesians* on the side or as a postscript.<sup>3</sup> Only later is a title added.

### *Background*

According to the epistle itself, Paul wrote it while imprisoned.<sup>4</sup> In Acts we read of Paul being imprisoned twice: in both Caesarea and Rome.<sup>5</sup> In both locations, the Romans allowed him to live in a home of sorts, receive visitors, teach, and write letters—thus the imprisonments were a kind of house arrest.<sup>6</sup> We have four letters that Paul mentions writing during his house arrest: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. (Paul also claims to be imprisoned in 2 Tim 1:8; 2:9, but this appears to be a second, harsher imprisonment, not the house arrest that we will discuss in that epistle.) The table below highlights three details those four prison epistles all address.

Table 2. Common details addressed in Paul's prison letters

Epistle	Reference to Paul in bonds	Letter carrier	Greetings sent from . . .
Ephesians	6:20	Tychicus	No greetings
Philippians	1:7, 13–16	Epaphroditus	“The brethren with me”
Colossians	4:18	Tychicus, Onesimus	Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Demas
Philemon	1:10, 13	Onesimus	Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Demas

## Ephesians 1

### *Greetings in Christ—Eph 1:1–4*

**Eph 1:1.** “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus . . . to the saints which are at Ephesus.*” Even though the epistle claims Paul as its author, textual scholars find it has different style and vocabulary from Paul’s other letters.<sup>7</sup> Paul may have delegated the assignment of writing to a companion, possibly offering an outline or general directions. A myriad of other scenarios could justify his name being attached even though he was not the sole author. Others argue that Paul did not write the text but his disciples fashioned it.<sup>8</sup>

**Eph 1:1.** “*to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*” The recipients of the epistle were faithful, spiritually mature Saints with an understanding of the gospel. The name Jesus Christ is written as a title in Greek from the Hebrew *Messiah*. Jesus’s titles are used in a variety of ways. The phrase “in Christ,” which is unique to Paul, is repeated five times in the next few verses. It is also translated six more times as “in Him” (Eph 1:1–14). Paul uses the phrase ninety-nine other times in the Pauline Epistles (and twenty-two times in Ephesians), and he is also cited as using it in Act 24:24. The addition of the Greek word *ἐν*, “in,” may also read “on” or “among.” Either way, “in Christ” means “in the anointed,” “on the anointed,” or “among the anointed.” It emphasizes unity with Jesus as our promised Messiah. This refers to temple imagery, as priests and sacred structures were anointed to become holy (Ex 30:30; Lev 16:32). Paul’s frequent use of “in Christ” evokes God’s highest blessings to the Saints.

**Eph 1:2.** “*Grace be to you, and peace, from God.*” The letter begins with Paul’s standard greeting found at the beginning or end of every letter attributed to him (including Hebrews). His audience understood the Hebrew and Aramaic *shalom* (meaning “peace, wholeness”) and the Greek *charis* (meaning “grace,” or “a gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ, favor, gratitude, thanks, a favor, kindness”).<sup>9</sup>

### *Spiritual blessings in Christ—Eph 1:3–14*

The next eleven verses are one sentence. It includes a blessing and a summary of the epistle and resounds with God’s glory. It exclaims prayers and praise like the psalms that the Jews recited at the time.<sup>10</sup> God is the subject of most phrases.

**Eph 1:3. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”** The author identifies the separate beings of the Godhead. The NIV translates the opening, “Praise be to the God.” Both openings identify our need for a worshipful, meek relationship with our God. Unlike the use of *blessed* in the Beatitudes (for example, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” Mt 5:9) or to describe Mary (“Blessed art thou among women,” Lk 1:42), here the underlying Greek word, *eulogétos*, is used exclusively for God and means “entitled to receive blessing from man, worthy of praise.”<sup>11</sup> It stands at the opening of this hymn as the letter’s thesis.

**Eph 1:4 (BLB). “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world for us to be holy and blameless before Him, in love.”** Through the lens of the Restoration, this verse refers to a premortal life.<sup>12</sup> In D&C 93:29, we read that humanity “was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.” God’s foreordination was based on what was best for His children (Abr 3:22–26). Writings from the earliest Christians also speak of a life before mortal birth. Justin Martyr (AD 100–165) taught that at death the “soul . . . goes back to the place from whence it was taken.”<sup>13</sup> And the oldest complete Christian sermon, 2 Clement (ca. AD 150) cites Ephesians 6 and then speaks of God’s spiritual creation: “The first church, the spiritual one which was created before the sun and moon.”<sup>14</sup> Yet the Restoration doctrine of premortality is unique in Christianity.<sup>15</sup>

**Eph 1:5 (BLB). “having predestined us.”** Twice in this chapter (Eph 1:5, 11) and once in Rom 8:29–30, the KJV translated *proorizo* as “predestinated,” but the ERV, ASV, LSV, and YLT translate it as “foreordained.” The Greek verb is made up of *pro-*, meaning “before,” and *horizo*, meaning “marking off or determining.” Another translation reads, “Having marked out beforehand the way” (Jubilee Bible 2000). This is more consistent with what God restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Before the physical creation, God organized and set bounds for earth life in a spiritual creation. He foreordained His spirit children to learn and progress (D&C 93:7, 29). Reformed Christians read this verse as speaking of God’s power that controls whomever He chooses to be the elect (regardless of human desires or efforts). Christian creeds defend God’s predestination to election or damnation as the “secret purpose of God.”<sup>16</sup> This theology continues to claim that God will superimpose His choice on humanity—His elect will passively receive God’s salvation as a gift and the rest God has assigned to damnation.<sup>17</sup> The Restoration denounces this.

**Eph 1:5. “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”** Paul shows how we can spiritually speak of Christ as our Father by using the image of Christ adopting the Saints as His children. The earlier reference to disciples “in Christ” includes those adopted “with Christ” through His Atonement. Paul repeatedly wrote of a gentile spiritual adoption.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Nauvoo newspaper *Times and Seasons* published, “For Abraham is heir of the

promises, and the Gentiles through adoption can become heirs with him of the same blessings.”<sup>19</sup> In the Book of Mormon, the Lord’s adoption is described in Jac 5 as grafting into an olive tree (see also Mosi 5:7; 18:18–22).

**Eph 1:7 (NKJV).** *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”* The author ties grace to Christ as our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. The author affirms that Jesus’s blood was required to redeem humanity.

**Eph 1:9 (ESV).** *“making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.”* God, in His wisdom and prudence, knows the best time to share His mysteries. God’s timing is part of the unknown that requires us to walk by faith. The Greek word *mustérion*, “mystery,” means “a secret, of which initiation is necessary.” In the New Testament it refers to “the counsels of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel or some fact thereof; the Christian revelation generally; particular truths or details of the Christian revelation.”<sup>20</sup> The Christian Orthodox Church refers to ordinances, or things that require initiation, as mysteries. Modern revelations have revealed hidden truths like the plan of salvation, temple ordinances, and vicarious work for the dead (1 Cor 15:29). Later Paul will talk about more mysteries.<sup>21</sup>

**Eph 1:9–10.** *“which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”* The KJV uses the word “dispensation” rather than “a plan for the fullness of time” (ESV) or “with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times” (NASB). This is the first of the mysteries that Paul addresses.<sup>22</sup> The word translated “dispensation,” *oikonomia*, means “management of household affairs, stewardship, administration.” The Greek word is used nine times in the New Testament, most often in the sense of stewardship. In the Restoration, we use the word to refer to periods when God orders His affairs with prophets, keys, and saving ordinances. Also, Eph 3:2 refers to a “dispensation of the grace of God.”

Most Christians refer to the dispensation of the fullness of time as the time of Jesus and His Church, but modern revelation clarifies that it is the time of the Restoration:

- “I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things” (D&C 27:13).
- “In all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation” (D&C 128:9).
- “It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time” (D&C 128:18).
- “All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years . . . shall be

revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God” (D&C 121:31–32; also D&C 112:30; 124:41).

***Eph 1:11 (BSB).*** “***In Him we were also chosen as God’s own, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will.***” This verse links being chosen with foreordination (see Eph 1:5). Yet restored scripture clarifies that God’s powers do not control human agency. Instead, God chooses those who choose to follow Him: “There are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world” (D&C 121:34–35). In this sense, humanity must choose to be chosen. The prophet Joseph preached, “Unconditional election of individuals to eternal life was not taught by the Apostles. God . . . passes over no man’s sins.”<sup>23</sup>

***Eph 1:13–14.*** “***after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance.***” God’s promise of our inheritance is sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise.” This is the only place in the Bible this four-word phrase is found. Other Christians interpret this as the Lord promising to send His Spirit.<sup>24</sup> Christian writings with this phrase often speak of the Holy Spirit of Promise as signifying regeneration, sanctification, adoption, or redemption. Yet in the Restoration, Holy Spirit of Promise is a special title describing a role of the Spirit. When disciples live their covenants valiantly, they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, which assures their redemption through Christ. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* explains, “The Holy Spirit of Promise is one of many descriptive name-titles of the Holy Ghost and refers to a specific function of the Holy Ghost. . . . The Holy Spirit of Promise is the power by which ordinances and other righteous acts performed on this earth, such as baptism and eternal marriage, are ratified, validated, and sealed in heaven as well as on earth.”<sup>25</sup> The Holy Spirit of Promise’s special sealing is conditional on the person’s commitment, and then if the person fulfills their covenants and ordinances, the sealing becomes permanent.

The Lord used this title, Holy Spirit of Promise, in seven sections of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Prophet Joseph’s sermons in Nauvoo.<sup>26</sup> There we learn that the Holy Spirit of Promise validates and seals covenants and ordinances, dependent on one’s worthiness on earth and in heaven. With its perfect knowledge, the Spirit cannot be deceived and therefore acts as the judge and sealer of ordinances.<sup>27</sup>

*Prayer for revelation to know Christ—Eph 1:15–23*

***Eph 1:15–17 (NIV).*** “***ever since I heard about your faith . . . I keep asking that the God of our Lord . . . may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.***” Even though it seems that the author heard about rather than personally knew his audience, he gives gratitude for their faith and prays for them to receive an outpouring of the Spirit’s revelation.

**Eph 1:18 (NIV).** “*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance.*” The ancients referred to their heart as their place of thought. The text means, “Your sight and thoughts may be enlightened.” If we understand Jesus’s calling and our relationship to Him, the Spirit can draw us to Him. Our hope is in Christ. He can enlighten believers now and with future glories.

**Eph 1:19–21 (NIV).** “*his incomparably great power for us who believe . . . far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name.*” Jesus’s name is the most powerful in the universe. His name causes mountains to move, prisons to tumble, and the earth to shake (Moro 8:24). Even more, His name can eternally free us from sin. Referring to this name of God, Nephi wrote as part of his final farewell, “This is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Ne 31:21).

**Eph 1:22–23 (NIV).** “*God . . . appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body.*” This emblematic image of Christ’s body as the Church describes the Church as Christ’s—not as Peter’s, Paul’s, Joseph Smith’s, or our living prophet’s. Our Savior directs the workings of the Church from the other side of the veil. He governs His kingdom through the Spirit and those who lead throughout the Church. Willing Saints serve as His hands and feet.

## **Ephesians 2**

*Become alive in Christ—Eph 2:1–10*

**Eph 2:1–2 (NIV).** “*you were dead in your transgressions and sins, . . . you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is . . . disobedient.*” Those disobedient to God’s commandments serve the devil. The Greek references the kingdom of “the devil, the prince of the demons that according to Jewish opinion fill the realm of air.”<sup>28</sup> Christians have mistakenly interpreted this to say mortals are born in sin, naturally wicked. However, the Book of Mormon corrects this misunderstanding: “the natural man is an enemy to God,” yet “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” and choose right from wrong (Mosi 3:19; Moro 7:16).

**Eph 2:4–6.** “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ . . . and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.*” In our fallen state, God extends mercy and love through His Son, our Savior. His grace allows us to return to God in heaven. The quickening is the second mystery addressed in this chapter. The ESV translates the word as “made us alive.” We believe Jesus’s gift of the Resurrection allows all humans immortal life after death, or being quickened, through Jesus’s gift of salvation.<sup>29</sup>

**Eph 2:8.** “*by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves.*” Without God’s grace, nothing we can do will redeem our fallen nature. We need to exert faith to realize the Lord’s saving

power, but the gift of resurrection will be given to us regardless of our faith. However, we do still need to perform good works, as the next verse adds.

**Eph 2:10 (BLB).** *“having been created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* Our creation in Christ comes after we repent and receive His grace. In the Restoration, we do not interpret this as do the Reformed Christians (who see the elect as predestined to only do good works—as if they were preprogrammed and given no agency). Nephi too describes salvation as a joint venture between the Savior and sinners: “We labor diligently . . . ; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne 25:23).

### *Worship as one in Christ—Eph 2:11–18*

**Eph 2:11–13 (BSB).** *“formerly you who are Gentiles in the flesh and called uncircumcised. . . . But now in Christ Jesus you . . . have been brought near.”* Through Jesus’s atoning sacrifice, the gentile converts to Christianity have entered the same covenant of Abraham (but our circumcision is figurative, taking effect in our desires and thoughts). We have the potential to be brought near to God our Heavenly Father through His Son’s mediation and our faith in Him. Faith can become like a magnet, using God’s cleansing Spirit, love, companionship, and peace to draw us near to Him.

**Eph 2:14 (BSB).** *“For he himself is our peace.”* Jesus fulfills Isa 9:5–6 and is the Prince of Peace.<sup>30</sup> As Jesus’s successor, the Spirit also becomes the messenger of peace (see D&C 6:23).

**Eph 2:14 (NIV).** *“has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”* The wall may refer to any barrier between God and humanity or heaven and earth. It could also refer to the high stone wall that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the more sacred spaces (see Act 21:28). As the discussion is about Gentiles receiving the blessings of Abraham, it seems appropriate that the barrier separating the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Israelites would be destroyed. The KJV’s “middle wall” is also translated “partition inside a house.”<sup>31</sup> In this light, it may refer to the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the temple (Ex 26:33), or it may refer to all barriers between God and humanity.

**Eph 2:16 (NKJV).** *“He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”* Jesus reconciled both “the law with its commands and regulations” (NIV) and the separation between God and His children. By His atoning sacrifice and death, Jesus accomplished His mission to destroy Satan’s hold on humanity. Satan used the enmity between Adam and Eve’s posterity in the Garden of Eden to fight humankind. Yet, Jesus’s victory over sin and death broke Satan’s grasp and dissolved the enmity. Jesus rose as a “new man” able to bring peace to the world (Eph 2:15).

**Eph 2:18.** *“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* After Jesus’s Resurrection, His Spirit continues to communicate truth. The Spirit offers peace and sanctification to our souls.



*Citizens of God's house, an holy temple—Eph 2:19–22*

***Eph 2:19. “ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”***

In the Roman world, male citizenship included the right to wear a toga, marry a citizen, and pass on citizenship to children.<sup>32</sup> Politically, the civil rights of citizens included rule by law, exemption from taxes, legal appeals, and having a voice in government.<sup>33</sup> Roman citizenship pales in comparison to the blessings and opportunities for citizens in God's household—especially for women and children. Interestingly, in the Roman world, a citizen received tax exemption; in the kingdom of God citizens are discharged from punishment for their sins. Citizenship in God's kingdom is based on repentance and obedience, as Jesus “suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as [Jesus]” (D&C 19:16–17). The analogy encourages Christians to become full citizens in God's kingdom.

***Eph 2:20. “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”*** Christ's Church was initiated by Christ Himself. Christianity was not developed by Paul or any other Apostle, as is commonly claimed by some.<sup>34</sup> Though the theology of others may have developed, Jesus was the founder. Contrary to how we use the descriptor today, in the New Testament prophets were those who testified of Jesus as the Christ (Rev 19:10). Additionally, people were called prophets if they spoke with the Spirit for God (Act 21:9; Lk 2:36). After Jesus's death, the Apostles held the keys of the priesthood (Mt 16:19; Eph 4:11). The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directed the work with those priesthood keys.

***Eph 2:21 (NIV). “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”*** This is a fascinating image of the temple. In the ancient world, temples of the Greeks, Romans, and Herod had fallen to corruption. In the New Testament, Christ's body represents a temple, or the house of the Lord. It is through Jesus that we may enter God's presence. Here, the Church is defined as those washed, clothed, and anointed as priests and priestesses. When Saints receive the Savior's cleansing through the Spirit, they become temples where the Holy Spirit may dwell.

## **Ephesians 3**

*The mystery of God's plan of salvation for all humans—Eph 3:1–13*

***Eph 3:1 (JST). “For this cause I Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for among you Gentiles.”*** Paul probably refers to his house arrest in Rome or possibly in Caesarea (Act 23–25, 28).

***Eph 3:2 (JST). “If ye have heard of For the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.”*** The JST changed the text that suggested the audience did not know Paul. This is the only time we find the descriptive phrase “dispensation of the grace” in the New Testament.

***Eph 3:3 (ISV). “this secret was made known to me through a revelation, just as I wrote about briefly in the past.”*** Revelation is the key to new information from God. While the verse

references one specific revelation, Paul refers to additional revelations in Gal 2:2. This secret, or “mystery” (KJV), was explained in a previous letter.

**Eph 3:5–6 (BSB).** “*it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs.*” The third mystery of this epistle is that Gentiles may become joint heirs. Peter’s revelation in Act 10:9–48 opened the door for this mystery. Gentiles may also be cleansed through Christ’s Atonement and adopted into the covenant. Peter’s vision was also accepted by the Quorum of the Twelve and the whole Church. Christ’s all-extending grace allows all who chose to follow Jesus completely to become heirs with Him.

**Eph 3:7–8 (BSB).** “*I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace, given me through the working of His power. Though I am less than the least . . . to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*” The word *servant* was significant in the New Testament culture. As described earlier, the Roman Empire’s hierarchical society included one-third of the population living as slaves or servants. Their cultural understanding of servitude taught Christian disciples another level about what it meant to be the Lord’s servants. Disciples choose to serve the Lord because of love for Him. Serving the Lord brings God’s power. The scriptures often describe God’s power as priesthood.<sup>35</sup>

**Eph 3:9–11 (NIV).** “*this mystery . . . was kept hidden in God . . . now, through the church, . . . should be made known . . . according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ.*” The author again references a premortal life and God’s plan from “before the foundation of the earth” (Abr 1:3).

**Eph 3:12 (BSB).** “*In Him and through faith in Him we may enter God’s presence with boldness and confidence.*” Our spiritual confidence comes from faith in Christ. This develops into access to God’s presence (D&C 93:1).

**Eph 3:13 (BSB).** “*I ask you not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you.*” The word here translated “sufferings,” or “tribulation” (KJV), in Greek also means “internal temptation and internal persecution.” This verse implies the audience at least knew of the author’s challenges.

*Paul prays for all to know Christ’s love—Eph 3:14–21*

**Eph 3:14.** “*I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Before recording a prayer (verses 16–21), the author teaches how and to whom Christians are to pray. We read of others kneeling in Ps 95:6: “Come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Further, Daniel knelt to pray three times a day (Dan 6:10). Satan asks Jesus to kneel before him, but He did not (Mt 4:9). Instead, Jesus knelt in Gethsemane (Lk 22:41). We follow Jesus’s example when we kneel in prayer.

**Eph 3:15 (NIV).** “*from whom every family in heaven.*” This is a unique scripture that describes families in heaven. The eternal sealing of a husband and wife is mentioned in D&C 132:19, but that verse does not mention families as this one does. Many Christians believe they will see their family

members in heaven, although the doctrine of families sealed for eternity is taught only in the Restoration. The eternal family of God will bow before Christ.<sup>36</sup>

**Eph 3:15 (NIV).** *“and on earth derives its name.”* In the Roman world, citizens alone had the right to receive a special third name. Likewise, each baptized disciple covenants to take Christ’s name. This key name allows entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Later we read that the name given from God will be a new name written on a stone (Rev 2:17).

**Eph 3:16–17 (NIV).** *“I pray that . . . he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit . . . through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love . . .”* The prayer begins with a request for the Spirit to strengthen the Saints through faith. In Acts and the Epistles the Spirit’s workings are linked with faith.<sup>37</sup> The prayer for inner strength also highlights disciples’ need to become rooted in love.

**Eph 3:19 (ESV).** *“to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”* Of all the things to pray for, seeking to feel God’s love is paramount and comes with repentance. His extraordinary gift of forgiveness allows repentant seekers to feel His forgiveness and love.

**Eph 3:20–21 (NIV).** *“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine . . . in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”* The prayer closes in the name of Jesus. It also describes that God’s abundant mercy will bless disciples, so they will glorify Him eternally.

## **Ephesians 4**

*Become one in Christ—Eph 4:1–16*

**Eph 4:1–3 (NIV).** *“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. . . . [Keep] the unity of the Spirit through . . . peace.”* The second half of this epistle is action filled, containing thirty-six verbs in the imperative mood. The author encourages disciples to seek unity through the Spirit. Jesus also called for unity and revealed that it is the key to entering the celestial kingdom (Jn 15–17; D&C 105:3–5).

**Eph 4:4–6.** *“one body, and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* These verses provide seven examples of unity. The Spirit unifies seekers in truth. Heavenly Father and His omniscience are the subject of verse 6.

**Eph 4:7 (NKJV).** *“to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”* Jesus now becomes the main subject of the next several verses. The author transitions from “all” in unity to “each” receiving Christ’s gifts. God blesses the unified Saints one by one.

**Eph 4:10 (BSB).** “He who descended is the very One who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things.” This verse cites Ps 68:18, describing Jesus’s descent to the depths of Satanic terror to bind the usurper and counterfeiter, Satan, and free the captives from spirit prison. Resultantly, Jesus conquered death through His Resurrection. During the three days that His body lay in the tomb, Jesus’s spirit organized missionary work in the spirit prison, preparing a release for the repentant (D&C 138; 1 Pet 4:6).

*Church worship and organization—Eph 4:11*

**Eph 4:11.** “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” The organization of the Church is a gift from God. The NLT reads, “Now these are the gifts Christ gave.” These Church offices help the Saints attain a unity of faith “and thus grow up into Christ the head of the body” (NIV). Some callings have different names than those we use—a pastor is a shepherd, or a bishop. In Greek the word for *evangelist* means “missionary, bearer of good tidings,” but Joseph Smith defined it as a patriarch: “Wherever the church of Christ is established in the earth, there should be a patriarch for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints, as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessings unto his sons.”<sup>38</sup> Joseph Smith cites part of this verse in the sixth article of faith: “We believe in the same organization . . . , namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.” Other lists are found in the Epistles and the Book of Acts.<sup>39</sup>

**Eph 4:12–13.** “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith.” Under the Spirit’s influence, members of the Church can act in unified efforts to edify, strengthen, and uplift. Most modern translations do not use the word “perfecting.” Instead, they use “equip his people for works of service”

Table 3. Organization of the Church in Acts and the Epistles

Eph 4:11	1 Cor 12:28	1 Tim 3; Titus 1	Act 14:23; Php 1:1	Meaning
Apostle	Apostle			One sent, special messenger
Prophet	Prophet			Foreteller, interpreter
Evangelist				Bringer of good news
Pastor				Shepherd
Teacher	Teacher			Teacher
	Help			Help, aid
	Government			Director, administrator
		Deacon	Deacon	Servant
		Bishop	Bishop	Overseer
		Elder	Elder	Male Christian leader

(NIV) or “for the training” (HCSB). The word *saint* means “holy one” from the Latin *sanctus*. The intent is that disciples become sanctified and holy through Christ. To become joint heirs with Christ, disciples must “mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.”<sup>40</sup> Line upon line, disciples can work toward unity through becoming like Christ.

**Eph 4:14 (NKJV).** “*we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.*” The Saints need spiritual maturity and grounding so as not to be swayed by the adversary’s schemes. We find people deliberately corrupting truths. Satan sends his henchmen to deceive seekers of truth.

**Eph 4:15–16 (BLB).** “*speaking the truth in love, we should grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ, . . . the increase of the body makes for itself, to the building up of itself in love.*” Paul is symbolically using the image of Jesus’s body as the Church. When the Church works in unity, it becomes like a bride for Jesus, the glorious groom.

### *Instructions to live in Christ’s light—Eph 4:17–5:7*

**Eph 4:17.** “*walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.*” Gentiles were “separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts . . . sensuality . . . impurity, and . . . greed” (Eph 4:18 NIV). Saints need to live Christ’s higher laws.

**Eph 4:22–32. “put off.”** The next ten verses list attributes needed to become converted disciples of Jesus and “children of God.” They are laced with imperative verbs. These new commandments are part of our covenant to live the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ and include the following:

- “Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires” (4:22 NIV).
- “Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness” (4:24 NIV).
- “Put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor” (4:25 NIV).
- “Do not let the sun set upon your anger” (4:26 BSB).
- “Do not give the devil a foothold” (4:27 NIV).
- “Steal no longer” (4:28 NIV).
- “Work, doing something useful with their own hands” (4:28 NIV).
- “Share with those in need” (4:28 NIV).
- “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths” (4:29 NIV).
- “Building others up according to their needs” (4:29 NIV).
- “Edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (4:29 KJV).
- “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for . . . redemption” (4:30 BSB).
- “Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others” (4:31 CEV).
- “Don’t yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude” (4:31 CEV).
- “Be kind and tenderhearted to one another, forgiving each other” (4:32 BSB).
- “Follow God’s example . . . and walk in the way of love” (5:1–2 NIV).

- “There must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity” (5:3 NIV).
- “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or crude joking (5:4 BSB).
- “Let there be thanksgiving” (5:4 ESV).
- “Let no one deceive you with empty arguments” (5:6 CSB).

Disciples who change their behaviors, attitudes, and desires to apply these teachings become sanctified by the Spirit. These changes are possible when we choose to trust what Christ sees in us and act with faith in Him. By doing so, our way of life becomes our worship since we worship God by keeping His commandments. However, we are idolaters when we are greedy (Eph 5:4). In our day, prophets have added that we must keep our covenants, increase faith, avoid pornography, stop all forms of abuse, let go of grudges, become peacemakers, control our thoughts, and seek the Spirit. We have the divine blessing to repent daily, which allows the Savior to transform us and for us to feel the joy of forgiveness.

## Ephesians 5

*Live as Christ’s children by the Spirit—Eph 5:8–14*

**Eph 5:8 (NASB 1995).** “*you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.*” This reference to children refers to humility and meekness, not to age. Writings from the same period (such as the Gospel of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls) also use light and darkness as metaphors.

**Eph 5:9.** “*For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.*” Paul gave a longer list of the fruits of the Spirit in Gal 5:22. Readers may gain new insights by comparing the fruits of the Spirit with the gifts of the Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Table 4. Comparison of the gifts of the Spirit to the fruits of the Spirit

<b>Gifts of the Spirit</b> (1 Cor 12:8–10; 13:13; Moro 10; D&C 46)	<b>Fruits of the Spirit</b> (Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9)
Faith	Joy
Hope	Love
Charity	Peace
Healing	Patience
Wisdom	Kindness
Miracles	Goodness
Prophecy	Faithfulness
Knowledge	Righteousness
Discernment of spirits	Truth
Tongues and interpretation of tongues	

The major difference between the Spirit's gifts and fruits is that one is the *means* and the other is the *ends*; God gives us gifts as the means to bless others. (This purpose is repeated five times in D&C 46.) After we use the gifts in service, God blesses us with the fruits of the Spirit (D&C 130:21).

Interestingly, there is only one duplicate—*agape*, “love, or charity”—that bridges both the Spirit's gifts and fruits. If we try to love, we receive love. God also taught this in the vision of the tree of life: the most desirable fruit of the tree is the love of God (1 Ne 11:8, 22).

***Eph 5:11 (NIV).*** “***Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.***” Unlike the Spirit, darkness is unfruitful. How do disciples expose works of darkness? The KJV calls on the Saints to reprove them. The CEV reads, “Show how wrong they are.” The epistle calls the Saints not only to recognize and denounce darkness but also to speak up for truth.

***Eph 5:14 (NIV).*** “***Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.***” This appears to be a poem or hymn. It may be quoting Jonah: “O sleeper? arise.” (1:6). In connection with the companionship of the Spirit, a divine light can radiate through disciples' countenances. The Book of Mormon describes a time when Christ's light literally shone as individuals received “the image of God engraven upon [their] countenances” (Alm 5:19).

*Live with the Spirit's power—Eph 5:15–20*

***Eph 5:15–16 (NIV).*** “***Be very careful, then, how you live . . . making the most of every opportunity.***” When disciples focus on serving God, each opportunity can be filled with the Spirit's power. While evil abounds, every person can make a positive impact within their sphere of influence. In the Old Testament, the Lord taught Lot that just a few righteous people could save a community. Good people bless their communities. Latter-day Apostles echoed this by calling on the Saints to increase their goodness, as the world is wicked enough for the Second Coming but the Saints are not ready.<sup>42</sup>

***Eph 5:17 (NET).*** “***Be wise by understanding what the Lord's will is.***” Disciples need to understand the Lord's will in order to apply it. The scriptures, the words of living prophets, and the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit each provide understanding of God's will.<sup>43</sup>

***Eph 5:18 (NIV).*** “***Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.***” Although wine was often diluted with ten parts water for daily use (and could be diluted with up to twenty parts water) and a strong drink was wine diluted with only two parts water, drunkenness was denounced regularly in scripture.<sup>44</sup>

***Eph 5:19 (BSB).*** “***Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord.***” Reciting scripture or singing hymns can foster the Spirit. The Greek *heautou* means “speaking to yourselves (or literally, ‘of himself, herself, itself’).” Music can be a spiritual gift that improves attitudes and blesses lives. Sacred music adds to our worship in churches, homes, and hearts. It can foster inspiration and bring the Spirit's witness and peace. This is in part why the Lord asked Emma Smith to prepare a hymnal shortly after the organization of the Church.<sup>45</sup>

**Eph 5:20.** *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* A heart and voice of gratitude fosters the Spirit. The Lord commands that we give thanks in all things, prosperity and loss. When we give thanks for trials, we demonstrate our trust in God’s wisdom. Showing gratitude can soften hearts, foster repentance, and present solutions for growth and should be a major portion of our prayers and worship.<sup>46</sup>

*Household code: Instructions for Christian marriage—Eph 5:21–33*<sup>47</sup>

**Eph 5:21 (BSB).** *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”* The Greek word *hupo-tasso*, “submit,” is a favorite in the Epistles. In various forms, it is repeated thirty-eight times in the New Testament (twenty-eight of which are in the Pauline corpus). The Greek roots deal with order, accountability, and cooperation. The New Testament uses a nonmilitary definition: “voluntarily carrying burdens and sharing responsibilities.”<sup>48</sup> This definition speaks of serving and working together. Submitting or yielding to God develops holiness, as the Book of Mormon claims: “Sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Hel 3:35). When we yield to God, we become holy. Likewise, when we cooperate with others in righteousness, we honor the Lord. While we rejoice in the chance to work alongside and yield to God and one another, we firmly call for the end of forced submission.

**Eph 5:22 (ESV).** *“Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.”* This verse is uncomfortable because it singles out women. Yet, the author singles out husbands and directs them in the next sentence. Satan has undermined the value of women throughout history. However, in the context of Christians striving for unity, applying the same definition of voluntarily cooperating leads to empowering results (Eph 5:21). The verse calls wives to share responsibilities with God and their families to engage in the joint work. Compared to the norms of the time, this command is liberating as it grants women a voice to actively engage in the Church rather than silently obey their husbands. Furthermore, since the previous verse suggests that all should submit to one another, we can infer that wives and husbands should voluntarily cooperate and submit to the other as they share their burdens. This perspective frames the counsel God gave to Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail: “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by . . . love unfeigned.”<sup>49</sup>

The earliest Greek texts of this verse do not include a verb. Instead, they reference the earlier sentence about submitting to Christ.<sup>50</sup> A literal reading is, “Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”<sup>51</sup> Jesus is our example in familial relationships just as He is in teaching, service, and sacrifice. We all are to submit to Him, voluntarily cooperating and sharing His burden. Then disciples do the same to help others.

**Eph 5:23 (NIV).** *“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”* The word translated “head” is not referring to a ruler or chief but figuratively means “source,” pointing to the creation in the Garden of Eden (see 1 Cor 11:3–4). This message may give the impression that the wife is in a secondary position to her husband; however, President Gordon B. Hinckley clarified, “Nothing could be further from the truth.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, M. Russell



Ballard explained that a the stewardships of husband and wife, which are “equally sacred and important, do not involve any false ideas about domination or subordination.”<sup>53</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints holds that husbands and wives should be in an equal partnership; wives are not to think of themselves or be treated as inferiors.

It is far easier to submit to or cooperate with God, a perfect being, than it is to submit to imperfect human beings. However, we aim for the ideal. Hugh Nibley included the Savior in the ideal relationship between spouses. Like points on a triangle, the marital relationship is a system of checks and balances wherein Christ, wife, and husband work in harmony. The wife yields to the husband when he is in line with God. Likewise, the husband yields to the wife when she is in line with God. Both must yield to God and be in tune with the Spirit.<sup>54</sup> Husband and wife kneeling before God illustrates the ideal: both offer humility and deference to each other as they submit to the Lord. There is no room for male chauvinism in celestial marriages.

While the epistle may suggest false ideas about a line of authority in marital relationships, it does not encourage blind obedience or resignation. The verse asks husbands and wives to have Christ as their head.<sup>55</sup> In Christ’s modern Church, we are taught that if the husband is not honoring God, the wife has no obligation to submit to him.<sup>56</sup> The same is true for the husband.

***Eph 5:25–26. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with . . . the word.”*** These verses give husbands specific counsel in family matters. They (and all disciples) are to follow Jesus’s new commandment to love as He loves (Jn 13:34). The Greek word translated “love,” *agape*, is the same word that Paul uses for charity here. At least five words could have been translated “love” (for example, *eros*, “erotic,” or *philo*, “friendship”), but Paul chooses the pure love of Christ as the ideal for husbands and wives.

The word *church* is found nine times in this epistle. Each use designates the same comprehensive group of believers. Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it (and for those outside its protection). Even after His death, He continued to nourish and cherish it (Eph 5:23–32). The promise is that as Christ sanctified the Church, so too will He sanctify our marriages by abiding in love. The goal is unity.

***Eph 5:28–29 (NIV). “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives . . . just as Christ does the church.”*** This counsel on marriage was shocking in Paul’s time as most first marriages were arranged by fathers or guardians for familial, political, or economic convenience when girls were not yet in their teens.<sup>57</sup> Romance was rarely considered. Despite this, the message for Christian husbands (and for wives, I would add) was, “You need to love, serve and take care of your spouse as Christ loves. You need to develop charity.” In the culture of the day, the average Greco-Roman man and woman divorced four to five times and had additional extramarital relations. This apostolic counsel to the world was much needed.

***Eph 5:31 (NIV). “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”*** The author is open and positive about marital intimacy. Note that the husband’s obligation to love his wife is more extensive than the wife’s to cooperate.

Christian guidelines for marriage cite Gen 2:24 from the Creation story (also cited by Jesus in Mk 10:7–8). These ideas are rooted in accounts of God’s initial plan for marriage in the Garden of Eden.

**Eph 5:32. “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** This fourth mystery in the epistle refers to the allegorical marriage between the Lord and His covenant people. As described above, the word *mystery* does not mean “unknowable” but “revealed from God or His servants” (see Eph 1:9).

**Eph 5:33 (BSB). “each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”** The author taught that Saints should love their spouses and respect each other. This was not part of their patriarchal culture. Peter taught a similar message in 1 Pet 3:8–9.

## Ephesians 6

*Household code: Instructions for children and parents—Eph 6:1–4*

**Eph 6:1–4. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right . . . fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”** In the context of parents who strive to follow Christ, this is good advice. The addition of “in the Lord” clarifies Moses’s fifth commandment (cited from Deu 5:16). This parameter implies that children do not have to obey wickedness or tolerate abuse. Verse 4 further teaches that fathers (and I add mothers) should not exasperate their children. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “We seldom get into trouble when we speak softly. . . . The voice of heaven is a still small voice.”<sup>58</sup> Children who learn to cooperate at home have an easier time submitting to God’s will.

*Household code: Instructions for servants and masters—Eph 6:5–9*

**Eph 6:5–6 (NIV). “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.”** These troubling verses need historical perspective. In the ancient Roman world, millions of people worked in servitude—some scholars estimate that 30 percent of the population were enslaved or servants. (The Greek word *doulos* means both “slave” and “servant,” so they can be used interchangeably here.) Slavery saturated Roman culture and infiltrated every aspect of the social order, including homes. Many servants and masters were more like serfs and landlords. Servants could own other servants, and men could sell their children or wives into slavery or servitude.<sup>59</sup> In the Jewish world, male servants were released after their seventh year of labor if they wanted freedom.<sup>60</sup> In the Roman world, servants and slaves were released by age thirty or thirty-five, although many were freed prior to this age.<sup>61</sup>

We have no record of Jesus nor His Apostles advocating to abolish the Roman and Jewish slavery systems. Instead, they counseled both slave and master to work honestly and show respect and kindness

toward one another. Jesus also advocated another reform: He taught masters how to serve. He Himself said, “[I] came not to be served but to serve” (Mt 20:28 ESV) He took on the role of a servant and slave as He healed, taught, and washed His Apostles’ feet. His greatest act of servitude came during His Passion in Gethsemane as He submitted to His Father as the Suffering Servant.<sup>62</sup>

**Eph 6:7–8.** “*With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: . . . whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*” The Apostolic Church taught that all service we give to others is received by the Lord. This idea is also found in King Benjamin’s teachings: “When you are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosi 2:17).

**Eph 6:9 (NIV).** “*And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.*” God does not favor certain races, ethnicities, genders, or any other group above others. He calls masters to “treat your slaves in the same way,” meaning that they should serve their servants as their servants serve them. In heaven, all will be judged on how they loved and served, not on what position they held.

*Put on the whole armor of God—Eph 6:10–18*

**Eph 6:10–11 (NIV).** “*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.*” The power of God allows disciples to be strong in moral, intellectual, and spiritual matters. The metaphor of armor would have been familiar to the audience because the whole empire knew the image of a Roman soldier’s dress.<sup>63</sup> These verses on the armor of God were recited or reworded by martyrs who died for the faith.<sup>64</sup>

**Eph 6:12–13.** “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*” Christians’ battleground supersedes earthly matters; they fight against the adversary and wickedness. Obedient disciples wear God’s armor, providing protection and allowing them to hold their ground.

**Eph 6:14.** “*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.*” Roman breastplates were often made of leather and included a carved or painted inscription of a Roman goddess or god. The symbolic breastplate of righteousness has no idols, but Christian faces shine with God’s light (Alm 5:14). Disciples’ covenants with Christ become their breastplates and protection.

**Eph 6:15–17.** “*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the*

**word of God.**” The spiritual armor is mainly defensive, meant to protect disciples from evil. In battle, the most important protection was for the head. At this time, Roman military helmets had developed into carefully crafted symbols of protection:

A helmet was made of leather, bronze, iron, or in special cases, gold. What was originally no more than a protective cap developed—especially by the addition of crests—into a heavy, decorative, and expensive item. An inside lining of felt or sponge made the weight bearable. Nothing short of an ax or hammer could pierce a heavy helmet, and in some cases a hinged visor added frontal protection. Roman soldiers wore a bronze helmet equipped with cheek pieces.<sup>65</sup>

In the armor of God, the helmet represents salvation—a gift from God to all faithful mortals. Salvation is our greatest defense. Rather than distinguishing rank like military helmets, God’s helmet of salvation is given to all, and exaltation is given to all who receive it. In the Jewish Midrash, the phrase “helmet of salvation” belonged with the “garments of glory” that the Messiah would wear when He came.<sup>66</sup>

The only offensive weapon described in our protection against wickedness is the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Understanding God’s word through His Spirit will help us cut through falsehoods and defend truth.

**Eph 6:18 (BSB).** “**Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints.**” The seventh piece of armor required to fight the adversary is to ensure our prayers are “in the Spirit.” Disciples learn how to pray *in* the Spirit of God. Continual prayer, in the Spirit, is the key to unlocking “the whole process of arming oneself.”<sup>67</sup> When disciples pray with the Spirit, it is like entering into God’s house to commune with Him in person. To feel the Spirit, begin prayer with repentance and by meekly seeking forgiveness.

#### *Personal news and final greetings—Eph 6:19–24*

**Eph 6:20 (NIV).** “**I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**” Paul, or whoever wrote the letter, solicits prayers as “an ambassador in bonds” (KJV). The word *halusis*, translated “chain or bond,” does not mean Paul was chained to something. In the Roman practice of house arrest, the prisoner’s “right hand [was chained] . . . to the left hand on his guard.” Thanks to his Roman citizenship, Paul may not have been required to wear chains. However, “the terms ‘chains’ and ‘prison’ could be virtually interchangeable, and one could be in chains and not in prison.”<sup>68</sup> The real message the author communicates is triumphing with God’s help. He does not ask the Saints to pray for his release; instead, he boldly testifies of the truth, like all ambassadors of Christ in all situations.

**Eph 6:21 (BSB).** “**Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know about me and what I am doing.**” Tychicus delivered and probably acted as scribe for this epistle (and he is also mentioned in the letter to the

Colossians). He was trustworthy and educated in Greek and the gospel. The author does not take the time to share how he is doing in this letter but rather delegates all updates to Tychicus.

***Eph 6:23–24 (NIV). “Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord.”*** The author closes as he began—with messages of peace and love.

## Notes

1 Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 10.

2 See Eph 1:15; 3:2–3; 4:21.

3 Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 381–384.

4 Eph 1:1; 3:1; 4:1.

5 Act 23:23–26:32; 28:16.

6 Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 51. The postscript from Eph 6:24 “written from Rome” is not found in the early Greek manuscripts until the ninth century. However, other claims in the text hint at this (Eph 3:1, 4:1; 6:20). Some biblical scholars remove the letter’s writing from Paul by a century, but I do not.

7 Geoffrey Harris, *Paul* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2013), 196.

8 Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 21–24.

9 “Charis,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5485.htm>.

10 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., 22 vols. (Detroit, MI: MacMillan Reference USA, 2007), 1:73–74. From the time of the second temple, some Jewish prayers were set and recited daily and weekly, and others were spontaneous from the heart. One of the best-known Jewish set prayers was called the eighteen benedictions. It began by referring to the God of (1) the patriarchs, (2) nature, and (3) sanctification. Then, the prayer petitioned God for (4) understanding, (5) repentance, (6) forgiveness, (7) redemption, (8) healing, (9) food, (10) gathering of exiles, and (11) restoration of His righteous reign. Then it spoke (12) against heretics and asked (13) for mercy for the righteous, (14) Jerusalem, and (15) the messianic king. It ends by asking that God (16) hear their prayers and (17) return to the temple, then finally gives (18) thanks to God for all His mercies. The prayer had variations for certain holy days.

11 “Eulogétos,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2128.htm>.

12 See also Jn 1:1–5; 17:24; and 1 Pet 1:20.

13 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 6, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (New York : Christian Literature Publishing, 1885–1887), 1:198.

14 Karl Paul Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2014), 198.

15 Alm 13:3; Hel 14:17; D&C 29:36; 38:1; 49:17; 93:29; 138:53. See Topical Guide, “Man, Antemortal Existence,” online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

16 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Scribner, 1871), 3:104; Lynne Wilson, “Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Contrasted with Cartwright, Campbell, Hodge, and Finney” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2010).

17 See the Westminster Confession for more on Protestant and Reformed doctrines. Also from the fourth century, Saint Augustine’s writings share similar understanding of God’s complete control without human input.

18 Rom 8:15; 9:4; and Gal 4:5.

19 “*Times and Seasons*, 15 February 1842,” p. 689, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-15-february-1842/3>.

20 “*Mustérion*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3466.htm>.

21 Eph 3:3, 4, 9; 5:23; 6:19.

22 Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *Studies in Scripture: Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 114.

23 “Discourse, 16 May 1841, as Published in Times and Seasons,” p. 430, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16may-1841-as-published-in-times-and-seasons/2>.

24 Alexander Campbell, “Reply to Robert B. Semple,” *Millennial Harbinger*, March 1830, 138–139. Campbell spoke for many of his contemporaries who interpreted the promise of the Spirit to mean the same thing as the Holy Spirit of Promise. In his commentary on Ephesians, Charles Hodge explained that the elect “have obtained a portion in this inheritance, and, after having believed, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York, NY: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1866), 68. Similarly, I found two other publications from the nineteenth century that addressed the phrase from Eph 1:13. First, Reverend William G. Elliot, the pastor of the Church of the Messiah at St. Louis, wrote, “The Holy Spirit or Spirit of God was ‘poured out’ or ‘shed forth’ both on Jews and Gentiles. Believers were ‘sealed’ with the Holy Spirit of promise. Jesus ‘breathed on them’ and said, ‘receive ye the Holy Spirit.’” William G. Elliot, *Discourses on the Doctrine of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: American Unitarian Association, 1855), 33. Also, Reverend William Guthrie explained that one “must first believe and . . . then look for the seal and witness of the Spirit: ‘In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,’ &c. As long as people hold fast these principles, and the like, they can hardly [*sic*] come to the knowledge of their gracious state, which God hath warranted people to prove and clear up to themselves, other ways than by these foresaid things.” William Guthrie, *The Christian’s Great Interest* (Glasgow, UK: Wm Collins, 1828), 75.

25 Lawrence R. Flake, “Holy Spirit of Promise,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York, Macmillan, 1992), 2:651–652.

26 D&C 76:53; 88:3; 124:124; 132:7, 18, 19, 26. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 4, 15, 190, 209, 284, 335.

27 There was and is no saving grace in a baptism that is followed by a hypocritical life of sin. Instead, the Prophet Joseph believed, all covenants and ordinances are efficacious only when humans live worthily. When we uphold our covenants with God, the Holy Spirit of Promise ratifies the ordinance; when we do not, there is no eternal reward. Another deterrent to ratification by the Holy Spirit of Promise is proper order and priesthood authority (D&C 107:18).

28 “*Aér*,” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/109.htm>.

29 Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *Studies in Scripture: Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 114.

30 Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 415–416. Ironically, Caesar Augustus also used the title “savior of the whole world.”

31 Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 214.

32 John W. Welch and John F. Hall, *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 4–6.

33 Donald L. Wasson, “Roman Citizenship,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, January 27, 2016, <https://ancient.eu/article/859/roman-citizenship/>.

34 A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle* (New York, NY: Norton, 1998); James Tabor, *Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle transformed Christianity* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

35 Neil L. Anderson, “Power in the Priesthood,” October 2013 general conference, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). “The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all—men, women and children. . . . As individuals make and keep sacred covenants, they are able to receive priesthood power and blessings.”

36 Eph 1:10; Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11.

37 This link is especially strong in the Pauline letters; see 1 Cor 12:9; 2 Cor 4:13; Gal 3:2; 5:5, 22; Eph 1:13.

38 “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 2 July 1839, as Reported by Willard Richards,” p. 22, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-2-july-1839-as-reported-by-willard-richards/8>; capitalization, spelling, and punctuation silently modernized.

39 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2007), 237.

40 Eph 4:13 BSB; see Eph 1:13; Rom 8:17.

- 41 See the table in my commentary on 1 Cor 12:7 for further comparison.
- 42 D. Todd Christofferson, “Preparing for the Lord’s Return,” April 2019 general conference; Dallin H. Oaks, “Preparation for the Second Coming,” April 2004 general conference, available online at churchofjesuschrist.org.
- 43 D&C 6:15, 23; 8:2–3; 9:7–9.
- 44 John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: IL: Moody Press, 1985), chapter 18; Eph 5:18; Lk 21:34; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:21; Pro 20:1; 31:4; Isa 5:11; D&C 89:7.
- 45 D&C 25:11–12. The Church was organized April 6, 1830. Emma was baptized June 28, 1830. The revelation was dated July 1830 and was given in Harmony, PA.
- 46 Rom 1:21; Ps 92:1; 138:2.
- 47 A shorter version of a household code of conduct is found in Col 3:18–4:1 and 1 Pet 3.
- 48 Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 8:41.
- 49 D&C 121:36–41; 131:1–4; 132:19–25.
- 50 Andrew Robert Fausset, ed., *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1961), Ephesians 5:22.
- 51 Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 610.
- 52 Gordon B. Hinckley, “If Thou Art Faithful,” October 1984 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.
- 53 M. Russell Ballard, “The Sacred Responsibilities of Parenthood,” *Liahona*, March 2006.
- 54 Hugh Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 93.
- 55 John W. Welch and John F. Hall, *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 15-15. Interestingly, the word *Islam* means “submission.”
- 56 Russell M. Nelson, “Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women,” April 1999 general conference; D. Todd Christofferson, “Fatherhood,” April 2016 general conference; Elaine S. Dalton, “Love Her Mother,” October 2011 general conference.
- 57 Mishnah, *Kiddushin* 2:1: “A man may give his daughter in betrothal while she is still in her girlhood either by his own act or by that of his agent.” Also see *Yebamoth* 13:1; and Ken M. Campbell, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 144. The day after a girl’s twelfth birthday, she was no longer a minor, and the day after she turned twelve and a half she could legally be married, though there are examples of marriage occurring at younger ages.
- 58 Gordon B. Hinckley, “Except the Lord Build the House . . .,” April 1971 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.
- 59 Keith Crim, ed., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, supplementary vol. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976), 830.



60 Ex 21:2; Lev 25:39–42; Deu 15:12. The Law of Moses stipulated that if a male servant received a wife from his master, he could not take his wife or children with him when released. Ex 21:3–4. This is where the situation became tenuous. Many men chose to remain in the employ of someone else rather than leave their family. So the law added, “And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him forever.” Ex 21:5–6. The pierced ear was often filled with a hoop, so that servant for life was known by a hoop in his ear.

61 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:545; Ken M. Campbell, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 135. Some sources record a release at age thirty, others at thirty-five or forty. The process of releasing a slave was known as manumission.

62 Isa 49–53; Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ’s Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing, 2015), chapter 8.

63 Graham Sumner, *Roman Military Dress* (Gloucestershire, UK: History Press, 2009), 71–73, 175–177.

64 In the early sixteenth century, Anne Askew wrote a beautiful poem filled with symbols of the armor of God as she faced her martyrdom. The opening of the poem reads, “Like as the armed knight / Appointed to the field, / With this world will I fight / And Faith shall be my shield / Faith is that weapon strong / Which will not fail at need. / My foes, therefore, among / Therewith will I proceed.”

65 Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 775.

66 Barth, *Ephesians 4–6*, 775.

67 Barth, *Ephesians 4–6*, 777.

68 Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 68. “The reference to chains is important as it speaks to the nature of Paul’s confinement. A ‘prisoner’ was not necessarily in a prison cell.”