



Walking Together in His Amazing Grace: A Study of Ephesians

Week 8: Angelology (Ephesians 3 – The Spiritual Realm)

- February 16th, 23rd
- March 2nd, 9th (Baptism), 16th, 23rd, 30th
- April 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th

The Goal of Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:1 Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

WHAT PROBLEMS WOULD EXIST FOR THESE TO BE THE ANSWERS?

- **REDEMPTION 1:7** (Salvation, Restoration)
- **DIVINE INTENTION for the human race 1:3-14** (God's plan for us)
- **GRACE 1:2** (God's favor that we never can earn)
- **PREDESTINATION 1:4-5** [The Tree DNA in the seed and...]
- **RECONCILIATION 2:1-21**
- **UNION WITH CHRIST 2:1-21**

Week 1: Welcome to Ephesus – Understanding the History

Week 2: Understanding the Culture of the Time: Individual Self/Collective Self

- WHO they were,
- WHOSE they were and how each Ephesian fit in with the whole of their group,
- WHERE they were,
- And the context, WHEN they were—in the timeline of history,
- Then WHERE were they headed,
- And to WHOM were they trying to reach,
- Once there, WHAT WERE THEY SUPPOSED TO DO?

Week 3: Understanding JC Headship of the Church. How/When/Why of being a member of a church.

Week 4: His Genesis – Predestination, What happened before Genesis and how it affects us today

Week 5: Ephesians 2:11-22 Being One – Not Two

Step #1: Remembering what WAS

Step #2: NOW, Declaring what IS

- a. Declaring His redemption in our life
- b. Declaring Him as the *peace* in our life
- c. Declaring Him as the *unity* in our life
- d. Declaring Him through reconciliation--“There is no closure without accountability.” Police Officer

Step #3: Access the Holy Spirit TRY

Week 6: Paul's life with God.

- Being inspired by Paul's humanity and humbled by his dedication.

Week 7: Ephesians 3 – The Church, The Spiritual Realm (Intercession)

Week 8: Angelology

Week 9: Ephesians 3 – Intercession



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Week 8:

- RECAP Week 7: The SPIRITUAL REALM

Mystery: Vs. 3, 4, 9.

- English: A puzzle, A secret – Illusionist use to create drama
- Greek: Mysterion = Was a secret but is now a truth into which someone has been initiated [OPEN SECRET].

Ephesians 3:9

⁹ and to make **all see** what is the *stewardship, dispensation* fellowship of the **mystery**, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

- Greek: Mysterion = Was a secret but is now a truth into which ALL can be initiated/can be revealed to ALL **by the creator of all things.**

1 Peter 1:12

*It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels **long** to look.*

“In Christianity there are no esoteric ‘mysteries’ reserved for a spiritual élite.”

J. R. W. (1979). [God's new society: the message of Ephesians](#) (pp. 113–141). InterVarsity Press.

Was this mystery of/miracle of the Church becoming, shown only to the Angels of the LORD?
Did evil see it happening too?

1 John 4:3 ESV

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Ephesians 3:10-12 ESV

*So that through the church the *variegated many sided*, **manifold** wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.*



ANGELOLOGY

I. In the Beginning:

A.) Did God Create the Angels?

John 1:3 NKJV

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

B.) The Role of Christ in Creation:

Colossians 1:13-17 ESV

¹³ *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

The Preeminence of Christ

¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

Also: Matt 14:27; Mark 6:50; 14:62; Luke 22:70; John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:6.

NOTE: Using the **present-tense** “I am”—rather than the **past-tense** “I was”.

- Many translations supply the word “he” (“I am he”) to avoid an awkward ending to the phrase; however, this term is not present in the Greek text.

Miller, J. E. (2016). [I Am Sayings](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

C.) Self Existence belongs Only God:

Exodus 3:14 ESV

God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And He said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

- **Hebrew:** Tetragrammaton, YHWH (יהוה), *yhwh*).
- The phrase was meant to convey the eternity, self-existence, and changelessness that belong to God alone.
- **Greek:** (The Septuagint) renders the opening of the phrase in Exod 3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμι (*egō eimi*)

Miller, J. E. (2016). [I Am Sayings](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

- A title for God elsewhere in the Old Testament. I.E.:

Isaiah:

43:10

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He.

Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me.

43:25

“I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.



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45:18

For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is God!), who formed the earth and made it (He established it; He did not create it empty, He formed it to be inhabited!): “I am the Lord, and there is no other.

D.) Incommunicable Attributes:

Omnipresent – All Present **Psalm 139:7-16**

*Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,”
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

*13 For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.^[a]
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

Omnipotent – All Powerful **Revelation 19:6**

*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,
“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.*

Omniscient - All Knowing **Psalm 33:13-15**

*13 The Lord looks down from heaven; He sees all the children of man;
14 from where He sits enthroned He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth,
15 He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.*

Immutable – Never Changing **Revelation 1:8**

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

- How God is different than us.
- Why we owe Him Glory, Honor, Praise.
- Why we should worship Him and Him alone.



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E.) What Happened in Heaven Prior to Genesis

1. Satan

Ezekiel 28:11-19 ESV

A Lament over the King of Tyre [Name for Satan]

¹¹ Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me: ¹² “Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God:

“You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created, they were prepared.

¹⁴ You were an anointed guardian cherub.

I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.

¹⁶ In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and I destroyed you [banish you], O guardian cherub,
from the midst of the stones of fire.

¹⁷ Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground;

[FUTURE]

I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.

¹⁸ By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your trade
you profaned your sanctuaries;
so I brought fire out from your midst;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.

¹⁹ All who know you among the peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever.”



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Isaiah 14:3-23 [Satan called King of Babylon]

³ When the Lord has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, ⁴ you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:

“How the oppressor has ceased, the insolent fury ceased!

⁵ The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers,⁶ that struck the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution.

⁷ The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing. ⁸ The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying,

‘Since you were laid low, no woodcutter comes up against us.’

⁹ Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.

¹⁰ All of them will answer and say to you:

‘You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!’

¹¹ Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your harps; maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers.

[Prophetic rendering of what happened:]

¹² *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!*

How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

¹³ *You said in your heart,*

*‘I will ascend to heaven; [I WILL INHABIT GOD’S TERRITORY]
above the stars of God*

I will set my throne on high; [I WILL HAVE GOD’S AUTHORITY]

I will sit on the mount of assembly

in the far reaches of the north; [I WILL RULE]

¹⁴ *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; [I WILL OVERSEE ALL/OMNIPRESENT]*

I will make myself like the Most High.’ [I WILL BE WORSHIPPED]

[I WILL = SELF AGGRANDIZEMENT] [NOTE: Jesus’ “I AM” statements in JOHN]

Vs. 15-20 reveal that God has the last word as He makes five responses:

1. You will be thrown into Hell.
2. Be gazed upon (made a spectacle).
3. Be talked about (mocked, scorned).
4. Be cast out of your grave like a carcass.
5. Be alone.

¹⁵ *But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.*

¹⁶ *Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you:*

‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,¹⁷ who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?’

¹⁸ *All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb; ¹⁹ but you are cast out, away from your grave, like a loathed branch, clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a dead body trampled underfoot.*

²⁰ *You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have slain your people.*



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“May the offspring of evildoers nevermore be named!

²¹ *Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their fathers, lest they rise and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities.”*

²² *“I will rise up against them,” declares the Lord of hosts, “and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity,” declares the Lord. ²³ “And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog[porcupine or owl], and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,” declares the Lord of hosts.*

2. Satan and his demons

Revelation 12:7-9 Satan Thrown Down to Earth

⁷ *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back,⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

II. Here On Earth:

Ephesians 3:10-13 ESV

¹⁰ *so that through the church the manifold ^{variegated many sided,} wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.*

A. Jesus’ statement regarding the ministry of the 72 [Authority Delegated]

Luke 10:18 (return of the 72)

He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

B. ANGELS

- Guardian Angels

Matthew 18:10

¹⁰ *“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.*

Psalms 91:11

For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

Hebrews 1:13-14 ESV

¹³ *And to which of the angels has He ever said,*

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

¹⁴ *Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*

- ANGELS Handout



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Ephesians 6:12 ESV

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(Our struggle is against what?)

C. Satan and Demons

Not Omnipresent – All Present

Not Omnipotent – All Powerful

Not Omniscient - All Knowing

○ **We Have An Enemy - Satan:**

“the tempter” (1 Thess. 3:5)

“Beelzebub” (Matt. 12:24)

“the wicked one” (Matt. 13:19, 38)

“the ruler of this world” (John 12:31)

“the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4)

“Belial” (2 Cor. 6:15)

“the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2)

“the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10)

○ **Enemy Tactics**

John 10:10

“The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Luke 22:31

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,

○ **Enemy Initiatives**

Revelation 12:3-4 [Christmas with a twist]

³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. {Control heaven; Kill Christ}

○ **Biblical Definitions of Demonology: (in handout)**

Informed by divination, Genesis 30:27.

Protected by blessing, Numbers 22:12.

God’s use of demons, 1 Samuel 16:15.

“Evil spirit from God,” 1 Samuel 16:16

Exorcism, Acts 19:11–13.

Demon use of bodies, Matthew 8:28–33;

Mark 5:1–5.

Jesus accused of demonism, Matthew 9:32–34; 12:22–32; John 8:48–52.

Depraved spirits, Matthew 10:1 (Berk.).

Authority over evil, Matthew 10:1–8;

Romans 8:37–39; Colossians 2:15; Jude 9.

Shrieking demons, Mark 3:11 (LB).

Satan versus Satan, Mark 3:20–26.



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Name of demon, Mark 5:8–9 (GNB).
Demon rebuked, Mark 9:25.
Demons recognized Jesus, Luke 4:33–36, 41.
Mary Magdalene’s seven demons, Luke 8:2.
Multiple demon possession, Luke 8:30.
Demon confronted Jesus, Luke 9:37–43.
Mute demon, Luke 11:14.
Crippled by demon, Luke 13:10–16.
Controlled by Satan, Luke 22:3; John 13:27; 1 Timothy 5:15.
Jesus accused of demon possession, John 10:19–21.
Tormented by demons, delivered, Acts 5:16.
Contending sorcerer, Acts 13:6–8.
Reverence to demons, Acts 17:22 (AB).
Demons cause physical harm, Acts 19:13–16.
Pagan idols, 1 Corinthians 10:20.
False angels, 2 Corinthians 11:14–15.
Enslaved by demons, Galatians 4:8–9 (NRSV).
“Cosmic powers,” Ephesians 6:12 (NRSV).
Satanic cause of anger, Ephesians 4:26–27.
Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10–18.
Cosmic powers, Ephesians 6:12 (Berk.).
Rescue from darkness, Colossians 1:13–14.
Hindered by Satan, 1 Thessalonians 2:18.
Possessed by Satan, 1 Timothy 1:18–20.
Demon theology, 1 Timothy 4:1–4 .
Deceived widows, 1 Timothy 5:11–15.
Satan’s trap, 2 Timothy 2:25–26.
Resisting Satan, James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8–9.
Testing false spirits, 1 John 4:1–6.
Angels versus demons, Revelation 12:7–9.
Global control, 1 John 5:19; Revelation 16:13–14.
Demon residence, Revelation 18:2.¹

○ We Are Living In His World

1 John 5: 19

“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

2 Corinthians 11: 14

“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”

John 12:31 (Jesus speaking with the Greeks)

“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”

2 Corinthians 4:4

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

1 John 2:1 But we have an *Advocate, Jesus Christ

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

○ End of Satan and his demons

Revelation 20:10

and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹ Anderson, K. (1996). *Where to Find It in the Bible*. T. Nelson Publishers.

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III. Now What?

- Live In The Power of Obedience as The Church

1 John 4:4

⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Ephesians 3:10-12

To the intent that now the ^{variegated many sided,} **manifold** wisdom of God might be made known **by the church** to the ^[rulers] principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

Revelation 12:11a

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Satan and his host oppose the knowledge of God
For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, **HOW?**

Romans 8:37-39

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Next Week: The Weapon of....**INTERCESSION**

Closing prayer: **Ephesians 3:20-21**

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Doctrine #4

THE FALL OF MANKIND:

{Student Manuel pages 10-11 }

- The Example of ADAM&EVE: An Overview

Gen. 1:26-27

*“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over...all the earth
27*

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male & female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Vs. 31a And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

Gen 2:15-16

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** it and **take care** of it.*

- ❖ Work: abad (aw-bad') to work, implied to serve, enslave, bond servant, compel, husbandman, keep, labor, bring to pass, servant, service, be wrought, worshipper.
- ❖ Take care: shamar (shaw-mar') to hedge about as with thorns, beware, be circumspect, **guard**, **protect**, attend to, take heed, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, save, sure wait, watch.

Vs 16

“And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

As we read Genesis 3, ask yourself these questions:

- 1.) Why was the enemy in the garden to begin with?
- 2.) Had Adam forsaken his duties?
- 3.) Is Eve daft?
- 4.) How could she fall for such an illusion?
- 5.) She was not there when God forbade. Did she resent this?

Genesis 3:1-15 The Fall

¹ *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.*

Step #1: Dons a disguise (angel of light) that the woman would find acceptable

He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Step #2: Outwits the inexperienced woman through confusion & distortion.

Did He really say? Do you think that is what He really meant?

QUESTIONING God's **WORD**.

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² *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "*

⁴ *"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.*

Step #3: Satan redefines God to Eve.

He cast doubt on God's plan/order/instructions. QUESTIONING God's **MOTIVES**, eventually God's **CHARACTER**.

(A process he personally knows, he is seeking to distort her image of God.

"He would not want you to do without.")

⁵ *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Step #4: He **RECONSTRUCTS** God's directives. ("You will not surely die! You will become....

Step #5: He **ELEVATED** the role of humanity to be like God.

(Which was his sin = **self aggrandizement**) ("You will become LIKE HIM!")

⁶ *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, **who was with her**, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

⁸ *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

¹⁰ *He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

¹¹ *And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"*

¹² *The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."*

¹³ *Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"*

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ *So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity*

between you and the woman, and between your offspring ^[a] and hers; he will crush ^[b] your head, and you will strike his heel."

Footnotes: a. [Genesis 3:15](#) Or seed b. [Genesis 3:15](#) Or strike

Appeals to our flesh, our human nature

1 John 2:16 (Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life)

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

IV. We Are Living In His World

Matthew 4:1-11 The Temptation of Christ...the difference between our response & His.

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¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted ^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him

Step #1: Dons a disguise (angel of light)...would not work as Jesus knew the enemy.

and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Step #2: Attempts confusion & distortion.

Did He really say? Do you think that is what He really meant? **"IF you are"**
QUESTIONING God's WORD. {How does the enemy Question God's WORD?}

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'People do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' ^[b]"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

" 'He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' ^[c]"

Step #3: How does he question's God's MOTIVES and CHARACTER(Vs.6)?

{Satan is attempting to cast doubt on God's plan/order/instructions. "If he really cared for you, }

Step #4: How does he **RECONSTRUCTS** God's directives. { He would not want you to get hurt or experience pain. **Death on the cross would not be something He would ask of you.**} (Genesis: "You will not surely die! You will become....)

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' ^[d]"

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Step #5: How did he **ELEVATE** himself to be like God (Vs. 9)?

(Self aggrandizement) {"I will give you...}

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' ^[e]" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Footnotes: a. [Matthew 4:1](#) The Greek for tempted can also mean tested. B. [Matthew 4:4](#) Deut. 8:3 c. [Matthew 4:6](#) Psalm 91:11,12 d. [Matthew 4:7](#) Deut. 6:16 e. [Matthew 4:10](#) Deut. 6:13

Stop here for MAG MM(Need to cruise)

FALL OF MAN & THE ANSWER TO THE FALL

Romans 5:12-19

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Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Mankind was created for:

- Fellowship with God.
- We were created with Free Will.
- Choice was made. Ignored God's instruction.
- Choosing to purposefully engage in what we know is wrong and evil.
- Death of innocence = Spiritual death as well.
- WE ALL EXPERIENCE THIS! WE ALL USE OUR FREE WILL TO PUT OUR OWN DESIRES FIRST.

10:18 This was not a vision in which Jesus **saw Satan** cast out of **heaven**; rather, He saw in their ministry the present and ultimate defeat of Satan.²

14:12 Fallen from heaven is a figure of speech meaning cast down from an exalted political position. Jesus said, "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades" (Luke 10:15), and apparently with the same meaning, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). The name for **Lucifer** in Hebrew literally means "Day Star," or the planet Venus. The poetic language of this verse describes the aspiration of this brightest star to climb to the zenith of the heavens and its extinction before the rising sun. This is an apt summary of the failed goal of the king of Babylon (v. 4) who wanted to grasp universal and eternal domination. Tertullian, Milton, and others have linked this passage to the career of Satan on the basis of Luke 10:18, but the text does not specifically make this connection.³

Is There Activity of Demonic Spirits in the World Today?

Ghosts, hauntings, séances, tarot cards, Ouija boards, crystal balls—what do they have in common? They are fascinating to many people because they seem to offer insight into an unknown world that lies beyond the limits of our physical existence. And, to many, such things seem innocent and harmless.

Many who approach these subjects from non-biblical perspectives believe that ghosts are the spirits of dead people who, for whatever reason, have not gone on to the "next stage." According to those who believe in ghosts, there are three different kinds of hauntings: (1) residual hauntings (likened to video playbacks with no actual interaction with any spirits). (2) Hauntings by human spirits, whose natures are a combination of good and bad (but not evil). Such spirits may simply want to get a person's attention; others may be pranksters, but, in either case, they do not truly harm people. (3) Interaction with non-human spirits or demons. These entities can masquerade as human spirits, but they are harmful and dangerous.

When reading about ghosts and hauntings from non-biblical sources, remember that, just because an author may refer to the Bible or to Bible characters (such as Michael the archangel), it does not mean he approaches the subject from a biblical

² Hayford, J. W., ed. (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Lk 10:18). Thomas Nelson.

³ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Is 14:12). T. Nelson Publishers.

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perspective. When no authority is given for an author's information, the reader has to ask himself, "How does he/she know this to be so? What is his/her authority?" For example, how does an author know that demons masquerade as human spirits? Ultimately, those who address such subjects from non-biblical sources must base their understanding on their own thoughts, the thoughts of others, and/or the experiences of the past. However, based on their own admission that demons are deceiving and can imitate benevolent human spirits, experiences can be deceiving! If one is to have a right understanding on this subject, he must go to a source that has shown itself to be accurate 100 percent of the time—God's Word, the Bible. Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about such things.

1. The Bible never speaks of hauntings. Rather, it teaches that when a person dies, the spirit of that person goes to one of two places. If the person is a believer in Jesus Christ, his spirit is ushered into the presence of the Lord in heaven (Philippians 1:21–23; 2 Corinthians 5:8). Later, he will be reunited with his body at the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). If the person is not a believer in Christ, his spirit is put in a place of torment called hell (Luke 16:23–24).

Whether a person is a believer or an unbeliever, there is no returning to our world to communicate or interact with people, even for the purpose of warning people to flee from the judgment to come (Luke 16:27–31). There are only two recorded incidents in which a dead person interacted with the living. The first is when King Saul of Israel tried contacting the deceased prophet Samuel through a medium. God allowed Samuel to be disturbed long enough to pronounce judgment upon Saul for his repeated disobedience (1 Samuel 28:6–19). The second incident is when Moses and Elijah interacted with Jesus when he was transfigured in Matthew 17:1–8. There was nothing "ghostly" about the appearance of Moses and Elijah, however.

2. Scripture speaks repeatedly of angels moving about unseen (Daniel 10:1–21). Sometimes, these angels have interaction with living people. Evil spirits, or demons, can actually possess people, dwelling within them and controlling them (see Mark 5:1–20, for example). The four Gospels and the Book of Acts record several instances of demon possession and of good angels appearing to and aiding believers. Angels, both good and bad, can cause supernatural phenomena to occur (Job 1–2; Revelation 7:1; 8:5; 15:1; 16).

3. Scripture shows that demons know things of which people are unaware (Acts 16:16–18; Luke 4:41). Because these evil angels have been around a long time, they would naturally know things that those living limited life spans would not. Because Satan currently has access to God's presence (Job 1–2), demons might also be allowed to know some specifics about the future, but this is speculation.

4. Scripture says Satan is the father of lies and a deceiver (John 8:44; 2 Thessalonians 2:9) and that he disguises himself as an "angel of light." Those who follow him, human or otherwise, practice the same deceit (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

5. Satan and demons have great power (compared to humans). Even Michael the archangel trusts only God's power when dealing with Satan (Jude 1:9). But Satan's power is nothing compared to God's (Acts 19:11–12; Mark 5:1–20), and God is able to use Satan's evil intent to bring about His good purposes (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 12:7).

6. God commands us to have nothing to do with the occult, devil worship, or the unclean spirit world. This would include the use of mediums, séances, Ouija boards, horoscopes, tarot cards, channeling, etc. God considers these practices an abomination (Deuteronomy 18:9–12; Isaiah 8:19–20; Galatians 5:20; Revelation 21:8), and those who involve themselves in such things invite disaster (Acts 19:13–16).

7. The Ephesian believers set an example in dealing with occult items (books, music, jewelry, games, etc.). They confessed their involvement with such as sin and burned the items publicly (Acts 19:17–19).

8. Release from Satan's power is achieved through God's salvation. Salvation comes through believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:18; 26:16–18). Attempts to disentangle oneself from demonic involvement without salvation are futile. Jesus warned of a heart devoid of the Holy Spirit's presence: such a heart is merely an empty dwelling place ready for even worse demons to inhabit (Luke 11:24–26). But when a person comes to Christ for the forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit comes to abide until the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

Some paranormal activity can be attributed to the work of charlatans. It would seem best to understand other reports of ghosts and hauntings as the work of demons. Sometimes these demons may make no attempt to conceal their nature, and at other times they may use deception, appearing as disembodied human spirits. Such deception leads to more lies and confusion.

God states it is foolish to consult the dead on behalf of the living. Rather, He says, "To the law and to the testimony!" (Isaiah 8:19–20). The Word of God is our source of wisdom. Believers in Jesus Christ should not be involved in the occult. The spirit world is real, but Christians do not need to fear it (1 John 4:4).

What are the different types of angels?

Angels fall into two categories: the "unfallen" angels and the fallen angels. Unfallen angels are those who have remained holy throughout their existence and accordingly are called "holy angels" (Matthew 25:31). In Scripture, generally when angels are mentioned, it is the class of holy angels in view. By contrast, the fallen angels are those who have not maintained their holiness. Holy angels fall into special classes, and certain individuals are named and mentioned. Michael the archangel is likely the head of all the holy angels, and his name means "who is like unto God?" (Daniel 10:21; 12:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7–10). Gabriel is one of the principal messengers of God, his name meaning "hero of God," and was entrusted with important messages such as those delivered to Daniel (Daniel 8:16; 9:21), to Zacharias (Luke 1:18–19), and to Mary (Luke 1:26–38).

Most holy angels are not given names but are described only as "elect angels" (1 Timothy 5:21). The expressions "principalities" and "powers" seem to be used of all angels whether fallen or holy (Luke 21:26; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; Colossians

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1:16; 2:10, 15; 1 Peter 3:22). Some angels are designated as “cherubim,” which are living creatures who defend God’s holiness from any defilement of sin (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18, 20; Ezekiel 1:1–18). “Seraphim” are another class of angels mentioned only once in Scripture in Isaiah 6:2–7 and are described as having three pairs of wings. They apparently have the function of praising God, being God’s messengers to Earth, and are especially concerned with the holiness of God. Most of the references to holy angels in Scripture refer to their ministries which cover a wide field of achievement. They were present at creation, the giving of the Law, at the birth of Christ and at His resurrection, at the Ascension, and they will be present at the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.

In stark contrast to the company of holy angels, the fallen angels are also innumerable and are described as fallen from their first estate. Led by Satan, who was originally a holy angel, the fallen angels defected, rebelled against God, and became sinful in their nature and work. Fallen angels have been divided into two classes: those who are free and those who are bound. Of the fallen angels, Satan alone is given particular mention in the Bible. When Satan fell (John 8:44; Luke 10:18), he drew after him one third of the angels. Of those, some are reserved in chains awaiting judgment (1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), and the remainder are free and are the demons, or devils, to whom reference is constantly made throughout the New Testament (Mark 5:9, 15; Luke 8:30, 1 Timothy 4:1). They are Satan’s servants in all his undertakings and share his doom (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

What Do Angels Look Like?

Angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:14), so they do not have any essential physical form. But angels do have the ability to appear in human form. When angels appeared to humans in the Bible, they resembled normal males. In Genesis 18:1–19, God and two angels appeared as men and actually ate a meal with Abraham. Angels appear as men many times throughout the Bible (Joshua 5:13–14; Mark 16:5), and they never appear in the likeness of women.

Other times, angels appeared not as humans, but as something other-worldly, and their appearance was terrifying to those who encountered them. Often, the first words from these angels were “do not be afraid,” because extreme fear was such a common reaction. The keepers of Jesus’ tomb became as dead men when they saw the angel of the Lord (Matthew 28:4). The shepherds in the fields in Luke 2 were “sore afraid” when the angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

As for physical characteristics, angels are sometimes described as winged. The images of cherubim on the ark of the covenant had wings that covered the mercy seat (Exodus 25:20). Isaiah saw winged seraphim in his vision of the throne of heaven, each one having six wings (Isaiah 6:2). Ezekiel, too, saw visions of winged angels. Isaiah 6:1–2 depicts angels having human features—voices, faces and feet. Angel voices are heard singing and praising God in several other passages. One of the most complete descriptions of an angel is in Daniel 10:5–6: “I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.” The angel at Jesus’ tomb was similarly described: “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow” (Matthew 28:3).

Whatever appearance angels take on, there is reason to believe they are incredibly beautiful. Ezekiel tells us that Lucifer was “lifted up” in pride over his beauty. In addition, beings such as angels, who are continually in the presence of God, would be expected to have extraordinary beauty because God’s glory is reflected upon all that is around Him.

What does the Bible say about angels?

Angels are personal spiritual beings who have intelligence, emotions, and will. This is true of both the good and evil angels (demons). Angels possess intelligence (Matthew 8:29; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Peter 1:12), show emotion (Luke 2:13; James 2:19; Revelation 12:17), and exercise will (Luke 8:28–31; 2 Timothy 2:26; Jude 6). Angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:14) without true physical bodies. Although they do not have physical bodies, they are still personalities.

Because they are created beings, their knowledge is limited. This means they do not know all things as God does (Matthew 24:36). They do seem to have greater knowledge than humans, however, which may be due to three things. First, angels were created as an order of creatures higher than humans. Therefore, they innately possess greater knowledge. Second, angels study the Bible and the world more thoroughly than humans do and gain knowledge from it (James 2:19; Revelation 12:12). Third, angels gain knowledge through long observation of human activities. Unlike humans, angels do not have to study the past; they have experienced it. Therefore, they know how others have acted and reacted in situations and can predict with a greater degree of accuracy how we may act in similar circumstances.

Though they have wills, angels, like all creatures, are subject to the will of God. Good angels are sent by God to help believers (Hebrews 1:14). Here are some activities the Bible ascribes to angels:

They praise God (Psalm 148:1–2; Isaiah 6:3). They worship God (Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8–13). They rejoice in what God does (Job 38:6–7). They serve God (Psalm 103:20; Revelation 22:9). They appear before God (Job 1:6; 2:1). They are instruments of God’s judgments (Revelation 7:1; 8:2). They bring answers to prayer (Acts 12:5–10). They aid in winning people to Christ (Acts 8:26; 10:3). They observe Christian order, work, and suffering (1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12). They encourage in times of danger (Acts 27:23–24). They care for the righteous at the time of death (Luke 16:22).

Angels are an entirely different order of being than humans. Human beings do not become angels after they die. Angels will never become, and never were, human beings. God created the angels, just as He created humanity. The Bible nowhere states that angels are created in the image and likeness of God, as humans are (Genesis 1:26). Angels are spiritual beings that can, to a certain degree, take on physical form. Humans are primarily physical beings, but with a spiritual aspect. The greatest thing we can learn from the holy angels is their instant, unquestioning obedience to God’s commands.

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When did God create the angels?

Trying to determine when God created the angels is somewhat tricky because anything God did “before the foundation of the world” puts the event outside of time itself. Time and space are characteristics of our world, not God’s. He is not limited by hours, days and years as we are. In fact, the Bible tells us that “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Peter 3:8).

We do know that God created the angels before he created the physical universe. The book of Job describes the angels worshipping God as He was creating the world: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4–7).

If we consider the function of angels, we might conclude that God created the angels just prior to the creation of mankind because one of their duties is to be “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). We also know they existed prior to the Garden of Eden, because Satan, who was formerly the angel Lucifer, was already present in the Garden in his fallen state. However, because another function of angels is to worship God around His throne (Revelation 5:11–14), they may have been in existence millions of years—as we reckon time—before God created the world, worshipping Him and serving Him. So, although the Bible does not specifically say when God created the angels, it was sometime before the world was created. Whether this was a day before, or billions of years before—again, as we reckon time—we cannot be sure.

What does the Bible say about demons?

Revelation 12:9 is the clearest scripture on the identity of demons, “The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” Satan’s fall from heaven is symbolically described in Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:12–15. Revelation 12:4 seems to indicate that Satan took one-third of the angels with him when he sinned. Jude 6 mentions angels who sinned. The Bible indicates that the demons are fallen angels who, along with Satan, rebelled against God.

Satan and his demons now look to destroy and deceive all those who follow and worship God (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14–15). The demons are described as evil spirits (Matthew 10:1), unclean spirits (Mark 1:27), and angels of Satan (Revelation 12:9). Satan and his demons deceive the world (2 Corinthians 4:4), attack Christians (2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 5:8), and combat the holy angels (Revelation 12:4–9). Demons are spiritual beings, but they can appear in physical forms (2 Corinthians 11:14–15). The demons/fallen angels are enemies of God, but they are defeated enemies. Greater is He who is in us, than those who are in the world (1 John 4:4).

Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Logos Bible Software.

NOTES

OMNIPOTENCE

All-powerful Lord, 1 Samuel 1:3 (CEV); Isaiah 5:16 (CEV).

No dwelling large enough for God, 1 Kings 8:27.

Mover of mountains, Job 9:5.

Beyond highest stars, Job 22:12.

In awe of God, Job 25:1–2; 26:14.

Sure of God’s plan, purpose, Job 42:2.

Exalting God above heavens, Psalm 57:5.

Divine versatility, Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 43:13; Matthew 19:26.

Unlimited omnipotence, Psalm 135:6.

Source of everlasting strength, Isaiah 26:4.

Heavens and hand of God, Isaiah 40:12.

One who never wearies, Isaiah 40:28.

God nearby, Jeremiah 23:23–24.

Immeasurable grace of God, Jeremiah 31:37.

Nothing too hard for the Lord, Jeremiah 32:17, 27.

All things possible with God, Matthew 19:26.

Resurrection power innate with God, Acts 26:8.

All power, Romans 4:17–24.

Unsearchable riches, Romans 11:33–36.

None greater than God, Hebrews 6:13 (CEV).

Scope of God’s greatness in Christ, Jude 24–25.

Sovereignty of Jesus over earth, Revelation 1:5.

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Reign of omnipotent God, Revelation 19:6.
See Sovereignty.

OMNIPRESENCE

Undetected presence of the Lord, Genesis 28:16.
Omnipresent in Heaven, on earth, Deuteronomy 4:39; Isaiah 66:1.
Scope of God's presence, 1 Kings 8:27.
Omnipresent Lord, Psalm 139:5–12; Jeremiah 23:23, 24.
Divine periphery of vision, Proverbs 15:3.
One always nearby, Acts 17:27.
The One who fills the universe, Ephesians 4:10.
See Holy Spirit, Trinity.

OMNISCIENCE

Sodom survey, Genesis 18:20–21.
God sees every action, Job 31:4; 34:21.
God sees all, Psalm 33:13.
Unlimited understanding, Psalm 147:5.
Omniscience of God, Isaiah 40:13, 14.
Sparrows known, hair numbered, Matthew 10:28–30.
Greater wisdom than Solomon's, Matthew 12:42.
Earthly knowledge of Jesus, Matthew 14:13.
Time of Christ's coming held secret, Matthew 24:36.
Knowledge of all mankind, John 2:24.
Validity of Christ's diety, John 16:30.
Limiting wisdom of God, 1 Corinthians 1:25.
The Lord's mind, 1 Corinthians 2:16.⁴

I AM SAYINGS (ἐγώ εἰμί, *egō eimi*). Examines New Testament passages in which Jesus uses the Greek expression "I am" in relation to His divinity. This usage is especially prominent in the Gospel of John.

Since εἰμί (*eimi*) alone can be translated "I am," the presence of ἐγώ (*egō*) serves to add emphasis—"I, yes I, am." Jesus uses this expression in two primary ways, both of which echo the Old Testament description of Yahweh:

1. in a simple predicate construction, such as "I am the good shepherd";
2. in the absolute sense, without a predicative expression, so that it is rendered simply as "I am."

"I Am" in Exodus 3:14

The phrase "I am" reflects Exod 3:14, in which God introduces Himself to Moses with an expression usually translated "I am who I am." The personal name of God reflected in the tetragrammaton, YHWH (יהוה, *yhwh*), relates to this Hebrew construction. The phrase was meant to convey the eternity, self-existence, and changelessness that belong to God alone.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, renders the opening of the phrase in Exod 3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμί (*egō eimi*), which amounts to a title for God elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 43:10, 25; 45:18; 46:4; 51:12; 52:6).

Christological Implications

Jesus' use of ἐγώ εἰμί (*egō eimi*) in the absolute sense ("I am") draws on Exod 3:14 and other Old Testament passages where the phrase clearly refers to God. In using the expression, Jesus seems to be explicitly identifying Himself with Yahweh, asserting His eternity, self-existence, and changelessness, and claiming to bear Yahweh's presence on Earth. Jesus employs this absolute sense of ἐγώ εἰμί (*egō eimi*) in the Gospels, particularly in the Gospel of John (Matt 14:27; Mark 6:50; 14:62; Luke 22:70; John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:6). The consistent use of

⁴ Anderson, K. (1996). [*Where to Find It in the Bible*](#). T. Nelson Publishers.

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the present-tense “I am”—rather than the past-tense “I was”—suggests that the phrase has changelessness in view. Many translations supply the word “he” (“I am he”) to avoid an awkward ending to the phrase; however, this term is not present in the Greek text.

In passages where Jesus makes an “I am” statement, the negative reaction of His opponents reinforces the view that the phrase amounts to a claim to deity. For example, John 18:6 records that those who came to arrest Jesus “drew back and fell to the ground” when He identified Himself with the words “I am.” John may be presenting this event as a theophany, since the people react as though God’s presence were manifested before them. When Jesus describes Himself as “I am” in John 8:58, the Jews attempt to stone Him because they interpret His words as a blasphemous claim to deity. According to Guthrie, “there seems little doubt, therefore, that the statement of 8:58 is intended to convey in an extraordinary way such exclusively divine qualities as changelessness and pre-existence” (Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*).

In addition to the Gospels, Revelation records Jesus using the phrase “I am” (in the simple predicate construction, rather than the absolute sense). In Revelation 2:23 Jesus says, “I am the one who searches the minds and the hearts”; in Rev 22:16 He says, “I am the root and the descendent of David” (Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*).

“I Am” Sayings in John’s Gospel

Jesus uses the phrase “I am” to describe Himself with seven metaphors in the Gospel of John. These simple predicate constructions provide insights into Jesus’ view of Himself:

- “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 48; see also 6:41, 51);
- “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5);
- “I am the door” (10:7, 9);
- “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14);
- “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25);
- “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (14:6);
- “I am the true vine” (15:1; see also 15:5).

Jesus selectively connects some of these claims to the seven signs recorded in John’s Gospel. For example, shortly after He feeds the 5,000 (6:5–14), He claims to be the “bread of life” (6:35). Just prior to healing the man born blind (9:6–7), Jesus calls Himself the “light of the world” (9:5). Immediately before raising Lazarus from the dead (11:43–44), Jesus claimed to be “the resurrection and the life” (11:25).

Selected Resources for Further Study

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998.

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1981.

Manson, William. “The Ego Eimi of the Messianic Presence in the New Testament.” In *Jesus and the Christian*. London: James Clark, 1967.

JEFFREY E. MILLER⁵

c. *The church is central to Christian living.* [WE LIVE AS ONE, AS ‘US’]

It is noteworthy that Paul concludes this section as he began it (verse 1), namely with a reference to his own sufferings in the Gentile cause. He addresses to them the following exhortation: ***So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory*** (verse 13). **Now ‘suffering’ and ‘glory’ are constantly coupled in the New Testament. Jesus said that he would enter his glory through suffering, and that his followers would have to tread the same path.** Here, however, Paul writes something different, namely that *his* sufferings will bring *them* (his Gentile readers) glory. He is suffering in prison on their behalf, as their champion, standing firm for their inclusion in God’s new society. So convinced is he of the divine origin of his vision that he is prepared to pay any price to see it become a reality. That is the measure of Paul’s concern for the church.

⁵ Miller, J. E. (2016). [I Am Sayings](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

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Now of course it may be argued that Paul was exceptional. He was after all the apostle to the Gentiles. He had received a special revelation and a special commission. So one would expect him to have to suffer for the church. Nevertheless, the principle is applicable to all Christians. **If the church is central to God's purpose, as seen in both history and the gospel, it must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously?** How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed at the centre? No, we shall seek to become responsible church members, active in some local manifestation of the universal church. We shall not be able to acquiesce in low standards which fall far short of the New Testament ideals for God's new society, whether mechanical, meaningless worship services, or fellowship which is icy cold and even spoiled by rivalries which make the Lord's Supper a farce, or such inward-looking isolationism as to turn the church into a ghetto which is indifferent to the outside world and its pain. If instead (like Paul) we keep before us the vision of God's new society as his family, his dwelling place and his instrument in the world, then we shall constantly be seeking to make our church's worship more authentic, its fellowship more caring and its outreach more compassionate. In other words (like Paul again), we shall be ready to pray, to work and if necessary to suffer in order to turn the vision into a reality.

6. Confidence in God's power [INTERCESSION]

[Paul's 2nd prayer already in Ephesians...1:16-23]

3:14-21

One of the best ways to discover a Christian's chief anxieties and ambitions is to study the content of his prayers and the intensity with which he prays them. **We all pray about what concerns us,**

[WHAT DOES MY PRAYER LIFE SAY ABOUT ME?]

and are evidently not concerned about matters we do not include in our prayers. Prayer expresses desire. For example, when Paul prayed for the salvation of his Israelite kinsfolk, he wrote of his 'heart's desire and prayer to God for them'. As the hymn puts it, 'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed.'

This is certainly true of this second prayer of Paul's in Ephesians in which he pours out his soul to God. He has been explaining both Christ's peace-making work, which resulted in the creation of the new society, and his personal involvement in this because of the special revelation and commission he had received. **Now he turns from exposition to intercession.** He prays that God's wonderful plan which he has been elaborating may be even more completely fulfilled in his readers' experience. Prayer and preaching should always go together. As Jesus watered with prayer the good seeds of instruction he had sown in the Upper Room, so Paul follows up his teaching with earnest prayer, and by recording it enables us to overhear him. As Bishop Handley Moule put it: 'Who has not read and re-read the closing verses of the third chapter of the Ephesians with the feeling of one permitted to look through parted curtains into the Holiest Place of the Christian life?'³

1. The introduction to his prayer (verses 14-16a)

The apostle begins *For this reason ...*, resuming his train of thought where he had left it in verse 1. What 'reason' is in his mind? **What is it that moves him to pray? Surely it is both the reconciling work of Christ and his own understanding of it by special revelation?** These are the convictions which undergird his prayer. This being so, an important principle of prayer emerges. **The basis of Paul's prayer was his knowledge of God's purpose.** It was because of what God had done in Christ and revealed to Paul that he had the necessary warrant to pray. **For the indispensable prelude to all petition is the revelation of God's will. We have no authority to pray for anything which God has not revealed to be his will.** That is why Bible reading and prayer should always go together. For it is in Scripture that God has disclosed his will, and it is in prayer that we ask him to do it.

Paul goes on: *I bow my knees.* The normal posture for prayer among the Jews was standing. In Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the Publican both men stood to pray (Lk. 18:11, 13). So kneeling was unusual. It indicated an exceptional degree of earnestness, as when Ezra confessed Israel's sins of penitence, Jesus fell on his face to the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Stephen faced the ordeal of martyrdom. Scripture lays down no rule about the posture we should adopt when we pray. It is possible to pray kneeling, standing, sitting, walking and even lying, although we may feel inclined to agree with William Hendriksen that 'the slouching position of the body while one is supposed to be praying is an abomination to the Lord'.⁶

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I bow my knees before the Father. Already the apostle has called God ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ and therefore because we are in Christ ‘our Father’, from whom all blessings flow. He has also declared that Jews and Gentiles are fellow members of the Father’s family, who enjoy equal access to their Father in prayer.⁸ Here he goes on to affirm that from this Father, before whom he kneels in reverent humility, **every family in heaven and on earth is named.** At least, this is the RSV and NEB translation, and **pasa patria** may quite properly be rendered ‘every family’. Yet there is something inherently inappropriate about this reference to a multiplicity of families, since the dominant theme of these chapters is that through Christ the ‘one God and Father of us all’ (4:6) has only one family or household to which Jewish and Gentile believers equally belong. It seems better, therefore, to translate **pasa patria** ‘the whole family’ (AV), ‘his whole family’ (NEB margin) or ‘the whole family of believers’ (NIV). Then the addition of the words *in heaven and on earth* will indicate that the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven, though separated by death, are nevertheless only two parts of the one great family of God.

At the same time, there is a deliberate play on words in the Greek sentence, since ‘father’ is *patēr* and ‘family’ is *patria*. In consequence, some translators have tried to preserve the verbal assonance in English, and have rendered the phrase ‘the Father from whom all fatherhood ... derives its name’ (JBP, NIV margin). Commentators point out that the word *patria* does not normally mean ‘fatherhood’, but rather ‘family’. Nevertheless, it is a family descended from the same father, and so the concept of fatherhood is implied and ‘the abstract idea of *paternity* seems uppermost here’. It may be, then, that Paul is saying not only that the whole Christian family is named from the Father, but that the very notion of fatherhood is derived from the Fatherhood of God. In this case, the true relation between human fatherhood and the divine fatherhood is neither one of analogy (‘God is a father like human fathers’), nor one of projection (Freud’s theory that we have invented God because we needed a heavenly father figure), but rather one of derivation (God’s fatherhood being the archetypal reality, ‘the source of all conceivable fatherhood’).¹

To this Father Paul prays that he will give his readers certain gifts *according to the riches of his glory*. Both ‘riches’ and ‘glory’ are characteristic words of this letter, and here as in 1:18 are in combination. **Paul has no doubt either that God has inexhaustible resources at his disposal or that out of them he will be able to answer his prayer.**

[DO I?]

2. The substance of his prayer (verses 16b–19)

I like to think of the apostle’s petition as a staircase by which he climbs higher and higher in his aspiration for his readers. His prayer-staircase has four steps, whose key words are ‘**strength**’, ‘**love**’, ‘**knowledge**’ and ‘**fullness**’.

[WHAT IS A LIFE WITH THESE FOUR IN IT LOOK LIKE? DO? EXHIBIT?]

More precisely, he prays first that they may be **strengthened by the indwelling of Christ through his Spirit**; secondly that they may be **rooted and grounded in love**; thirdly that they **may know Christ’s love in all its dimensions**, although it is beyond knowledge; and fourthly that they may be **filled right up to the very fullness of God**.

a. Strengthened with might

The prayer opens: *that ... he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith (verses 16–17a)*. These two petitions clearly belong together. Both refer to the Christian’s innermost being, his ‘inner man’ on the one hand and his ‘heart’ on the other. Then, although one specifies the strength of the *Spirit* and the other the indwelling of *Christ*, both surely refer to the same experience. For Paul never separates the second and third persons of the Trinity. To have Christ dwelling in us and to have the Spirit dwelling in us are the same thing. Indeed, it is precisely by the Spirit that Christ dwells in our hearts, and it is strength which he gives us when he dwells there. Moreover, the experience of ‘Christ in you’ was a part of the ‘mystery’ and so of the privilege of Gentile believers.³

Some are puzzled by this first petition when they remember that Paul is praying for Christians. ‘Surely’, they say, ‘Christ dwells by his Spirit within every believer? So how can Paul ask here that Christ may dwell in their hearts? Was Christ not already within them?’. To these questions we begin by replying that indeed every Christian is indwelt by Christ and is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless as Charles Hodge rightly comments, ‘The indwelling of Christ is a thing of degrees’.⁵ So also is the inward strengthening of the Holy Spirit. **What Paul asks for his readers is that**

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they may be **'fortified, braced, invigorated'**, that they may 'know the strength of the Spirit's inner reinforcement' (JBP), and may lay hold ever more firmly 'by faith' of this divine strength, this divine indwelling.

That this is Paul's meaning is further confirmed by his choice of word for the 'dwelling' of Christ in the heart. There are two similar Greek verbs, *paroikō* and *katoikeō*. The former is the weaker. It means to 'inhabit (a place) as a stranger' (AG), to live in fact as a *paroikos*, the very word Paul has used in 2:19 for an alien who is living away from his home. *Katoikeō*, on the other hand, means to settle down somewhere. It refers to a permanent as opposed to a temporary abode, and is used metaphorically both for the fullness of the Godhead abiding in Christ and for Christ's abiding in the believer's heart (here in verse 17). Bishop Handley Moule draws out the implications: 'The word selected (*katoikein*) ... is a word made expressly to denote residence as against lodging, the abode of a master within his own home as against the turning aside for a night of the wayfarer who will be gone tomorrow.' Again, it is 'the residence always in the heart of its Master and Lord, who where he dwells must rule; who enters not to cheer and soothe alone but before all things else to reign'. Thus Paul prays to the Father that Christ by his Spirit will be allowed to settle down in their hearts, and from his throne there both control and strengthen them. For the fourth time in the letter one is struck by the natural **trinitarian structure** of the apostle's thought.⁹

b. Rooted and grounded in love

If we had the opportunity to ask Paul for what purpose he prayed that Christ would control and strengthen his readers, I think he would reply that he wanted them **to be strengthened to love**.

[HAVE I EVER PRAYED TO BE STRENGTHENED TO LOVE?]

For in the new and reconciled humanity which Christ is creating love is the pre-eminent virtue. The new humanity is God's family, whose members are brothers and sisters, who love their Father and love each other. Or should do. They need the power of the Spirit's might and of Christ's indwelling to enable them to love each other, especially across the deep racial and cultural divide which previously had separated them.

To express how fundamental Paul longs for their love to be, he joins two metaphors (one botanical, the other architectural), both of which emphasize depth as opposed to superficiality. **These Christians are to be rooted and grounded, or to have 'deep roots and firm foundations'** (NEB). Thus Paul likens them first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases **the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love**. Love is to be the soil in which their life is to be rooted; love is to be the foundation on which their life is built. One might say that their love is to be of both a 'radical' and a 'fundamental' nature in their experience, for these English words refer to our roots and our foundations.

c. Knowing Christ's love

We observe that the apostle **now passes from our love (in which we are to be rooted and grounded) to Christ's love (which he prays we may know)**. Indeed, he acknowledges that we need strength or power for both, strength to love and power to comprehend Christ's love. **Certainly the two cannot be separated, and it is partly by loving that we learn the meaning of his love.** **A/DA**

Paul prays that we *may have power to comprehend* the love of Christ in its full dimensions—its *breadth and length and height and depth*. Modern commentators warn us not to be too literal in our interpretation of these, since the apostle may only have been indulging in a little rhetoric or poetic hyperbole. Yet it seems to me legitimate to say that the love of Christ is 'broad' enough to encompass all mankind (especially Jews and Gentiles, the theme of these chapters), 'long' enough to last for eternity, 'deep' enough to reach the most degraded sinner, and 'high' enough to exalt him to heaven. Or, as Leslie Mitton expresses it, finding a parallel to **Romans 8:37–39**: 'Whether you go forward or backward, up to the heights or down to the depths, nothing will separate us from the love of Christ.' Ancient commentators went further. They saw these dimensions illustrated on the cross. For its upright pole reached down into the earth and pointed up to heaven, while its crossbar carried the arms of Jesus, stretched out as if to invite and welcome the whole world. Armitage Robinson calls this a 'pretty fancy'.² Perhaps he is right and it is fanciful, yet what it affirms about the love of Christ is true.

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We shall have power to comprehend these dimensions of Christ's love, Paul adds, only *with all the saints*. The isolated Christian can indeed know something of the love of Jesus. But his grasp of it is bound to be limited by his limited experience. **It needs the whole people of God to understand the whole love of God, all the saints together,** Jews and Gentiles, men and women, young and old, black and white, with all their varied backgrounds and experiences.

Yet even then, although we may 'comprehend' its dimensions to some extent with our minds, we cannot 'know' it in our experience. It is too broad, long, deep and high even for all the saints together to grasp. **It surpasses knowledge.** Paul has already used this 'surpassing' word of God's power and grace;⁴ now he uses it of his love. Christ's love is as unknowable as his riches are unsearchable (verse 8). Doubtless we shall spend eternity exploring his inexhaustible riches of grace and love.

d. Filled up to God's fullness. [BE, BEING FILLED...EPHESIANS 6:18]

5:18 The tense of the Greek for **be filled** makes clear that such a Spirit-filled condition does not stop with a single experience, but is maintained by "continually being filled," as commanded here.⁶

Hayford, J. W., ed. (1997). [*Spirit filled life study Bible*](#) (electronic ed., Eph 5:18). Thomas Nelson.

¹⁸ *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, NKJV*

'Fullness' is a characteristic word of Ephesians, as it is of Colossians. In Colossians Paul tells us not only that God's fullness dwells in Christ, but also that in Christ we ourselves have come to fullness. At the same time, he makes it plain in Ephesians that we still have room for growth. As individuals we are to go on being filled with the Spirit,⁶ and the church, although already the fullness of Christ, is still to 'grow up into him' till it reaches his fullness.⁸ 'Growth into fullness' is therefore the theme of Paul's fourth and last petition for his Asian readers. He prays that they *may be filled with all the fullness of God*. It is uncertain how this genitive should be understood. If it is objective, then God's fullness is the abundance of grace which he bestows. If it is subjective, it is the fullness which fills God himself, in other words his perfection. Staggering as the thought may be, the latter seems the more probable because the Greek preposition is *eis*, which indicates that we are to be filled not 'with' so much as 'unto' the fullness of God. God's fullness or perfection becomes the standard or level up to which we pray to be filled. The aspiration is the same in principle as that implied by the commands to be holy as God is holy, and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Such a prayer must surely look on to our final state of perfection in heaven when together we enter the completeness of God's purpose for us, and are filled to capacity, filled up to that fullness of God which human beings are capable of receiving without ceasing to be human. Another way of expressing the prospect is that we shall become like Christ, which is God's purpose and promise, for Christ is himself the fullness of God. Yet another way of putting it is to say that we shall attain the fullness of love, of which Paul has just spoken in his prayer. Then Jesus' own prayer will be fulfilled: 'That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

In saying that Paul's last petition points to heavenly perfection, we have no liberty to try to evade its contemporary challenge. For God expects us to be growing daily towards that final fullness, as we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit into Christ's image from one degree of glory to another.

As we now look back down the staircase which we have been climbing with Paul, we cannot fail to be struck by his audacity. He prays that his readers may be given the strength of the Spirit and the ruling presence of Christ, the rooting of their lives in love, the knowledge of Christ's love in all its dimensions, and the fullness of God himself. These are bold petitions. Climbers of this staircase become short of breath, even a little giddy. But Paul does not leave us in suspense.

3. The conclusion of his prayer (verses 20–21)

⁶ Hayford, J. W., ed. (1997). [*Spirit filled life study Bible*](#) (electronic ed., Eph 5:18). Thomas Nelson.

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We notice now that the apostle's four petitions are sandwiched between two references to God. In verses 14–16 he is the Father of the whole family and possesses infinite riches in glory; in verses 20 and 21 he is the one who works powerfully within us. Such a God can answer prayer.

God's ability to answer prayer is forcefully stated by the apostle in a composite expression of seven stages.

- (1) He is able to *do* or to work (*poiēsai*), for he is neither idle, nor inactive, nor dead.
- (2) He is able to do what *we ask*, for he hears and answers prayer.
- (3) He is able to do what we ask *or think*, for he reads our thoughts, and sometimes we imagine things for which we dare not and therefore do not ask.
- (4) He is able to do *all* that we ask or think, for he knows it all and can perform it all.
- (5) He is able to do *more ... than* (*hyper*, 'beyond') all that we ask or think, for his expectations are higher than ours.
- (6) He is able to do much more, or *more abundantly* (*perissōs*), than all that we ask or think, for he does not give his grace by calculated measure.
- (7) He is able to do very much more, *far more abundantly*, than all that we ask or think, for he is a God of super-abundance. This adverb *hyperekperissou* is one of Paul's coined 'super-superlatives'. English equivalents which have been proposed are 'immeasurably more' (NIV) or 'vastly more than more', but perhaps the feel of it is best conveyed by 'infinitely more' (AG, JBP). It states simply that there are no limits to what God can do.

The infinite ability of God to work beyond our prayers, thoughts and dreams is *by the power at work within us*, within us individually (Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith) and within us as a people (who are the dwelling place of God by his Spirit). It is the power of the resurrection, the power which raised Christ from the dead, enthroned him in the heavenlies, and then raised and enthroned us there with him. That is the power which is at work within the Christian and the church.

Paul's prayer relates to the fulfilment of his vision for God's new society of love. He asks that its members may be strengthened to love and to know the love of Christ, though this surpasses knowledge. But then he turns from the love of God past knowing to the power of God past imagining, from limitless love to limitless power. For he is convinced, as we must be, that only divine power can generate divine love in the divine society.

To add anything more would be inappropriate, except the doxology. *To him be glory*, Paul exclaims, to this God of resurrection power who alone can make the dream come true. The power comes from him; the glory must go to him. *To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus together*, in the body and in the Head, in the bride and in the Bridegroom, in the community of peace and in the Peacemaker, *to all generations* (in history), *for ever and ever* (in eternity), *Amen*.⁷

Ephesians 3:14–21

An Apostolic Prayer

PREVIEW

The sentence begun in 3:1 is now brought to completion. The prayer initiated in 1:16 is thereby also brought to a conclusion, and with it the end of the first panel of Ephesians (Introduction). Capping the prayer, and indeed the first half of the letter, is a doxology.

Verses 14–19 constitute one lengthy sentence. Directed to *the Father* (*patēr*) who has named every *family* (*patria*) in the universe, the prayer consists of three related requests, increasing in intensity (Schnackenburg: 146). The first is that believers might be renewed at the core with power and love (3:16–17; note the importance of how *the inner human* [*anthrōpos*] is interpreted). The second is that they might have the power to grasp reality (*the width, length, height, and depth*) and the love of Christ (3:18–19a). The third request is that believers might

⁷ Stott, J. R. W. (1979). *God's new society: the message of Ephesians* (pp. 113–141). InterVarsity Press.

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experience the fullness of God (3:19). The prayer concludes with a joyous and confident doxology offered to the God who is able to exceed any and all needs and expectations (3:20–21).

Structure of 3:14–21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (praying)—

- that (*hina*) he might strengthen you in (to) the inner person,
- that (*hina*) you might be able to grasp the width and length and height and depth,
- that (*hina*) you might be filled into the whole fullness of God.

To the one who is able to do more than all we can ask or think,
be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.

AMEN.

OUTLINE

Kneeling Before the Father, 3:14–15

Empowerment, Love, and the Indwelling Christ, 3:16–17

Power to Grasp and to Know, 3:18–19a

Power to Be Filled with/into God's Fullness, 3:19b

Doxology: Praising the Empowering God, 3:20–21

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Kneeling Before the Father 3:14–15

Verse 14 takes up the sentence begun in 3:1 and shows us the imprisoned apostle at prayer. The specific term for prayer here is *bow* or *bend the knees*, a somewhat unusual prayer stance since Jewish prayer was usually performed standing. Perhaps it emerges from the motif of the imprisoned apostle. In Luke-Acts bending the knee is associated with impending death (e.g., Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 20:36; Perkins: 88). Bending the knees is also, however, an expression of awe and reverence before God (e.g., Isa. 45:23; cf., Phil. 2:10–11). Such a sense of awe is present here in that prayer is directed to the God who is *Father of every family in heaven and on earth*. The concluding doxology fittingly gives the whole the ambience of grand worship.

The picture of Paul on his knees serves an important theological interest as well. It provides some sense of balance to the strong assurances of full access and boldness of sons and daughters of God that we see in the previous verses. Believers can approach God with the confidence and freedom of family members (2:18–22; 3:12); nonetheless, they come with prayer into the presence of the Creator and Savior of the whole universe (3:9). The intimate way Jesus taught his followers to address God as Father—*Abba*—was well known to Paul and his churches (cf. Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). In this case, however, *Father* is more a term of respect than of intimacy. It expresses the recognition that all families in the cosmos, in heaven as on earth, owe their existence to God and are under his authority.

Not surprisingly, God is called the same name in the opening eulogy and in the first prayer-report in chapter 1: *our Father* (1:2); *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1:3; some manuscripts expand *Father* in 3:14 to conform to that wording); and especially *Father of glory* (1:17). The wording in our text also anticipates 4:6—*one God and Father of all*.

Related to the word *Father* (*patēr*) is *family* (*patria*), an unusual word and thus likely a play on words. It is not an abstraction like “fatherhood,” as it is erroneously translated in NJB, but instead it denotes every family, group, tribe, people, or nation that claims the same ancestor (*BAGD*: 636; Barth, 1974:368, 382; Gnilka: 181; Lincoln: 201). NIV mistakenly translates *every family* as *the whole family*, which has a quite different sense. The absence of the

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article before *pasa* (*every*) demands, however, that it be translated as *every* and not *whole* (Barth, 1974:381; Best, 1998:338; Lincoln: 202).

This reach of God's parenthood should not be obscured, even if it presents us with some difficulties. For one, these families reside in the whole cosmos—in *heaven and on earth*. With respect to earthly families, the most dramatic expression of God's parental reach has been explored in relation to Jews and Gentiles in 2:11–22. "Social groups" rather than "families" might thus be a preferred translation (Best, 1998:338). Speculation is rife as to who the heavenly families are, however. Are they angelic families? (e.g., Lincoln: 202; Schnackenburg: 149). Are they churches of which some members have already died and gone to heaven? (Mitton: 237–9).

Furthermore, how many is *every*? Does it mean that God is Father of *every* family on earth, even those outside the boundaries of the church? Does it mean that God is Father of *every* family in the heavens, including the hostile rulers and authorities (cf. 1:21; 6:12)? If so, what is the meaning of such paternity? Since there is not the slightest interest on the part of the author to speculate on these questions, let alone to argue for some kind of universalism, the answer may lie in the prevailing ambience of worship and adoration. The formulation *every family in heaven and on earth* uses the lavish expression of worship to indicate the extent of God's care as Creator and Savior of the *whole* cosmos, heaven and earth (Perkins: 89). It also serves to reassure believers that God is directly Lord of heaven and earth and those who inhabit them (Best, 1998:339).

God's relationship to all these families has been established by *naming*. In the ancient world, to give a name could mean to claim paternity. But it could also mean to claim authority over, to establish dominion over. Closely related to this is the sense that those who bear a name are given the power and authority that such a name carries. Names are potencies (cf. esp. 1:21; 5:3; also Phil. 2:9–10; Rev. 2:17; 14:1; 19:12).

Two important ideas combine in this case. One is that in some mysterious sense, God is progenitor of all families in heaven and on earth and gives them their names. That says nothing, of course, about the state of the relationship between those families and their divine parent. In the view of Ephesians, many or perhaps most of these families or groupings are living in broken relationships with God (e.g., 2:1–3, 12; 6:12). However, the fundamental conviction that God is the parent of *all* families and groups corresponds to the conviction that God's designs for redemption and restoration also know no limits. Hence, we see the repeated *all things (ta panta)* at crucial points where God is mentioned as Creator, Lord, and Savior (e.g., 1:10, 23; 3:9; 4:10). God is reclaiming *all* of creation, and that surely includes every grouping of human beings.

The second idea is related: God's claim on creation is being asserted in his work in and through Christ. So the naming of all families is God's act of asserting authority and dominion over all the families of heaven and earth. This is couched in patriarchal terminology. In the first century, a father was considered the ruler of the household. If we think of the cosmos as in some sense God's household (2:19–22; Russell, 1984; 1985), even if presently still in disarray, then we should think of God's *naming* of families as the reestablishing of lordship over them. In the end, this conviction underlies the confidence with which the church undertakes to confront the rulers and authorities residing in the heavenlies (3:10, 12). God is Lord over them all, and they need to be *informed* of that great life-giving wisdom—a wisdom as multifaceted as there are families to be reconciled.

Empowerment, Love, and the Indwelling Christ 3:16–17

The first part of the tripartite petition is that the church be empowered by God. This is the core concern of this prayer and of the whole letter (so also Arnold, 1989:137–9; R. Martin, 1991:44; Schnackenburg: 150). The concern is so important because of the breathtaking scope of the church's calling and task. The church is to be the body of the Messiah (1:23; 2:16), the *new human* (2:15), the holy temple of God (2:21). It is charged with making the wisdom of God known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies (3:10) and, finally, with taking them on in battle (6:10–20). Hence, the author makes the concern for empowerment the center of his prayer, just as it was in 1:15–23 and will be again in 6:10–13.

God is asked to *empower the church with power*, a typical redundancy with which the author intends to strongly emphasize his point (cf. notes on 1:19 and 6:10). Readers are thereby reassured and bolstered in confidence. Not surprisingly, we observe this in the militant literature of Qumran (1QM 10.5–6; 11.4–5, 9). Such heaping up of

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synonyms for power, as we see here, ironically witnesses to the inadequacy of human words to measure the power, grace, and love of God in Christ (as made explicit in 3:19–20).

Believers are divinely empowered *according to the wealth of [God's] glory* (cf. 1:18; Rom. 9:23; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27). God's *glorious wealth* (3:16) is an inexhaustible source of power as much as it was of grace in 1:7 and of mercy in 2:4. God's *glory* is God's power at work within and for believers (2:5–6). Ralph Martin's apt rendering of glory as "God's presence-in-power" captures the connections of glory and power perfectly (1991:45).

The means of empowerment is God's *Spirit*, which could be captured just as well by Martin's phrase cited above. Just as *glory* and *power* are virtual equivalents in the Bible, so the word *spirit* is also a way of speaking of the palpable presence of God's power (Fee, 1987:695). In Greek, *pneuma* is the word for "spirit" as it is for "wind." God's Spirit is power that moves.

A most difficult phrase in 3:16 is (lit.) *into the inner human (or person)*. Both NIV and NRSV translate the phrase as *in your inner being*. If this is the correct understanding, then we have a glimpse into the anthropology of the author, one he would have shared with many others in his day: a person is made up of an outer being and an inner being. The inner being is that part of a person with which God communes, "the base of operation at the center of a person's being where the Spirit does his strengthening and renovating work" (Lincoln: 205; so also Best, 1998:340–1; cf. Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16). The immediately following reference in 3:17 to Christ dwelling *in your hearts* is then taken to parallel being strengthened *in the inner being*. *Inner being* and *heart* thus complement each other (Fee, 1987:695–6).

However, close attention to the exact vocabulary invites a rather different understanding in 3:16. The phrase is literally *into the inner human (or person, anthrōpos)*. *Into* suggests a direction in which the prayer asks the power of God to move the believers. Further, we already know *anthrōpos* from 2:15, where it is the term for reconstituted humanity *in Christ* (2:15, notes). If such a meaning of *anthrōpos* informs its use here (so Barth, 1974:388–94; rejected by Fee, 1987:696; Lincoln: 205), then God is being asked to empower the believers so that they might become more like the one who inhabits them—Christ.

The coexistence of notions of *being in Christ* and *Christ being within* (understood both individually and corporately) is typical of Paul (cf., e.g., Gal. 2:20; 4:19). In Ephesians, the emphasis falls more on being *in Christ* (cf. 4:13, 15–16). At the same time, the church carries the fullness of Christ (1:23). The complement to *the inner human* is thus not the *heart* of the believer, but the *Christ* who has become a "permanent tenant" (Best, 1998:341) in the heart, as made explicit in 3:17. The author's concern is Christology—or the church in light of Christology, not anthropology. To speak of *inner* is therefore to speak of social, public, and communicative reality, not of private reality. The Christ who lives *within* finds expression in the *outer* social reality of a holy community made up of reconciled enemies—the new humanity of whom the rulers and authorities in high places must take note (3:10).

This latter point is emphasized by the phrase *rooted and grounded in love* (cf. Col. 1:23; 2:7). Botanical and architectural imagery are combined (cf. 2:20–22). Believers are *rooted* in God's love as experienced in Christ (2:4), in the sense that they owe their very lives to it and continue to draw strength from it. But they are also *established upon* it as their foundation (*tethemeliōmenoi*, 3:17; cf. *themelios, foundation*, 2:20). Their existence is thus governed and shaped by the love that finds expression in their own lives. There is no need to decide, as many commentators do, between God's love, Christ's love, or the believers' love (cf. Best, 1998:343; Lincoln: 207). In the end, the one is meant to effect the other. That is the consequence of being *in Christ*.

Power to Grasp and to Know 3:18–19a

The second request is again couched in the vocabulary of power: that *you may have power to grasp what is the breadth and length and height and depth*. *Grasp* can mean "comprehend," an adequate rendering of *katalambanomai* (middle voice). In other contexts, active forms of this verb can mean "grasping," "taking hold of," "seizing," even "overpowering" (e.g., Mark 9:18; John 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:4). For this, the divine power stressed throughout is clearly required.

The "four dimensions" (Best, 1998:344, rejects this since there are only three spatial dimensions) are preceded by only one article and thus should be taken together as four facets of one whole. They have been the source of a great deal of speculation. Some see in this an allusion to the cross (Houlden: 304–5), others to the new Jerusalem

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(cf. Ezek. 48:16; Rev. 21:16), and others an adaptation of a magical formula intended to conjure up the powers of a deity (Arnold, 1989:89–96). More in keeping with the concerns of Ephesians, the four dimensions have been related to dimensions of the cosmos, to the mystery of Christ, to Christ himself (cf. esp. cosmic dimensions implicit in 1:10), and to the love of Christ, mentioned in the following clause (3:19; discussion and citations in Barth, 1974:395–7; Best, 1998:344–6; Lincoln: 208–13).

Most connect the four dimensions to the love of Christ, as do many translations (e.g., NAB, NIV, REB, TEV). The immediately preceding reference to being *rooted and grounded in love* (3:17) and the immediately following text, *to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge*, would commend such an understanding. After all, in the end it is the love of God (2:4) as it comes to expression in the love of Christ (2:13–18) that is the core of the mystery now revealed.

However, there is also a persistent emphasis on wisdom in Ephesians, not least in 3:10, where wisdom is referred to as *multivariied* (cf. also 1:17; notes on *wisdom* for 1:3–14; 3:1–13 [*Wisdom*]; for background on dimensions of wisdom, see esp. Job 11:5–9; Ps. 139:8–10; Perkins: 90). By its very nature, the biblical understanding of wisdom is holistically and comprehensively related to the will of God as expressed in creation, law, and salvation. This letter's vision emerges out of that conviction perhaps more than the vision of any other NT document.

We thus should understand grasping the four dimensions as an invitation to grasp reality fully. That includes viewing reality from the vista of God's secret now disclosed in Christ, and also taking hold of reality in the sense of participating in the gathering up of all things in Christ (1:10). The grasping of the four dimensions should thus be seen in the light of the church's experience of being saved and reconstituted in Christ and in light of its task as articulated in 3:10. Such an interpretation does not rule out a close connection to the love of Christ in verse 19. On the contrary, the love of Christ is limitless, beyond grasping, and extends to *all things* and thus to the edges of the four dimensions of the cosmos.

Nowhere does the infinite wisdom of God come to more creative expression than in the love of Christ, which like all true wisdom surpasses human comprehension. At the same time, believers are to be empowered to grasp reality and to know the unknowable—the incomprehensible love of Christ—because it is their task to communicate that fathomless wisdom to the rulers and authorities in high places.

Once again, the brevity of the vocabulary invites comprehensiveness, not precision. The biggest mistake would be to force a choice between a wide range of possible understandings. In the end, comprehending and knowing are not an intellectual exercise, even if they require all of the intellectual powers God has granted humans. Such knowing is nothing other than receiving God's gracious gift of revelation. Further, such knowing encompasses the experience of the love of Christ and also a life and a mind nurtured by and built upon the exercise of such divine love. To know is to love.

This is not a private or individualistic empowerment or knowledge. Believers get hold of the true nature of reality and participate in its gathering up in Christ (1:10) *together with all the saints*. Christian knowledge is not private; it is public and social, and thus it is intimately related to living out the love of Christ in the community of the saints (Barth, 1974:394–5).

Some see in this a polemic against the Gnosticism beginning to take root in Pauline churches (Houlden: 305). Both the emphasis on *knowledge* (*gnōsis*) and its rootage in *love* (*agapē*) would have found resonance as well as resistance in Gnostic circles. But nothing in this text, including the highly allusive reference to the four dimensions, represents an invitation to the speculations of the privileged few, as in the Gnosticism of the second and later centuries.

Power to Be Filled with/into God's Fullness 3:19b

The three-part petition reaches its climax in verse 19: *that you may be filled into all the fullness of God*. Again the grammar allows for a number of interpretations. As already indicated at 1:23, *fullness* (*plērōma*) can refer to that which is filled and to that which fills it. Here the passive form of the verb *to fill*, meaning *that you may be filled*, is first followed by the preposition *eis*, usually translated “into” or “toward,” implying process or direction (BAGD: 228–9). NRSV has *with all the fullness*, obscuring this important point (so also KJV, NJB, REB). We understand the text to imply that believers are *to be filled up to all the fullness of God* (so, e.g., Best, 1998:348; Lincoln: 214; cf. also similarly

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NAB, NASB, NIV). This more careful translation also preserves the element of growth and development, visible also in 4:13.

The church is *already* the body of Christ, bearing his fullness (1:23, notes; 3:19 is in close contact with Col. 2:9–10). At the same time, the apostle must still be in constant prayer (1:16–17) for the church that it might in fact be so filled. We catch the sense of Ephesians this way: as the filled body of the filled Christ, the church is in constant need of being filled **toward** all the fullness of God. The element of direction and process must not be obscured in this text.

Even with such qualification, this request is breathtaking in its implications. It suggests a level of “participation in divinity” that might make us nervous. Such reticence does not fit the author of Ephesians, however. Whereas the awesome holiness and the love of God are beyond measure and understanding, the wondrous extent of that love is shown most profoundly, first, by drawing rejects into God’s family (chap. 2) and, second, by graciously making them the receptacles of God’s own fullness in Christ.

Doxology: Praising the Empowering God 3:20–21

The final two verses of chapter 3 provide a conclusion to the prayer of verses 14–19. They take up the theme of power by glorifying the giver of power. Such power is said to exceed infinitely what can be asked (referring to prayer) and thought (alluding to the theme of knowledge and understanding throughout the prayer-report, 3:14–19).

This doxology is surely a fitting conclusion to the first half of Ephesians. Much as in Romans 11:33–36, the recitation of the grace of God provokes a doxology—an expression of praise to the God who has made it all happen and who will bring the work to completion. Further, as in Romans 11, the doxology prepares the ground for the exhortation that follows. It is a reminder that all ethics, all *walking in good works* (2:10), is possible *only* because of God’s grace and power. A gracious God stands before and after all doing of good. All ethics, all discipleship, must begin with praise and worship. More, ethics itself is to be worship.

A number of features of this doxology reflect the character and vision of Ephesians as a whole. First is the emphasis on *power*, an essential component of the preceding prayer-report (3:14–19; cf. 1:15–23). The English terms *dynamic* and *energy* are reflected in the Greek: *To the one who is able (dunamos) according to the power (dunamis) at work (energeia) within us (cf. energeia and dunamis together in 3:7; 1:19)*. The phrase *within us* holds particular interest because in 1:19–20 God’s power is at work *in Christ*, but *for us*. That such power is now at work *in us* shows the extent to which the church has taken an exceedingly prominent place in Ephesians. This will explain the unique inclusion of *the church* in the final clause of this doxology (see below).

Second, *the power at work in and through us* [“*In*”] brings about more than we can ask or imagine or, as the NRSV puts it, *abundantly far more than all ...* Lincoln captures well the deliberately preposterous language: “infinitely more abundantly above all” (216). Once again, the hyperbolic style of the author serves him well. It illustrates that even the most exaggerated human language cannot possibly provide adequate expression for what the power of God is able to bring about. In Ephesians, exaggeration is understatement. “Neither the boldest human prayer nor the greatest power of human imagination could circumscribe God’s ability to act” (Lincoln: 216). Again, we must stress the author’s emphasis: this power is at work *in and through us*. Doxology is thus in the end thanksgiving.

Third, the glory ascribed to God is *in the church and in Christ Jesus*. The prominence of the church in such a doxological climax fits the overall emphasis in Ephesians on the church. As such, it is unique among the doxologies of the NT (cf. Rom. 16:25–27; Jude 24–25). It is open to question whether the Greek *en* should be taken simply as *in* (NRSV and other versions) or instrumentally as *through* or *by* [“*In*”]. We see the stress on Christ as the agent by whom God’s power is at work and the stress on the church as the recipient of God’s grace and power and also as a participant in it. Both these emphases invite us to see the church as a means by which God is glorified (so also Houlden: 305). Thus God’s glory is visible *in* the church and *in* Christ and also is generated, so to speak, by Christ and the church. God is glorified in the life and mission of the church.

All this plays itself out against the background of eternity. The author uses two motifs already familiar from the earlier part of chapter 3—*generations (geneai, 3:5)* and *ages (aiōnes, 3:9)*. Here they are combined with *all* in a way typical of the style of Ephesians. Just as God will show forth his overwhelming wealth of grace to *coming ages* (2:7), so in and through the church and Christ, glory will be given to God *for all coming generations and ages*. Amen—so be it!

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THE TEXT IN BIBLICAL CONTEXT

God the Father

One of the most prominent features of this prayer is the way God is referred to without qualification as *the Father* (“Father,” TLC for 1:3–14). As the notes explain, the motif of God as Father is prominent in this letter (cf. 1:2, 17; 2:18; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23). This is particularly distinctive. The term is found everywhere in Paul’s letters as a designation for God, characteristically as a way of addressing God at the beginning of his letters (e.g., Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; Philem. 3). More broadly, the designation of God as Father is conspicuous in the Gospels, especially in Matthew and John. This often shows in the way Jesus refers to God as *his* Father, and also in the way he invites others to relate to God (e.g., Matt. 5:16, 45, 48; 7:11, 21; 11:25–27; John 3:35; 10:15; 14:23).

The rare personal form of address, *Abba*, which appears in the Gospels only in Mark 14:36 in connection with Jesus’ wrestling with his impending death, was evidently retained for prayer also in Pauline churches (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). However, it is clear in Ephesians 3:14 that *Father* is used to describe God as Creator, sustainer, and restorer of creation as a whole, in particular the groupings that make up the varied network of relationships in the world—*all families on earth as in the heavens* (cf. also 2:18). It is not focusing on *Father* as a title of intimacy or familiarity.

Prayer

The Gospels Matthew and John contain two other important examples of prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is found in Matthew 6:9–13 (cf. shorter form, Luke 11:2–4). Jesus models how one prays to the divine Father. Ephesians 3:14–21 shows clearly that same confidence, boldness, and access to God that Jesus attempted to instill in his followers (cf. Eph. 2:18; 3:12). The postbiblical form of the Lord’s Prayer, as it is known and recited today, concludes with ascriptions of power and glory to God similar to those in the Ephesian prayer—*for thine is the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen* (cf. Didache 8).

One might ask whether the prayer of 3:14–21 (begun in 1:16) is also meant to teach the church how to pray. This is how the church is to pray in light of its identity and task: with boldness and confidence the church is to request power, knowledge, love, and fullness. Might this be a Pauline “Our Father”?

The prayer in Ephesians also has points of similarity with Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17. It also begins with an address to the *Father*. It touches on themes we see in Ephesians 3, such as *glory* (John 17:1, 4, 5, 22, 24), *power* (17:2, 18), *knowledge* (17:3, 7, 8, 25, 26), the *name* (17:6, 11, 12, 26), *holiness* (17:17, 19), *sharing Christ’s task in the cosmos* (17:18, 21, 23), *love* (17:26), *oneness with God and Christ—being in God and Christ* (17:21, 24), and *Christ and his love being in the believers* (17:10, 13, 22, 23, 26).

I am not suggesting dependency of one prayer on the other. Nevertheless, both emerge out of profound care for the church. That might be the greatest point of similarity between these two prayers. The prayer in Ephesians can rightly be seen as the Pauline high priestly prayer. Such a view of the prayer is equally compelling if it is seen as a post-Paul retrospective on the great apostle’s relationship to the church as a whole and a crystallization of his pastoral concern.

To liken the prayer in Ephesians 3 with both the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 and the high priestly prayer in John 17 fits well the designs of the author of Ephesians. Here the great apostle intercedes on behalf of the church. In 6:18–20, the tables are turned, and the recipients of the letter are asked to pray for all the saints, but especially also for the apostle himself, that he might be given the boldness to fulfill his calling to speak the good news fearlessly.

THE TEXT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Praying to God the Father

The content of this prayer is as timely in our day as it was then. Believers today are just as much in need of empowerment, renewal, knowledge, and the courage to fulfill the church’s task as believers were then. Sadly, because the prayer is directed to God as *Father*, many cannot hear its profound and majestic strains. For most of the church’s history, the fatherhood of God has not been a matter of controversy. *Father* has been a term of respect for God’s authority and generativity, but mostly it has offered an opportunity for believers to practice in prayer their

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status as daughters and sons with full access to God their heavenly parent. To begin a prayer with *Father* witnesses as much to a personal relationship with God as it does to God's lordship.

In recent years, naming God as *Father* has been caught up in great social change ("Father," TLC for 1:3–14). Fatherhood is often equated with patriarchy, which literally means "the rule of the father." *Father* can carry the burden of hierarchy, domination, and top-down models of relationship, and thus imply the victimization and abuse of the less powerful, notably women and children. So in some churches, God is seldom if ever addressed in prayer as Father.

Much is at stake. On one hand, those who have been injured by male privilege, especially as concentrated in the role of the father, may find the terminology of fatherhood as encountered in Ephesians to be unhelpful or even offensive. The critique often goes beyond individual experiences of power and sexual abuse, however. It encompasses the ideological and cultural undergirding for such structures and behaviors. In many circles, patriarchy holds pride of place as a chief example of the wicked *principalities and powers* (6:12, KJV) with which especially women in the church must contend (5:21–6:9, notes). On the other hand, some have sounded the alarm that rejecting the image of God as Father lays siege to fatherhood as a cultural institution and also one of the essential foundations of the faith (Kimel; J. W. Miller).

To call God *Father* recognizes God as creator and sustainer of all that is. It recognizes God's relationship to "the all" as one of authority. It implies that God can make demands on "his" families. That much would have been taken for granted in the first century as inherent in the meaning of father. Letty Russell believes such a perspective too easily views fatherhood as the power to dominate, a view of authority she rejects for human fathers as for God (Russell: 30–32, 62, passim).

Today one might search for a better way to express God's sovereignty. Yet such authority and lordship, power and glory, are, in the view of Ephesians, the basis of the confidence with which the church undertakes its mission. God's grace, kindness, forgiveness, love, and peace are strong and authoritative initiatives, not to be separated from the conviction that only God can guarantee the ultimate success of the assault on evil, hostility, and brokenness.

After all, it is the *Father of glory* who raises the crucified one from the dead and with him all those who belong to him (1:17, 20; 2:4–6). Whatever difficulties such a view may present to us and our contemporaries, the conviction that God can and will see to it that things will turn out right in the end is one that pervades the biblical imagination *at its core*. This conviction cannot be removed without dismantling the gospel (cf. Rom. 8:28, NRSV note; 8:38–39).

As an alternative to a patriarchal view of authority, Russell proposes "partnership." With that term she has, perhaps ironically, hit on by far the most important implication of fatherhood in Ephesians, as she herself recognizes (32, 62). In addition to the explicit summons to *imitate God* (5:1), such partnership is implicit in the understanding of the church that underlies this passage and indeed all of Ephesians. That is what it means to sit *with* Christ, indeed *with* God, in the heavenlies (2:6–7), informing rulers and authorities in high places of the wisdom of God, thus participating with God in the "naming" of reality (3:10).

Most strikingly, the church is being filled up to and with the very fullness of *God* (3:19)! As applied to God, *fatherhood* is in Ephesians first and foremost a way to signify that God's authority, power, and glory is *for us*, for God's sons and daughters (1:19; 3:20). To call God *Father* also communicates the kind of respect for God's daughters and sons that implies partnership, to the extent of flirting dangerously with divinizing human beings (see 3:19; cf. Col. 2:9). But such is the measure of a love that *exceeds understanding*. This is a Father who liberates and empowers those who have hitherto been outside the family (2:11–22).

Only *after* seeing God's fatherhood in such terms should we approach the image critically. Alternative ways of addressing God should be no less profound in their capacity to evoke the mix of access, assurance, hope, and glory (see also Swartley, 1990; Volf: 167–90).

To apply *Father* to God is, of course, an analogy drawn from the realm of human experience. Are we permitted to turn the analogy around and ask to what degree the divine Father becomes normative for human fathers? Are human fathers encouraged to see themselves as "fathers of glory" through whom and to whom all things in the family are to be oriented? The answer may lie in the fact that when the issue of male family behavior is specifically raised in Ephesians, the injunctions are not that fathers imitate the Almighty, but rather the *Christ* who gives up his

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life for his bride, the church (5:25). Fathers are not to provoke their children to anger, but rather to nurture them to be Christlike (6:4). So God in the role of father is not the model for human fatherhood in any obvious sense.

Only one place in Ephesians *explicitly* calls for the imitation of God (4:32–5:1), a feature unique in the Pauline writings and a strong witness to the high level of partnership this letter envisions for believers. *All* the saints, men and women alike, including fathers, are to be tenderhearted, forgiving, kind, and loving to the utmost. A notion of fatherhood premised on such a foundation would ill fit a patriarchy slanted to serve the interests of fathers at the expense of mothers and children.

Doxology as the Basis of Ethics

The location of the doxology of 3:20–21, *after* a lengthy recitation of God’s gracious intervention in Christ (chap/s. 1–3) and immediately *before* the exhortation (chap/s. 4–6), carries some significant lessons. First, any recitation of God’s grace appropriately results in grateful worship. A deep awareness of God’s love and grace should make a hearty “Thanks be to God!” a constant in the lives of believers.

The second lesson follows from this and is related to the doxology’s location as a preamble to the exhortation. Worship, however much shaped by gratefulness, is not complete or true without a life in which “obedience” is experienced, not as compulsion, but as the free expression of gratitude to God. Such an insight is not easy to appreciate in a tradition such as Anabaptism, for example, which has viewed Christian ethics as obedience and discipleship rather than as worship. This text is intended to instill in readers a disposition of active gratitude, regardless of how costly and struggle-ridden it might be.⁸

3:1 Paul had already discussed the union of Jewish and Gentile believers into a new entity—the church. He began to pray that they might experience the power and the love of Christ that they would need to live in practical unity with one another in this life.

3:2–7 Paul reminded the Ephesians that by revelation God gave him a special stewardship (lit., “dispensation”) that was for their benefit. This stewardship, which he had written about earlier, is a “mystery” (Gk. *musterion*), referring to God’s wise plan that was previously hidden (v. 9; see Eph. 2:11–22). The focus here is on the union of Jew and Gentile as equal partners in the church—the body of Christ (Eph. 3:6).

3:10 Paul’s reference is to the new relationship between believing Jews and Gentiles in one body.

3:14, 15 Although God is the Creator of all human beings and angels, only those who have placed personal faith in Jesus Christ are His children and may call Him Father (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15, 16). The idea of a “father” is derived from God and not from human beings. He is the first Father, and none existed before Him.

3:16–19 Paul’s prayer has two parts. First, he prayed that God, whose resources are limitless, would grant believers inner strengthening in their present experience (Eph. 3:16). As a result of this empowering, Christ would become fully at home in their lives (v. 17) with access to each area of their lives and as the governing factor in their attitudes and conduct. Paul’s second petition was based on the fact that believers have already been placed in the body of Christ, being rooted and grounded in love (v. 17). He prayed that they might be empowered to grasp the immensity of Christ’s love and to know that love in their personal experience (vv. 18, 19).

4:1–16 Paul extensively presented the doctrinal basis of the Christian life (Eph. 1–3). He then gave practical applications of these doctrines (Eph. 4–6), with emphasis on a believer’s “walk” or lifestyle.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: GENTLENESS: A QUALITY PRECIOUS TO GOD

Those who walk in the Spirit possess a quality of gentleness that is one of the hallmarks necessary for Christian unity. Paul challenges believers to a life worthy of their calling in Christ Jesus that is characterized by lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, mutual forbearance, and peace (Eph. 4:1–3).

⁸ Neufeld, T. R. Y. (2001). *Ephesians* (pp. 138–168). Herald Press.

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“Gentleness” or “meekness” (Gk. *praut s*) refers to a humble, submissive attitude that is the opposite of pride. Not to be confused with weakness, gentleness is strength that is submitted to God and channeled into service to others. The Old Testament characterizes God as gentle (2 Sam. 22:36; Ps. 18:35). The New Testament describes Jesus as “gentle and lowly [humble] in heart” (Matt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1). Believers, like their Lord, should pursue gentleness (1 Tim. 6:11) and wear it like a garment (Col. 3:12).

The godly virtue of gentleness, which is a quality of the heart, is counted as being more influential than outward beauty in winning an unbelieving husband to Christ (1 Pet. 3:1–4). A gentle spirit is precious to God. Gentleness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit necessary for godliness (holy, Christlike living), goodness (kindness toward others), and giftedness (service in the name of Jesus).

See also notes on Encouragement (Eph. 4); Fruit of the Spirit (Ps. 86; Rom. 5; 15; 1 Cor. 10; 13; Gal. 5; Col. 3; 2 Thess. 1; Rev. 2); Humility (Phil. 2); Submission (1 Pet. 3); Wives (Prov. 31)

4:12–16 These gifted individuals seek to equip other believers to do the work of the ministry by leading them into doctrinal and practical stability. This mutual edification (v. 12) will continue until the church reaches maturity and unity (v. 13). The mature church will no longer be led astray doctrinally (v. 14) and will exhibit the character qualities of Christ by mutually edifying itself (vv. 15, 16).

4:17–19 The Ephesians were admonished to avoid the lifestyle typical of unbelieving Gentiles all around them. This lifestyle was characterized by “futility,” being empty and without purpose. The understanding of unbelievers had been darkened because they had chosen not to receive God’s revelation (Rom. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:4); they were “alienated” or separated from the life of God and so were unable to hear His voice; they were willfully ignorant of God and His truth (see 2 Tim. 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:4); and their hearts had become blinded and calloused so that they were insensitive to God and had no fear of the consequences of their actions (see John 12:37–40). They had given themselves over to self-indulgent immorality characterized by an insatiable desire for more.

4:22–24 Unlike the unbelievers described, the Ephesians had learned life-changing new truth in Christ: Believers are to put off “the old man,” a phrase referring to the sinful lifestyle driven by desires that deceptively promised joy but did not give it; they are to allow the Holy Spirit to renew their thought patterns, changing them from impurity to holiness (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8); they are to put on “the new man,” a phrase referring to a new lifestyle of holiness and righteous living. This new lifestyle is put on positionally when a person receives Christ and needs to be lived out experientially through the Spirit’s empowering (Col. 3:9, 10).

4:26, 27 God has a plan for dealing with anger (see Ps. 13, Healing; Eccl. 7, Anger; chart, How Can You Prevent Inappropriate Anger).

ENCOURAGEMENT: A GIFT FOR YOUR HEARER

Paul’s words admonish us to speak only good, not corrupt, words—ones that build up, encourage, and edify. Our words are to constitute a gift to the hearer (Eph. 4:29).

Jesus and Paul are examples for us in their use of uplifting words to encourage. Even when his ship started to sink, Paul gave words of encouragement (Acts 27:22). When Jesus’ disciples were sinking, He spoke encouragement to them (Matt. 14:27). When Paul was being persecuted, the Lord appeared beside him and encouraged him (Acts 23:11).

Many people are bowed down under heavy emotional loads and are weary of life’s struggles. How eager they are to hear a word of encouragement (1 Thess. 5:11)! Often we turn the other way, but the Lord wants to give us kind words to say if we are willing to make ourselves available (Is. 50:4).

In Proverbs, the book of wisdom, much is written about the value of encouraging words (Prov. 16:24; 25:11). Not only do pleasant words taste sweet, but their use can lift us up to high places (Prov. 22:11). Whether we want to be encouragers because Jesus said “be of good cheer,” because Paul urged us to “take heart,” or because we are simply called to lift up the weary, edify the saints, and evangelize the

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lost—whatever our reason for wishing to bring sweetness to the soul, now is the time to start (James 4:17). See also Deut. 1:21, 29, 30; Ezra 10:4; Ps. 145:14; Mic. 2:7; Luke 22:32; Acts 13:15, note; Heb. 3:13; notes on Communication (Prov. 15); Love (1 John 4); Spiritual Gifts (Rom. 12)

4:30 Believers should not grieve the Holy Spirit through sins such as unwholesome speech (v. 29) and the outpouring of repressed anger (v. 31). Since only persons can be grieved, this verse affirms the fact that the Holy Spirit is a Person.

4:32 The basis for believers forgiving others is the fact that they themselves have been graciously forgiven by God (Gk. *charizomai*), and released from any *obligation* to make restitution (see Ps. 133, Healing).

GOD'S WILL: CONFORMING TO HIS PURPOSE

A mature Christian seeks God's will and asks for God's wisdom when she is facing a major decision. Believers must pray about decisions—especially life decisions such as “Where shall I go to college?” “Should I marry this man?” “Should I bring my ailing parent to live in my home?” Such decisions have serious consequences, and they deserve the prayerful seeking of God's perfect wisdom. But knowing God's will does not happen solely in prayer. It also requires a commitment to knowing His Word.

The Bible teaches that realizing (or proving) God's will is the result of habitually conforming your thinking and behavior to God's Word over a lifetime. As a Christian woman reads the Bible day by day, her mind is renewed with a new way of thinking about life. Worldly ideas, attitudes, and prejudices are replaced by thoughts that conform to God's ways. This process takes time, and there are no shortcuts. The transformation is never complete until death.

The Christian who has ongoing fellowship with the Lord through His Word comes to decisions equipped with a biblically informed way of thinking. Knowing God's will at major decision points is much easier if you are seeking God's will every day in Bible reading and prayer.

See also Dan. 2:23, note; Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 1:9; Col. 1:9; notes on Access to God (Rom. 10); Change Points in Life (Eccl. 3); Decision Making (1 Cor. 8)

CHILDREN: OBEDIENCE: DO IT GOD'S WAY

Children are to obey both their parents. This relationship exists “in the Lord,” and the implication is that children and parents live under the authority of Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:1). Children cannot be subject to their parents in a way that is contrary to the obedience they owe to Jesus Christ. They should obey their parents because this is “right” in God's eyes, as illustrated by the fourth Commandment (vv. 1, 2). A child's education would typically include the Ten Commandments; so Paul is drawing attention to truth children would already know. The word “honor” includes the ideas of respect and esteem (v. 2). Life lived in submission to legitimate authority would benefit the child with a better and longer life (v. 3; see Deut 5:16). The term “father” can be used to represent both parents (see similar usage in Heb. 11:23). Unreasonable demands by parents will provoke children to anger and can push them to perpetual bitterness with the result that children lose hope of ever performing well enough to please (Col 3:21). Parents should instead rear their children in an atmosphere of nurturing: godly training in what is right, correction of what is wrong, and encouragement at every turn.

See also chart on The Ten Commandments Throughout Scripture; notes on Children (Ps. 128); Parenthood (Prov. 10)

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5:18 The command to be filled applies to all believers. The passive voice of the verb indicates that this is not a manufactured experience; the Holy Spirit fills and controls them. Further, the present tense of the command indicates that there can be many, successive fillings. This filling is not to be confused with the “baptism of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13), which occurs at the point of conversion.

5:19–21 As a result of the Spirit’s filling, believers will communicate with one another in an edifying manner. The Greek verb used includes all sorts of speech—singing of “psalms” (OT psalms), “hymns” (praises composed by Christians), and “spiritual songs” (spontaneous, Spirit-inspired praise). Second, they will sing praises to the Lord (see chart, Hymns and Songs Associated with Women). Third, they will continually give thanks to the Father (Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:18). Fourth, they will mutually submit to one another.

5:22–6:9 As Paul elaborated on the subject of submission, he showed what would happen in specific relationships within the family (see 1 Pet. 3, Submission; charts, Role Relationships Between Men and Women; Submission).

5:22–24 The exhortation specifies that wives are to submit themselves to their “own” husbands (v. 22). Paul in no way suggests that wives are inferior to their husbands or that they, as women, must submit to all other men. The wife’s submission is voluntary rather than forced (v. 22). God does not ask a wife to submit herself to her husband in violation of her Christian responsibility to walk in holiness and righteousness before Him. The marriage relationship is raised to lofty heights as Paul compared it to the relationship of Christ and His church (v. 23). The husband is not the Savior of the wife’s body. Nevertheless, the analogy holds that the husband is to be the protector of his wife (see Gen. 2:15–17, note). In voluntary submission, the wife can serve her husband, just as the church serves Christ, with freedom and dignity.

ROLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Original Relationship: Creation	Distortion of the Relationship: The Fall	Restoration of the Relationship: Redemption
Man and woman are perfectly related to one another and to God (Gen. 2:25).	The relationship between the man and the woman and their relationship to God are distorted by the presence of sin (Gen. 3:7, 8).	Jesus Christ as Redeemer models both servant leadership for the man and selfless submission for the woman (Eph. 5:23–27; Phil. 2:5–8).

According to the egalitarian position, no difference existed between the man and the woman prior to the Fall. They were equal in personhood (as is also true in the complementarian position) and the same in role and function (while the complementarian position maintains a difference in role assignment for the man and for the woman).

See also Gen. 1:26; 2:24; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:22–24, 25–31, notes; notes on Headship (Gen. 1); The Creation of the Woman (Gen. 2); Complementarity (Eph. 5); Egalitarianism (Rom. 9); Submission (1 Pet. 3)

5:25–31 Paul’s exhortation is equally clear to husbands: They are to love their wives (an admonition expressed six times in vv. 25–33) in the same manner in which Christ sacrificially loved the church (v. 25). Husbands must not be “bitter” or harsh with their wives (Col. 3:19). Christ’s love for His church is presently manifested in His work of atonement (Eph. 5:25) and sanctification (v. 26) so that He might in the end times present her as a pure and spotless bride (v. 27). Returning to the marriage relationship, Paul explained that the husband should love his wife as his own body because the two are actually one (v. 28; see Gen. 2:24). “Body” is

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used here, as elsewhere, to refer to the whole person (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 1:20). God prescribed that marriage provide a picture of the ultimate and eternal love between Christ and His church.

5:33 Paul summarized by reminding each husband to love his own wife sacrificially as himself and by reminding each wife to show respect to her husband as the God-ordained leader of the family “as to the Lord” (v. 22; see charts, Role Relationship Between Men and Women; Theological Foundation for Headship).

COMPLEMENTARITY: EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT

Male and female were created as equal and complementary expressions of the image of God. Both bear His image fully, though in different ways. Their different roles in relationship to each other provide a picture of who God is and how He relates to His people.

Christ Jesus is equal with God the Father, yet submissive and responsive to Him (Phil. 2:6–8). God the Father loves the Son and exalts Him. The pattern is repeated in the relationship between Christ and the church. Christ provides loving, servant leadership; the church responds with respect and submission as Christ’s “Bride” (Eph. 5:22–33). Another counterpart to the picture is the relationship between church leaders and local bodies of believers (Heb. 13:7, 17).

Sin has distorted the relationship between man and woman at every level, but believers are called to relate according to the Creator’s plan instituted in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world (Gen. 2:15–25). This plan is marked by a holy reciprocity in which the husband’s loving headship awakens a responsive submission from the wife just as a wife’s submissive cooperation draws from her husband sensitive leadership. The realities of headship and submission are to be enacted within loving, equal, complementary male-female roles. In this, the image of God is properly reflected.

See also Col. 3:18, 19; 1 Pet. 3:1–7; charts on Role Relationships Between Men and Women; Submission; notes on Egalitarianism (Rom. 9); Equality (Gal. 3); Headship (Gen. 1); Marriage (Gen. 2; 2 Sam. 6; Prov. 5; Hos. 2; Amos 3; 2 Cor. 13; Heb. 12); Submission (1 Pet. 3)

FATHERHOOD: PROTECTOR AND PROVIDER

The earliest concept of God for a child is greatly impacted by the relationship she has with her own father. Fathers in the Bible were the supreme authoritative figures in their families. With but a word they could determine the fate of their offspring. In contrast to this autocratic image of fatherhood, Paul’s advice to fathers emphasizes patience (Eph. 6:4). The father Jesus describes, just as our heavenly Father, loves unconditionally, forgives without strings attached, and gives abundantly (Luke 15:11–32). Still, Scripture presents a tender side to fatherhood: A temple official came to Jesus frantic for his daughter’s healing (Matt. 9:18–26); Jacob and David displayed deep sorrow at the loss of their sons (Gen. 37:33–35; 2 Sam. 13:35–39); both⁹

⁹ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman’s Study Bible* (Eph 3:1–5:33). Thomas Nelson.