

GOD

A Review of the Doctrinal Portion of Ephesians (Chapters 1-3)

The Book of Ephesians has been called the greatest revelation ever given to the Church of the Body to which we belong in this Grace Administration. It represents the culmination of what Jesus Christ said as recorded in John 10:10: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.”

The first three chapters of Ephesians are doctrinal, showing us what God has done for us through His great grace, His unmerited divine favor. The last three chapters deal with the practical application of the doctrine in our daily walk: what to do with it after we’ve got it.

We will review the first three chapters, the doctrinal portion of the Book of Ephesians, considering how this doctrine applies to us.

The doctrine of Ephesians begins where the doctrine of Romans, chapter 8 ends. The first eight chapters of the Book of Romans set forth the doctrine regarding our individual standing in Christ, justified by believing and inseparable from God’s love. Then Ephesians unfolds to us the Great Mystery, in which we collectively make up the Body of Christ and are, from God’s perspective, seated in the heavenlies.

The first two verses of Ephesians, Chapter 1 record Paul’s opening salutation.

Ephesians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Verse 1 introduces the writer (Paul), who wrote what God authored by divine revelation, and to whom this epistle was originally addressed. Paul wrote this epistle while a prisoner in Rome, in about 61 AD. In his salutation he refers to himself as an apostle, one who brings new light to his generation, and the doctrine in this epistle certainly qualifies as new light.

Verse 1 continues: “to the saints (*set-apart, born-again believers*) which are at Ephesus...” The words “at Ephesus” are not found in some of the oldest manuscripts, and it is likely that this epistle originally was not addressed to any one particular group. Instead, copies may have been sent out, including one to the Church in Laodicea mentioned in Colossians 4:16. Even though all of the Church Epistles, no matter to whom they were originally addressed, were circulated among believers in other areas and can be applied by us, Ephesians stands out in not having an addressee specified, so we could even put our own name in this verse: this greatest revelation to the Church is addressed most directly, and personally, to us today.

The remainder of the first verse, “...and to the faithful in Christ Jesus”, tells us that this epistle is addressed to those of us who are not only born again of God’s spirit but are standing together as members of God’s household, what God’s Word elsewhere calls “in the Lord”.

1:2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Aramaic Peshitta text, “peace” comes before “grace”. Peace denotes “the absolute end of all strife and trouble, a state of complete rest, with no fear, condemnation, or frustration”. As we read Ephesians, we see why this peace is available to us. The word “peace” is used 7 times in Ephesians (Biblically, 7 is the number for spiritual perfection).

Grace, God’s unmerited divine favor, is used even more times, appearing 12 times in Ephesians, nine of which are in the doctrinal portion of the first three chapters. Biblically, the number 9 represents spiritual completeness. It was by God’s great grace that He did what He did to make available to us what is revealed in the verses to come.

This peace and grace come from “God our Father”. The word “Father”, referring to God, is used five times in the doctrinal portion of Ephesians. Five is the number for grace. Because of His grace, God is our Father, and we have peace.

The next verse, verse 3, has been called “The Key to Ephesians”.

1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

God is blessed, and He blessed us (both individually and collectively as His household) with every spiritual blessing. By His great love and grace, He made it available for us to be born again (Romans 10:9) and receive the gift of holy spirit. We have everything we need.

God really wants us to know this. He put three different figures of speech in this verse: polyptoton, the repetition of words with the same root; antanaclasis, using the word “blessed” in two different senses (blessing God and blessing us); and benedictio, an emphatic blessing. God’s telling us to “pay attention!”

In the next several verses, through verse 14, God elaborates on how He blessed us.

1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation (*overthrow*) of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption (*sonship*) of children by (*through*) Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

We were with God in His foreknowledge: He knew we would believe and get born again, so He was able to choose us, making us holy (sanctified, set apart for heaven) and without blame (legally justified) before Him (in His presence) in love.

God is no respecter of persons, but because of His foreknowledge He could predestinate us to become His children. This was made available to us by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. We also see this truth in Romans 8:29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image (likeness) of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The last part of verse 5 tells us why God did all this: "...according to the good pleasure (desire) of His will". God did it because He wanted to. He didn't have to do it, and we didn't deserve it, but God did it because of His grace. This is expressed in the next verse:

1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The word "praise" in this verse should be "commendation", referring to something that is worthy of attention, approval or special praise. What is worthy is "the glory of his grace". With the figure of speech antimereia, in which one part of speech is used instead of another, we see that God is calling attention to His grace: the verse could be read "to the commendation of His glorious grace". God wants us to know that all He's done for us is because of His grace.

Verse 6 continues: "wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." The word "accepted" is from the Greek word *charitoō*, which literally means "highly favored". It's the verb form of *charis*, the word for grace (a major theme in Ephesians).

Because of God's great grace, He has made us accepted, or highly favored, in the beloved. God was able to accept us as members of His family when we got born again. This is different from us being acceptable, which depends on whether or not we are in fellowship with him (see II Corinthians 5:9, where the Greek word *euarestos* should have been translated "acceptable").

God has made us accepted "in the beloved". The "beloved" is Jesus Christ, as we can see in places like Matthew 17:5 ("This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"). In the Aramaic text, this part of the verse more accurately reads "...by means of his beloved" – in other words, by what Jesus Christ accomplished. The accomplishments of Jesus Christ are what made it available for us to be accepted by God. A more literal translation would be: "He has highly favored us through the work of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ."

Verses 7 and 8 continue to show how God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings:

1:7 In whom (*in the beloved, Christ*) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness (*remission*) of sins, according to the riches of his grace:

1:8 Wherein (*in God's grace*) he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom (*knowledge applied*) and prudence (*understanding, from the Greek word phronēsis*):

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished, we have been redeemed, bought back from the Devil's power and authority. We have received remission from sins. This was all done according to the riches of God's grace.

1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

1:10 That in the dispensation (*administration*) of the fullness of times (*still future, at the Return*) he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him:

- 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh (*energizes*) all things after the counsel of his own will:
 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.
 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted* (*this word is not in the text, so omit it*), after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise,
 1:14 Which is the earnest (*token, deposit*) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

In verse 11, the words “we have obtained an inheritance” are all one Greek word in the text (*klēroōmai*), which more accurately would be read “we were made an inheritance”. This verse isn’t talking about what we get, but rather what God gets: us as members of His family!

We see again the word “predestinated” that we saw earlier in verse 5: it’s established – God knew we would believe so predestinated us to join His family. And once again, as it also says in verse 5, this is according to God’s will: He did it because He wanted to.

Having set forth how we are blessed because of God’s grace, Paul now presents a prayer, recorded in verses 15 through 23. This prayer also expresses God’s desire for us:

- 1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith (*believing God*) in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,
 1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,
 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom (*spiritual wisdom*) and revelation in the knowledge of him:
 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
 1:19a And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to usward (*you also*) who believe,

The rest of Chapter 1, from the rest of verse 19 through verse 23, is a parenthesis, a figure of speech that draws attention to and expounds on what was just mentioned: the exceeding greatness of God’s power. God wants us to know that this power is available to us.

This prayer is the first of two prayers in the doctrinal portion of Ephesians. This one is addressed to God as the creator. The prayer is that we can know the power of God, the Father of Glory, by God’s giving us wisdom and knowledge so that we may know (*oida* - perceive) in our heart the hope of His calling and the exceeding great power available to us. A very similar prayer appears in verses 9 through 12 of chapter 1 of Colossians, an epistle of correction corresponding to the doctrine of Ephesians. These great truths are thus established.

Because of the parenthesis beginning in verse 19, we could read directly from the first part of verse 19 to Chapter 2, verse 1 to see the flow of what God is saying:

- 1:19a And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to you also who believe,
 2:1 And (*Even*) you *hath he quickened* (*omit these italicized words as they are not in the text*), who were dead (*without spirit*) in trespasses and sins;

God's power is available to us, even though at one time we were "dead in trespasses and sins." Verses 2 and 3 expand on what our lives were like back then. We didn't deserve God's grace. In fact, we deserved judgment against us.

- 2:4 But God, who is (*being*) rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;)
2:6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

Even though we deserved judgment, God's great love motivated His mercy. Instead of executing judgment against us, God delivered us and made us spiritually alive, giving us the gift of holy spirit when we got born again. In His perspective, we are already seated in the heavenlies. From this exalted position, we see life's situations from a new perspective, allowing us to walk more effectively.

Why did God do this for us? The answer is in verse 7:

- 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew (*make a public exhibit of*) the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through (*in*) Christ Jesus.

We see again the emphasis on God's rich, abounding grace, His unmerited divine favor. The next three verses expand on this grace of God:

- 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith (*the faith of Jesus Christ*); and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
2:10 For we are his (*God's*) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained (*prepared*), that we should walk in them.

We are saved by grace through the faith of Jesus Christ: we didn't earn it by our works. We are God's workmanship (masterpiece), and God has prepared for us to be able to walk according to the truths of the Church Epistles.

In the next several verses, God then reminds those to whom this epistle was written (former Gentiles, including us) that we were "aliens from the commonwealth (citizenship) of Israel" to whom the covenants of promise had been given. We were "without God and without hope in the world". The Israelites didn't do any better, because they failed to be obedient to God, so they also were at enmity with God. But even though we were "far off", through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ we, like them, could be saved, becoming "nigh", close to God.

Because of God's mercy and grace, it is available for us to obtain peace with God:

- 2:14 For he (*Jesus Christ*) is our peace (*our "peace treaty"*), who hath made both (*Judeans and Gentiles*) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*.

Through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ and by way of the new birth, we have peace with God. Before getting saved, people were Judean or Gentile, but once born again we are members of the Body of Christ, making up one new man with Christ as the head. Now we also have peace with each other. We see the emphasis on this peace by its use in verses 14 (he is our peace), 15 (so making peace), and 17 (came and preached peace). We have peace, complete rest, free of strife and trouble, with no fear, condemnation, or frustration.

In addition to our having peace, we also have access to God:

2:18 For through him we both (*Judeans and Gentiles*) have access by one Spirit (*the gift of holy spirit – the new birth*) unto the Father.

We don't just have access to God as the creator, but we have access to God as our loving heavenly Father. As born-again believers, we have unrestricted, unconditional access to Him, and He is able and willing to bring to pass whatever we need.

The remainder of Chapter 2 shows us that we are children of God, fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God. Together we make up the Body of Christ, with Christ Jesus as the head. Collectively, we make up what verse 21 figuratively calls the Temple. Together we make up God's perfect, permanent dwelling place.

2:22 In whom (*in the Lord*) ye also are builded together for an habitation of God (*we are God's address*) through (*in*) the Spirit.

These great truths in the latter part of Chapter 2, how that no matter what our previous background, by God's great grace we are now members of the Family of God, the Body of Christ, are the embodiment of the Great Mystery that God had kept secret but now revealed to us. This is the culmination of the great doctrine of the Book of Ephesians.

But God wanted to give us an even greater understanding of what He made available, to help us to walk as members of the household, so He had Paul write what we see in Chapter 3.

Ephesians, Chapter 3 is a parenthesis that expounds on the Mystery, which Paul had just introduced the basics of in Chapter 2.

3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ (*Christ Jesus in the text*) for you Gentiles,

Paul was not only a prisoner in Rome when he wrote this, but he had made the sold-out commitment to stay on the Word, being a *doulos* bond slave for Christ. Verses 2 through 13, in which he elaborates on the Mystery, are actually a second parenthesis nestled in the parenthesis of Chapter 3. God wants to call our attention to what He wants said about the Mystery. We need to understand it and its implications so we will be able to better carry out the walk as outlined in the chapters that follow.

- 3:2 (If ye have heard of the dispensation (*administration*) of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery: (as I wrote afore in few words,
3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Notice that the second part of verse 3 and verse 4 are a third parenthesis: a parenthesis within a parenthesis within a parenthesis. God really wants our attention.

This parenthesis follows Paul's mention of the Mystery in the first part of verse 3, which was made known to him by revelation from God. He had already written briefly about it, both in Chapter 2 and also in the form of truths expressed in his earlier epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians.

From verse 4 in this parenthesis we see that God wants us to not only read but to read to the point that we experientially know what we read. He wants us to understand, or more accurately to ponder, or dwell on, what we read to the point that we make it our own. Then as we apply this understanding in our daily walk, our lives will be a witness of the greatness of what God has made available.

The Mystery is summed up in verse 6:

- 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (*the 7 Church epistles*):

This is a summation of the truths found in the latter part of Chapter 2. It doesn't matter who we are or what our previous background was, once we got born again, we became members of the Family of God, and all of God's inheritance is ours to enjoy.

In the next few verses Paul tells about how he became a minister, in this case operating the ministry of an evangelist, to preach among the Gentiles this Mystery which had previously been kept hidden. Then:

- 3:11 According to the eternal purpose (*the purpose of the ages*) which he (*God*) purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
3:12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

We already saw back in verse 18 of Chapter 2 that through what Christ accomplished we have access unto the Father. This verse establishes that truth.

When we are in Christ (in fellowship) as sons and daughters of God, we not only have access to our heavenly Father, but we can approach Him with boldness, having confidence that He will lovingly provide everything we need. We have access to God's strength, wisdom, peace, protection, and power.

Verse 13 marks the end of the parenthesis that had begun with verse 2 of Chapter 3. We could read from verse 1 directly to verse 14 to get the overall flow:

- 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ (*Christ Jesus*) for you Gentiles,
3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father (*the rest of the verse is not in 5 of the 7 critical Greek manuscripts and must be omitted*),

Notice that if we do read directly from verse 1 to verse 14, Paul repeats himself (“For this cause”). This is another figure of speech, called anachorēsis, which is a regression, a return to the original subject after a digression (the parenthesis in between).

In verse 14 Paul says he bowed his knees unto the Father. This is a figure of speech called an idiom, in which the emphasis here is on prayer, not on any posture. Paul is about to deliver the second prayer in this doctrinal portion of Ephesians, recorded in the rest of Chapter 3.

This prayer is the central pivotal prayer of Ephesians, serving as the fulcrum between the doctrinal and practical parts of the epistle. Paul prays for certain things that we will need, once we have the doctrine, to be able to successfully accomplish the walk spelled out in the practical part of the epistle which is to follow.

In this prayer, rather than praying to God as the Creator, the prayer is addressed to God as our Father, of whom the whole family (God’s family) is named (verse 15). The name for a family represents the power and authority available to those in that family (to us).

- 3:16 That he (*God*) would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by (*through*) his spirit in the inner man (*that gift of holy spirit we have*);
3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith (*believing God*); that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
3:19 And to know (*ginoskō – experientially*) the love of Christ, which passeth (*surpasses*) knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

This prayer expresses God’s desire for us. He wants us to be strengthened, or made strong to the end of having an impact (Greek word *krataioō*), with might (*dunamis*, inherent potential power) through the gift of holy spirit that we received when we got born again. We build up, or strengthen, our spirit by speaking in tongues (I Corinthians 14:4).

As we speak in tongues much and strengthen our spirit, we are able to allow Christ to dwell in, to make himself at home in, to saturate, our hearts, the seat of our personal lives. We will then be able to fully comprehend God’s love.

Verse 18 contains the figure of speech ellipsis, in which a word is omitted in order to emphasize concepts referring to that word. Here the word omitted is “it”, which in the immediate context refers to “love” at the end of verse 17:

- 3:17b ...that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints (*we're in it together*) what is the breadth (*of it*), and length (*of it*), and depth (*of it*), and height (*of it*);
3:19a And (*even*) to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge...

God wants us to fully comprehend His love, which can't be comprehended or manifested by natural man of just body and soul through their five senses. Then we can be "filled with all the fullness of God", and we will be able to best carry out the practical walk of the last three chapters of Ephesians, using the power that God has made available to us and the great truth of the next verse:

- 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power (*dunamis*) that worketh (*energizes*) in us,

It has been said that verse 20 is the more than abundant life for us. In this verse we see that God has equipped us with great spiritual power that enables us to be more than conquerors in any situation (Romans 8:37). God is able and willing to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. As we look to Him, He takes care of us. We definitely have everything we need to be able to carry out the walk outlined in the practical portion which follows.

- 3:21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

In everything, God gets the glory.

God truly does love us, and by His grace and mercy, through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, we are members of the household of God, where we reap the benefits of the more than abundant life as we apply the great principles contained in the doctrinal section of the Book of Ephesians.

Here's a summary of the major points in Ephesians, Chapter 3:

1. God is blessed, and He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.
2. Because of God's great grace:
 - He chose us and predestinated us to become children in His family;
 - He made us accepted (highly favored) through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ;
 - We were redeemed and received remission of sins.
3. When Christ returns, we will be gathered together. Until that time, we have the gift of holy spirit, a token of our inheritance to come.
4. God desires that we know the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe.

5. Even though we were without God and without hope and deserved judgment against us, God's love motivated His great mercy, so instead of receiving judgment we were raised up together and seated in the heavenlies.
6. We were saved by God's grace, not by our works. We are God's workmanship (masterpiece).
7. Through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ we now have peace with God and with each other in the Body of Christ, and we have access to the Father.
8. No matter what our previous background, when we got born again, we became members of the family of God (the great Mystery). Together in the household, we make up the Temple, God's dwelling place.
9. God desires that our holy spirit within be strengthened with might so Christ can dwell in (fully saturate) our hearts, so we can be filled with all the fullness of God and will be able to fully comprehend and manifest God's love, enabling us to carry out the walk of a committed believer in the household as outlined in the practical portion of Ephesians.
10. God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is energized in us.

- Dr. Rick Batt