

The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Paraphrased,
explained,
for today.

GOOD NEWS

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Hans-Jörg Ronsdorf

As high as the heavens are

Book description

The letter to the Ephesians is paraphrased in my own words, i.e. it is re-rendered in an explanatory way. The amount of text is approximately three times the length of the original biblical text of a classical and literal Bible translation. This text does not replace or improve the biblical text, but is intended as an assistance to better understand and apply it.

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To the Disciples in Ephesus – Introduction

The motto that I give this Pauline letter, “As high as the heavens are”, are not some empty words. Just as from a high mountain the view goes in every direction to the horizon, so this letter is like a vantage point in every direction. Wherever one looks, one encounters the grace and love of God in Christ, his Son. It is unparalleled grace that begins in the past eternity and leads into the eternal kingdom of God and Christ, into his new world. If one reads the letter in one piece, one will pause again and again and think: We do not have deserved such a God.

Without devaluing other texts, I would call this letter the climax of the New Testament. Not only I fell in love with him. This is what theologians call him: “The crowning of Paul’s writings”, “the most divine composition”, “the most royal of all letters”, “this letter is pure music ... what we read here is truth that sings, teaching that is set to music”. “The letter to the Ephesians is one of the most important documents ever written.”

From this vantage point one can look to all the other letters of Paul and the other letters of the New Testament.

This letter describes like no other the nature, the origin and the horizon, the fullness and impact of the Christian faith. It is anchored in the Death, Resurrection and enthronement of the Son of God. God’s merciful saving action for us is central. He creates unity out of the many distant and near ones. He creates the church. It becomes his house on earth, where he lives. Lost people become new people. All this was revealed to Paul. It was completely new to him. But it was not contrary to the scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. This he knew like no one else. This was his Bible.

The second half of the letter deals with the everyday life of the new man. In all possible life relationships.

The Time of Writing and its Recipients

There'd be a lot to cover here. But there are plenty of other good books. The letter was written by Paul in about 62 AD. From prison. Which one is still to discover. Addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, in the Roman province of Asia, whose capital was Ephesus. One of the three largest metropolises in Asia Minor with more than 200,000 inhabitants. There was something going on! An economic, religious and political centre due to its geographical location and trade routes. A melting pot of many nations. And thus also of the most diverse religions and cults. Each home had its own little house idols, to which people sacrificed daily. Soothsayers, sorcerer-priests and oracle-readers were a respected branch of industry. The emperor cult had its unmissable place. But one god, or goddess, dominated everything: Artemis, the goddess of hunting and virginity. She was the daughter of Zeus and the twin sister of Apollo. The Romans called her Diana. She gave protection to women and girls, especially at birth. For loyalty shown in one of the greatest temples of antiquity in Ephesus. Paul experienced firsthand the role this goddess played in Ephesus. Paul experienced, indeed, was the cause of a great revival in the city and region. But for which he also had to suffer a lot. Read the 19th chapter from the Acts of the Apostles.

Xenophon of Ephesus wrote one of the few surviving romance novels of antiquity: *Ephesiaca* (Ephesian Tales). It is believed to have been written in the first, latest second century. At the beginning and end of the short novel, one gets a vivid picture of the cult of Artemis, which, by the way, was exclusively practised and dominated by women: “Now it was precisely at that time that the Artemis festival, which was customary there, was celebrated. From the city to the shrine there are seven stadiums (1.3 km). All the girls of the country had to go there in solemn procession in their best jewellery The crowd of spectators, locals and foreigners was large, because it was the custom to choose the bridegroom for the young girls at this festival. The procession passed in an orderly fashion, at the head of the procession were the ritual instruments, torches, baskets, incense, and then horses and dogs, as well as hunting and war tools, but most of them peaceful. Now when the procession was over, the whole crowd streamed into the temple for sacrifice.”

At the end of the novel, when the main characters return to Ephesus years later, he writes: “As soon as they had gone ashore, they went as they were, immediately to the temple of Artemis, made many prayers, made offerings, made holy offerings and also had a stone tablet with an inscription put up for the goddess”.

Artemis was the patron goddess of Ephesus, so to speak, who influenced all levels of society. With this overall impression of the city, the letter becomes more transparent for us. People were afraid of the influence of invisible divine powers and forces. But Paul proclaims Christ, who is exalted above all these powers and has defeated them.

Actuality in 21. Century?

The truths revealed to Paul by God, and which Paul wrote down inspired by God's Spirit, are timeless. They will last forever. It is about God and his Christ. Everything revolves around him, who has neither beginning nor end.

The idolatry of our days and in the western world functions without more or less visible idols, oracles and bloody sacrifices. The principle of idolatry and sacrifice, however, has remained. Slightly different, but in essence the same. What remains is the fascination of power, money or possessions. And sex. Then there is the digital world, which offers an endless source of distraction and amusement. Modern idolatry does not seek to appease or call upon gods, but to appease man himself, in order to ultimately serve his addiction to consume.

Convince yourself! The letter to Ephesians analyses this world situation rigorously. Paul would not write it differently today. And he shows the escape. Also the alternative lifestyle, which literally comes from heaven.

Paul did not bring a new religion. He brought Christ. Christ, in whom a new creation had begun, beyond death. A new world was to come, in which people of all classes, peoples and languages, united as one new man, would reflect Christ. In freedom from the life-determining and life-destroying dark powers to a new life. Which begins in this world, already filled with heaven, and which will last for eternity.

Content and Structure of the Letter

Part 1: Chapter 1 - 3 Educational (dogmatic) part

Section	Content
The granted Position of Salvation in Christ - the Salvation Indicative	
Chapter 1	
Verse 1 – 14	Praise and Worship of God: What God plans and does for Himself and what He has given us; God's Purpose for the Universe: Christ the Head over all, and we, the Church, His Body
Verse 15 – 23	What we are to understand: First God himself, the hope, the heritage of God in us, and his great Power for us, as it was in Christ's resurrection.
Chapter 2	
Verse 1 – 10	Once and now - God's Salvation: From spiritual Death to the new Position of Salvation in Christ in the Heavens.
Verse 11 – 22	No more Separation between Jews and Gentiles: Both will be one new Man and Temple.
Chapter 3	
Verse 1 – 13	The special Ministry of the Apostle of the Nations: The worldwide Church of the New Testament, the "new" People of God as the eternal Purpose of God
Verse 14 – 21	What we pray for: Intercession and praise of and by the Power of the Spirit, Knowledge of the Love of Jesus.
Part 2: Chapter 4 - 6 Practical Section - Living with dignity	
The everyday life of the new Person - the Salvation Imperative	
Chapter 4	
Verse 1 – 16	Exhortation to Unity: Gifts and Members of the Body, and the Growth of the Body.
Vers 17 – 32	The new Person: a completely different Life.
Chapter 5	
Verse 1 – 21	Life as God Children: Speaking and walking as imitators of God in contrast to the World.

Content and Structure of the Letter

Verse 22 – 33	Christ and the Church: Model for the Marriage of Man and Woman.
Chapter 6	
Verse 1 – 9	Parents and Children - Slaves and Masters.
Verse 10–24:	God's Armor: Spiritual Conflict .

Greetings 1,1-2

It is Paul who writes to you, no other. I do this as an apostle, as a directly assigned servant of Jesus Christ, the glorified Son of God and man. By his will I am his messenger. I am writing to you, saints and beloved ones in the capital Ephesus, also in the whole Roman province of Asia Minor. I write to you from my heart. ...you who, like all the followers of Jesus, are holy men dedicated to God. Believers with all your hearts. You are all rooted and grounded in Christ. United with him. Forever bound to him.

I very much desire that God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, from His inexhaustible heavenly source, may give us ever more grace and peace for our daily lives. Daily. Until we reach our ultimate goal.

Overflowing blessed in heaven, in Christ 1,3

Together, and as often as possible, we praise our God. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. With amazed and thankful hearts we realize that he has already given us every possible spiritual blessing. Everything that we as graced people can receive, enjoy and experience, he gave us. A blessing that comes to us through the Holy Spirit and can only be known and experienced through him.

Everything in the heavenly world was given to us. There where Christ is. Already now, in our everyday life, we enjoy this blessing. Christ is at home in heavenly glory. And only in him have we been given this blessing. There, in the heavenly world. I will come to that shortly. Already now we possess this heavenly wealth of blessings. And we live in it. Soon to be filled with visible glory. I will now inform you about all this in more detail.

The Blessings in Detail: Election for Sonship 1,4-5

The great, immeasurable wealth of blessings has been promised to us even before the beginning of the universe. When none of us existed. Everything started out only from him - not from us. For he has chosen us before all time. We who believe the gospel. So that we may be holy and blameless in the fellowship of His love. To live with him under his loving presence. As beloved and motivated by his love, we want to live holy and blameless. For God has appointed us to be placed in the position of royal daughters and sons of God. God did this through His Son. We should become for him like his son. As precious as he is to his father, so precious we should become to him. For himself, for his heart. Because he rejoices in it. Because it delights him. Because he is the love that gives himself away. He has accepted us into his heavenly family community.

Our undeserved adoption as sons and daughters of God makes God's grace shine in the brightest light. We are set for the glory of His glorious grace. For it is only by grace that we have become this. He has made us conform to it in His beloved Son. He has given us the same love as He gave to His Son.

Pardon, Redemption, Forgiven 1,6-8

But we were unworthy. First, something had to happen to us. We would never have come from ourselves - without God's merciful intervention - into the fellowship of His love. We needed redemption! We were trapped and guilty of our sins. Salvation came through the blood of Jesus. Through the death of his beloved Son. His sacrifice takes away our sins forever. Just like it did in Egypt. The blood of the Passover lamb brought deliverance to Israel. Now he has forgiven all our sins and disobedience. Because the riches of his grace are so great.

He has let that grace overflow. We needed it so much. And a lot of grace was needed. He has given us this insight so that we can praise that grace aloud. In this way we can discover the redeeming grace again and again and more and more. But he has let us know far more than it would have been enough for us already.

The Secret of his Will 1,9-10

As his sons and daughters, he has even initiated us into his eternal plan and counsel. He wants us to know what he has planned for this world and the whole universe. This was not an emergency plan after people have sinned and fallen away. No, God had this eternal purpose long before and despite our perdition and sin. Today, the eternal purpose is no longer a secret that only a privileged few can know. No, all his daughters and sons are initiated. Deep in his heart he has a great desire to carry out a glorious plan of love and blessing for this world. The time will come when all the other times that have defined and shaped by mankind will be over. Then everything will be filled and marked by the Christ of God. From Him, the Head, the blessing will come forth to the ends of the earth. He will have the guidance. He will unite in himself all that was separated in chaos. He will put everything back into its rightful place. Bring together what belongs together. This means salvation for the whole cosmos. He will unite heaven and earth through his visible presence. A new and better Eden, spreading over the whole earth, will make everything forget what once was.

Our inheritance in the eternal kingdom of Christ 1,11-12

In Christ, as royal sons and daughters of God, we have also been appointed heirs of God. Just as the 12 tribes of Israel once received an inheritance in the land of Canaan by lot, so this great, heavenly inheritance, an eternal possession, has been granted to us in Christ. We are predestined by God Himself to experience this glorious fullness of times. The time to which all things will lead. We are to be united with Christ. We are privileged to share his place of honour. Then, when he is head over all. In this way, God will be even more pleased and delighted than we are. Already now, but all the more this praises his glory and grace when that day comes. He has truly rewarded Himself by bringing us to Himself, in Christ.

How this Message came to us 1,13-14

We, the Jews, who have already waited and hoped for the Messiah, have received this inheritance. But today this also applies to you, the nations of the whole earth. The truth about the true and living God you have encountered in the Gospel. This is the good news of salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ. You have accepted and believed this gospel. God has responded to your faith. He has accepted you as his own. And he has firmly sealed his property. This seal is the Holy Spirit. It has already been promised to us by the prophets and by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is God's most precious and secure deposit on this great inheritance I have just spoken about. As if God needed to guarantee our future in this way. How gracious he is. It is like a pledge with which we have the security today to be with Christ in the world to come. The certainty that one day we will receive our rightful inheritance as sons and daughters of God in eternal life. When God's infinitely generous plan of salvation is then fulfilled, it serves first and foremost his honor, his glory and his own good pleasure. From him, through him and for him it is accomplished.

The intercessory prayer of Paul 1,15-16

I have heard of the living faith in which you live. And of the love you have for all the saints, for all the daughters and sons of God. I am very glad about this, and this is also my wish for all the communities that have come into being through my evangelization. I thank God daily for you in my prayers. I pray for you, as for all the others.

Prayer for Knowledge of God 1,17

I especially pray that you will know God. That He will give you the gift of knowing Himself through the Spirit. And to understand him more and more. Do Know your God! Who and what he is to you personally. For he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. From him comes the glorious plan of which I speak. He is the source of all good and glorious things that have undeservedly fallen to us. It is this God that we must recognize first and foremost. He is totally different from any god you have ever known. Recognize him in all his being, richness and glory. Recognize him above all in Jesus. He is the image of God. The Spirit will reveal God to us, show us His glory, and make the Eternal One great in our hearts. Without the Spirit, we will not know God. When the Spirit reveals, it is for our joy and worship of God.

Know our Hope 1,18

In this way you will be enlightened and see with the eyes of the heart, with the gaze of the inner man, the greatness of God in Christ. Through the Spirit of God and in faith, we then see clearly what God has called us to do. How glorious is our goal. How awesome is our hope. We will be united with Christ, the Head, in God's New World.

Not only we are heirs of God. We are God's own inheritance. It is his very personal heritage, as if he were also one who receives an inheritance. And is looking forward to it. We, the saints, his daughters and sons, are his inheritance. It is almost a shared, a mutual inheritance. Breathtakingly great in the face of the glory and riches of God who will consummate that inheritance.

God's power manifests in us and in Christ 1,19-20

I also pray that you will realize God's power that has been effective in you and is working for you. God's power and strength, with which He called the universe into existence out of nothing, will unfold mightily on us as we enter into our inheritance and live in it forever.

This divine endeavor of power, which God employs for us, has already become clearly visible. It was effective in its entirety when God tore his Christ out of the shameful death on the cross and raised him up. And placed him above all else, at his right hand, on his throne, in the heavenly world. As a risen and glorified man, in this highest place of honor, he triumphed over all spiritual powers and authorities of the invisible heavenly world. They claim this place for themselves, but only one is entitled to it: the Messiah. This is now settled for all time and will always be settled. The evil, anti-God forces are defeated. They tremble before him. Christ is greater and everything is subject to him. He is the head, the ruler and master of everything. Already now and as I wrote, soon visible to all.

The Church and Christ – Head and Body completely unified 1,21-23

How great and blessed it is, one hardly dares to believe that God has given this exalted Christ to the Church, to us as Head. The community of believers, the worldwide church, is his body. As Head, Christ is the provider and protector.

Both are a spiritual, a real complete organism. Visible in the world. Even more: in this way, even Christ himself in this union with his Church has also become complete and full. Christ, the Head, united with his Church out of all the followers of Jesus, will in this unity fill everything, up to every corner of the universe, with the glory of God.

In what Situation God found us 2,1-3

The demonstration of God's power will not only become visible in your future inheritance. It was already necessary at the beginning of God's history with each one of you. For you were as dead in your relationship with God. Turned away from Him, you lived your own life. Disobedient to Him in many sins. You were separated, even cut off, from the true and living God.

Without God, you were abandoned to the invisible ruler of darkness. You did not know that. You thought you were free. This mighty prince and his angels influence and dominate the human world. He influences every epoch in the history of the world. He colonizes the people so that they forget the true God and disobey him. We were all sons of disobedience. We loved disobedience and sin. We all belonged to this godless society manipulated by Satan. But we are still responsible for our own actions. Wherever we had the opportunity, we lived out the sinful desires and passions from our hearts. Everything in our lives revolved around how we could realize ourselves. We took everything we could get. We thought we were free, yet we were trapped in our sins. We breathed the spirit of the world, but we were dead alive. That was our nature, the spirit we were born with. In God's eyes, such a life deserves nothing but His wrath.

God's love cannot be resisted and makes the impossible possible 2,4-7

But this God approached us very differently than we deserved! He is full of incomprehensible mercy towards us, because he is - completely different from Satan and his servants and all the gods of the world - a God of love! He saw our hopeless situation from which we could never free ourselves. And we did not want to either. God intervened - he actually loved us. Rescued us from this forlornness. He has loved us out of this prison of sin. We were spiritually dead in our transgressions. We were separated and far away from him. Totally cut off from the source of God's life. But God delivered us from this prison of death. He tore us out by raising us from his freewill death with the Messiah and making us alive. God's power has become so powerful in Christ that it has catapulted us into life with him. Thus we have come into a new and real life relationship with him. This is real salvation and deliverance from hopeless lostness! Our fate was sealed, but the infinite goodness of God makes the liberating difference. Such is undeserved grace! Such is our God!

But salvation is greater and reaches further than we could ever have imagined! God has united us so intimately with the Messiah that we were not only raised from our spiritual death with him. We even ascended with him into heaven, where he was allowed to take his seat at the right hand of God. There, in Christ, we were allowed to sit and rest in the presence of God. In Christ, God has taken us to Himself, to His heart. This is already now reality. True in our everyday life. In this knowledge, in our position as royal daughters and sons of God, we now live for God. In this way, we are placed in the realm of the heavenly victor. This position will one day no longer be lived only in faith. One day it will become visible in the resurrection. When we receive a new glorious body.

From this heavenly place, we will enter into God's new world, into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord Jesus. And there, in Christ, receive even more gifts of grace. God is so rich in grace and goodness towards us! For today and tomorrow. It will also in future time and eternity have no end towards us.

Undeserved Grace makes us the Masterwork of God 2,9-10

This whole saving operation of God was undeserved grace! We have contributed nothing. We could only believe and trust God and Christ as we heard in the Gospel. The great salvation of God is his faithfulness, his gift and his present! I cannot stress this enough! Neither did we want it then, nor did we do anything that God could do anything to help us. All glory and honour belong to God alone!

Now we are his masterpiece, his new creation in Christ! In the beginning people were created to be fruitful and to multiply. In the same way, we now, as God's new people, are allowed to multiply good works. In this we are to be fruitful. God has already prepared the good works that we do. They lie at our feet and wait to be done. What God has done for us, we can now pass on. So that people may be blessed and God may have the glory. He alone!

The Near and the Far - both reconciled and led to God 2,11-16

Never forget where you, the nations, came from. How far from God you were. In the sight of Israel you were called the foreskin. We were God's covenant people, endowed with the covenant seal of circumcision. You lived without expectation of the Messiah. You had no hope, no claim on him. You had no access to the civil rights of Israel. The covenants by which God bound himself to his people Israel and the great promises he promised to his own people did not apply to you. All in all, you were hopelessly lost. Without a spark of hope, yes, without the true God of Israel, you were lost in the world of nations and their gods. You yourselves have not perceived this yourselves, but this is the truth.

But now something unexpected has happened for us Jews, and something undeserved and surprising has happened for everyone. You the nations have been brought from the far-off distant through Christ directly into the immediate presence of God. Only through the blood of the Messiah has this become possible. He is our shalom! He is the peace between us, Israel, and the nations. He has torn down the separation, the wall between us. He did this by becoming a human and overriding the laws that formed this separation and wall. He wanted to unite these two, Israel and the nations, in peace. He even wanted to create them in himself into a completely new man. All of us together have now become that one new man. It is not only the individual that counts, but the common. He, Jesus, has united the two into one body and reconciled them with each other. And has reconciled them both together with God. He has made peace. And do you know how he did that? At what cost and with what effort? With the horrible cross! With his suffering and death on the cross, he virtually killed and destroyed this enmity. What stood between us and God, he took away on the cross.

This Message must spread out 2,17

With the message of the cross, he, the Messiah, is travelling throughout the world through his messengers and through his Spirit. Let all people hear it. This all-embracing peace and reconciliation will be proclaimed to you, the far-off, that is, the nations, but also to us Jews, the near ones. Peace with God and peace among one another! This is the message of the gospel.

We are invited - boldly we come before the Throne 2,18

Imagine the triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, inviting us, Israel and the nations, to approach Him together into His heavenly presence. To come before the face of the eternal, almighty, holy and loving God. We approach him through Jesus, through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. He enables and encourages us to do this in faith and joyful confidence. Without any fear. Fear filled all who approached God in His earthly Jerusalem temple. But he is now our heavenly father. He loves his sons and daughters! His heart is open to us. Waiting for us.

New Homeland and new Home - a new House 2,19-22

But everything has turned out for the best for us. You, the nations, are no longer strangers, no longer without a home, no longer homeless, no longer second-class citizens. We have become co-inhabitants and members of God's household. Yes, we now also live with the believers from Israel in His heavenly house, as His family. The eternal God has finally found a permanent home on earth, which he has been looking for since the beginning. The house is built on this foundation: on the apostles of Jesus and his prophets. They stood at the beginning of the proclamation of salvation, they were witnesses of the Resurrection and messengers of the Lord Jesus. They brought the gospel and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this house, Jesus Christ is the cornerstone on which everything is aligned. Who, as the keystone, guarantees stability. In him, the whole house is perfectly oriented and stably joined together.

Although this house is already perfect through Christ, it continues to grow. Like a living organism. It is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. In it dwells none other than the Triune God Himself. You, the nations, now belong to it. It began with us from Israel in Jerusalem at Pentecost. And not long after that you too became living building stones of this divine building. Through the Holy Spirit, who builds us all up together into this dwelling of God. Together we have become God's dwelling place. Once it was a temple of stones. In a single place. Now his temple extends over the whole earth. Everywhere, living stones are being placed in his temple every day. The dividing wall has been broken down - now the temple is being built.

The Mystery of Christ revealed and proclaimed by Paul 3,1-7

I, Paul, write to you from captivity. But I am not a prisoner of the Romans, even though it may seem so. I am and remain a prisoner of my Lord Jesus Christ. He rules over everything. Every day of my life. For you, the nations, I am in prison. Because of my Jewish fellow Jews, who find it unbearable that you, the nations, now become sons and daughters of God. But Christ has entrusted me with the mission of proclaiming the grace of God to you who were entangled in the darkness of idolatry.

I didn't invent all this myself. It was revealed to me in a supernatural way. This secret of God's grace is no longer a secret. I have just described it to you in a few words. This is the mystery of Christ, which was hidden from all men. Also to us, his ancient people Israel. But now the Spirit of God has completely revealed it to the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. They now know it, and freely proclaim Christ and His grace. In this way we can all know what was once hidden in this mystery: That we from the nations are co-heirs of God; that we from the nations are incorporated into the body of Christ, His Church; that we from the nations now also share in the promises that Israel received long ago. All that we now possess together we have only in Jesus Christ. In him and through him, God has freed us and given us gifts. The Gospel is the only and reliable message about the mystery of Christ. You have embraced it with faith. I am a servant of this gospel and I do everything for it. It is the gift of God, an undeserved present, that I am worthy to be a servant of the Gospel. I am allowed to be so through the power that works in me. I will faithfully fulfill this mission until my last day.

The Mystery of Christ was revealed to be proclaimed to the whole World 3,8-13

I really feel like the least and last saint when I think about my past. I can't imagine myself doing this big project. I am to proclaim to you, the nations, the immeasurable riches of Christ until the end of the world. Through my proclamation, all those who hear it should be enlightened about this mystery. They shall know how God revealed it in his time. And now made accessible to all through the Gospel. Before all times it was the longing of God's loving heart. But it remained hidden until Christ came.

It comes from the God who created all things. Which makes it clear without a doubt which God we are dealing with: Not just any god imagined by man. No, the eternal one, who has no beginning, but who himself gave a beginning to everything. He is the author of this mystery. It concerns all created things. He will fill it with His glory. God has the last word.

Not the powers and authorities and princes of the invisible heavenly world. They want to take possession of everything created for themselves. And manipulate and destroy man. The hostile, invisible powers are also God's creatures and once belonged to His heavenly family. But many have fallen away from him. God's deep redemption wisdom is now demonstrated to them through the redeemed and liberated church of Jews and nations. Perplexed, these powers have to acknowledge that they could neither recognize nor prevent the eternal purpose of God, which he fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ, the Lord of Lords. They must witness how people who, like themselves, were entangled in sins are now allowed to take their place in the family of God. We have in the ascended and glorified Christ the joyful confidence and full authority to face this glorious God in faith. To his heavenly throne. It is only one kneeling step away from us, since we have been transferred to the heavenly world. In each and every place we can approach this throne - it is only one step away.

The Powers must also take notice of this. They are no longer allowed to step into the presence of their Creator.

Do not be discouraged by my contested situation in prison and in persecution. After all, this has come only because I proclaim to you the mystery and riches of Christ. And the privilege of approaching God boldly. Remember how blessed you are by my service, which is why I am here in prison chains.

Intercession for spiritual Power, Christ's indwelling and Knowledge of His Love 3,14-19

In spite of everything I encounter, I will not stop praying for you. On my knees. He, as Creator, gives the name to everyone, to the heavenly families, to the angels, but also to us humans. He - as Creator - is above everything. That is why He is the first and only address for our prayers.

I ask Him specifically that you all may receive His power. As much spiritual power as he is rich in glory. May his Spirit constantly let this divine power flow into our inner man. And increase it in our soul.

In this way, through the action of the Spirit of God, Christ can be made room in your hearts, in your innermost being, in your thoughts. Constantly many voices and things want to take the space of your heart. Let him always take the priority.

In this way you will be rooted and safely anchored in his love. A love that is gratefully received, but also passed on daily, which unites you with all the saints, with all the holy ones.

Especially together, in communion, in many places where disciples of Jesus come together, we grasp the breadth, length, height and depth, the whole space of God's eternal purpose. Keep this eternal plan of God in mind again and again. It is filled with the boundless and incomparable great love of Christ. His love made all this possible at all. This love of Christ is greater than we will ever understand. It can touch and impress us deeply again and again and leads us into deep worship.

Explore and love this mighty purpose. Not to do so would be embarrassing for daughters and sons of God. For only in this way can we become full and fulfilled by Christ and by God Himself. This is already now a piece of heaven on earth.

All Glory to the Almighty, who works in us - from His people 3,20-21

What a God! One who can do anything. And much more than what we can think and plan, hope or pray for. Through his power working within us. Today and forever. To Him be all glory and honour. We can only praise and worship what glory you, O God, hold. In the midst of your church, in your house, where you enjoy living, there all honour and affection, love and worship belongs to you, in Christ: today, tomorrow and forever and ever. Amen.

This is only the end of half of the letter. It was about how God saved us and blessed us beyond measure. The second half of the letter is about how God has turned our lives upside down. We have become new people through God's intervention. And how new people live is what the second half is about. Many areas of life are addressed and the before and after are compared. It is about living what we are. To live the life of God out of salvation and grace. With my fellow Christians, fellow men, spouses and children.

Living, nurturing and protecting loving Unity 4,1-3

I encourage you, the prisoner in the Lord Jesus, that the glorious call of God is visibly reflected in your daily lives. He has transformed you into what you are now in Christ. I have just described this in my letter. God called us through his gospel.

Let your lives be completely in harmony with this glorious call of God. And that means nothing other than to live as Jesus lived. Be his imitators.

This means to live together in a way that is interwoven with humility and gentleness and longevity. Do not act big and don't be arrogant. Do not hurt anyone, neither with words nor with deeds. Give the other person time, if necessary, to rethink. Put yourselves in his place. Bear the other with his weaknesses and faults through the love of God. God himself does the same with each one of us.

It is about nothing less than the unity of all saints. That's what God wanted and that's what he loves. I described it to you earlier. That's what God's spirit created. Only He makes this unity possible and experiential. But it is fragile and vulnerable, so we should preserve and protect it like a precious treasure. For the unity of the Spirit is God's treasure. This is what God's heart longs for and it is anchored in His own being and eternal purpose. He has given us this unity. It is the visible, lived and practical unity of all sons and daughters of God. It is not uniformity or unification, not an event, but a decision to be united, the unconditional solidarity of different people of all races and social classes and types in Jesus. Therefore, being one in one body deserves all our attention and effort. Through the bond of peace we are to be bound together, virtually chained to one another. Only in this way can this precious unity be practically preserved. We must chase after this peace so that it never escapes us.

A great Unity and its Means of Manifestation 4,4-6

This unity of all saints, of all disciples, is based on a sevenfold unity. It is greater than us, and yet we are part of it. We are rooted in it. Through us it becomes visible: one body, the new man, out of all sons and daughters throughout the world, formed by the Spirit of God.

One spirit that unites - not many spirits that create divisions.

One hope that directs and unites us to the great, epic, purpose of God.

One Lord Jesus Christ for all, greater than all the Lords and Caesars of the world, whom we all gladly serve.

One faith that unites us, proclaimed and communicated to us through the apostles and prophets.

One baptism is our trademark, in water, through which every disciple testifies before God and men and the invisible powers that Christ died and rose again, and we with him.

One true and living God and Father of all the sons and daughters of God, who is active in this unity, who is enthroned above all, who works through all and dwells in all.

Christ distributes the Gifts of Grace that serve Unity 4,7-11

Just as the grace of God was given to me, Paul, so a special grace has been given to everyone who belongs to this unity of the Spirit. With this individual gift of grace, everyone is to serve this unity. And help to preserve it. Despite all differences. Our glorified Lord Jesus gave this to each disciple, and that individually, as he, in his divine wisdom, gave it to each one in a most suitable way. Just as each one can carry it and carry it out.

These gifts that Christ has given to each one of us are the result of His mighty triumph. Never forget that he gave everything so that we could receive this grace! I think of Psalm 68, which speaks of the Lord as the mighty warrior who, in a spiritual battle, climbs and conquers Mount Bashan, Hermon. The mighty enemies, bulls of Bashan, these are the powers of darkness, of which I have spoken many times now. They are defeated and brought down in captivity. They are his prey. That is how Christ defeated these powers that held you captive, through the cross on Calvary.

Christ is victorious and has ascended in triumph into heaven. And from there he descended in his spirit at Pentecost in Jerusalem. With rich gifts the Spirit of Christ came down, which he distributed and gave to his body, his church. Both his ascent and his descent are triumphal processions. He has come down to earth, to us, to distribute the gifts to us in royal generosity, as the victorious warrior. Christ, who died and rose from death, ascended to the heavenly throne of God to fill everything with His glorious presence. Every corner of the universe, as well as our daily lives, should and will be filled with Christ.

Gifts of Grace in Action – ministry, unity, knowledge, growth, maturity, truth and love 4,11-16

Did Christ, after he ascended, leave his church to itself? No, because he gave his church people as gifts. I'll mention five here. They were gifted and enabled by him to become apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Their service and commitment with their supernatural, spiritual gifts serves to prepare all saints, all disciples, and make them well prepared for their special ministry. For this they have all received the gift of grace from Christ. Everyone has received a gift and thus a ministry. Gift and function should be recognized, encouraged and challenged and discovered through the fivefold ministry.

The ministry of these five gifts, as well as the ministry of all who belong to the unity of the Spirit, serves to build up and preserve the body of Christ. As long as we are on earth, this spiritual body of Christ needs the active and devoted commitment and participation of all its body parts, its members. We are already the body of Christ, but we should also live it out practically. The goal of building up and growing is the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. We are all on the way, recognizing piece by piece. Sometimes we are ignorant, unconsciously clinging to wrong beliefs, not recognizing the Son of God clearly enough. Therefore we need the others with their gifts. We should grow together and become grown up. To the full maturity of an experienced person. That is the goal we have set ourselves. This growing up is nothing else but the fullness of Christ.

Equipping and growth are necessary so that we are no longer underage like children. This means not being able to judge or evaluate anything from God's perspective. If we do not make progress in faith, we are like a sailboat being driven rudderlessly back and forth by the wind. The wind of false teachings and teachers can sweep us away. These false teachings are often even deliberate deception, made up as a cunning mistake to seduce the underage children. So don't be babies and toddlers anymore!

Be truthful and hold on to the truth. but with love for one another and not in a know-it-all manner. Yes, let everything you do help us to grow up to him, to Christ the Head. From him, in turn, the whole body grows, being spiritually

nourished by this heavenly Head. Through Christ, the body of many disciples is perfectly joined and united. The body is supported and nourished by the spiritual joints, i.e., by every available connecting point, by muscles and tendons. Each disciple contributes to the growth of the body according to the grace received. Or not, if he keeps the grace he received for himself and does not pass it on. What each member, each disciple contributes to this body through his ministry results in progress and growth of the whole. We cannot see this directly and in the whole, because it extends over the whole earth, but God sees it and holds the whole in his hand.

Just as every body builds itself up and keeps itself alive in order to grow, and goes about its business, so too is the body of Christ, which builds itself up in the love of God. This is true of the universal church, it is the one body of Christ. Even when we do not see it, or its unity is not visible, or only little is visible.

What Life without God looks like 4,17-19

This growing and becoming can only succeed if you no longer live like the nations to which you once belonged. I beseech you in the Lord. They are completely convinced of their senseless and superficial view of life and reject the Gospel. Their thinking and their minds in terms of God, and thus about themselves, are completely obscured. They are separated from God, virtually dead in sin, as I said before. They do not know life with God, which is why they lack everything. They are ignorant about God and in this they are hard as stone in their conviction. Cemented in their opinions. They are completely closed to everything that comes from God. As a result, many of them have lost all sense of what is good, appropriate, useful and right. What remains for them and in what they realize themselves is the unrestrained debauchery and perversion of all the good that God gave in the beginning in His creation. What God once created for blessing and pleasure is twisted into impurity and consumed with insatiable greed and avarice. Thus the nations that live more or less in this way find themselves in senselessness and emptiness, hopelessness, bondage, dependency and perdition.

How to live another Life 4,20-24

Only God can get us out of such a life. It truly takes a resurrection to become a new man. God did that. In Christ. When you came to know Christ, He was the exact opposite of what you were. The truth that Jesus proclaimed is quite different. His words we are to learn and do. His words and teachings have been proclaimed to you in Asia Minor. They lead to a completely different life.

Our old life, that of the nations, belongs to our old man. We have taken it off and taken off like an old, worn and dirty coat. This old man decays like a perishable commodity through all the deceitful desires in which he lives. He already reaps what he sows. He becomes what he worships and adores. But you are constantly being renewed and refreshed by the Spirit of God in your thinking and in your whole attitude towards life. Through your fellowship with one another and through the Word of Christ. That you may live like new men. From within you now decide for the good. From the new heart. For you have put on the new man like a new garment that all can see. This new man created by God. Only because of this, this new man lives as it is God's own being. Namely, his truth, justice and holiness.

What the new Life looks like 4,25-32

That God has so radically renewed our lives becomes visible in small and large things, situations and attitudes. The lie should no longer exist. Always speak the truth to your neighbor, and do not fool yourselves against each other. After all, we are organically connected to one another like limbs of a body! As brothers and sisters in faith. If you are angry with others, then be very careful not to sin. Anger is a natural human emotion. But often, if not mostly, our anger is sinful because it is too intense, exaggerated and also unjustified. If you were angry that way with your neighbor in his face, which should not have been the case, seek the next possible opportunity to clear it up and to reconcile. If you do not do this, you open the space for the devil and give him the opportunity to sow bitterness, and again, even more sinful anger.

Theft should also no longer be a problem. Instead of taking it easy and taking something, work for it and earn it. Do not use your hands to steal. On the contrary, use them to give to those who need it and suffer hardship.

Also pay attention to how you speak and what you say. It is a characteristic of the new man not to speak lazy, ugly and hurtful or unkind words. Instead, speak good words that encourage and make the grace of God great for those who hear them.

When you do, speak or think something, like your old man, you offend and insult the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and wants to help us to live as new people. He is God's seal upon us. He is our security and guarantee that we will reach the day of redemption - when we take up our inheritance. This Holy Spirit is very sensitive when it comes to sins. More than we sometimes think. It is sad when we do exactly what He wants to remove from our lives in His very immediate presence. So let us live out his life that he has given us in the new man. Let us become what we are! The Spirit empowers us!

The lives of the old, unredeemed men among themselves are often filled with bitterness, with anger and rage and shouting and blasphemy against each other. It is simply malicious. Are you now very different from each other. Even to them. Be kind, show your compassion and be sensitive when others experience suffering and loss. Be ready at all times to forgive and show mercy

when injustice is done to you. This is the greatest thing you can do because God has also forgiven you all through Christ. You could not make restitution even to God and were completely dependent on God's merciful forgiveness, as I have already said. That is the greatest thing that has been given to you: His mercy.

If it was said about a Christian: Very much the Father - very much like Jesus 5,1-2

You are loved by God! You are his children! You have his eternal life in you. His heart beats within you: You are to be, and can be, imitators of our God and heavenly Father. In God's love this becomes visible above all else. In love let us live. Let our dealings with one another and our motive for everything we do be love. It is out of love for us that Jesus Christ gave himself to death for us, as a vicarious sacrifice. There has never been greater love. This sacrifice of love is what pleases God. His purpose in life was a total sacrifice to God. It honoured, glorified and delighted God beyond measure. That is how it should and can be with us too!

Sexuality from two Perspectives 5,3-10

I am now coming to speak about something that is common in our society, with you in Ephesus, but also around the world: free sex, sexual unrestraint, pornography and greed. Refuse this entirely. Already in your thoughts! Even in your conversations. This free living out of sexuality has nothing to do with the giving and giving away love I just spoke about. It is exactly the opposite. People become victims.

Even joking or making fun about this kind of sexuality, even just talking about it, does not fit with saints and holy people. Banish every thought and every word about it, so that this empty and senseless life will never catch up with you again. Humor and fine jokes are not a sin, but dirty jokes about shamefulness and foolish, empty and superficial chatter do not fit into God's Kingdom. From your hearts and minds shall come thanks, nothing but gratitude. Talk about what you can thank God for. And then do it!

You have to recognize and hold on: People who have free sex outside or without marriage covenant between man and woman will never enter the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus without conversion and repentance. They give in to their sexual lust and live in it as if it were their idol whom they worship. They will - unlike you - have no inheritance in the future of God. So do not let yourselves be distracted in this matter from this clear standpoint of God, as if all this were not so bad and serious. They think they are modern and in the light. They claim that one must not control one's lust, but live it out, and live out oneself. But that is a lie. People deceive themselves. Because that was never meant by God. Sexuality as God's gift is wonderful and holy, and given for marriage. But he who follows his sexual desire without restraint is disobedient through and through. He will already feel in his life how empty and lonely such a life is, if love is not lived in commitment and faithfulness. In the end the holy and righteous wrath of God will come upon them. We may then take up our inheritance in the glory of God and His royal rule.

So do not belong to these people. And does not share or support their opinion and view of life. The time when you lived like them is over for you. You are no longer in darkness. You - and not they - are now transferred into the

heavenly light of Christ. Live like that now. As seeing people, and quite different from these people. Refuse their doings. The heavenly light produces more and more fruit in our lives: Kindness, justice and truth. You are now asking for what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not first ask what pleases you or the people around you.

Falling back is possible - a way back into God's Light also 5,11-14

If any of you fall back into such deeds, do not make yourselves one with these unfruitful works of darkness by covering them in silence or even tolerating them. Have the courage to call these things clearly by name. What they do in secret is so shameful that it is simply not worth talking about. And if you condemn these works, it is not because it is your personal opinion, but because it is God's viewpoint and truth. His holy light reveals the nature of these unholy deeds. Make them aware that it will certainly harm them. If any of you should slip into this old life, then call out to them urgently the familiar words: Awake from your spiritual sleep and twilight. Rise from the dead, since you live like those who do not know God. Then Christ will shine on you again, and you will see where you belong as a child of God.

Dangers everywhere - teach us to count our Days 5,15-17

You see, dangers lurk everywhere for us children of God. Look closely at how you live. As Christians, do not live thoughtlessly, naïve or superficially. Live like those who are wise, who examine themselves and what they encounter in the light of the truth of God. For our time is evil. We do not live in a neutral zone, but among people in a society far from God. She wants us to belong to them again. Buy out the time you have left. Realize that our days of life are numbered and finite. The will of our Lord and Master Christ is the only thing that counts. Only in carrying out his will can we buy out the time.

Fulfillment with the Spirit in common Praise of God 5,18-21

Do not get drunk or intoxicated with alcohol. Not even when you get together for your evening meals. This often brings about the sins of which I spoke. Whoever gets drunk becomes unrestrained and loses soberness and self-control. Or he becomes tired, passive and inactive. Instead, let the Spirit of God fill you instead when you come together. Talk about the riches and the Word of Christ. Yes, let the Spirit inspire and fill you and each other by singing and cheering the Lord together from the heart. And play your instruments. Let the praise from psalms and spiritual songs fill us with Christ and the joy of heaven. Yes, say at all times, at every opportunity, in your hearts, but also loudly, thank to our God in the name of Jesus. This is the only worthy response when you have experienced God's grace daily.

In this, all of you are subject to one another in reverence for Christ, just as you are subject to Christ. Do not rise above one another. Do not impose your own will. Respect the other higher than yourselves.

The Love of God: Christ and His Church - Head and Body - Husband and Wife - Respect and Love 5,22-33

Wives, be subject to your husbands before the Lord. For the head in this marriage covenant is the husband, just as the Messiah is the head of the Church, his wife, and his body. The Messiah is the Savior of His body, that is, of His Church, which consists of all the disciples. Just as the Church is subordinated to Christ, to her head, so are the wives to their husbands. The Church is blessed by the unity with Christ. So let the unity of your marriage be a blessing for the wives.

Husbands, this does not mean that you rule over your wives as a master rules over his slaves or the rulers over their servants. No, love your wives as the Messiah loved his Church and gave himself completely for her. ...even unto death. So far he went. His love was so great. He had the goal to sanctify them completely by taking them out of their misery and drawing them to himself. He made her special by sanctifying her. He had to cleanse her from all sinful dirt by washing her with the water of the Word of the Gospel. He still does this, constantly and every day his lasting love is expressed in it. He wants to place his beloved Bride before him, the Bridegroom, in all the beauty and glory that he has given her. There is nothing left of her that reminds us of where she once came from. She is now the Bride of Christ, holy and blameless.

Why am I writing this to you? Because you husbands are indebted and obliged to love and care for your wives as much as you care for your own bodies. The unity of your marriage goes as far as loving your own bodies, even yourselves, if you love your wives. And this without selfish ulterior motives. It would be absurd if you did not do this, because you never hate your own body. You nurture and nourish it, just as the Messiah nurtures his church. For we are members of his body. Moses writes at the beginning how God imagined the creation of a marriage relationship: The man will leave father and mother, become independent and no longer depend on them. He will unite with his wife in a new unity. These two will become one body. This is really a great mystery, about which one can always marvel when two people unite in this way. What is even greater: this is exactly the same even for Christ and his Church.

Therefore, in the face of these real and profound examples, each of you men should love your wife as you love yourself.

The woman should respect the man. Love and respect should govern your marriage on a daily basis and thus preserve it. Only in this way can you fully develop and be a blessing in what God has given you. There is no better way to create a marriage!

Parents and Children 6,1-4

I don't just write to adults. God speaks to children too. Be obedient to your parents in the Lord. That is good and right, even if it is sometimes difficult and even parents make mistakes. Moses, in the 10 Commandments, dedicated one to children. It is the only one with a promise: Honour your father and mother, so that you may be well and live long on earth. Believe his word and do what God says!

You fathers, be loving and sensitive in the education of your children, so that they will gladly obey. Be interested in them. Show and prove your love! Do not discourage them by excessive severity and demands! If they rebel against you, it may be because of you. Be role models! Train them to think and behave well, as the Lord pleases.

To please the heavenly Master as a Slave 6,5-8

You slaves in Christ, be obedient to your earthly masters with all your dedication. Without questioning or criticizing everything, as you obey Christ. But you should not want to please your masters, believers or unbelievers, in order to earn their praise. Obey them as slaves of Christ, who do the will of God willingly and with all your heart. So serve and obey willingly and with good motivation, as if it were directly for the Lord and not for men. Never forget it, you do not do it in vain. It is worth it. The Lord will reward all the good that we do. Sometimes at this time, but certainly when we take up our inheritance in the glory of the new world. That is true for all disciples.

The earthly and heavenly Lord 6,9

You faithful masters and slave owners: You too shall do good to your slaves. Stop constantly threatening them with punishment. Imagine that you are unjustly threatening them while they have their great Lord and Master in heaven who stands by them. And that's what your lord and master is for. He does not look at the person and social status. Before him no one has more rights or mercy than the other. So do not threaten, especially not against brothers.

War till the end: Get strong 6,10

I'm coming to the end. I would like to swear you in to the spiritual conflict in which we stand every day. Spiritually we are in a state of war until God's kingdom comes visibly. Never forget this and do not be surprised about it. Therefore, I call you first of all to become strong in the Lord as warriors of Christ. Get strong in the power of his great strength, of which I have spoken several times. This power is available, even if it is usually experienced in an unobtrusive, unspectacular way and even in perceived weakness.

Armed for a spiritual War 6,11-12

Put on all the armor of God with which he wants to equip us. We need it to resist the devil's tricks, ploys and tricks. With this he constantly attacks us, all sons and daughters of God. The church is his first target, although he is already defeated by Christ. Without God's armor, however, we have already lost before the battle has begun. Our fight is not against men, but against the evil and hostile forces of the invisible world. There are whole hosts of hostile beings in different ranks, in which they were once created by God. But they have rebelled against their Creator under the leadership of the devil and now want to destroy everything that God has created in Christ. They are principalities and world rulers of darkness. They are at home in spiritual, sinful darkness. Spiritual forces of wickedness, who have only bad intentions towards us. Therefore I say once again that you put on the whole armor of God and do not take only a few parts. There are evil days in our lives where these forces try especially hard. There we must and can resist in the power of Christ. But when such battles are over again, we should be careful not to become careless. Then we remain steadfast, so as not to be suddenly caught off guard in a calmer time.

The Armor in Detail 6,13-17

God's armor forms a whole and consists of different parts. All of which are connected to each other. Actually, the armor consists of everything I have already written to you in this letter.

The belt on the hip stands for the truth about God, about Christ and what He has done. But it is also the truthfulness and practical truth in our lives, as I have already told you.

The breastplate stands for the righteousness of God with which we are clothed as those justified by God. But we also live the righteousness of God and do what is right for Him.

The robust shoes for any terrain show our willingness and zeal to carry the gospel of peace that we ourselves have received to those who are still in the captivity of evil forces. The shield stands for the faith and trust we have in our God in all situations of life, because He can always help. Through faith we are saved, but the righteous man also lives constantly by faith. Only in this way are we able to repel and extinguish the bitter and fiery arrows of evil.

This also includes protecting our head with the helmet that speaks of salvation. So that thinking, hearing and seeing remain unharmed. Salvation is ours: We are saved, we are saved daily and once we are saved into his kingdom on the day of redemption. Let no one rob us of this certainty.

Defend yourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. But also go forward in battle. This weapon is the speaking of God Himself, the Word of God, which is used by the Spirit in a living and purposeful way. Look at Jesus, who is our great example in this.

One more weapon: Continued Prayer and Intercession 6,18-20

You shall seize another weapon. Perhaps the most important. Pray at all times with prayer and fervent supplication. Driven by the Spirit of God. Alone and together. Loud and silent. You cannot pray enough or too much. Keep on praying and interceding for all the saints and their worries and needs. But do it for me as well, so that I can proclaim the good news in an understandable way with adequate and fitting words. And that I am courageous. I should and will proclaim the mystery of the gospel, which I have described to you in this letter, everywhere. For this I am sent out, even though I am now in prison in chains. It is important for me to experience the help of the Lord through your intercession, because I am a bad speaker.

Closing Words 6,21-24

This letter to you will be delivered to you by Tychicus, the beloved brother and my faithful servant in the Lord. He will be able to tell you about my circumstances. I want you to know how I am. Then you can pray for me and you will be comforted.

To all brothers and sisters in faith I wish more and more the peace and love of God, trusting in Him, our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I wish the grace of God to all who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ! Who stay with him by doing what he says. And confess him before men.