



B R C
*Study the Bible
and follow Jesus*

Ephesians 3-6; Philippians 1

NT #38 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and **training in righteousness**, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)*

A Blessed Journey

1. May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.
2. May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.
3. May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.

Study the Bible, follow Jesus

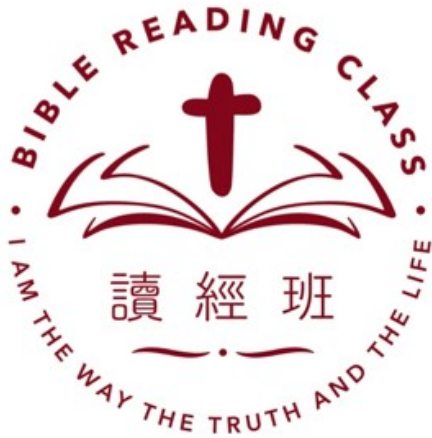


The Guiding Principles of BRC



- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement



I'll complete weekly reading assignment

I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety

I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John
- The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)
- Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching



The Classification of Paul's Thirteen Epistles

• According to doctrine, Paul's thirteen epistles can be categorized into four groups in order: Soteriology (Salvation), Christology, Eschatology, and Ecclesiology.

Soteriology (Salvation)	Christology	Eschatology	Ecclesiology
1) Romans 2) 1 Corinthians 3) 2 Corinthians 4) Galatians	5) Ephesians 6) Philippians 7) Colossians	8) 1 Thessalonians 9) 2 Thessalonians	10) 1 Timothy 11) 2 Timothy 12) Titus 13) Philemon

The Prison Epistles

- Among Paul's letters, four are known as the "Prison Epistles," written while he was imprisoned: **Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon**. Although 2 Timothy was also written by Paul during imprisonment, it has traditionally not been classified among the Prison Epistles but among the Pastoral Epistles.

- Paul was imprisoned multiple times, with the longest periods being in Caesarea and Rome. Most biblical scholars agree that

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, around AD 60. Scholars differ on the date of Philippians, but an increasing number believe that Philippians was also written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome.



The Prison Epistles

- **Ephesians**

- *“For this reason I, Paul, **the prisoner** of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles...” (3:1)*

- *“As **a prisoner** for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” (4:1)*

- *“For which I am an ambassador **in chains.**” (6:20)*

- **Philippians**

- *“Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am **in chains** for Christ.” (1:12–13)*



The Prison Epistles

- **Colossians**

- *“My fellow **prisoner** Aristarchus sends you his greetings.” (4:10)*

- *“I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember **my chains**. Grace be with you.” (4:18)*

- **Philemon**

- *“Paul, **a prisoner** of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker...” (v.1)*

- *“Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also **a prisoner** of Christ Jesus...” (v.8)*



Paul and Ephesus

- Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia, a prosperous and wealthy great city. In the city stood the magnificent temple of Artemis, regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.
- Among all the cities, Paul preached in Ephesus for the longest period, a full three years (*“So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” Acts 20:31*).



Paul and Ephesus

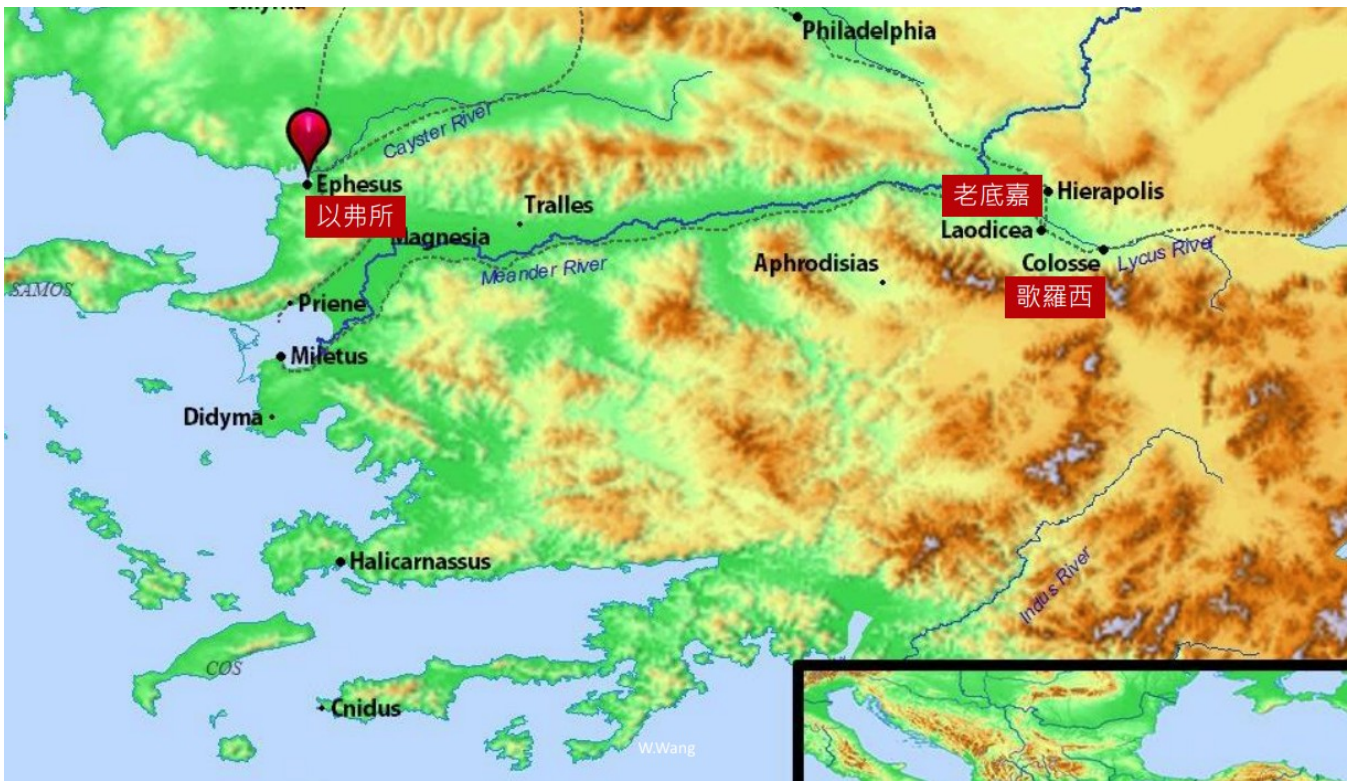


- In Ephesus Paul struggled against both Jews and pagans, to the point where even the hope of staying alive was gone. It was the hardest place for him in all his gospel ministry. Yet Paul relied on the Lord and won the great spiritual battle, spreading the gospel throughout the cities of Asia.
- *If I fought wild beasts in **Ephesus** with no more than human motives, what would I have gained? (1 Corinthians 15:32)*
- *Brothers, we do not want you to be unaware of the troubles we experienced in **Asia**. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we felt the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8–9)*
- *This went on for two years, so that all who lived in **Asia**, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord. (Acts 19:10)*

Fruit of the Gospel in Asia

• The Roman province of Asia was located on the western end of Asia Minor, facing the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was its principal city, and Colossae and Laodicea also belonged to this province. Paul used Ephesus as his base and preached in Asia for three years (Acts 20:31). His labor bore gospel fruit: *“so that all who lived in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.”* (Acts 19:10)





Ephesians: A Book on “Christ and the Church”

- The theme of Ephesians is **“Christ and the Church,”** and every believer should study it carefully. Everyone has personal ideas and experiences regarding the church, but if we want to understand the church according to God’s will, we must begin with the relationship between Christ and the Church. The book that explains this most fully and clearly is Ephesians.
- **Ephesians** and **Colossians** are sister epistles. Both books share the same theme—“Christ and the Church”—and more than fifty verses are identical or similar. Colossians is the concise version of Ephesians, and Ephesians is the expanded version of Colossians. Both were written by Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome.
- Ephesians is a **“circular church letter,”** meaning that besides Ephesus, it was also passed on to other churches in Asia to be read. After one church finished reading it, they would send it on to the next.

Outline of Ephesians

I. Doctrine: Chapters 1–3

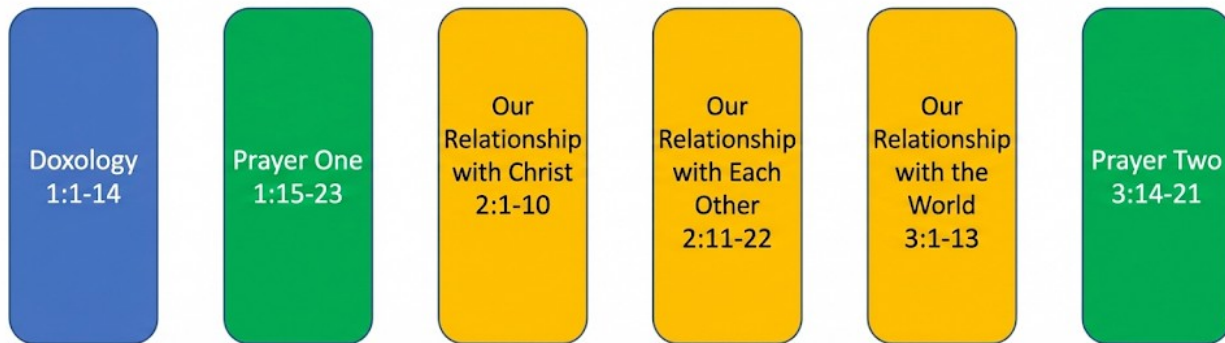
1. Chapter 1 — The Church as the Body of Christ: Praise and Prayer
2. Chapter 2 — The Church as God’s Household: Breaking Down and Building Up
3. Chapter 3 — The Church as the Steward of the Gospel: Commission and Power

II. Living: Chapters 4–6

4. Chapter 4 — The Church as Christ’s Workmanship: Joints and the Body
5. Chapter 5 — The Church as Christ’s Bride: Leaving and Uniting
6. Chapter 6 — The Church as Christ’s Army: Warfare and Victory



Praise, Prayer, and Our Life in Christ, Chapters 1–3



The structure of Ephesians is very clear. The whole book is divided evenly into two major sections: chapters 1–3 speak about doctrine, and chapters 4–6 speak about living.

The doctrinal section begins with praise to God, followed by two **prayers**—one at the beginning and one at the end—with the “relationships of believers” woven in between: our relationship with Christ, our relationship with one another, and our relationship with the world (the universe).

Understanding “Church” — Ecclesia

• *“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church (ecclesia), which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (1:22–23)*

• **Original meaning: the called-out ones**

1. A gathering of citizens called out from their homes into a public assembly
2. An assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting



Understanding “Church” — Ecclesia

- In ancient Greece, when a city needed to gather its citizens, heralds would go out and shout, **“Come out, the assembly is meeting! Come out, the assembly is meeting!”** Those who were called out and gathered together were the ecclesia.



- Those who hear the call of Jesus Christ, come out, repent, and believe unto salvation —when they gather together, they are the ecclesia.

- The church (ecclesia) is the gathering of believers. It is not a religious organization, nor a building, but a group of people who believe in Jesus Christ. Three or five believers gathered together form an ecclesia; thousands gathered together also form an ecclesia.

Understanding “Church” — Ecclesia

- In Scripture, “church” (ecclesia) refers purely to the gathering of believers, not a religious institution.

- *“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for **the church**, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (1:22–23)*

- *“His intent was that now, through **the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.” (3:10)*



- *“To him be glory in **the church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (3:21)*

- *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved **the church** and gave himself up for her.” (5:25)*

- *“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about **Christ and the church.**” (5:32)*

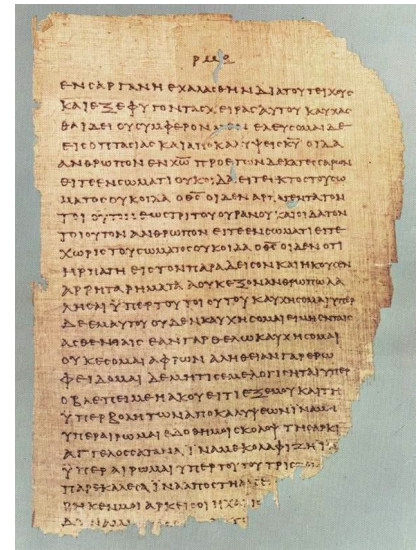
Key Verses in Ephesians

1. The Church as the Body of Christ

• *“The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (1:23)*

2. Saved by Grace Through Faith

• *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (2:8–9)*



Key Verses in Ephesians

3. The Dividing Wall Destroyed

• *“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” (2:14)*

4. One Body

• *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (4:4–6)*



Key Verses in Ephesians

5. Building Up the Body of Christ

• *“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (4:11–12)*

6. Christ Loved the Church

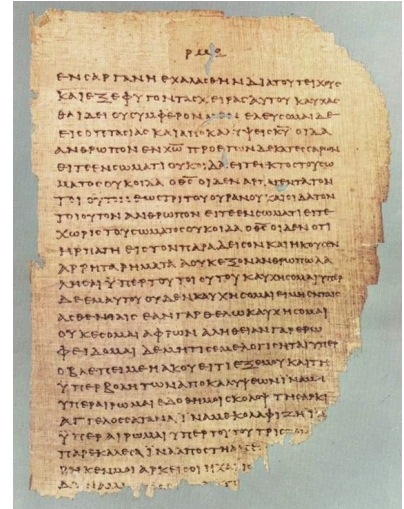
• *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (5:25)*



Key Verses in Ephesians

7. The Full Armor of God

- *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (6:10–11)*



In Christ

- Ephesians may be called an “**in Christ**” letter. In the first fourteen verses (1:1–14), expressions such as in Christ Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Beloved appear more than ten times:

- *Paul, an apostle of **Christ Jesus** by the will of God, writes to the saints in Ephesus, those who are faithful **in Christ Jesus**. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ**.*

- *Praise be to the God and Father of our **Lord Jesus Christ**! He has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms: just as God chose us **in Christ** before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him; and in love He predestined us, according to the pleasure of His will, to be adopted as sons through **Jesus Christ**, to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. This grace He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding; He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed **in Christ**, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together **in Christ** when the times reach their fulfillment. In Him we also obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, so that we who were the first to hope **in Christ** might be for the praise of His glory. And you also, when you heard the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation—and believed **in Christ**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. This Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of God’s possession, to the praise of His glory. (1:1–14)*

The Longest Sentence in the New Testament

• In the Greek original, Ephesians 1:3–14 is a single continuous sentence—flowing without interruption—and is the longest sentence in the entire New Testament. It begins with praise and ends with praise, and the phrase **“to the praise of His glory”** appears repeatedly. It is a true doxology. Because of its length, its richness, and its Christ-centered focus, it may be considered one of **the most profound and exalted praises in all of Scripture.**

• **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, such as:**

- 1. He chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless before Him;**
- 2. He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ;**
- 3. He granted us redemption through the blood of His beloved Son, the forgiveness of our trespasses.”**

Blessings in Christ

1. The above three points are “**the blessings God has given us in Christ,**” all related to salvation. The first blessing is **to become holy**. God is a holy God, and the unclean cannot draw near to Him. God showed grace to Israel by allowing the high priest to enter the Most Holy Place once a year. Now, in Christ, God makes us holy so that we may come before the throne of grace at any time—this is the first blessing.
2. The second blessing is **the adoption as sons**. In ancient times, sons had the right of inheritance and could receive the father’s estate. Now, whether male or female, Jew or Gentile, all may receive the status of sons through Jesus Christ and inherit the Father’s riches—this is a blessing beyond imagination.
3. The third blessing is **redemption and the forgiveness of sins**. This blessing is obtained “**through the blood of His beloved Son,**” clearly showing that every blessing we receive is built upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of the blood of God’s beloved Son, we would have no redemption, no forgiveness of sins, no adoption as sons, and we would remain unclean, unable to become holy, and unable to come before God.

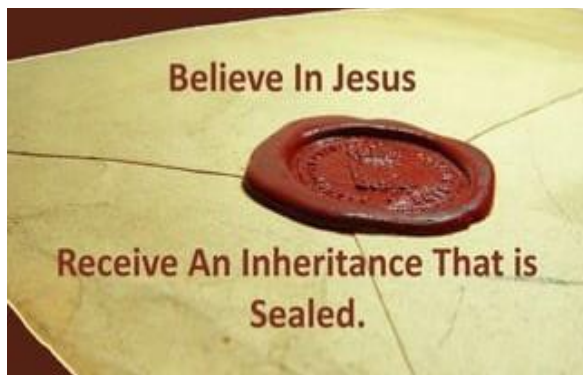
Unity in Christ

• *“According to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, to make known to us the mystery of His will, according to His plan for the fullness of the times, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in unity **in Christ.**”*
(1:9–10)

• Ephesians speaks of a “mystery” with two layers of meaning. The first is the mystery of Christ, which is **the unity of redemption**—Gentiles becoming fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers of the same promise in Christ. The second is the mystery of God’s will, which is even broader: **the unity of the entire universe**, in which, when the time is fulfilled, everything in heaven and on earth will be brought together in Christ.

• A “mystery” refers to “something hidden.” When what was once hidden is revealed, the mystery is unveiled. These two mysteries are actually one mystery: **all things being united in Christ**. The first step has already taken place—through Jesus Christ, all who believe in Him have been brought into unity. The second step has not yet occurred; it will happen when the appointed time arrives, and the entire universe will be united in Christ.

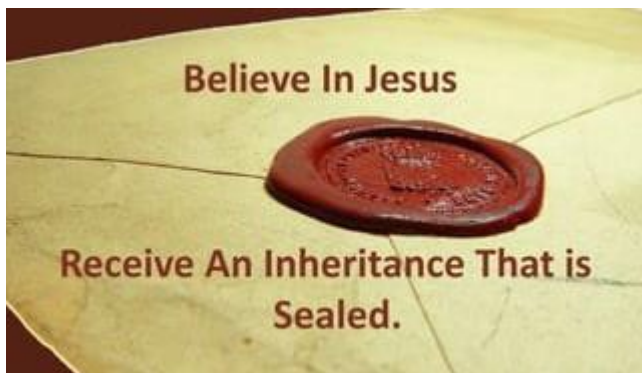
Receiving the Holy Spirit as the Seal



• *“When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Christ, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of God’s possession, to the praise of His glory.” (1:13–14)*

• Speaking of the seal of the Holy Spirit, many people feel confused. What is the seal of the Holy Spirit? Is it speaking in tongues? Is it healing the sick and casting out demons? Is it performing miracles? The Bible says that these are not the seal of the Holy Spirit. The so-called seal of the Holy Spirit is actually “receiving the Holy Spirit as the seal.” It is not that the Holy Spirit stamps a seal, but that the Holy Spirit Himself is the seal. It refers to believers in Christ receiving the promised Holy Spirit; **this Holy Spirit is the “guarantee of our inheritance.”**

Receiving the Holy Spirit as the Seal



- In Christ we have received the status of sons and are able to inherit the Father's inheritance. If anyone hears the "gospel of salvation" and believes in Christ, the Father gives the Holy Spirit as the seal, causing him to know in his heart that he is a child of God and to cry out, "Abba,

Father." This certainty, this assurance, is the work of the Holy Spirit, serving as the guarantee of his inheritance.

- How glorious and how abundant this inheritance is, most people do not know. Therefore Paul prayed to God (1:15–23), earnestly asking the Father to enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we may know how abundant and glorious this inheritance is.

I. The Church Is the Body of Christ

1A Praise: The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1:3–14

• “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ:”

1. **Election:** Before the creation of the world, He chose us in Christ
2. **Predestination:** According to His will, He predestined us in Christ to receive the status of sons
3. **Grace:** Through the blood, He granted us the grace of forgiveness in Christ
4. **Mystery:** When the time is fulfilled, all things will be united in Christ
5. **Inheritance:** Having received the Holy Spirit, we have become the guarantee of the inheritance in Christ

I. **The Church Is the Body of Christ**

1B Prayer: The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, 1:15–23

• **“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may truly know Him:”**

1. **Calling:** That you may know what is the hope of His calling
2. **Inheritance:** What the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints are
3. **Power:** And know what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe

I. **The Church Is the Body of Christ**

“He put all things under His feet and made Him head over all things for the church. The church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (1:22–23)

1. **Christ is the head over all things:** For the sake of the church, Christ became the head over all things, giving the church legitimate authority to carry out Christ’s mission.
2. **Christ is the head of the church:** The church is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all things.

II. The Church Is the Family of God

1. **Dead in sins**: “You were dead in your trespasses and sins, and He made you alive.”
 - A. Following the customs of this world (the course of this world): the control of the world
 - B. Obeying the evil spirit in the air: the control of evil spirits

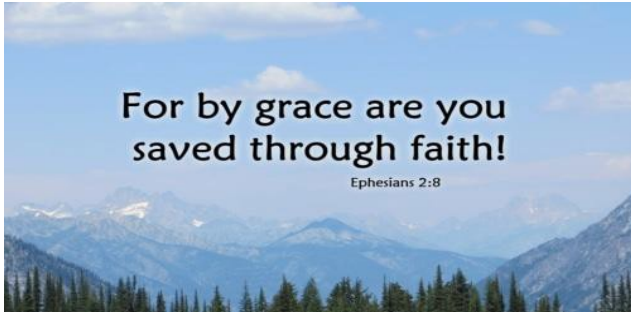
2. **Alive in the Lord**: “He also raised us up with Christ Jesus and seated us together in the heavenly places.”
 - A. **The way of salvation**: “You are saved by grace, through faith.”
 - B. **The purpose of salvation**: “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ to do good works (the things God considers right).”

You are saved by grace through faith

• *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (2:8–10, NIV)*

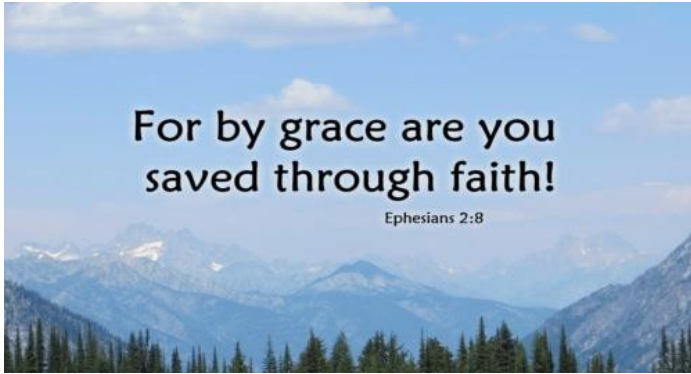
• **The source, means, and purpose of salvation:** This great passage is often quoted by Christians. In just three short verses, it explains with exceptional clarity the source of salvation, the means of salvation, and the purpose of salvation.

You are saved by grace through faith



- *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (2:8–10, NIV)*

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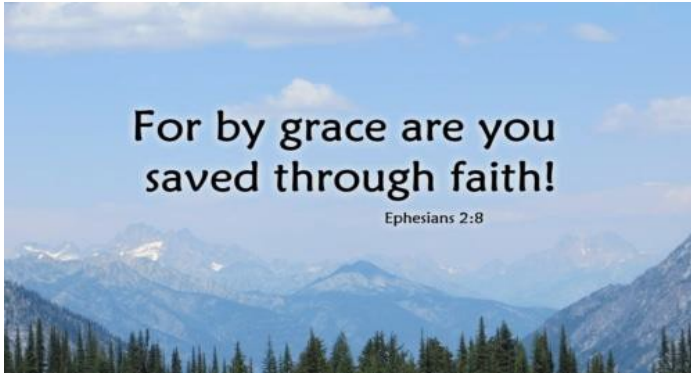


- **The source, means, and purpose of salvation:** This great passage is often quoted by Christians. In just three short verses, it explains with exceptional clarity the source of salvation, the means of salvation, and the purpose of salvation.

- **The source of salvation is God's**

grace. Salvation is something God actively gives to us: “This is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” It is not that God had never thought of salvation and we went to ask Him, and then God granted salvation. God “before the foundation of the world, 1:4” had already prepared salvation in Christ. This is a grace, freely given, not dependent on human performance, but dependent only on God’s grace, because God loves us.

You are saved by grace through faith

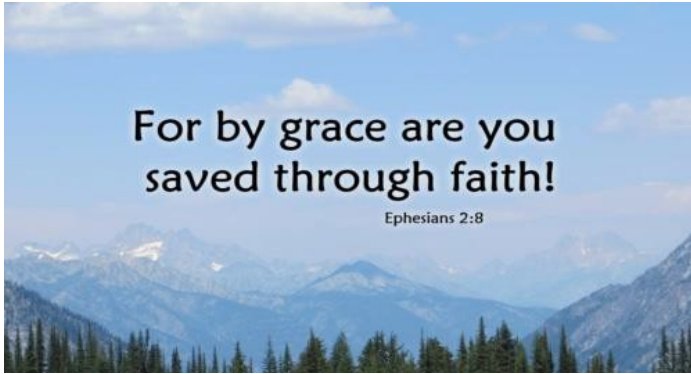


- **The channel of salvation is a person's faith.** When you hear the gospel and, with faith, receive Jesus Christ as Lord, this is the beginning of salvation. Salvation is not only going to heaven after death, but having God's grace supplied throughout your whole life,

rescuing you and blessing you on the journey of life. As long as you keep trusting in Jesus, salvation will keep flowing to you.

- This is not from works, so that no one may boast. It does not mean that because you perform well, therefore God shows you favor. Rather, God already intends to show you favor; you only need to connect with God through the conduit of faith, and grace will flow. The righteous shall live by faith; this righteousness is from faith to faith. The path of believing in the Lord is the path of faith, and from beginning to end it is all "by faith."

Created in Christ, so that we may do good works

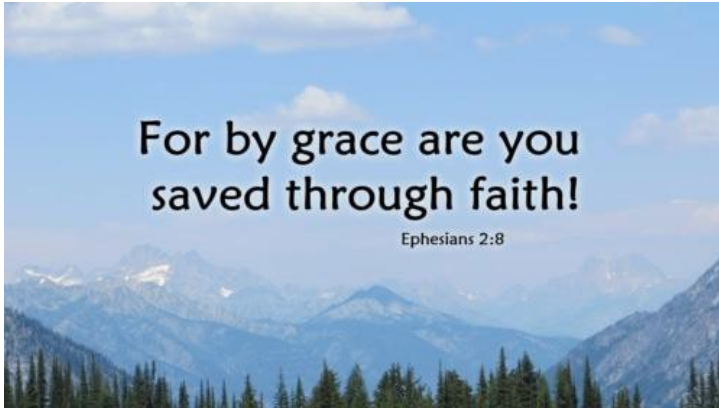


- The purpose of salvation is to do good works, that is, to do what God wants us to do. Why did God save me? Is it so that I may enjoy blessings in this life and go to heaven after I die? The Bible says that God has recreated us in Christ, and the purpose is that we may do

good works. The so-called “doing good” is “the things God has prepared for us to do,” that is, the things that are good, right, and pleasing in God’s eyes.

- Brothers and sisters, the purpose of salvation is to do good works, not to enjoy blessings. It is work, not the absence of work. It is service, not the absence of service. The so-called doing good, the so-called serving, is not only leading worship, ushering, or singing in the choir at church, but manifesting the beauty of Christ in daily life and living out the attributes of God.

Created in Christ, so that we may do good works

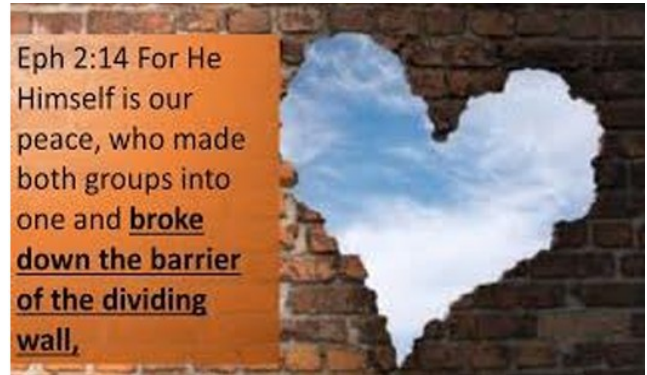


- Serving in the church is indeed also service, but that is not the focus of salvation. The Bible says that under the condition of “by grace and through faith,” we become God’s new creation in Christ, and the purpose is that we may do good works and manifest God’s glory.

- Just as in the first creation God gave Adam a task and work on earth, God, who created us in Christ, has also given us tasks and work on earth. The scope of this work is the world, not only the church. Acting with righteousness before people, having compassion toward others, being humble and self-denying, manifesting Christ, and leading people to Christ—this is the purpose of salvation.

II. The Church Is the Family of God

1. He has broken down the dividing wall: *“For He is our peace (literally, ‘He Himself is our peace’), who has made the two one and has broken down the dividing wall.”*

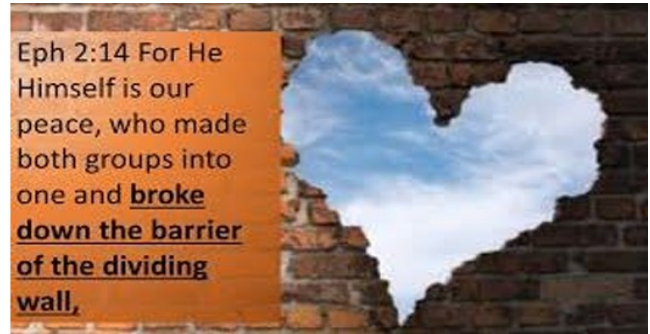


- A. He has broken down the wall between Gentiles and Jews
- B. He has broken down the wall between people: race, culture, class, status, gender...

II. The Church Is the Family of God

2. Made one in Christ:

A. **Made one through the cross:** *“Having put to death the enmity on the cross, He made the two into one body through this cross and reconciled us to God.”*



B. **Made one through the Holy Spirit:** *“For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”*

II. The Church Is the Family of God

3. Becoming family in Christ

A. The church is God's family: “So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household.”

B. The church is God's temple: “In Him the whole building is joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together to become a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.”



He is our peace



- *“For he himself is our peace (literally, ‘for He is our peace’), who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of*

the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.” (2:14–17)

He is our peace

A. Christ Our Peace — Christ is our peace. It is not that Christ is a



mediator who persuades two quarrelling parties, “Don’t fight, make peace!” Rather, Christ Himself is our peace. What is the difference between the two? Anyone can be a mediator, but the One who is peace itself is only one. Where Christ is, there is peace; where Christ is not, there is no peace.

Jews and Gentiles were originally not at peace, with a high wall separating them. Now that all are in Christ, there is only peace and no wall. If someone says he is in Christ yet has racial discrimination, national discrimination, or is not at peace with people of other ethnicities, it is because he does not have Christ. Christ is our peace; where Christ is, there is peace. Where there is no peace, it is because although he claims to be a Christian, he actually does not have Christ.

He is our peace

B. Thus Making Peace — Thus He made peace. Christ, by His own body, paid in full the debt of sin that we owed. He not only paid the debt of the Jews, but also the debt of the Gentiles, and the debt of all in the world



who believe in the Lord and are saved. In this way, all who believe in the Lord are people whose sin-debt has been paid, and in Christ become one person, “creating the two into one new person.”

The reason we lack peace is because we divide into “us” and “them.” Now that all are in Christ, there is no “us” and “them,” but only one new person. Thus peace is accomplished.

He is our peace

c. **He Preached Peace** — “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and to those who were near. 2:17.” In the original text there is no



“gospel of”; it simply says “preached peace.” Jesus came to proclaim peace (harmony). He preached peace. He made peace. He is our peace. Jesus is peace, and we are the children of peace. We live out the peace of Jesus Christ and also proclaim the peace of Jesus Christ.

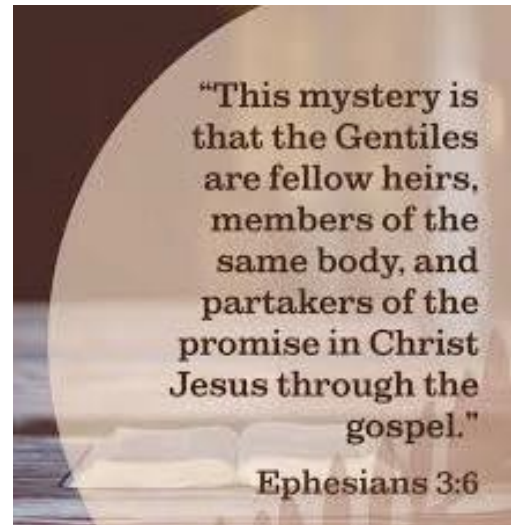
If someone claims to be a Christian yet harbors division, rejects other ethnic groups, or creates discord in society because of ideology or political stance, although he calls himself a Christian, he is actually not a Christian. A Christian is a disciple of Christ, one who follows in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus proclaimed peace, accomplished peace, and is peace. We are disciples of Jesus, and we also “proclaim peace, accomplish peace, and be peace.”

III. **The Church Is the Bearer of the Gospel**

1. **God's commission to Paul (the one who preaches the gospel):** "Surely you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you."
2. **God's commission to the church (the community that preaches the gospel):** "So that through the church the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms might now know the manifold wisdom of God."

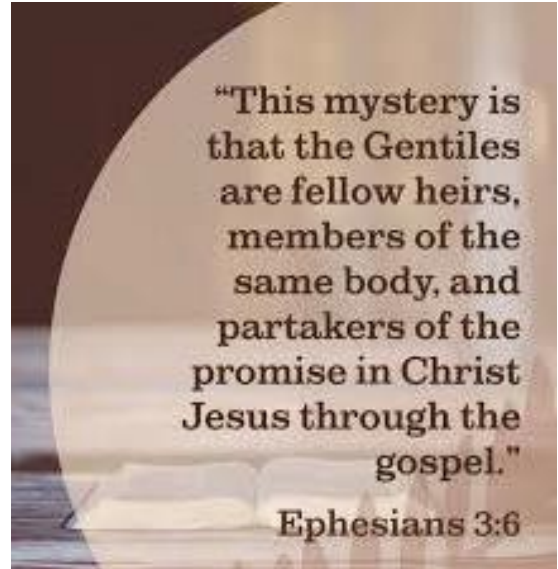
The Mystery of Christ

• *“if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me **the mystery** (the original text does not have ‘of the gospel’), as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into **the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel... and to bring to light what is the administration of **the mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.” (3:2–10)***



The Mystery of Christ

• **The mystery of Christ:** When people hear the word “mystery,” some immediately think of Revelation or other secret knowledge—things like the great red dragon, the seven trumpets, the number of the beast, or the date of Christ’s return. If someone could crack the Bible’s code and unlock hidden mysteries, that person would be considered a great prophet. Such extremely low-level mistakes need not be repeated in the future.

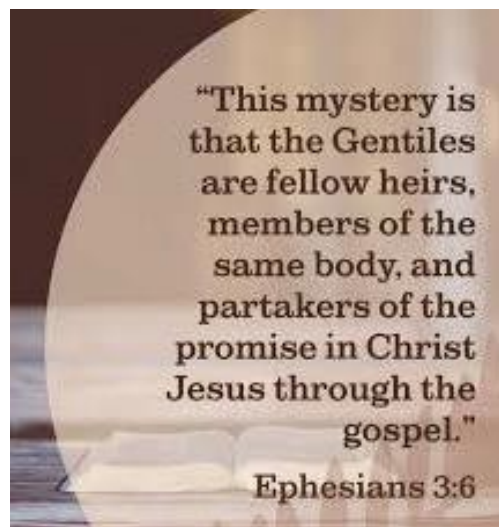


• Among all mysteries, none is greater than **“the mystery of Christ.”** This is a mystery that has already been revealed. Paul says, *“This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel . 3:6.”*

The Mystery of Christ

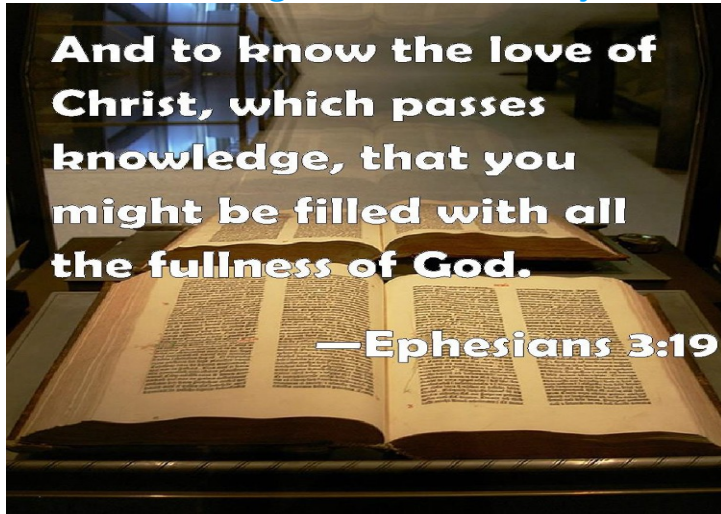
- Paul says that this mystery is **“hidden in God who created all things throughout the ages,”** and now, through the work of proclamation, it is made known to everyone. The church has inherited the responsibility of “proclaiming the mystery,” so that Gentiles also, by believing in Jesus Christ, may receive redemption, become one body, and become heirs of God together.

- Whether Jew or Gentile, being united in Christ is only the first step of the mystery. The second step of the mystery, and also the final step, is that **“to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. 1:10.”** Brothers and sisters, **“being united in Christ”** is the greatest mystery! Knowing this and living it out is enough. Compared with this, other “mysteries” are not mysteries at all. You have already seen the sunlight—why light a candle?



How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ!

- “For this reason I kneel before the Father (from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name), asking that according to the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that

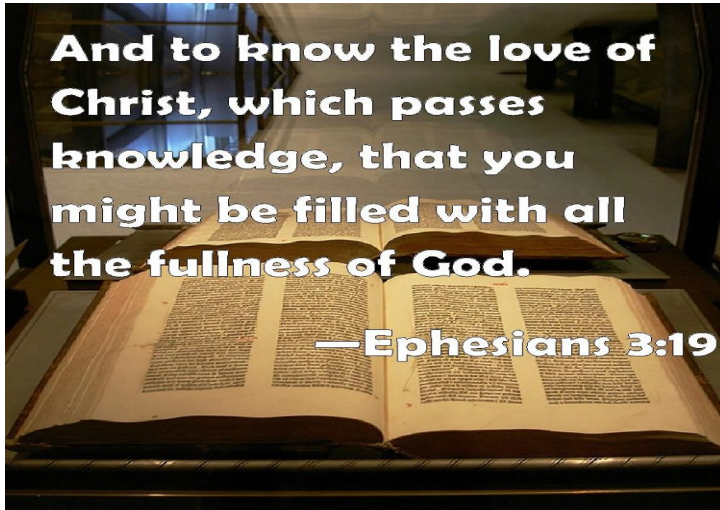


you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth of Christ’s love, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (3:14–19)

- This is Paul’s second prayer for the Ephesians. In the first prayer, Paul asked God to enlighten the eyes of the Ephesians so that they could see how rich and glorious the inheritance God has given them is. In the second prayer, Paul asked God to strengthen the inner being of the Ephesians so that they could understand how wide, long, high, and deep the love of Christ is. Both prayers come after Paul has explained a mystery. After Paul finished speaking about the mystery that “all things are brought together in Christ,” he prayed for the church. After Paul finished speaking about the mystery that “believers are brought together in Christ,” he again prayed for the church.

How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ!

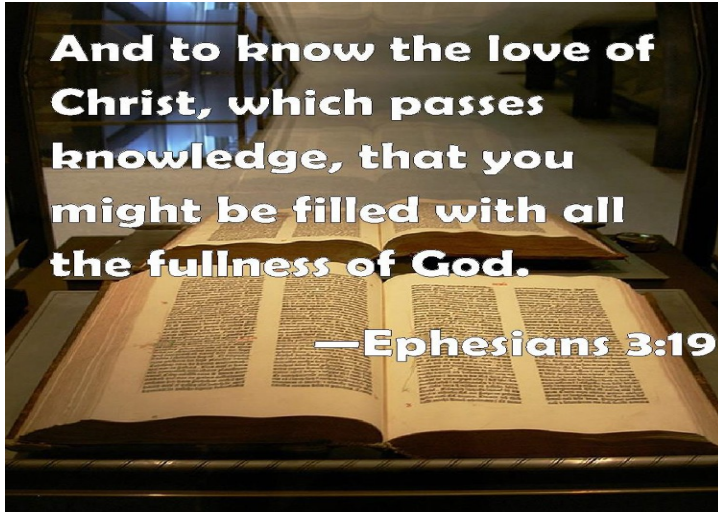
• The second prayer takes “love” as its theme and may be called the greatest “intercessory prayer of love” in the Bible. It has three main points:



1. **Believers’ love has roots and foundation:** Paul first lowers himself (“**I kneel before the Father**”), coming before God with a humble attitude. This is the proper posture of prayer: the Father above, and I below—I kneel before the Father. The heavenly Father is the origin of all things

(“**every family in heaven and on earth derives its name from Him**”; “derives its name” means “receives its being,” referring to origin). Paul prays that God would strengthen you with power in your inner being. A strengthened person manifests Christ’s indwelling through faith, and because of Christ’s indwelling, love has roots and foundation.

How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ!



2. The breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love: Only when your love has roots and foundation can you understand how wide, long, high, and deep the love of Christ is. And it is not only you who understand, but “to comprehend together with all the saints.” In Paul's mind there are

always two: the first is the Lord Jesus, and the second is the church of the Lord Jesus. Paul wants the people in the church to understand together how greatly Christ loves them!

3. Filled with all the fullness of God: *“And to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* The secret to receiving all the fullness of God is not speaking in tongues, not receiving special favor, not fasting and praying, but understanding the love of Christ. When the strength of our inner being is renewed, when we stop doing childish things, when by faith we receive Christ's indwelling, when our love has roots and foundation, and when together with all the saints we understand the love of Christ—then all the fullness of God fills us! We become the “glorious ecclesia,” and praise is given to God the Father!

IV. The Church Is the Workmanship of Christ

1. Live a life worthy of the calling you have received

A. Be humble, gentle, and patient in all things

B. Bear with one another in love

C. Keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace

IV. **The Church Is the Workmanship of Christ**

2. **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit**

- A. There is one body — One Body
- B. There is one Spirit — One Spirit
- C. Just as you were called to one hope — One Hope
- D. One Lord — One Lord
- E. One faith — One Faith
- F. One baptism — One Baptism
- G. One God, above all, through all, in all — One God
 - “The Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.”

IV. **The Church Is the Work of the Saints**

1. **The purpose of the gifts: For the work of service**

- A. **The gifts Christ gave to the church:** “He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,”
- B. **The purpose of these gifts:** “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

2. **The method of building: Each part does its work**

- A. **Connection and cooperation:** “From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with each part doing its work according to its function, helps the others,”
- B. **Growth and building up:** “so that the body grows and builds itself up in love.”

Make every effort to keep the unity given by the Spirit

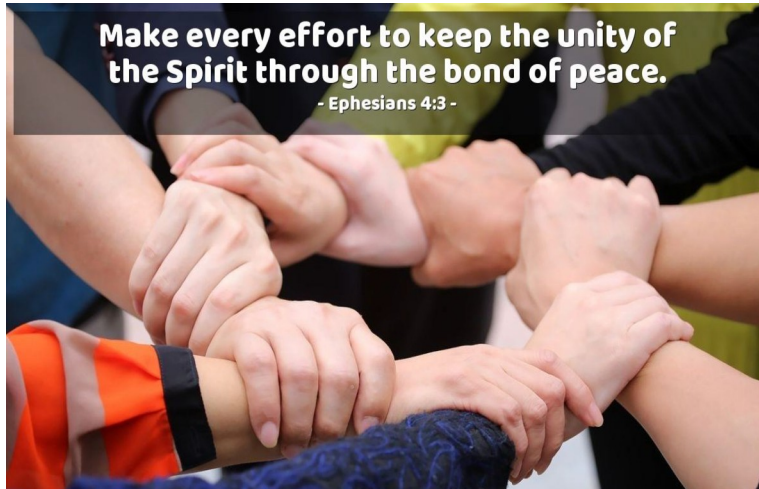


through all and in all. (4:3–6, NIV)”

- *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and*

Make every effort to keep the unity given by the Spirit

- What the Spirit gives is “unity,” not “a heart of unity.” It does not mean



that the Spirit gives us a desire to be united, and as long as we preserve this desire and work hard, one day the church will finally achieve unity. Rather, it means that the Spirit has already given unity; the church has possessed unity from the very beginning,

making us no longer divided from one another.

What we must do is to make every effort to preserve this state of “church unity.” One is a goal we strive toward; the other is a state we already possess. What Scripture speaks of is the state we already possess.

Make every effort to keep the unity given by the Spirit

- The unity given by the Spirit must be **“make every effort to keep.”** It is



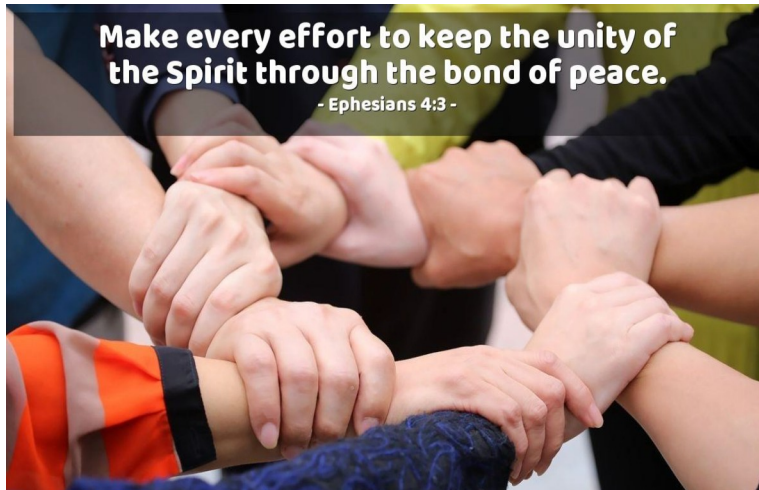
not ordinary keeping, but keeping with all diligence, using every effort, because unity is easily broken. To destroy a church, Satan needs only to use the words and actions of a few people—causing division, stirring attacks, creating factions and strife—and unity is quickly shattered.

For example, many Chinese churches have Mandarin congregations, Cantonese congregations, English congregations, early services, and late services—several groups. If the Mandarin congregation cares only for itself, and the Cantonese and English congregations also care only for themselves, the unity of the church is broken.

There must be mature Christians in every congregation who make every effort to keep unity, who bind one another together in peace, so that the church will not fall into division.

Make every effort to keep the unity given by the Spirit

- The key is this: **emphasize what is the same, not what is different.** Paul uses seven “ones” in a single breath—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, one faith, one God—to emphasize what we share in



common. If even these seven “ones” cannot unite us, then we truly cannot be united.

If someone stirs up division, emphasizes differences, and refuses to emphasize what is the same, then you must ask: Is the Holy Spirit working in

him, or is Satan working in him? The Holy Spirit is the Spirit who gives unity; Satan is the one who creates division. Is this person doing the work of the Holy Spirit, or the work of Satan?

Building Up the Body of Christ

• *“Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (4:11–16)*



• “The body of Christ” is the Ecclesia, a collective of believers. It may or may not be what you traditionally think of as “the church.” As long as it is a gathering of believers, it is the body of Christ.

Each Part Doing Its Work

- Jesus gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in order to “equip” the saints—that is, to prepare and train believers. Take note: the purpose of these people is not to do the work on behalf of the believers, but to enable the believers to do the work. They equip the saints so that the saints may “each fulfill their own ministry.” The modern practice of hiring people to do the work for the believers is not found in Scripture. The body of Christ must be built up by all its members

together—each part doing its work, each person having his or her own role; each part fulfilling its function, each person doing his or her part. A healthy body must have good hands, good feet, good eyes, good ears—every part doing its job. A creature with a huge head and a tiny body, with only ears but no hands or feet, is not the body of Christ.

- There are two key points in building up the body of Christ: **first**, unity in the truth; **second**, building itself up in love. One is truth, the other is grace. A church that has both grace and truth is truly the body of Christ.



Unity in the Truth

- The primary responsibility of pastors and teachers is to help the congregation become united in the truth, to grow into maturity, and to attain the full measure of the stature of Christ. The believers in Paul’s time came from different backgrounds, and so do believers today. Those who gather because they believe in Jesus must continue to receive teaching, each adjusting themselves according to God’s Word, so that they may be united in the truth.



- Within the body of Christ, we must **“speak the truth in love.”** The phrase “truth” can also be translated as “honest speech,” for the original word is the same. The preceding verse warns against being deceived and following false teachings; the emphasis is the contrast between false doctrine and truth. Therefore, it is better translated as **“speaking the truth in love.”** Do not spread heresies or false teachings; instead, speak the truth in love, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Building Up the Body in Love

- *“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (4:16)*

- Christ is the Head; when everyone is connected to Christ, everyone in the church becomes connected to one another. If we are not connected to Christ, and only focus on human relationships—only maintaining social connections—the church remains fragmented: a small group here, a little cluster there, scattered like loose sand.

- The members of the body complement one another. I have my function, you have your function, he has his function. Under Christ as the Head, each part wonderfully complements the others, and the body builds itself up in love.

- The word “itself” here refers to the body of Christ, not to you as an individual believer. It is not that you build yourself up through loving service; rather, the members help one another, and in love the body of Christ is built up.



Four Irreplaceable Functions of the Church

1. Proclaim Christ
2. Teach God's Word
3. Fellowship of the believers
4. Worship the Lord



Put Off the Old Self — Renewal Begins from the Heart

• “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, **in the futility of their thinking**. They are **darkened in their understanding** and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to **the hardening of their hearts**. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **to be made new in the attitude of your minds**; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (4:17–24)

• If we want to build up the body of Christ, every member must be renewed. Renewal of the members begins from the heart. Each person must replace the futile heart, the darkened heart, the hardened heart, and the conscience that has been numbed. When the members are renewed, the whole body will be renewed.



Put Off the Old Self — Renewal Begins from the Heart

• If we want our minds to be renewed, we must have a standard for renewal—a reference point for removing the old. That standard is Jesus Christ. Since you have **learned Christ, heard His teaching, received His instruction, and learned His truth**, you ought to put off the old self and put on the new self. Without a standard for renewal, believers do not know how to be renewed. But when we have the Lord’s Word, and Christ is formed in the hearts of the people, everyone realizes, “Ah, this is the right way!” Then each person renews himself according to the same standard. This kind of renewal becomes the renewal of the whole church, and once it succeeds, the church takes on a fresh atmosphere, full of new vitality.

• When I was pastoring, the old church building was no longer sufficient, and everyone wanted to build a new one. I proposed the principle: “Build the people first, then build the building.” We spent several years studying the Bible together as a whole church. After those years, the church had been washed by God’s Word and renewed inwardly. Then we began the building project, and the process went remarkably smoothly. When the new building was completed, the people were renewed, the building was new, and the whole church was filled with joy and gratitude!



Put On the New Self — Renewal in Speech

- The most obvious characteristic of the new self is that he speaks differently: *“You must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” (4:25, 29; 5:4)*

- The old self speaks lies, unclean words, and obscene or foolish talk. The new self speaks truth to his neighbor, speaks words that build others up, and speaks words of thanksgiving. Speech can change the atmosphere of a church. Take truth-telling as an example: a church that speaks truth has a fresh and wholesome atmosphere. What the world criticizes most about Christians is hypocrisy. They say “yes, yes,” “good, good,” appearing kind and loving, yet speak all kinds of harmful words behind people’s backs.



If a church can remove hypocrisy and keep sincerity—each person speaking truth to his neighbor—the polluted air will disperse, and a refreshing breeze will come in. Everyone longs to breathe fresh air. Those who breathe polluted air in society, once they breathe the fresh air in your church, will want to stay.

Make the Most of Every Opportunity, Because the Days Are Evil

• *“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:15–20)*

• Since childhood, our teachers taught us: “An inch of time is worth an inch of gold, but an inch of gold cannot buy an inch of time.” Yet when we grow up, somehow time slips away so quickly. If our teachers were to ask us now, “Have you treasured your time well?” most of us would probably bow our heads in shame and say, “No...”

• Paul understood deeply the preciousness of time and the evil of the present age. He urges us to be wise and to learn how to “make the most of every opportunity.”



Make the Most of Every Opportunity, Because the Days Are Evil

- The original meaning of “make the most of” includes the idea of “redeeming” or “cashing in.” The word “time” (kairos) refers to a special moment, a God-given opportunity. The correct translation is “opportunity.” Paul is saying: do not be foolish, but be wise—when an opportunity appears, redeem it, cash it in, do not let it slip away.

- He then says we must understand God’s will, be filled with the Holy Spirit, sing and make melody to the Lord, and give thanks to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are able to do these things because kairos has appeared. We have believed in Christ, learned the truth, and become one body—this is the perfect opportunity to do these things. If you do not redeem this opportunity—if you spend years as a Christian without seeking God’s will, without being filled with the Spirit, without praising and thanking God—you have wasted precious time.



- The present age is evil. Its customs and habits pull people into many useless things. Without noticing, opportunities slip away, time disappears, and life passes by. Paul says: be careful how you live—do not be foolish, but be wise!

Relationships in Christ — Ephesians 5:21–6:9

- This passage begins with: **“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”** It then addresses the three most common human relationships: the relationship between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between masters and servants. Each relationship is presented from both sides—speaking to husbands and to wives, to parents and to children, to servants and to masters.

- **The husband-wife relationship** receives the most attention (5:22–33). According to Scripture, the marital relationship is the foundation of all human relationships. First came Adam and Eve’s relationship—**“You are bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”**—and only then did all other relationships arise. Paul uses Christ and the church as the analogy for husband and wife, elevating marriage to an unprecedented height.

“A man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery, and it refers to Christ and the church (5:31–32). Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her; husbands must love their wives in the same way. The church submits to Christ; wives are to submit to their husbands in the same way. Husbands and wives must love and honor one another. The husband should love his wife a little more, and the wife should respect her husband a little more.

Relationships in Christ — Ephesians 5:21–6:9

• **Parent–child relationship** (6:1–4). Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. They must honor their parents—this is the first commandment with a promise. Then Paul says something that would have shocked people in a patriarchal society: **“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger!”** This elevates the status of children to equality with their fathers, forbidding fathers—who held great authority—from ignoring their children’s feelings, hurting them emotionally, or stirring up resentment. Fathers are simply to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

• **Master–servant relationship** (6:5–9). Applied to today, this refers to the relationship between employers and employees. Employees in Christ work diligently, with a spirit of excellence—not only serving when being watched, but doing God’s will from the heart. They serve as if serving the Lord, not people. Employers in Christ treat their employees as equals, **“because they and you have the same Master in heaven, and He shows no favoritism.”** Such employers will not exploit their workers; instead, they will care for them and provide good treatment.

Put On the Full Armor of God

• *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*



Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
(6:10–17)

The Reality of the Spiritual Realm

• Paul says that the opponents we fight against are **“not flesh and blood.”** People are flesh and blood, and on the journey of faith you may think you are fighting against people—but you are not. **“We are fighting against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the**

heavenly realms.” Paul affirms the existence of the spiritual realm and explains that our true enemies are not people, but the demons behind them.

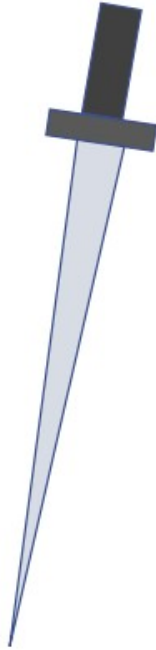
• Because this is a spiritual battle, we must put on spiritual armor. If you only focus on counting how many people you have or how much money you have, you have already lost the battle. Everyone must put on the full armor of God in order to win. The spiritual armor has six components: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit—which is the Word of God.



Christian Soldier

**The Spiritual
Armor of God**

**Sword of
Spirit -
the Word
of God**



Helmet of Salvation



**Breastplate
of
Righteousness**



Belt of Truth

Shield of Faith



Shoes of Gospel of Peace



Last Man Standing — Having Done All, Stand Firm!

• “Take up the full armor of God, so that on the day of trouble you may stand against the enemy, and after you have done everything, you will still be able to stand.”

• Paul says we must use the full armor God provides to resist the enemy. It is not enough to grab two or three pieces and rush into battle—wearing the helmet but forgetting the shoes, fastening the breastplate but not the belt, taking the shield but not the sword. We must put on the full armor of God.

• On ancient battlefields, the one who remained standing at the end was the victor, because all the enemies had fallen. If you fight the enemy with the full armor God gives, the one still standing at the end will surely be you! And because Ephesians speaks about the body of Christ, the final victor will certainly be the church of the Lord Jesus — the Ecclesia!



Last Man Standing — Having Done All, Stand Firm!

• This letter is the “Epistle to the Ephesians.” Among all the places Paul visited, Ephesus was where he stayed the longest and where the spiritual warfare was the most intense. Paul was not discussing theories with the Ephesians—he was speaking from his actual experiences in that place. Let me conclude this section with two verses from the book of Acts:



- *“When this became known to all the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.”*
- *“In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.” (Acts 19:17, 20)*



W.Wang
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Philippians: Shining as Lights

- Philippians is a letter Paul wrote to the church in Philippi while under house arrest in Rome, around AD 60. Philippi was the first church Paul established in Europe, around AD 50.
- Philippians is a warm and affectionate letter. Paul writes with two identities: first, as a missionary, thanking the church for their support and reporting his situation; second, as a spiritual father, earnestly reminding the household of God about matters they should pay attention to.
- The letter contains no rebuke—only gratitude, encouragement, and reminders.
- It emphasizes the joy of the Christian life.
- It contains no quotations from the Old Testament (Philippi was a Gentile church).

Philippians: Shining as Lights

- The “Christ Hymn” in chapter 2 is a classic passage, profoundly influencing Christian living and Christian doctrine.
- We take the phrase “shining as lights” from the letter as the theme slogan:
- *“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like lights in the world as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.” (2:14–16)*

Outline of Philippians

1. Thanksgiving and Prayer, 1:1–11
 2. Report on Paul’s Personal Situation, 1:12–26
 3. Encouragement for the Church to Be United, 1:27–2:18
 - **Unity outwardly, unity inwardly, unity in the Lord**
 4. Two Faithful Co-workers, 2:19–30
 - **Timothy and Epaphroditus**
 5. Two Dangerous Types of People, 3:1–21
 - **Legalists and libertines**
 6. Final Exhortations, 4:1–23
-

Key Verses in Philippians

1. He Who Began a Good Work

- “Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (1:6)

2. To Live Is Christ

- “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (1:21)

Key Verses in Philippians

3. Have the Mind of Christ

- “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:”
- “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped; but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.”
- “Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (2:5–11)

Key Verses in Philippians

4. Shine as Lights

- “Then you will shine among them like lights in the world as you hold out the word of life.” (2:15–16)

5. Christ as the Supreme Treasure

- “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” (3:7–8)

Key Verses in Philippians

6. Press On Toward the Goal

- “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (3:13–14)

7. The Peace That Surpasses Understanding

- “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (4:6–7)

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

1. A Heart That Is Not Bound

- Scripture says--(Proverbs 4:23),
“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” (NIV)
“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” (NASB)
- The original Hebrew word for “flows” or “issues” — *tôtsā’âh* — carries the meaning of “to pour out, to produce, to grow forth.”
- Scripture teaches that the outflow of life comes from the heart; the results of one’s life spring from within. Everything you say and do, everything you think and imagine, originates from the heart. The condition of your heart determines the condition of your entire life. Therefore, you must guard it diligently—more than anything else—so that it remains in its best state.
- The heart is in its best condition when it is in Christ. A heart that abides in the Lord is the healthiest heart.

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

1. A Heart That Is Not Bound

• Paul had the mind of Christ Jesus. Though his body was in chains, his spirit was not bound. While imprisoned, he wrote letters—not with sorrow or discouragement, but filled with hope. He thanked God for the Philippians, prayed for them, and encouraged them to rejoice, shining like lights. Between the lines, we see the grace, truth, and power within him.

• The strength of the inner life

- “Brothers and sisters, I still have this to say: rejoice in the Lord!”
- “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice!”
- “I rejoiced greatly in the Lord!”
- “With all boldness, whether by life or by death, Christ will be exalted in my body!”
- “I can do all things through Him who gives me strength!”

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

2. The Gospel Is Not Bound

- Paul is a servant of Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1:1). Though he was in chains, he seized every opportunity to preach the gospel.
- The key to evangelism lies in one's heart and resolve. Those who have a heart to share the gospel will always find a way to share it. Those who lack the heart will always find it impossible. The same is true for the church.
- *“Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.” (Philippians 1:12–13)*
- *“For this gospel I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained.” (2 Timothy 2:9)*

Shining as Lights (2): United Strength That Cuts Through Metal

- **When people are united in heart, their combined strength can cut through iron.**

- A united church shares the mind of Christ. Outwardly, they advance the gospel; inwardly, they fellowship and support one another. The enemy cannot withstand such unity.

- **Advancing the Gospel Outwardly: One Shared Goal**

- *“Because from the first day until now, you have been partners in advancing the gospel. I am confident of this: that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

- *“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.”*

Shining as Lights (2): United Strength That Cuts Through Metal

- When people are united in heart, their combined strength can cut through iron.
- **Fellowship and Mutual Support Within: Koinonia, a Shared Life Community**
 - *“Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, any comfort from His love, any fellowship with the Spirit, any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”*
 - *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.”*