

# DAILY READ – EPHESIANS

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*Devotional notes on Ephesians adapted from Matthew Henry's Commentary.*

## Introduction

Though written to the church in Ephesus, Ephesians is *"the only one of all Paul's letters that has nothing in it especially adapted to the state or case of that particular church, but has much of common concern to all Christians."* Paul's intention is to establish the Ephesians in the truth by reminding them of the great privileges they have, and in the light of these, what their main duties are and to *"exhort and stir them to faithfully fulfil them."*

## Ephesians 1

v1-2: The members of the church in Ephesus are called the faithful saints in Christ Jesus. They believed in Jesus, were *"firm and constant in following Him,"* both His truths and His ways. This is who we are, and who we are to be if our faith is in Jesus Christ.

v3: *"No good can be expected from a righteous and holy God to sinful creatures except by Christ's mediation."* We are blessed by God in Christ with every spiritual blessing and these *"are the best blessings with which God blesses us"* and for which we are to praise Him, exalt Him, and speak well of Him.

v4-6: Election and predestination are two spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ. In election, God chooses a people to be devoted to Him, and in predestination, He intends that this people *"should become his adopted children and so enjoy the right to all the privileges and to the inheritance of children."* This act of love took place *"not only before God's people existed but even before the world began, for they were chosen in the purpose of God from all eternity."*

v7-8: *"There can be no forgiveness without redemption... We have this redemption in Christ, and this forgiveness through his blood,"* for *"the guilt and the stain of sin could be removed only by the blood of Jesus."*

v9-10: The good news of salvation and the offer of it we only know about because God has made it known to us through Christ, *"who, having been at the side of the Father from eternity came to declare his will to human beings."* Without the gospel we would be left in the dark about how we can be saved, so *"how we should value this glorious gospel and bless God for it!"*

v11-12: Can you believe that all the spiritual blessings that are ours now, *"are only small in comparison with the inheritance"* that the Father will give to all His children?

v13-14: By the Holy Spirit, we have been sealed, that is, *"separated and set apart for God and distinguished and marked as belonging to him."* The Holy Spirit's *"influences and activities"* in our lives, *"both as a sanctifier and as a counsellor,"* guarantee for us both perfect holiness and eternal joys.

v15-17: We need to pray for each other, giving thanks to God for our faith in Jesus and our love for one another, but also praying that we might grow in our knowledge of Him and His saving work for us, and in us, as the Spirit enables us *"to understand and apply the Scriptures."*

v18-19: Pray that *"by reading, contemplation, and prayer,"* we would know *"the immense privileges of God's people,"* *"as much of heaven as we possibly can, so that we may desire and long to be there,"* and the power of God that we need *"for a close and steady walk with him."*

v20-21: Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand, in authority over all things, both in heaven and on earth. Therefore, all creatures are subject to Him and must either give Him their obedience or they will be condemned by Him.

v22-23: Christ is ruling over all things for the church, for her progress and her health. As His body, we can be sure that He loves us and will care for us.

## Ephesians 2

v1-2: As those who are born dead in our trespasses and sins, we are by nature children of disobedience. Cut off from God, the source of all life, *"we follow the course of this world"* and conform our *"lives and actions to the will and pleasure of Satan"* walking *"according to his suggestions and in compliance with his temptations."* This is what we were like before God stepped in and saved us.

v3: *"All people, being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath."* God's wrath and anger is what we deserve and what we will eternally face, if He did not intervene. This description of the condition of humanity as dead, depraved, and damned is *"enough to awaken and alarm those who are still in their sins and make them move quickly out of that state"* by turning to Christ.

v4-7: We who were spiritually dead, cut off from God, are now spiritually alive with Christ. We have been saved from sin and wrath because of God's great love for us and mercy towards us. *"Our believing in order to be saved and our obtaining salvation through faith are entirely owing to divine help and grace."*

v8-9: Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation are gracious gifts from God. They do not come to us because of anything we have done, or *"of any natural abilities or of any merits of our own,"* and so *"all boasting is excluded."*

v10: We are saved and given new life for a purpose. We are to glorify God by living *"an exemplary life and by our perseverance in holiness."* These are good works that God has prepared for us to do beforehand, and He will help us to do them by the *"influence and activity"* of His Spirit.

v11-12: It is good for us to consider what we were by nature. We had no knowledge of Christ and no saving relationship with Him. We did not belong to God's people and had no hope of eternal life.

v13: But now by faith we have been united to Christ and brought near to Him, to His church, to His promises, to the hope of eternal life, and to God Himself. *"Every believing sinner owes their closeness to God and their enjoyment of his favour to the death and sacrifice of Christ."*

v14-15: Jesus Christ by His death has reconciled Jews and Gentiles to each other by removing the *"cause of hostility and distance between them,"* by being the fulfilment of the ceremonial laws. The church is a new community of believers in Christ, *"whether they had been Jews or Gentiles before."*

v16-18: We can draw near to God through Jesus Christ and by the help of the Spirit. *"Christ purchased for us permission to come to God, and the Spirit gives us a heart and strength to come."*

v19-22: Every believer in Christ is a temple which God lives in through the Holy Spirit. *"His living with them now is a pledge of their living with him to eternity."*

## Ephesians 3

v1: Paul is suffering in prison and yet he is praying to God on behalf of the Ephesian Christians. A lesson we can take from this is *"that no particular sufferings of our own should make us so concerned about ourselves as to neglect the situations of others in our supplications and speaking to God."*

v2: *"What God calls people to, he equips them for, and he does so with his almighty power." God equipped Paul for his work, "and as he did his work God gave him the appropriate help — all necessary gifts and graces, both ordinary and extraordinary, by the effectual working of his power."*

v3-7: The mystery that *"was not so fully and clearly revealed in the generations before Christ as it is now revealed,"* is that Gentiles along with believing Jews would be members of the church of Christ and enjoy all the blessings of salvation, *"especially the great promise of the Spirit."* The salvation of Gentiles is a reminder *"not to despair of the worst, or the worst people and the worst nations. Nothing is too hard for divine grace to accomplish,"* and *"no one is so unworthy that God may not be pleased to lavish his great grace on them."*

v8-9: *"There is a vast treasure of mercy, grace, and love stored in Christ Jesus for both Jews and Gentiles."* This treasure is to be made known and offered to the whole world, and those who *"are not made rich with these riches"* only have themselves to blame for remaining poor by not responding with faith to the preaching of the gospel.

v10-13: The wisdom of God is *"revealed in the many different ways and methods he uses in organising his church in its various ages"* and especially in the way the Gentiles have been gathered into it. All that has been accomplished in and through Jesus Christ *"in the great matter of human redemption was according to the Father's eternal decree about that matter."*

v14-16: Paul asks God to give the Ephesians Christians spiritual blessings, *"which are the best blessings and should be most wholeheartedly sought and prayed for by each one of us, both for ourselves and for our friends."* He prays that they would be given the spiritual power and ability that comes from the Holy Spirit *"to fulfil their duty, resist temptations, and endure persecution."*

v17-19: *"The dimensions of [Christ's] redeeming love are wonderful."* Its breadth extends to *"all ages, nations, and ranks of people."* Its length continues *"from eternity to eternity."* Its depth stoops *"down to the lowest condition of humanity, with the intention of helping and saving those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery."* Its height raises us up *"to heavenly happiness and glory."* Oh that we would know this love, experience this love, and be assured of this love. Let's pray that we would *"more clearly grasp and more firmly believe"* this wonderful love that Christ has for His people.

v20-21: God is *"able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more"* that we may ask or think of asking for. We can never exhaust His grace and mercy with our prayers. *"When we turn to God, we should encourage our faith by considering his all-sufficiency and almighty power."*

## **Ephesians 4**

v1: The remainder of this letter is all about what God requires of us. It is a section that is practical, *"intended to give us direction in our lives and how we lead them."* Paul's concern is that those who are called Christians, *"fulfil that name and live as Christians."* This is something he thinks is worth suffering for and we should give his teaching *"serious attention and dutiful observance."*

v2-3: To maintain unity, the first step is having humble thoughts of ourselves, because without humility, *"there will be no gentleness or patience, and without these there is no unity."*

v4-6: Those who belong to Christ should be one. One because we belong to the same body of Christ and are motivated by the same Spirit. One because we are called to the same hope of eternal life. One because we saved by the same faith. One because we are baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One because the one God and Father acknowledges all of us who are part of the church as his children.

v7-10: Everyone in the church has been given by Christ gifts and graces to be used to love one another.

v11-13: Both extraordinary gifts (apostles and prophets) and ordinary gifts (evangelists and pastor-teachers) have been given to the church by Jesus. While the extraordinary gifts are no longer needed with the completion of Scripture and the establishment of the church, the ordinary gifts of these teachers who preach the gospel and instruct God's people continue to be given in order to build up the church and prepare us for heaven. *"How kind Christ is to his church! How much he cares for it and its teaching!"*

v14-16: God's intention is that the ministry of those who have been given to the church to teach God's Word will lead to His people being *"no longer children in knowledge, weak in faith and fickle in judgments, easily giving in to every temptation."* Instead, we would *"come to know Christ and to increase our faith in him, our love for him, and dependence on him."*

v17-21: *"Converted Gentiles must not live like unconverted Gentiles."* At one time we were devoid of all saving knowledge and ignorant of many things about God *"because we wanted to be so."* Preferring the darkness to the light and having *"a dislike and aversion to a life of holiness,"* we made it our *"common practice to commit all kinds of immorality."* But not anymore. When we came to know Christ, we were *"saved from the darkness and defilement"* and are now *"obliged to lead better lives."*

v22-24: Our old self, *"this corrupt nature innate in us,"* inherited from Adam and which we brought into the world with us must be taken off and put to death, and the new self must be put on. The new self enables a person to live a new life, the life of righteousness toward people and holiness toward God they are required to live.

v25: *"It is the character of God's people that they are children who will not lie, who dare not lie, who hate and detest lying."* Lying is destructive and harmful to a local church, so *"if we love one another, we will not deceive nor lie to one another."*

v26-27: Anger in itself is not sinful but can become sinful. The way we avoid being angry and not sinning, if we have a genuine reason to be angry, is to *"be angry at nothing but sin."*

v28: Work is good. It is good because it provides what we need to live, *"and live honestly,"* but also so that we might share what we have, to meet *"the needs of others."*

v29: We can use our words to either hurt or heal others. When they are impure words, they *"corrupt the minds and conduct"* of those who listen to them. When they are words used for the good of others *"by way of giving information, advice, appropriate rebuke, or the like"* they build up.

v30: We grieve the Holy Spirit when we do *"what is contrary to his holy nature and his will"* and *"refuse to listen to his advice or rebel against his rule."* Some of the things that grieve the Spirit include *"all immorality and impurity, lying, and unwholesome talk that stirs up impure appetites and desires"* and *"those corrupt passions of bitterness, rage, anger, fighting, slander, and hatred."*

v31-32: *"There is forgiveness with God, and he forgives sin for the sake of Jesus Christ,"* based on His substitutionary atoning death on the cross. *"Those who are forgiven by God should have a forgiving spirit and should forgive as God forgives, sincerely, readily, cheerfully, universally, and forever, upon the sinner's sincere repentance."*

## Ephesians 5

v1-2: *"Godly people should imitate the God they worship, as far as he has revealed himself and as far as they are capable of doing... We must be holy as God is holy, merciful as he is merciful, perfect as he is perfect,"* and especially, we are to be like him *"in his love and goodness, in his mercy and readiness to forgive."*

v3-4: We are to rid our lives not only of those gross acts of sin, but also those which *"some people may make light of and think excusable."*

v5: *"Those who are unrepentant and indulge themselves either in the lustful desires of the flesh or in the love of the world are not true Christians."* These are sins that we need to be on our guard against.

v6-7: We share in the sins of those who are disobedient, becoming their partners, *"not only when we live in the same sinful way they do,"* but also *"when we encourage them in their sins, prompt and urge them to sin, and do not prevent them as far as it may be in our power to do so."*

v8-10: *"Sinners, like people in the dark, do not know where they are going or what they are doing."* Though we still sin, because of our faith in Christ, we are now in the light. As those in the light, we are expected to examine and search in the Scriptures what God has revealed to be His will, and then conform to it, producing the Spirit's fruit.

v11-14: *"Sinful works are works of darkness,"* for *"they come from the darkness of ignorance, they seek the darkness of concealment, and they lead to the darkness of hell."* When God called up to wake up and rise, He meant that we *"should break away from [our] sins by repentance and begin a life of holy obedience."*

v15-17: Living a holy and pure life will not be possible if we are not paying careful attention to how we are living by *"consulting our Christian rule of conduct and referring to the directions we have in the [Scriptures]."* We must also watch how we use our time by taking care to use it to do good while we are able to, and to watch against temptations.

v18-20: *"Drunkenness is no friend to purity of life,"* and it *"is a sin that rarely goes alone"* carrying *"people into gross sensuality and evil."* Those who give into drunkenness are unlikely to be full of the Spirit. If we are filled with the Spirit, we *"will be full of acts of devotion, and all proper expressions of it,"* including giving thanks *"for our comforts but also for our sanctified sufferings,"* as well as *"for the expressions of God's kindness and favour to others."*

v21: Where there is a spirit of mutual submission among Christians, *"the duties of the respective places and positions God has allotted us in the world... will be better performed."*

v22-24: Christ as head of the church, uses his authority to *"save her from evil and supply her with everything good for her."* In the same way, the husband as the head of his wife, *"should seek the protection and comfort of his spouse,"* and in response the wife submits to his lead *"in everything lawful and consistent with their duty to God,"* out of love for him and obedience to God who has commanded this.

v25-30: Christ's love for the church is the example for husbands of what it means for them to love their wives. *"The greatness of his love for the church was shown in his giving himself up to die for it,"* and He did this so that church, both in general and individual believers, would be sanctified now and glorified in the future. A husband loves his wife in this way by seeking to provide her with what is *"necessary or good for her"* and which *"leads to her eternal happiness and welfare."*

v31-33: The relationship between a husband and wife in marriage is a picture or a type that points beyond itself to the union between Christ and his church, and this relationship is model for every human marriage to follow.

## Ephesians 6

v1-4: Children have a God-given duty to obey their parents, who have the responsibility for bringing up their children *"in the knowledge of the duty that God requires of them and by which they may come to know him better."* When children are obedient, they *"are often rewarded with outward prosperity"* although not always, *"and where it is not, it is made up for with something better."*

v5-9: Masters and servants, or as we might say today, employers and employees, are both to look to the Lord and what He requires of them. When they do that, *"they will be more careful about their duty toward each other."* Those employed will serve their employers well remembering that Christ *"sees them and is always present with them, and that his authority obliges them to faithfully and conscientiously fulfil the duties of their position,"* and those who are employers will show their employees *"the same goodwill and concern"* they expect from them.

v10-12: We need God's almighty power and His all-sufficiency if we are to overcome all the Devil's attacks, *"all the schemes he throws at us, all the traps he lays for us, and all the conspiracies he directs against us"* that tempt us to sin.

v13-16: *"To stand our ground against Satan is to fight against sin,"* and to do that we need the Lord's armour as well as the Lord's strength. We put on the Lord's armour as we trust in Christ and continue to trust in Him, because He is the truth. It is His righteousness we have been clothed with. He brings peace with God and with one another. Faith in the good news about Him is what extinguishes all the lies of the Devil. He is also the One who saves us by His death and resurrection.

v17: *"When Scripture is hidden in the heart, it will protect us from sin."*

v18: We must pray always, *"pleading to receive God's help as the situation requires."* We must pray all kinds of prayers, *"public and private, social and solitary, solemn and sudden"* and *"with all the parts of prayer: confession of sin, petition for mercy, and giving thanks for favours received,"* and persevering in doing so. We must pray not only for ourselves, but for all the saints, for *"no one is such a saint and in such a good condition in this world that they do not need our prayers; and they should have them."*

v19-20: Pastors need the prayers of people, benefit from those prayers, *"and should therefore earnestly desire those prayers."* Pray for them that they will *"communicate the whole will of God, without any deceit, fear, shame, or bias."*

v21-22: To pray better for one another, it is a great help to know the condition of those we are praying for. It is good for the church to know how their pastor is doing and for the pastor to know the state of the members in the church.

v23-24: God's blessing is with those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and *"who continue to be faithful in their love for him so as not to be corrupted from it by any attractions or deceptions, and whose love for him is uncorrupted by any opposing sinful desires, or the love of anything displeasing to him."* We should pray for one another that their love for Christ may be so.