

# Ephesians in the Heart



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 23

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Ephesians 1–6

**MEMORY VERSE:** “I mean that you have been saved by grace [mercy] because you believed. You did not save yourselves; it [being saved] was a gift from God. You are not saved by the things you have done, so there is nothing to boast [brag] about. God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would spend our lives doing the good things he had already planned for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8–10, ERV).



New Testament thinker Thomas Wright says that Paul's letter to the Ephesians is much the same as the London Eye.

**VISITORS TO LONDON, ENGLAND**, can get on a special ride named the London Eye. The London Eye is much the same as a Ferris wheel that you can see at most amusement parks. The London Eye takes you 450 feet above the River Thames. You can get a good view from there that lets you see many important things in London: the Big Ben clock tower, the government buildings, royal palaces, and famous churches. New Testament thinker Thomas Wright says that Paul's letter to the Ephesians is much the same as the London Eye. That's because Ephesians, more than any of Paul's other letters, “shows us a big picture of the ideas Paul writes about in his other New Testament letters.”—*Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), page 3, adapted.

In Ephesians, Paul writes as if he is talking to Christians everywhere. As we read each chapter, let us remember this question: What important Bible truths in Ephesians should continue to change our lives today?

**WE ARE BLESSED IN JESUS (Ephesians 1)**

**Read Ephesians 1 and think deeply about its meaning. Which Bible truths in this chapter touch your heart the most? What are your favorite topics in this chapter?**

---

---

Ephesians 1 tells us all about God's saving plan, from the past before He made this earth to the future. In this chapter, we read about God's mercy and the things He does for us in Jesus. God's saving plan shows us that He took action to save us before He made the skies and earth (Ephesians 1:4). The plans God made to save us are now happening in our lives (read Ephesians 1:7, 8, 13, 14). God's saving plan will be finished fully when Jesus comes back (Ephesians 1:9, 10). Then God will join together in agreement all things in heaven and earth. God will put Jesus in charge of everything (Ephesians 1:10). Now, we can be sure that God's plan to save us in Jesus is part of His big plan to make everything new and better in the future.

Thanksgiving, also, is an important topic in Ephesians 1. In Ephesians 1:15–19, Paul gives thanks to God. Paul prays that Christians will experience the joy of being saved. Paul helps us to put our attention on Jesus, who woke up from the dead. This same Jesus went to heaven where God put Him over every power, leader, and government for all time (Ephesians 1:20–23).

God shows us His mercy in Jesus, His Son, who died for our sins. By our faith in God's mercy, we may live now with Jesus in heaven!

**Paul tells us that “God chose us to belong to Christ before the world was created [made]. He chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us” (Ephesians 1:4, NIV). Think about what this verse means. God chose us to belong to Jesus before He made this earth! Wow! What hope does this wonderful Bible truth give you? What does this Bible truth tell you about how much God wants you to be saved?**

---

---



**Thanksgiving is also an important topic in Ephesians 1.**

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS (Ephesians 2)

**Read Ephesians 2. As you do, try to answer this question: What have God and His Son done for us?**

In Ephesians 2:1–10, Paul talks about the awful lives that his readers lived in the past before they met Jesus. As sinners, they were fighting against God and His law. Satan and sin controlled their lives (Ephesians 2:1–3).

What did God do for these sinners? The same thing He does for us:

1. God made us alive with Jesus. Jesus' resurrection or waking up from the dead is God's promise to us of new spiritual life now and everlasting life in heaven.
2. God took us to heaven with Jesus. So, the honor Jesus got when He went to heaven belongs to us, too.
3. In heaven, God seated us with Jesus. Jesus was crowned King of kings. His crown is our crown (Ephesians 2:4–7).

We aren't only watchers who look at the wonderful things that happened to Jesus. God wants us to live these wonderful experiences for ourselves. Why does God do these things for us? God doesn't include us in Jesus' experiences because of our own good behavior. God includes us in Jesus' wonderful experiences because of His mercy (Ephesians 2:8, 9). God wants us to live in perfect peace and agreement with Jesus and to do "good things" (Ephesians 2:10, ERV).

Ephesians 2:11–22 teaches us that we live in fellowship with other Christians in God's church. This fellowship is God's plan. Jesus' death makes it possible for God to show us mercy and to adopt us as His children (Ephesians 2:1–10). Jesus' death also makes possible our fellowship with other Christians (Ephesians 2:11–22). Because of the Cross, Jesus can destroy everything that separates non-Jewish Christians from Jewish Christians. Jesus is so powerful that He can correct our misunderstanding of His law (Ephesians 2:11–18). Jesus also builds a new temple that is made of Christians. Non-Jews, who weren't allowed to worship in the temple in the past, now can join Jewish Christians in becoming one in heart and mind. We, also, become part of God's church, which is the same as a holy temple for God (Ephesians 2:19–22).

Because of God's mercy, you have the joy and blessing today of joining in fellowship with Jesus and other Christians.



**Jesus' resurrection or waking up from the dead is God's promise to us of new spiritual life now.**

## WE ARE THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD (Ephesians 3)

**Why is it both important and exciting to be part of God’s church? Read Ephesians 3 for the answer.**

In Ephesians 3, Paul gives a report about the church. Paul starts his report with his prayers for Christians in Ephesus (Ephesians 3:1; compare Ephesians 1:15–23.) But then Paul stops his prayer report to talk about how God planned and made the church (Ephesians 3:2–13). Paul finishes his prayer report in Ephesians 3:14–21. Along the way, we learn many important things from Paul about God’s “plan” or “mystery”:

- Before time started, God made His plan for the church (Ephesians 3:3–5, 9, 11). This plan was a secret or mystery.
- Jesus’ life and death show us God’s plan (Ephesians 3:11; compare Ephesians 2:11–22).
- God gives Paul special knowledge to understand His plan for the church. God also tells Paul some surprising news: the non-Jews are part of His plan. God accepts non-Jewish Christians fully as members of His church, the same as Jewish Christians (Ephesians 3:3–6).
- God chooses Paul to be the preacher to the non-Jews. Paul shares this good news in his sermons to the non-Jews. Paul tells the non-Jews “about the riches Christ has” (Ephesians 3:8, ERV; also, read Ephesians 3:9).
- The church is made of Jews and non-Jews. The different people groups in the church show God’s wisdom to Satan and his evil angels (Ephesians 3:10). The agreement in the church is the same as an announcement to Satan and his evil angels. This announcement warns them that they will be destroyed soon in the future (compare Ephesians 6:10–20). God’s secret also includes the plan to join all things in Jesus (Ephesians 1:10). This plan is happening right now. So, Satan and his evil angels don’t have much time left.

God’s plan for the church encourages Paul to pray for church members. Why not imagine a picture of Paul praying for you? Imagine him praying that you will be “filled with everything God has for you” (Ephesians 3:19, NIV). Promise to do your part to bring peace and agreement in the church.



**The different people groups in the church show God’s wisdom to Satan and his evil angels (Ephesians 3:10).**

## FAITH MAKES US ONE IN HEART AND MIND (Ephesians 4)

**In Ephesians 4, Paul asks Christians to stop doing some things and to be sure to do other things. What are the things that Paul tells Christians to do and not to do?**

Paul starts and ends Ephesians 4 with a command for church members to love and forgive each other (Ephesians 4:1–3, 32). Paul also wants us to do everything we can do to have peace and agreement in the church. Paul starts with a list of seven Bible truths that will cause us to be at peace with each other: We must have (1) one body (the church) (2) one Spirit, (3) one hope, (4) one Lord (Jesus Christ), (5) one faith, (6) one baptism, and (7) one God and Father (Ephesians 4:4–6). These spiritual truths connect us together. They join us together as one with God.

The Bible promises us peace and agreement. At the same time, we must work hard if we want to have them. So, we always must “work hard to live together as one by the help of the Holy Spirit. Then there will be peace” (Ephesians 4:3, NLV). One way we do this is by our being a part of Jesus’ body or church (Ephesians 4:7–16). The Holy Spirit gives each church member gifts. Church members should use their gifts to help the church be strong and healthy (Ephesians 4:7, 16). All church members also should be blessed by the work of church leaders, special messengers, traveling preachers, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11, 12). The different groups are the same as different parts of the body. Together, these different parts help the church grow strong in Jesus. Jesus is the same as the Head of the body, which is His church (Ephesians 4:13, 15).

Paul also tells church members, “The body of Christ must grow so that we will no longer be like [the same as] children. We are like children when we are pushed [keep changing our minds] this way and that way [all the time]. We change our minds every time people bring a different teaching. Some teachers teach the lies of men and fool [trick] people so that they believe wrong things” (Ephesians 4:14, WE). This verse gives us a hint that church members were in danger from false teachings.

Paul asks church members to avoid having hard hearts as they did in the past (Ephesians 4:17–24). Paul also tells them to avoid anger and mean and nasty words. They should say loving words (Ephesians 4:25–31) and forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32).



**Church members should use their gifts to help the church be strong and healthy (Ephesians 4:7, 16).**



## GETTING AND GIVING MERCY (Ephesians 5)

**Read Ephesians 5 and think about how Paul asks us to show the Good News to our friends, coworkers, and family members. What does Paul say that means the most to you?**

If you want to understand fully Ephesians 5, you must start with Ephesians 4:32. In Ephesians 4:32, Paul tells his readers, “You must be kind to each other. Think of the other person. Forgive other people just as God forgave you because of Christ’s death on the cross” (Ephesians 4:32, NLV). This verse helps us to understand better an important topic in chapter 5: we must show other people the love, mercy, and forgiveness that God shows us. That is how we copy God’s behavior (compare Matthew 5:43–48).

Paul compares our showing people God’s love with the behavior of people who don’t know God at all. Without Jesus, humans can’t love other people as brothers and sisters in the family of God. All too often, people use each other for sex. Worse, they brag about it (Ephesians 5:3, 4). Paul warns that this behavior will not be part of the kingdom God plans for His people (Ephesians 5:5–7).

Christians must stop behaving the way they did in the past. They must live holy lives and show God’s love (Ephesians 5:8–10). Again, Paul warns us away from evil behavior and from doing secret sins (Ephesians 5:11, 12). We must live as Jesus lived (Ephesians 5:13, 14). We must not get drunk. We must live holy lives. As Christians, we will make the best use of the time that God gives us. We will offer thanks to God for His love (read Ephesians 5:15–21).

Paul also says that Christian husbands and wives should show God’s love in their marriages. Jesus’ love for us on the cross is the example that Christian husbands must follow (Ephesians 5:25–33). Just as the church is loyal to Jesus, the wife must respect and be loyal to her husband (Ephesians 5:22–24). Husbands and wives must not use the gift of sex in a selfish or evil way. Husbands and wives should love each other the same as precious treasure. With God’s help they will become one body, heart, mind, and spirit (Ephesians 5:28–33).

**Ephesians 5:2 tells us to “live a life of love” (ERV). How does verse 2 help us understand what Paul means in verse 1? How can we “try to be like [much the same as] God” (ICB)?**



**Husbands and wives should love each other the same as precious treasure.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** We end our study with Ephesians 6. In this chapter, we discover that we, the church, are the army of God. As God's army we "fight" against sin and Satan's evil forces. We help God bring peace to the lives of people on this earth.

As we saw already, Paul compared the church to three things: (1) Jesus' body (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Ephesians 4:11–16), (2) God's temple (Ephesians 2:19–22), and (3) Jesus' bride/wife. In Ephesians 6:10–20, Paul says the church is the same as an army. Paul tells the church to get ready to fight. Many people misunderstand these verses.

Some people think Paul is saying that Christians should fight real wars with real weapons against God's enemies. Other people think that Paul means that we should always be ready and willing to fight and argue with other people. But Paul doesn't mean we should fight in those ways. Remember, Paul said that we, as Christians, must be in peace and agreement. We must encourage each other and be loving (read Ephesians 4:25–5:2). Paul explains that God's Good News is a message about peace (Ephesians 6:15). So, Paul uses the word picture of an army to teach us how we must fight for God. We must not use real weapons against God's enemies. Our fight against evil is spiritual. Paul asks us to join God's army and help God bring peace to the lives of humans. They will feel peace when they accept Jesus into their hearts.

Our enemies aren't just human. Our enemies include evil angels and Satan, their general (Ephesians 6:12). At the same time, we don't need to be afraid. God is with us in the fight (Ephesians 6:10). God gives us the best weapons and His battle suit (Ephesians 6:11). God gives us His Bible truth, holy life, peace, faith, saving mercy, and His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:13–17). With God's help, we will win. God goes ahead of us into battle. He promises us we will win the fight.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Paul says we were made in Jesus to do good things. How is that true? We're not saved by our good behavior. So, what is God's plan for the good things we do?
- 2 Read Ephesians 3:20. What "power" works in us? How do we show this power in our lives?



**God gives us the best weapons and His battle suit (Ephesians 6:11). God gives us His Bible truth, holy life, peace, faith, saving mercy, and His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:13–17).**

## PRAISING GOD FOR A SICKNESS

Anna was born in Riga, Latvia. From the time she was a little girl, Anna suffered a disease of the nerves. This sickness made Anna shake and tremble all over. The sickness changed how her brain worked and how she felt. Some days Anna felt that she couldn't think. She wanted to be healed so much.

The summer after Anna finished high school, she went to a fortune teller who said she could heal people. But the fortune teller couldn't heal Anna. So, the fortune teller told Anna about a customer who was healed by a pastor's prayer. The fortune teller gave Anna the pastor's phone number.

The fortune teller said, "The pastor will tell you about his church and God. But don't listen to him. Just take the healing and leave. The rest of his words are a lie."

Anna telephoned the pastor. During their conversation, Anna heard for the first time about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Anna and the pastor decided to meet together. At their second meeting, the pastor prayed for Anna to be healed. But her shaking sickness didn't go away. Anna liked the pastor and accepted his invitation to study the Bible. Later Anna went to meetings at the church. Then Anna worshiped at church on Sabbath. She told her mother, "I think the Adventist Church is good."

So, Anna's mother went with her to church. A few months later, Anna went to church with both her parents. The next summer, Anna and her mother were baptized. A year later, Anna's father was baptized and then her grandmother and brother.

Over the years, many people prayed for Anna. But the shaking sickness didn't go away. Anna wondered why God didn't heal her. Then she read about Paul. Paul also prayed for God to heal him. "But the Lord said, 'My grace [mercy] is all you need'" (2 Corinthians 12:9, ERV).

Now 30 years old, Anna Rozenberga believes her shaking sickness is a big blessing. Because she must live with her sickness every day, she knows that she must trust God every day. Some Sabbath mornings, Anna doesn't feel she can get out of bed. But then she remembers she must help out at church. So she trusts in God to help her to be strong. Anna's sickness has helped her share God's love. Her suffering has helped her to be patient with other people. She doesn't always tell people about her sickness when she first meets them. But when she does, they open their hearts to her and are more ready to hear what she has to say about Jesus. Anna says, "My sickness has helped me share God's love. So, I am thankful for my suffering."

This quarter's 13th Sabbath Offering will help support the work of the worldwide church in Europe, including Latvia. Thank you for planning to give a big offering this Sabbath.

## INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**Anna says, "My sickness has helped me share God's love. So, I am thankful for my suffering."**





