

Ephesians 1 (RTS NLT)

Greetings

1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

2 May grace and peace be given to you by God our Father and by Jesus Christ our Lord.

3 We praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 God chose us to be blameless and holy in his presence since before he created the world. 5 It gave him great pleasure to adopt us as his own children according to his unchanging plan thus bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.

6 So we praise God for his wonderful kindness that he has freely given to us because now we belong to the One that he loves so much. 7 He purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son, 8 which is the forgiveness of our sins through his kindness that he has abundantly given to us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

Introduction: God's Secret Plan is Revealed

9 God's secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his purposes. 10 And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything in heaven and in earth under the authority of Christ. 11 In keeping with his plan, which has been from the beginning and cannot be thwarted, he chose to give us an inheritance. 12 For God's intention was that there would be a people who would bring him praise and glory. 13 Now that you have heard and obeyed the truth, which is the message of salvation through Christ he confirmed your acceptance by giving you the promised Holy Spirit. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he has promised, all of our inheritance, by purchasing us for himself. For this reason we praise our glorious God.

Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for Christians everywhere, 16 I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you wisdom and understanding through the Spirit of God, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. 18 I pray that your understanding will be enlightened so that you can comprehend the wonderful hope he promises to those he has called, which is the rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people.

19 I pray that you will be able to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe in him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of authority at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. 22 God put all things under him and made him the head over all things for the benefit of the church. The church is his body, 23 the full representation of Christ who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 2

1 You once were dead because of the offenses you had committed against God. 2 You lived like the others who follow the way of the world and its master, who is the ruler of this world's system. He is the spirit who is at work in the hearts of those who are disobedient to God. 3 All of us used to live as they do by following the passions and desires of the evil nature that we were born with. For this reason, we were targets of God's anger just as they are.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love for us, 5 gave us new life in Christ when he raised him from the dead – it is because of God's grace that you have been saved. 6 For he raised us up from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in heavenly realms because he made us one with Christ. 7 He has done this so that throughout the ages to come he can demonstrate the incomparable wealth of his grace and kindness, which is expressed by all that he has done for us in Christ Jesus.

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. This is not something that you could do by yourself, it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not something we can earn by our own efforts, so we cannot take credit for it. 10 For we are God's workmanship. He recreated us in Christ Jesus so that we can do good works, the things that he prepared in advance for us to do.

Oneness and Peace in Christ

11 For remember that you were Gentiles by birth and were called "the uncircumcised ones" by the Jews who were proud of their circumcision – which is only something done to the body and not to the heart. 12 At that time you were separated from Christ and were excluded from the citizenship of Israel and from the covenants that God had made with them. 13 But now you belong to Christ Jesus. Though you were once far away from God, you have now been brought near to him because of the blood of Christ.

14 For Christ himself has made peace between the Jews and the Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall that separated us, 15 which was the law that with its commandments and regulations brought enmity between us. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new entity from the two separate ones. 16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by putting to death their hostility for each other by means of the cross. 17 He brought the message of peace to the Gentiles who were far away from God as well as to the Jews who were near. 18 Now through Jesus Christ all of us may come to the Father by means of the same Holy Spirit.

A Temple For the Lord

19 So now the Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners, rather you are fellow citizens together with all of God's people and are members of God's family. 20 We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets and the chief cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. Under his supervision the entire building is being carefully built into a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him the Gentiles are fully integrated into this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 3

God's Secret Plan Revealed

1 I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my preaching to you Gentiles. 2 As you have heard, God has made me the administrator of a very special gift for you, 3 which is the revelation of his secret plan as I already mentioned to you briefly. 4 As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about God's plan regarding Christ. 5 God did not reveal it to previous generations but he has now revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. 6 And this is the secret plan: The good news in Christ is that the Gentiles have an equal inheritance with Israel, the two are equal members of the body of Christ and both have an equal share in all of the promises of God.

7 By God's special favor and by the demonstration of his power in me, he has made me his servant and messenger of this good news 8 even though I am the least deserving of all of God's people. By an act of his favor he chose me to proclaim this message to the Gentiles of the unimaginable riches there are in Christ for them, 9 and to make plain to them the plan which has been kept secret from the beginning by God, the creator of all things.

10 God's purpose was that now, at this time he would demonstrate his wisdom in all of its rich variety to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms by uniting Jews and Gentiles together in his church. This was the plan that he has had from all eternity, which has now been carried out through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Because of Christ and through our faith in him, we can now come with complete freedom and confidence right into God's presence.

13 I ask you not to be discouraged on account of what they are doing to me here. To the contrary, the sufferings that I am experiencing are on your behalf, so consider them as an honor and be encouraged by them.

Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Empowering

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you great inner strength through his Holy Spirit, 17 so that Christ will be firmly established in your hearts as you fully trust in him. I also pray that you will be steadfastly rooted in love 18 so that you might have the ability to understand, along with all believers everywhere, how wide, how long, how high and how deep is the love of Christ. 19 And as you experience this love that far surpasses human understanding I pray that you will be completely filled with the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask for or even imagine because of his mighty power that is at work within us, 21 may all who are in the church give him glory in the name of Christ Jesus forever throughout the endless ages! Amen.

Ephesians 4

Unity in the Body

1 Therefore, as a prisoner for serving the Lord, I beg you to live a life that is worthy of the call you have received from God. 2 Be humble and gentle; be patient with each other, making allowances for each other's because of love. 3 Make every effort to maintain the unity among yourselves through the Holy Spirit; binding yourselves together with peace. 4 We form one body in Christ, there is one Spirit and we have been called one certain future. There is one Lord, one baptism, 6 and there is one God our Father who is over all, who lives in us and expresses himself through us.

7 Yet Christ has generously distributed to each one of us special gifts as he has seen fit. (8 That is why the Scriptures say,

“When he ascended on high
He led a multitude of freed captives
And he gave gifts to his people.”

9 Notice that it says “he ascended.” This means that Christ first came down to the world in which we live. 10 The same one who came down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that his rule might fill the entire universe.) 11 He is the one who gave these gifts to the Church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and the teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do works of service so that the body of Christ can be built up 13 until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's son; attaining full maturity and Christ-likeness.

14 Then we will no longer be like children, unstable in our thinking and easily swayed by wrong teaching or be deceived by unscrupulous people who tell us lies that sound like the truth. 15 Instead, as we hold to and proclaim the truth in love we will grow to be more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the Church. 16 Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each member does its own part in love, it helps the other members to develop so that the whole body is healthy and constantly growing and filled with Christian love.

Living As Children of Light

17 I need to tell you something very emphatically with the full authority of the Lord that you must no longer live as people without God do in the futility of their thinking. 18 Their understanding is darkened and they are willfully ignorant because they have shut their minds to the truth; as a result they are far away from the life of God. 19 They have lost their feeling of shame, they have given themselves over to sensuality and participate in every sort of immoral deed and continually lust for more.

20 But as you have learned, that is not Christ's way. Since you have been taught about Christ and you know very well the truth that is in Jesus, 22 discard you old evil nature and your former way of life, which is completely rotten; it is putrid because of lust and deception. 23 Renew your thinking and your attitudes 24 by putting on your new nature, which has been created in God's likeness—righteous, holy and true.

25 So put away all falsehood; “always tell the truth to each other” because we belong to the same body. 26 “Don’t sin when you are angry.” Resolve your anger before the sun goes down 27 because when unresolved it gives the devil a foothold.

28 The person who is accustomed to stealing should steal no longer, but should use his hands to do honest work and to give generously to those who are truly in need. 29 Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

30 Do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live; He has identified you as his own and guarantees your salvation on the day of redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, always forgiving one another just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 5

Living in the Light

1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dearly loved children. 2 Live your life filled with love for others, following Christ’s example who gave himself as a sacrifice because of his love for you. God was greatly pleased with his sacrifice.

3 Don’t let there be even a hint of sexual immorality, impurity or greed among you. Such things have no place among God’s people. Neither should there be obscene or foolish talk and coarse joking—these are completely inappropriate for Christians. Instead let everything you say have an attitude of thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God; for such a person is an idolater who worships the things of this world. 6 Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey him. 7 Don’t participate in the things these people do. 8 For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord and your behavior should show it! 9 The fruit this light will produce in your life is goodness, righteousness and truth 10 so do everything in a way that pleases the Lord.

11 Have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness, they are worthless and evil; instead expose them for what they are. 12 It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret 13 but when the light of the Lord shines on them it becomes very plain whether their deeds are good or evil 14 because light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper
Rise up from the dead
And Christ will give you light.”

Living by the Spirit's Power

15 So be careful how you live, not as fools but as wise. 16 Take advantage of every opportunity to do what is good because these are evil days. 17 Don't do anything without careful consideration of God's will in every situation. 18 Don't get drunk with wine because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit; let him control your life. 19 Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs when you get together, making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 Give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spirit-Guided Relationships: Wives and Husbands

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of Church, which is his body; he gave his life to be her savior. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, you must love your wives with the same intensity that Christ loved the church when he gave his life for her 26 to make her holy, washing her through baptism and with the God's word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without any spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. 28 In the same way, the husbands ought to love their wives as they love themselves; in fact as the husband loves his wife he loves himself. 29 After all, no one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church; 30 for we are his body.

31 As the Scriptures say, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother to be united with his wife and the two will become one." 32 This is a revelation of God's eternal plan that has been given to us, for it is an example of how Christ and the church are one. 33 So I repeat this to you, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 6

Children and Parents

1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 "Honor your father and your mother." This is the first commandment that also offers a promise, 3 which is – "you will have a long life and things will go well for you."

4 Fathers, don't make your children angry by mistreating them; instead of that, train them well so they will honor the Lord.

Slaves and Masters

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with profound honor and respect just as you would obey Christ. 6 Serve them diligently not only to win their favor while they are watching you, but serve them as you serve Christ—with all of your heart. 7 Work wholeheartedly as though you were serving the Lord and not a man. 8 Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good that we do whether we are slaves or free.

9 And in the same way, you masters must treat your slaves right. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

The Whole Armor of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord's mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firmly against all of the strategies and tricks of the Devil. 12 For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God. You will need every piece of it as you fight to hold your ground against the onslaught of the enemy; whatever happens, stand firm. 14 Stand your ground. Synchron the belt of truth tightly around your waist and secure the breastplate of righteousness in its place. 15 Shod your feet with the gospel of peace, so that you will be fully prepared. 16 When you go into battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray at all times in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent as you pray for Christians everywhere.

19 Also pray for me. Ask God to give me the right words and the boldness to proclaim the secrets of the gospel. 20 This is the very reason why I am presently in chains as an ambassador for God, but pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

Final Greeting

21 Tychicus, a much loved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work, will tell you all about how I am getting along. 22 I am sending him to you for just this purpose. He will let you know how we are, and he will encourage you.

23 May God give you peace, dear brothers and sisters. And love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 May God's grace be upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.