THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

WRITER. The Apostle Paul (1:1).

Date. Ephesians was written from Rome in A.D. 64. It is the first in order of the Prison Epistles (Acts 20–27.; see Acts 28:30, note), and was sent by Tychicus, concurrently with Colossians and Philemon. It is probable that the two greater letters had their occasion in the return of Onesimus to Philemon. Ephesians is the most impersonal of Paul's letters. Indeed the words, "to the Ephesians," are not in the best manuscripts. Colossians (4:16) mentions an epistle to the Laodiceans. It has been conjectured that the letter known to us as Ephesians is really the Laodicean letter. Probably it was sent to Ephesus and Laodicea without being addressed to any church. The letter would then be "to the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus" anywhere.

Theme. The doctrine of the Epistle confirms this view. It contains the highest church truth, but has nothing about church order. The church here is the true church, "His body," not the local church, as in Philippians, Corinthians, etc. Essentially, three lines of truth make up this Epistle: the believer's exalted position through grace; the truth concerning the body of Christ; and a walk in accordance with that position.

There is a close spiritual affinity between Ephesians and Joshua, the "heavenlies" answering in Christian position to Canaan in Israel's experience. In both there is conflict, often failure, but also victory, rest, and possession (Josh. 21:43–45; Eph. 1:3; 3:14–19; 6:16, 23). As befits a complete revelation, the number seven is conspicuous in the structure of Ephesians.

The divisions are, broadly, four: I. The apostolic greeting, 1:1, 2. II. Positional; the believer's standing "in Christ" and "in the heavenlies" through pure grace, 1:3–3:21. III. Walk and service, 4:1–5:17. IV. The walk and warfare of the Spirit-filled believer, 5:18–6:24.

Chapter 1

¹ Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus who are at Ephesus. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; 4 according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; ⁵ having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: 7 in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace; 8 which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself ¹⁰ for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him, ¹¹ in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, ¹² that we should be to the praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ: 13 in whom ye also have trusted, having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of his glory.

Wherefore I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *is* in you, and the love which *ye have* towards all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention *of you* at my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you *the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him, ¹⁸ being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of his calling, *and* what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, ²⁰ *in* which he wrought in the Christ *in* raising him from among *the* dead, and he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, ²¹ above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come; ²² and has put all things under his feet, and gave him *to be* head over all things to the assembly, ²³ which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all:

1:1 The believer's place as a member of the body of Christ, vitally united to Him by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

1:3 Literally, the heavenlies. The same Greek word is used in John 3:12, where "things" is added. In both places the word signifies that which is heavenly in contradistinction to that which is earthly. In Ephesians "places" is especially misleading. "The heavenlies" may be defined as the sphere of the believer's spiritual experience as identified with Christ in nature (2 Pet. 1:4); life (Col. 3:4; 1 John 5:12); relationships (John 20:17; Heb. 2:11); service (John 17:18; Mt. 28:20); suffering (Phil. 1:29; 3:10; Col. 1:24); inheritance (Rom. 8:16, 17); and future glory in the kingdom (Rom. 8:18–21; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). The believer is a heavenly man, and a stranger and pilgrim on the earth (Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:11).

1:5 Predestination is that effective exercise of the will of God by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass. See *Election*, 1 Pet. 1:2, *note*; *Foreknowledge*, 1 Pet. 1:20, *note*.

Adoption (*huiothesia*, "placing as a son") is not so much a word of *relationship* as of *position*. The believer's relation to God as a child results from the new birth (John 1:12, 13), whereas adoption is the act of God whereby one already a child is, through redemption from the law, placed in the position of an adult son (Gal. 4:1–5). The indwelling Spirit gives the realization of this in the believer's present experience (Gal. 4:6); but the full manifestation of the believer's sonship awaits the resurrection, change, and translation of saints, which is called "the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23; 1 Thes. 4:14–17; Eph. 1:14; 1 John 3:2).

1:10 The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. This, the seventh and last of the ordered ages which condition human life on the earth, is identical with the kingdom covenanted to David (2 Sam. 7:8–17; Zech. 12:8, Summary; Lk. 1:31–33; 1 Cor. 15:24, Summary), and gathers into itself under Christ all past "times": (1) The time of oppression and misrule ends by Christ taking His kingdom (Isa. 11:3, 4). (2) The time of testimony and divine

forbearance ends in judgment (Mt. 25:31–46; Acts 17:30, 31; Rev. 20:7–15). (3) The time of toil ends in rest and reward (2 Thes. 1:6, 7). (4) The time of suffering ends in glory (Rom. 8:17, 18). (5) The time of Israel's blindness and chastisement ends in restoration and conversion (Rom. 11:25–27; Ezk. 39:25–29). (6) The times of the Gentiles end in the smiting of the image and the setting up of the kingdom of the heavens (Dan. 2:34, 35; Rev. 19:15–21). (7) The time of creation's thraldom ends in deliverance at the manifestation of the sons of God (Gen. 3:17; Isa. 11:6–8; Rom. 8:19–21).

1:13 The Holy Spirit is Himself the seal. In the symbolism of Scripture a seal signifies: (1) A finished transaction (Jer. 32:9, 10; John 17:4; 19:30). (2) Ownership (Jer. 32:11, 12; 2 Tim. 2:19). (3) Security (Esth. 8:8; Dan. 6:17; Eph. 4:30).

Chapter 2

¹ and you, being dead in your offences and sins—² in which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience: ³ among whom we also all once had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do, and were children, by nature, of wrath, even as the rest:

⁴ but God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace,) ⁶ and has raised *us* up together, and has made *us* sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift: ⁹ not on the principle of works, that no one might boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them.

Wherefore remember that ye, once nations in *the* flesh, who *are* called uncircumcision by that called circumcision in *the* flesh done with the hand; ¹² that ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: ¹³ but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of enclosure, 15 having annulled the enmity in his flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances, that he might form the two in himself into one new man, making peace; 16 and might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross, having by it slain the enmity; 17 and, coming, he has preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were afar off, and the glad tidings of peace to those who were nigh. 18 For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone, 21 in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

2:5 Death (spiritual), Summary: Spiritual death is the state of the natural or unregenerate man as still in his sins (Eph. 2:1), alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18, 19), and destitute of the Spirit. Prolonged beyond the death of the body, spiritual death is a state of eternal separation from God in conscious suffering. This is called "the second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

2:15 Here the "new man" is not the individual believer but the church, considered as the body of Christ in the sense of Eph. 1:22, 23; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Col. 3:10, 11. (See Heb. 12:23, *note*.)

Chapter 3

¹ For this reason I Paul, prisoner of the Christ Jesus for you nations, ² (if indeed ye have heard of the administration of the grace of God which has been given to me towards you, ³ that by revelation the mystery has been made known to me, (according as I have written before briefly, 4 by which, in reading it, ye can understand my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ,) ⁵ which in other generations has not been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, ⁶ that they who are of the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings; 7 of which I am become minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of his power. 8 To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, 9 and to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things, in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God, ¹¹ according to the purpose of the ages, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access in confidence by the faith of him. ¹³ Wherefore I beseech you not to faint through my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

family in *the* heavens and on earth is named, ¹⁶ in order that he may give you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love, ¹⁸ in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height; ¹⁹ and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled *even* to all the fulness of God. ²⁰ But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, ²¹ to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen).

3:6 That the Gentiles were to be *saved* was no mystery (Rom. 9:24–33; 10:19–21). The mystery "hid in God" was the divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile a wholly new thing—"the church, which is his [Christ's] body," formed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12, 13) and in which the earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears (Eph. 2:14, 15; Col. 3:10, 11). The revelation of this mystery, which was foretold but not explained by Christ (Mt. 16:18), was committed to Paul. In his writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church.

Chapter 4

- ¹ I, the prisoner in *the* Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called,
- with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all. But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ. Wherefore he says, Having ascended up on high, he has led captivity captive, and has given gifts to men. But that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things; and he has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints; with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ;

arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at *the* full-grown man, at *the* measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ; ¹⁴ in order that we may be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of that teaching *which is* in the sleight of men, in unprincipled cunning with a view to systematized error; ¹⁵ but, holding the truth in love, we may grow up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ: ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to *the* working in *its* measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love.

¹⁷ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye should no longer walk as the rest of the nations walk in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in understanding, estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them, by reason of the hardness of their hearts, ¹⁹ who having cast off all feeling, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greedy unsatisfied lust. ²⁰ But ye have not thus learnt the Christ, ²¹ if ye have heard him and been instructed in him according as *the* truth is in Jesus; ²² *namely* your having put off according to the former conversation the old man which corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts; ²³ and being renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ and *your* having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Wherefore, having put off falsehood, speak truth every one with his neighbour, because we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry, and do not sin; let not the sun set upon your wrath, ²⁷ neither give room for the devil. ²⁸ Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him toil, working what is honest with his hands, that he may have to distribute to him that has need. 29 Let no corrupt word go out of your mouth, but if there be any good one for needful edification, that it may give grace to those that hear it. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamour, and injurious language, be removed from you, with all malice; 32 and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you.

4:11 In 1 Cor. 12:8–28 the Spirit is seen as enduing the members of the body of Christ with spiritual gifts, or enablements for a varied service; here certain Spirit-endued men, viz. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are themselves the gifts whom the glorified Christ bestows upon His body the church. In Corinthians the gifts are spiritual enablements for specific service; in Ephesians the gifts are men who have such enablements.

The Lord, in bestowing the gifted men, determines, providentially (e.g. Acts 11:22–26), or directly through the Spirit (e.g. Acts 13:1, 2; 16:6, 7), the places of their service. "Some" (churches or places) need one gift, as, e.g. evangelist; "some" (churches or places) need rather a pastor or teacher. Absolutely nothing in Christ's service is left to mere human judgment or self-choosing. Even an apostle was not permitted to choose his place of service (Acts 16:7, 8).

4:24 The new man is the regenerate man as distinguished from the old man (Rom. 6:6, *note*), and is a new man as having become a partaker of the divine nature and life (2 Pet. 1:4; Col. 3:3, 4), and in no sense the old man made over, or improved (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10; Col. 3:10). The new man is Christ, "formed" in the believer (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27; 1 John 4:12).

Chapter 5

- ¹ Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, ² and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.
- ³ But fornication and all uncleanness or unbridled lust, let it not be even named among you, as it becomes saints; ⁴ and filthiness and foolish talking, or jesting, which are not convenient; but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For this ye are *well* informed of, knowing that no fornicator, or unclean person, or person of unbridled lust, who is an idolater, has inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with vain words, for on account of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore fellow-partakers

with them; ⁸ for ye were once darkness, but now light in *the* Lord; walk as children of light, ⁹ (for the fruit of the light *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth,) ¹⁰ proving what is agreeable to the Lord; ¹¹ and do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather also reprove *them*, ¹² for the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to say. ¹³ But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light. ¹⁴ Wherefore he says, Wake up, *thou* that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee. ¹⁵ See therefore how ye walk carefully, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ For this reason be not foolish, but understanding what *is* the will of the Lord. ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, in which is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ giving thanks at all times for all things to him *who is* God and *the* Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

submitting yourselves to one another in *the* fear of Christ. ²² Wives, *submit yourselves* to your own husbands, as to the Lord, ²³ for a husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ *is* head of the assembly. He *is* Saviour of the body. ²⁴ But even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it, ²⁶ in order that he might sanctify it, purifying *it* by the washing of water by *the* word, ²⁷ that he might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless. ²⁸ So ought men also to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly: ³⁰ for we are members of his body; *we are of his flesh, and of his bones*. ³¹ Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. ³² This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly. ³³ But ye also, every one of you, let each so love his own wife as himself; but as to the wife *I speak* that she may fear the husband.

5:25 Christ's love-work for the church is threefold: past, present, future: (1) For love He gave Himself to redeem the church (v. 25); (2) in love He is sanctifying the church (v. 26); (3) for the reward of His sacrifice and labour of love He will present the church to Himself in flawless perfection, "one pearl of great price" (v. 27; Mt. 13:46).

5:32 Verses 30, 31 are quoted from Gen. 2:23, 24, and exclude the interpretation that the reference is to the church merely as the body of Christ. Eve, taken from Adam's body, was truly "bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh," but she was also his wife, united to him in a relation which makes of "twain ... one flesh" (Mt. 19:5, 6), and so a clear type of the church as bride of Christ (see 2 Cor. 11:2, 3). The bride types are *Eve* (Gen. 2:23, 24); *Rebecca* (Gen. 24:1–7, *note*); *Asenath* (Gen. 41:45; *note* under Gen. 37:2); *Zipporah* (Ex. 2:21). See Hos. 2:1–23, *note*.

Chapter 6

¹ Children, obey your parents in *the* Lord, for this is just. ² Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, ³ that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest be long-lived on the earth. ⁴ And *ye* fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in *the* discipline and admonition of *the* Lord. ⁵ Bondmen, obey masters according to flesh, with fear and trembling, in simplicity of your heart as to the Christ; ⁶ not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but as bondmen of Christ, doing the will of God from *the* soul, ⁷ serving with good will as to the Lord, and not to men; ⁸ knowing that whatever good each shall do, this he shall receive of *the* Lord, whether bond or free. ⁹ And, masters, do the same things towards them, giving up threatening, knowing that both their and your Master is in heaven, and there is no acceptance of persons with him.

10 For the rest, brethren, be strong in *the* Lord, and in the might of his strength. 11 Put on the panoply of God, that ye may be able to stand against the artifices of the devil: 12 because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual *power* of wickedness in the heavenlies. 13 For this reason take *to you* the panoply of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having accomplished all things, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girt about your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and shod your feet with *the* preparation of the glad tidings of peace: 16 besides all *these*, having taken the shield of faith with which ye will be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one. 17 Have also the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word; 18 praying at all seasons, with all prayer and supplication in *the* Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;

¹⁹ and for me in order that utterance may be given to me in *the* opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador *bound* with a chain, that I may be bold in it as I ought to speak. ²¹ But in order that ye also may know what concerns me, how I am getting on, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in *the* Lord, shall make all things known to you; ²² whom I have sent to you for this very thing, that ye may know of our affairs and that he may encourage your hearts. ²³ Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God *the* Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption.