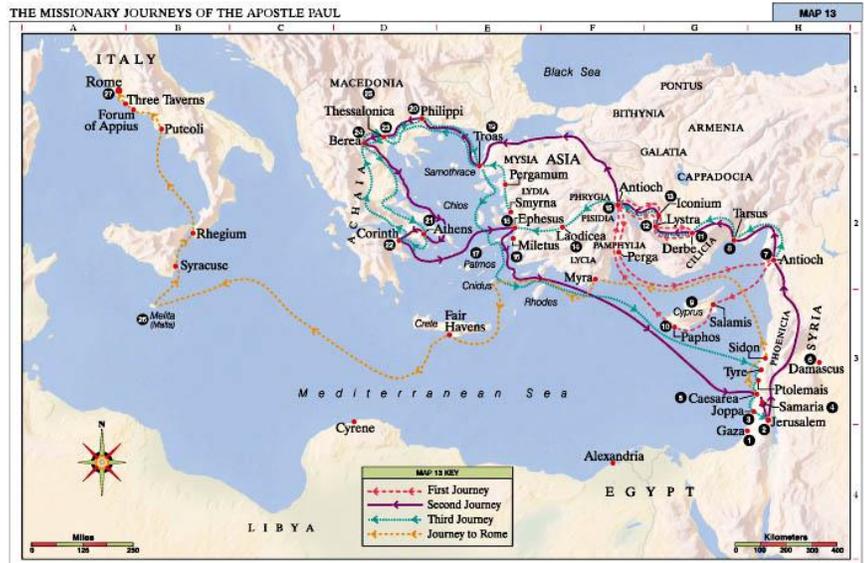
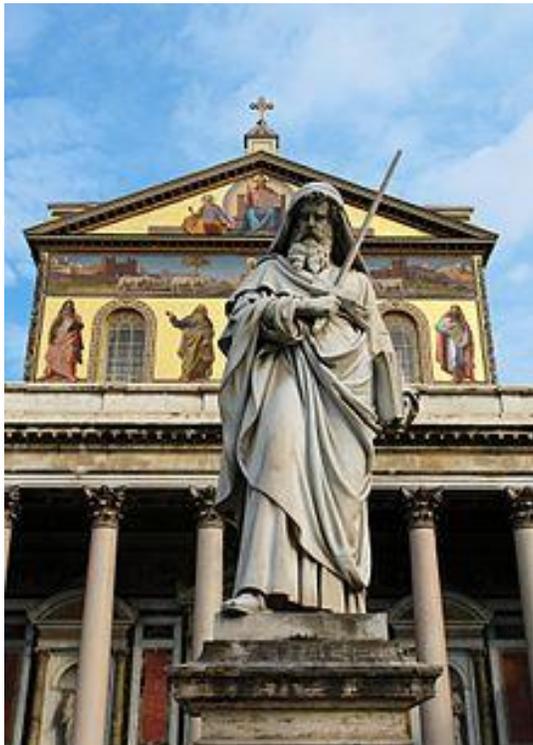


PAULINE EPISTLES



Colossians: The Cosmic Crucified Christ as the Wisdom of God

Air of majesty about this letter, which presents Jesus as the pre-existent Wisdom of God. This letter also inspires a down-to-earth spirituality which surpasses misguided attempts to renew humanity with ascetic practices which don't recognize the reality and power of the Resurrection. There is a singularity of purpose to COL just as in GAL.

The letter seeks to convince COL that Jesus is sufficient for their spiritual liberation and life. They ought to resist the temptation to engage in particular practices which supposedly supplement, but in fact, supplant, their participation in Christ's death and Resurrection.

COL was a moderately important city due to its location as a trade route between the Aegean Sea and Ephesus (west) and the provincial capitol, Pisidia Antioch (east). It was in the fertile Lycus River Valley in the region of Phrygia. It was not a Roman colony. Its population was Phrygians, Greeks, and Jews - syncretism stronger here than anywhere else in Paul's time. The Jews were of the Diaspora, brought to COL from Babylon and Mesopotamia by Antiochus III in 200 BC. COL was destroyed by an earthquake in the early 60s and never rebuilt. The remains of COL have never been excavated.

The COL church was almost certainly NOT founded by Paul. It was probably founded by Epaphras. The congregation reflected the multiethnic makeup of COL: Greeks and Jews. Certain Jewish Christian mystical ascetics with Hellenized views promoted a philosophy which is opposed to Jesus. This "COL heresy" was present in COL before the church was founded. It was **dualistic**, claiming that the purpose of worship is to escape the flesh and enter the heavenly realms. The prerequisite for entry was observance of the appointed fasts and other means of detachment from the flesh. Some were led to ascetic competition, which gave rise to pride. The dualism in this philosophy was **incipient Gnosticism** - not yet full-blown. Paul's teachings **against "the flesh"** and in favor of **charismatic** experiences (tongues, visions, etc.) could have led some believers to over-emphasize these dimensions in their everyday life.

Elements of this philosophy: (1) observation of Jewish calendar, dietary laws, and circumcision; (2) extreme asceticism - fasting and other disciplines (see COL 2:18, 21, 23); (3) worship of angels, which could mean veneration of angels OR participation with the angels at worship; (4) visions (see COL 2:18); (5) interest in the elemental spirits of the universe, the forces which rule the cosmos and human life (COL 2:8).

Merkabah Judaism, a mystery cult, could have syncretized their hellenized culture with the practices of the mystery cult, finding Paul's teachings against the flesh and in favor of charisms of the Spirit and blended it all into this new philosophy. Paul's letter to COL addresses those Christians under the influence of this cult, using the vocabulary of those he seeks to condemn. He corrects them that the heavenly life of believers is NOT one of extreme asceticism but one of ongoing, daily death to self to new life in Christ, accomplished solely by the indwelling Presence of Christ, Who empowers the community with **faith, hope, and love**. COL tells of the wisdom, power, and sufficiency of Jesus: (1) Nothing reveals more about God than Jesus; (2) Nothing is more powerful than the risen, glorified Jesus; and (3) nothing is more necessary than life in Christ.

There are differences in form (style and vocabulary) and substance (theology) from Paul's other letters. COL uses syntactical patterns and terms not found in the other, undisputed Pauline epistles, but ARE found in EPH. COL differs from other Pauline letters in (1) Christology - the cosmic Christ; (2) ecclesiology - the church as universal or cosmic; (3) eschatology - a realized eschatology - the resurrection is present today, not just an anticipated future event; and (4) ethics on key theological topics, such as a patriarchal ethic in the household code COL 3:18-4:1.

(1) the pre-existent, cosmic Christ is still Christ Crucified in COL **and** Christ Crucified is the pre-existent, cosmic Christ of the undisputed letters. The identity of the crucified Messiah with the exalted Lord is a hallmark of Paul's experience and theology. (2) One of Paul's goals is to help the local churches understand themselves to be united to a universal church (hence the Jerusalem collection); (3) In the eschatology of the undisputed letters, there is an emphasis on the life of the Spirit in the present tense - the new life received in Baptism is simultaneously resurrection from the dead and ongoing death as we carry about in our bodies the dying of Christ - this is also simultaneously transformation from glory into glory; (4) the social and literary contexts of the household code reveal how radical it is. Paul's conviction that we are all equal in Christ and that we each equally live in Christ erases the traditional boundaries - male and female, Gentile and Jew, slave and free.

For the first three points, some say that the temporal (horizontal, or eschatological) emphasis of the undisputed letters has become a spatial (vertical, or heavenly) emphasis. Yet in COL, life in heaven is still life on earth and the resurrection life is the cruciform life. Therefore, there is more continuity between COL and the undisputed letters than some scholars maintain.

There are differences in style and theological emphasis in COL, but it is so close that someone who knew Paul's mind must have written it. Paul was writing it literally in chains and could not hold the pen except to write his name and a personal greeting at the end. He probably gave general directions to an assistant, who wrote the letter. Paul then signed it. Tychicus is a likely candidate; he reported on Paul's condition to the churches; he bore the letter to COL and EPH. If Tychicus served as Paul's assistant in writing the letters to COL and EPH, that would explain the similarities between them.

If COL was composed by Paul or in Paul's lifetime, it is dated to mid to late 50s, possibly from prison in Ephesus or in the early 60s from his house arrest in Rome. This would place it following Philemon and before EPH. **Motto:** If by Paul, as late as possible; if after Paul, as early as possible.

1:1-2 - Opening Paul identifies himself as "an apostle by the Will of God" to lend weight to his letter. Paul is confident that the COL can resist this new philosophy.

1:3-23 - Liturgical Introduction: Christ Pre-Eminent - COL has a liturgical air about it, a sense of majesty and worship. Paul gives thanks for the COL *faith, hope, and love* “in Christ”. Jesus is the location of their faith and the Spirit is the “sphere” where their love for one another takes place. The mutual indwelling of Christ and His believers is a hallmark of Pauline spirituality in the undisputed letters.

There is a strong eschatological emphasis right from the start, along with emphasis of the Gospel of God’s grace, planted on Paul’s behalf by Epaphras in COL; it is twice linked to “truth.” Paul prays for COL, for full knowledge of God’s Will through spiritual wisdom and understanding. This Christocentric prayer, with its allusions to Jewish Wisdom themes, announces that you know the Father by knowing the Son. The English translations lose some of the dimensions and nuances of the letter. The Greek suggests that the basic content of the prayer is about “fullness, knowledge of God’s Will, wisdom, and understanding” - derived from the Jewish Wisdom tradition. Knowledge of God is not intellectual but has a practical and ethical purpose: a covenantal way to live - to walk the Way - to live worthily, to live for the Lord. There are four basic aspects to such a way of life: **(1)** bearing fruit in every good work; **(2)** growing in the knowledge of God; **(3)** strengthened for suffering via endurance, patience, and joy; and **(4)** giving thanks to God the Father. The *source* for strength in suffering is the power and might of God, who is sovereign over all hostile powers. God’s Divine action has past, present, and future dimensions; believers will one day receive the inheritance due the saints.

Paul praises God for what He has done. This part of the letter is a narrative hymn full of poetic imagery and “thought rhymes” which tell the story of creation and reconciliation through Christ. The Wisdom literature of the OT reveals that Wisdom played a role in the creation of the world and in its re-creation. This narrative hymn drew upon Proverbs 8 and Wisdom of Solomon 7:22-8:1. Each stanza is dominated by the image of the *firstborn* (*prototokos*), the privileged child of Jewish antiquity who inherited a double portion (Elisha, anyone?) AND the one through whom subsequent generations receive their *family heritage and status* (fellow heirs with Christ). The “in Christ” language now refers to the locus of the Father’s activity.

The first stanza claims for Christ all the attributes of Wisdom and more: pre-existent Image of the invisible God in Whom *and through Whom* all things were made; all things were created *for* Christ. All things continue to hold together in Christ, including the “powers of the universe” whether visible or invisible. Christ is supreme over creation and supreme over all the powers.

The second stanza shifts the focus from creation to re-creation. Christ is the head of His Body, the Church, where the new creation is constituted. He is the *firstborn* of many who will share His inheritance of resurrection and glory. Christ receives the place of pre-eminence because of His uniqueness as the place of God’s indwelling and the means of God’s reconciliation with mankind through His Incarnation and Cross. Christ is God, Wisdom Incarnate, the very seat of Divine Wisdom. Because of the wisdom of God, Jesus is crucified; Incarnation is inseparable from crucifixion. This is cosmic in scope, including “all things” - all creation is reconciled to God through Christ’s sacrifice. His sacrificial death liberates humanity from the hostile forces of the universe and yet will restore those powers to their rightful place for their divinely-created purpose. This combination of liberation and reconciliation is another hallmark of Pauline theology. Paul here reminds COL of their place in the grand sweep of salvation history. Paul exhorts the COL to be mindful of God’s purpose in reconciling all things to Himself: the undoing of the way of life of those who are unreconciled to Him so that Christ may one day present His believers “holy and blameless and irreproachable” to the Father on that Day. COL and all believers are responsible for their own fidelity to the Gospel.

1:24-2:5 - Narrative Introduction: Paul’s Ministry - Paul gives a narrative summary of his ministry to establish the appropriateness of his present communication to COL. Paul’s summary begins with his characteristic combination of suffering and joy, completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions: believers are called to

continue the suffering and death of their Lord. Because Christ suffered and died for us, Paul, His Apostle, suffers for His Body, the Church. As a suffering servant, he preaches the Gospel in which he participates in the full revelation of God's mystery. The essential content of that mystery is the Word of God, Christ living in you, the hope of glory - combining present reality of Christ's indwelling Spirit in believers with the future hope of glorification with Him. The very indwelling of Christ enables and empowers believers to walk in a way which pleases God and assures their future inheritance. This is why Paul devotes himself tirelessly to preaching the Gospel, always recognizing Christ as the true source of his strength. Paul states the goals of his ministry more specifically to COL, as he has not yet met them face to face. Paul desires united communities characterized by love and faith. Paul, present in spirit with COL, rejoices in advance that they will withstand the temptations of the cult and remain firm in their faith in Christ Jesus.

2:6-23 - Life in Christ as Freedom from the Powers - Paul's goal in this letter is to persuade COL to remain firm in Christ and to dissuade them from embracing the deceitful philosophy of the mystical ascetics. Paul here will contrast the emptiness of those practices with the fullness of life in Christ. COL have received Jesus in faith and are to walk with (live in) Him. This means both stability and growth and a constant spirit of thanksgiving. They ought not be seduced and captured by any alternative or supplement to Christ stemming from human tradition or from the hostile elemental powers of the universe. **That which is not Christ is human at best, demonic at worst; it is not the Gospel.**

Believers have come to fullness in Christ; they share in His Cross, an experience of *Christus victor*. Three images portray this share in Christ's victory: circumcision; burial and resurrection; and debt forgiveness. **Circumcision** is spiritual, not physical, a removal of the inner anti-God force which manifests itself in sin - this spiritual circumcision is publicly displayed in Baptism in which believers move from being dead in sin to new life in Christ - resurrection and forgiveness of sin. Outside of Christ is guilt, death, and hostility to God.

Two allusions to the message of the Jewish Christian mystical ascetics are addressed here - circumcision and the Law. Their focus on physical circumcision is misguided; baptism into Christ accomplishes what circumcision could not. The Law did not help the human condition but exacerbated it, for it showed what needed to be done but did not empower believers to do it. The Spirit of God through Baptism into Christ confers the graces and power needed to obey the Law and to live a life pleasing to God.

This section ends with a significant twofold depiction of the Cross as God's act of victory. (1) God erased the record that stood against us and nailed it to the Cross; and (2) God disarmed the rulers and authorities; by His Cross, God has defeated the cosmic powers which hold humanity in the grip of fear. *Deus victor* through *Christus victor* liberates us from guilt and from the hostile powers, cosmic forces, and personal demons, rendering them powerless.

The error of the deceitful philosophy: (1) observance of Jewish calendar, dietary laws, and circumcision; (2) severe ascetical practices; (3) worship of angels or worship in the company of angels; (4) fixation on visions. Since believers have died with Christ to the elemental spirits of the universe, they need not subscribe to the human traditions of this new cult in an attempt to pay them homage or venerate them. The ascetic practices are quite worldly, unable to promote true wisdom and piety, ineffective in treating the root human problem of the flesh; they lead to judgmentalism and arrogance; they take the focus off Christ as the true source of wisdom and growth in God. Simply Christ, and Christ alone, is the Head, the substance, the reality, to which all Jewish symbols ultimately point. Receiving Christ the Lord, dying with Him, and continuing to walk in Him and with Him will assure you of victory over the elemental spirits through Christ.

3:1-4:6 - The Shape of Life in Christ - What constitutes true wisdom and piety? Paul answers this in the remainder of his letter to COL. His response to the visions of the mystery cult ascetics is believers must have a resurrection experience of Christ, which is also a death experience - death to the old self, death to slavery to sin - and arisen to new life in Christ, a cruciform life which embodies the virtues of Jesus on the Cross. This expresses covenant membership in substantive ethical boundary markers like compassion and humility. While living in the body and honoring it as a gift from God, believers live in the thanksgiving and praise inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Paul begins by focusing on the vertical dimension of Christianity: resurrection to new life in Christ. This is in opposition to the deceitful philosophy in COL which overemphasizes visions and mystical experiences at the expense of the body. These visions and ascetical extremism are actually very worldly as they inspire pride, competition, and a superiority complex. True life is hidden with Christ, to be revealed on a future day of glory. This is not triumphalism. Believers live in the “now, but not yet” experience of growing towards that future glory by living the Gospel and by remaining in Christ, united to Him in prayer, worship, and suffering daily. Identification with the exalted, risen, glorified Christ is simultaneously identification with the Crucified Christ. Resurrection implies death, and means daily death for believers in the hope of the future resurrection. Resurrection also means that the glorified, risen Christ dwells within believers, who thereby experience His new life.

Paul continues with the exhortations: Put to death... (3:5) providing a list of sins related to sex and speech. Paul calls for radical surgery - amputation - of the sins and temptations which keep believers from living fully in Christ. This is not a set of regulations such as the old Law; it is a freeing oneself from the winding cloths of sin and death, just as Lazarus, risen from the dead by Jesus, had to be freed: Untie him, Jesus ordered. Believers have been radically transformed by the grace of God, have stripped off the old self and been clothed in Jesus and His Spirit. This refers to the sacrament of Baptism and its subsequent change in lifestyle.

The list of the two sins include the thought life (impurity, passion, lust, anger, wrath, malice) as well as the actions as an outgrowth of those thoughts (fornication, sexual immorality, slander, abusive language, lying). These are the ordinary passions which destroy the soul and personal relationships, extending out to taint the community. These passions are generally untouched by the visions and extreme asceticism of the new cult. Only the action of God, our Divine Healer, can restore us to harmony within ourselves, within our relationships, and with the Holy Trinity. The Church has begun this work by restoring harmony between Gentiles and Jews, as both are equally included in the blessings of the Church. This renewed humanity, depicted in images of creation, is expressed in covenantal terms. God chose His beloved believers to be set apart from the world - *in* the world but not *of* it. Paul continues with the language of baptismal clothing and covenant. Believers in Christ will exhibit compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, mutual forgiveness, and *above all, love*. Love unifies the other traits and the believers who embody them; these traits constitute the ongoing life of the cross as death to the old life and the positive shape of their new life.

Paul describes the renewal of life in Christ in three exhortations. **(1)** To allow Christ’s peace to rule in His Body (3:15). **(2)** To allow Christ’s word and wisdom to permeate the community through praise, gratitude, and mutual instruction. **(3)** Do everything in a manner consistent with Jesus and honoring God.

Relationships in the household make up the last portion of this section of the letter. Paul realized, perhaps spurred on by the situation between Onesimus and Philemon, that for many cultural reasons, immediate emancipation of all slaves would be impractical or even impossible. However, Paul stresses that slave and free are equal in Christ, as all have been freed from the deathgrip of sin. Paul imposes new guidelines upon COL so that believers in a household would treat each other with the dignity befitting to Christians.

Paul's household code focuses on the *paterfamilias*. In antiquity, the head of the household wielded ultimate authority over all members of his household, extending even to the power of life and death. COL subverts and transforms the power (*patria potestas*) of the *paterfamilias*, turning the domicile into a domestic church in three crucial ways: existential, literary, and cultural contexts. **(1)** the duties of the household members are situated within the reality of ***life in Christ*** (existential). All are to keep the teachings and example of Jesus ever in mind as they honor the reality of His dwelling. Even the *paterfamilias* must keep ever in mind and heart the fact that he answers to the Master. **(2)** All believers in a household are accountable for their conduct; all must live by Christian precepts. The *paterfamilias*, above all, is endowed with the duty to establish his household in love, humility, forgiveness, and the building up of the household (literary). He cannot act with impunity in anger, greed, lust, or abusive language. **(3)** The cultural context focuses on the ***duties*** of the household, beginning with the head of the household. This is an alternative to the legal code which focuses on the ***rights*** of the *paterfamilias*. He has no right to punish or kill them; he has a duty to be patient, kind, and forgiving, leading the Way of the cruciform life, standing in the place of Christ as head of his household body.

Paul thus rewrites the patriarchal system in his household code in the context of ***life in Christ*** in which all believers, regardless of societal status, are called to a cruciform life. Paul exhorts wives to submit to their husbands in love; children are to obey their parents (not just the father) in everything; the father may not harass the children lest he drive them to sin. Slaves are called to obey their masters as a way to serve their true Master, for since both slave and master in a believing household are slaves of the Master, neither one is the property of the other (despite Roman law).

Paul asks COL for prayers for his evangelical mission and reminds the COL that they, too, are evangelists and missionaries. By their lives they must embody the Gospel, exhibiting its wisdom and grace.

Paul wraps up the letter with greetings naming eleven people, perhaps to lend the letter authority and credibility. He mentions Tychicus and Onesimus, bearers of this letter. Paul describes Tychicus as a beloved brother, a faithful minister (*diakonos*), and a fellow servant (co-slave, *syndoulos* - which he also called Epaphras). Paul calls Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother (but not a slave - perhaps he was freed by Philemon to work with Paul as Paul requested). Others mentioned are Aristarchus (also in prison); Mark; Jesus called Justus - these three are his sole Jewish coworkers. Paul greets Epaphras, the evangelist from COL, one who vigorously intercedes for the churches in COL, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

At the end of the letter, Paul, in chains, takes up the pen to write his name so as to authenticate the letter; he sends a word of grace: the fullness of grace of God in Christ.

Ephesians Walking Worthily of the Cosmic Crucified Christ

- ❖ Liturgical celebration of God's eternal purpose in Christ
- ❖ Exhorts the Church to embody that purpose in daily life
- ❖ Like COL - may have been written by same amanuensis as COL - Tychicus is likely
- ❖ Circular letter not specific to EPH containing general exhortations and no specific incident; it doesn't move from the general to specific concerns
- ❖ EPH was capitol of the Roman province of Asia. Paul had spent time in EPH; it became the epicenter of the spread of the Gospel. EPH letter possibly battles gnosticism.
- ❖ EPH was a large city, a Greek colony, with sea trade and land trade routes. It had many temples to pagan gods and with the famous temple to Artemis - one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. "Artemis of the Ephesians" because they blended this Greek goddess with Cybele whose priests castrated themselves and gashed themselves.
- ❖ EPH was a strategic center of the early Church. John wrote a letter to EPH in Revelations; St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote to it on his way to martyrdom.
- ❖ EPH became the site of church councils
- ❖ The letter is modeled on COL: structure, vocabulary, theology, and liturgy (worship and catechesis).
- ❖ Paul likely wrote EPH in prison in the early '60s. He mentions Tychicus as the bearer (and likely the one who physically wrote Paul's words for him) of the letter.
- ❖ "Realized eschatology" = now, but not yet fully realized
- ❖ "Realized soteriology" = salvation is an ongoing process - we were saved, we are being saved - salvation can be lost or can continue unto eternity
- ❖ EPH known for its exalted Christology and ecclesiology
- ❖ Paul uses "saved" or "justified" - past tense (strange) - our resurrection to new life of cruciform self-offering AND being seated with Christ in the Heavenly places (2:6)
- ❖ The power of the resurrection to new life IS the power to be conformed to the Cross in suffering and selfless love.
- ❖ Our future hope: 1:12 - set our hope on Christ; 1:21 - the age to come;; 4:30 - day of redemption
- ❖ Christ is the head, the Lord, of the Church, both local and universal.
- ❖ God's plan does not end in the Church, but when all all Creation will be gathered up in Christ (EPH 1:10 and ROM 8:18-25)
- ❖ The Prison Epistles are PHIL, COL, and EPH - all contain Christ's authority over all powers: anti-imperial texts
- ❖ EPH Chapters 1-3: God's plan to unify all in Christ
- ❖ EPH Chapters 4-6: advice on counter-cultural cruciform Christlike lifestyle = spiritual warfare
- ❖ The grace of being **in Christ** and being incorporated into God's plan = we have responsibilities in our everyday witness

- ❖ **EPH 1:3-14 - Berakah** - Jewish prayer of praise. The wealth of God's grace - past, present, future
 - **Election** - of the Gentiles as well as the Jews = covenant made before the foundation of the world - God's eternal plan. We are chosen to live a counter-cultural life of cruciform love.
 - **Adoption and Grace** - we are adopted in the Beloved Son (1:6). As the Church, we owe to God the honor due to a father. The Emphasis is on the present reality and future hope.
 - **Forgiveness as Redemption** - a present reality which will fully be realized at the eschaton
 - **Revelation** - of the mystery of His Will to unify all Creation in Christ in the fullness of time - this phrase refers to the future, whereas it usually refers to the past (Incarnation)
 - **Inheritance** - in the death of Christ. This is not yet fully realized, but it generates the blessing of hope marked by a life of praise and thanksgiving in the present time.
 - **Gift of the Holy Spirit** - (a) a seal which marks and protects believers as God's possession; (b) a pledge, deposit, or first installment of our future redemption.
- ❖ Believers ought to praise the Trinity for all of these blessings.
- ❖ **Trinitarian prayer of praise 1:15-23** - dimensions of the covenant
 - Faith = vertical - Heaven-ward
 - Love = horizontal - we love each other
- ❖ Our Faith, our Church are very public, cosmic realities - NOT hidden knowledge (possibly against gnosticism in the churches of Asia)
- ❖ Enlightenment = knowledge AND participation in redemption AND grace and hope and power, Divine power. Believers fight against spiritual forces with the power and grace of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Christ's rule is both present AND future. His power protects the Church with the Spirit as the Church battles.
- ❖ As the Church is the Body of Christ, we share in His Lordship, but this is not triumphalism
 - There is still evil in the world
 - There is still a future in God's plan
- ❖ **God's Grace in Christ: 2:1-10** - the Church as the fullness of Christ, sharing in His power
- ❖ Restoration to unity now but not yet fully revealed
- ❖ This is a magnificent summary of "Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation." (1:13)
- ❖ Faith working through love AND being a new Creation in Christ echoes GAL 5:6 and 6:15
- ❖ We are destined to **walk** in good deeds; we **walked** in sin and darkness until God's grace intervened
- ❖ Jewish metaphor of life as a **walk** becomes the dominant metaphor for life in Christ
- ❖ Non-believers are dead, enslaved to sin, the flesh, and the "ruler of the powers of the air"
- ❖ Although Christ is Lord of these powers, they can still exercise power during this "present darkness"
- ❖ God co-enlivened, co-raised, AND co-exalted us with Christ
- ❖ The new life to which believers are raised must conform to Christ AND to the love of God
- ❖ In God's Church, we experience His love and power: **theocentric** - shows God's grace
- ❖ By grace we have been saved: (2:5, 8) - use of the past tense with a future dimension
- ❖ Unmerited Divine gifts: salvation, redemption, resurrection, and new life
- ❖ The purpose of the Divine gifts: to walk in Christ; to do good works; and to participate in God's plan
- ❖ Forgiveness without new life is not redemption
- ❖ Good works matter as the **purpose and result** of salvation - not the cause
- ❖ Faith must show itself in love
- ❖ **Unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ 2:11-22**
- ❖ Gentiles were outside of the Old Covenant

- ❖ In the New Covenant, Gentiles do not become Jews
- ❖ God, in Christ, has made peace, creating the New Israel from both Gentiles and Jews on His Cross
- ❖ Circumcision and Temple divisions no longer matter
- ❖ Cross: **vertical** - reconciliation with God; **horizontal** - unites all people
- ❖ In Christ, through the Spirit, to the Father
- ❖ All are members of God's household, built upon the Apostles and prophets (OT and NT) with Christ as the cornerstone/keystone/capstone
- ❖ **Paul's role in God's plan:** 3:1-3 - Paul establishes his identity
- ❖ Repeatedly uses the words "mystery" and "unveiled secret" to disclose God's plan, revealed to the Apostles and prophets
- ❖ All believers are fellow heirs, members of the same Body, and sharers in the Promise
- ❖ Paul = servant of the Gospel according to God's grace and plan
- ❖ God's power as Creator and re-Creator
- ❖ The Church = vehicle to proclaim the Gospel - God's eternal Christocentric plan
- ❖ EPH should glory in Paul's suffering for the Church, the fruit of his mission from God
- ❖ **Paul's Second Prayer** - 3:14-21 - prayer is addressed to the one source and unifier of every human family and nation
- ❖ Intercessions:
 - Spirit's power and strength in our inmost being
 - Indwelling of Christ via faith and love
 - Power to understand the extent of His love - only by living in self-sacrificial love
 - Knowledge of Christ's love - only by living in self-sacrificial love
 - Believers are in the Spirit AND in Christ
- ❖ **Life in Christ** - 4:1-6:20 - **Propositio**: Walk worthily in unity and love
- ❖ **The Unity and Maturity of the Church** 4:1-16 - links chapters 4-6 with liturgical celebrations and theological reflections
- ❖ Diverse gifts contribute to the Church's unity and maturity
- ❖ Walk:
 - Worthily of your calling
 - In love - the key to exercising your gifts which produce fruit in unity and in peace
- ❖ The Seven Unities of the Church
 - One Body
 - One Spirit
 - One hope
 - One Lord
 - One Faith
 - One Baptism
 - One God and Father of all
- ❖ All believers have a gift issued from the grace of Christ AND from God and the Spirit
- ❖ Psalm 68:18 - the enemies of the Lord acknowledge the power of God by giving gifts (Exodus)
- ❖ Christ is now Lord - He is the Giver of Gifts
- ❖ Christ ascended and has cosmic sovereignty

- ❖ Emphasis: gifts of preaching and teaching the Gospel.
 - Apostles and prophets received the Divine mystery and are the foundation of the Church
 - Evangelists, pastors, shepherds, and teachers are indirect recipients of revelation
 - All of these equip the saints for ministry; to edify the Church; for unity in faith and knowledge of the Son
- ❖ The way to maturity is to speak the Truth in love. The Truth is the revelation of God's plan in Christ. Love builds up and matures the Church.
- ❖ **Learning and living in Christ** - 4:17-6:9
- ❖ Exhortations on how to mature in Christ
 - Contrasts former and present ways of life
 - Emphasis is on speech
 - Household code/table 5:22-6:9
- ❖ Former life - darkened, futile, ignorant, hard-hearted, immoral
- ❖ Christ transforms life: put away the old self and put on the new self, renewed in mind
- ❖ Contrast the new life with series of don't do (X); do (Y)
- ❖ Speech can either impart grace OR detract from grace
- ❖ Prohibit falsehood; **instead**, speak the Truth in love as we are members of one Body
- ❖ Prohibit anger; **instead**, resolve quickly so as not to provide an opportunity for the devil
- ❖ Prohibit stealing; **instead**, work honestly to assist the needy
- ❖ Prohibit evil talk; **instead**, edify with speech to impart grace to others and not grieve the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Prohibit bitterness, wrath, anger, slander, and malice; **instead**, practice kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness as we are loved and forgiven by God
- ❖ Imitate God's love sacrificially
- ❖ Purity in thoughts, words, and actions
 - Speak like saints, not like pagans
 - Thank God rather than indulging in vulgar talk
 - Maintain your salvation and don't lead others astray
- ❖ Take God's wrath seriously
- ❖ To live like pagans is to be outside of Christ
- ❖ Walk as children of the Light
 - Bear witness against evil
 - Bear witness to Christ, our Light
- ❖ **Community and Trinity** - 5:15-21 - contrasts wisdom and foolishness
- ❖ Walk wisely with an apocalyptic awareness of the darkness and evil of the present age
- ❖ Make good use of your time - understand AND do God's Will - **exagorazomenoi ton Kairon**
- ❖ Be filled with the Holy Spirit (contrasts with drunkenness)
 - This is an ongoing experience, not once and done
 - Expressed in :
 - Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs **to each other**
 - Sing and make music in your heart **to God**
 - Have gratitude at all times and for all things in the Name of Jesus to the Father
 - Be subject **to one another** in reverence/honor/imitation of Christ
 - Chiasm: a: to each other; b: God; a': God; b': each other
 - The Trinitarian prayer of gratitude is a hallmark of Paul's spirituality

- ❖ Household code is divided into three sections. In each, the pater familias is seen. Paul upends societal values where the father/husband had all of the rights but few duties
- ❖ Paul imposed Catholic cruciform love to the existing patriarchal structure, transforming it in a radical, revolutionary way. Paul blends ethics and Christology.
- ❖ **Wife subject to husband**
 - Part of her obligation as a Christian is to be subject to one another in reverence of Christ
 - Husband has that same obligation
 - Husband must also love his wife as Christ loves His Church = self-sacrificial, cruciform love
 - Wife, as a believer, must also love her husband with Christlike sacrificial love
 - As in the Church:
 - Mutual care is for **unity** of the spouses
 - Different gifts and duties shows **diversity** of persons
 - Husband is head of his wife - she is the body - they are intimately connected, made one flesh
 - Image of Christ as Head of His Church - He nourishes the Church with His own Blood: power in weakness
- ❖ **Father-child relationship** -
 - Fourth Commandment - honor your father and mother; promise of long life
 - Fathers guide and guard their children with love and gentleness
 - Fathers speak the Truth in love
 - Fathers are not to provoke their children so that they go astray
- ❖ **Master-slave relationship** -
 - Slaves to serve as if they are serving Christ - obediently and humbly
 - Master is subject to God and must treat the slave as (a) Christ would treat them AND (b) as another Christ
- ❖ **Spiritual Warfare** - 6:10-20
- ❖ Participation in an ongoing spiritual battle with the power of God' indwelling Spirit AND with prayer
- ❖ This battle continues until the Second Coming
- ❖ Echoing Isaiah and Wisdom, Paul uses a soldier metaphor for **all believers**:
 - Belt of Truth
 - Breastplate of Righteousness
 - Shoes to proclaim the Gospel
 - Shield of Faith
 - Helmet of Salvation
 - Sword = the Word of God
- ❖ With Prayer:
 - Pray always
 - Pray for all the saints
 - Pray for Paul:
 - That he proclaim the Gospel with boldness
 - As an ambassador for Christ in chains
- ❖ Paul ends EPH with: peace, love, faith, and grace to all who have an undying love for Christ