

**Preacher Short Course Handout: Theology of Ephesians
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**Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee
February 17-19, 2025**

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The Purpose and Substance of Ephesians

Ephesians is Paul's [my assumed author] most comprehensive letter. It was likely intended for circulation among various congregations for public reading in regions surrounding Ephesus. The first three chapters unfold the mystery of Christ as the plan of salvation, and the final three chapters invite believers to participate in that mystery by becoming like God and Christ in the power of the Spirit as part of the new creation.

Arnold, Ephesians, 58: "Paul wrote this letter to a large network of local churches in Ephesus and the surrounding cities (1) to affirm them in their new identity in Christ as a means of strengthening them in their ongoing struggle with the powers of darkness, (2) to promote a greater unity between Jews and Gentiles within and among the churches of the area, and (3) to stimulate an ever-increasing transformation of their lifestyles into a greater conformity to the purity and holiness that God has called them to display" (parenthetical numbers added).

1. Ephesians stresses the contrast between the gentile believer's new identity in Christ and their former way of life. They were dead in sin, but now they are alive (2:1-2). Their former lifestyle among the nations was filled with ignorance, licentiousness, and greed (4:17-19). They must put on their newly created selves and renounce their old ways (4:22-24) and renounce their past where they pursued those passions (5:3-5) as they embrace a new way of living that images God and Christ (5:1-2).
2. This new identity in Christ is, in fact, the work of God recreating humanity in God's likeness. Believers in Christ are a new creation (2:10). They are renewed in the image of God (4:23-24). They are members of the body of Christ, the new human (but not a "third race"). All are united in one body through union with Christ (1:22-23; 3:15; 4:4, 14-16). The oneness of that body is a matter of inclusion rather than replacement: gentiles become fellow-heirs.
3. This one body includes both Jews and gentiles without the hostility that divided Jew and gentile (2:14-15). This highlights the most acute circumstance in which the letter is situated. Gentile antisemitism was deep in Greco-Roman culture, and Jewish separatism was well-known. Jewish and Gentile believers must embrace each other as reconciled members of one body (2:16-19; 3:5-6). At the same time, gentile believers must recognize the priority of God's priestly work through Israel (2:11-16). They are God's covenant people whom God chose as the means of cosmic redemption. Gentile believers are now included (1:3-14). Ephesians has a positive view of Israel. Gentiles are now fellow-heirs and have access to the God of Israel through Jesus the Messiah in the Spirit by whom God inhabits us.
4. This work of God—to unite Jew and gentile in a new humanity led by and centered in the Jewish Messiah—is the mystery (or gospel) of Christ that has now been revealed though it was previously hidden (1:10; 3:3-6, 9-10). Israel is neither replaced nor superseded, but gentiles are included. The mystery is the plan of salvation itself: the Father redeeming the world through the Messiah in the power of the Spirit. This gospel is a Triune work: the Father initiates and rescues, the Son is the means by which the Father rescues, and the Spirit indwells, enlivens, and transforms believers (1:4-5, 7-8, 13-14; 2:4-6; 2:18, 21-22; 4:4-6).
5. God's plan—the mystery of Christ—is to reorder the cosmos which had been subverted by evil powers in the heavenly realms (1:10, 21-22; 3:10; 6:10-12). They enslaved gentiles in their sin (2:1-2) and Jews as well (2:3). The gospel of Christ liberates humanity from those powers through forgiveness, redemption, and recreation by the enthronement of a new king (Messiah) as the new human who rules over God's kingdom (1:21-22; 5:5). Through the power of the Spirit, the newly recreated humanity in the Messiah is strengthened to struggle against the powers and equipped to defeat the enemy (6:10-12). They thereby join God in the battle and participate in the cosmic struggle as they partner with God in God's mission.

A Theological Outline of Ephesians

Opening: Salutation (1:1-2)

1. Theological Grounding (1:3-14)

Revelation: the mystery of new creation realized in the Messiah (1:3-3:21)

Doxology: Praise to God through the Messiah in the Spirit (1:3-14)

Prayer (1:15-23): To know God's riches and power

From dead in sin to alive in the heavenly places (2:1-10)

From hostility to peace in the one new human (2:11-22)

The revelation of the mystery of Christ through the church (3:1-13)

Prayer (3:14-19): To know the love of Christ

Doxology: Glory to God in the church (3:20-21)

2. Theological Hinge (4:1-16)

Exhortation: Therefore, God calls us into service as newly created humans (4:1-6:9)

Growing up into the new human (4:1-16)

The mystery establishes unity amidst mutual forbearance (4:1-6)

The mystery gifts the body for maturation (4:7-16)

Living as the body of Christ (4:17-6:9)

Living as new creation in contrast to an old life (4:17-5:2)

Living as light in the darkness (5:3-14)

Walking wisely in evil times (5:15-6:9)

3. Theological Closing (6:10-20)

Participation: God empowers us to participate in new creation and resist the powers.

Empowered against the enemy (6:10-12)

Equipped to stand with the armor of God (6:13-17)

Pray in the Spirit (6:18-20)

Closing: Commendation and Benediction (6:21-24)

Ephesians 1:3: Entering the Theological Narrative of Ephesians¹

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, who has blessed us in the Messiah with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”

Hebrew Narrative: Blessed, Adoption, Messiah

Triune God: Creator-Electing God, Messianic Lord, Spirited-blessings

Cosmic Significance: In Heavenly Places

Blessed be God and Father of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah - Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς (Eph 1:3)

Genesis 14:20 - εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς

Exodus 18:10 - Εὐλογητὸς κύριος

1 Sam 25:39 - Εὐλογητὸς κύριος

1 Kings 1:48 - Εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ

Tobit 13:2 [LXX] - Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς

Psalms 66:20 [65:20, LXX] - εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς

Psalms 68:35 [67:36, LXX] - εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς

Who blessed us in the Messiah – ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς

Genesis 1:22, 28; 2:3; 5:2; 9:2 - God blessed (ἠύλογησεν)

Genesis 12:2 – God will bless (εὐλογήσω) Abram

Genesis 12:3 – in Abram all families will be blessed (ἐνευλογηθήσονται)

Numbers 6:24-25 – the Lord bless (εὐλογήσαι) you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine (ἐπιφάναι) upon you, and be gracious (ἐλεήσει) to you.

Psalms 29:11 [28:11, LXX] – the Lord will bless (εὐλογήσει) his people with peace

Psalms 67:1 [66:2, LXX] – may God be gracious (οἰκτιρήσαι) to us and bless (εὐλογήσαι) us and make his face to shine (ἐπιφάναι) upon us.

With every pneumatic [Spiritual, Spirited] blessing -- ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ

Genesis 28:4 – May he give to you the blessing (εὐλογίαν) of Abraham

Psalms 23:5 [24:5, LXX] – They will receive blessing (εὐλογίαν) from the Lord

Isaiah 42:1 – I have put my spirit (πνεῦμά μου) upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations (κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἐξοίσει).

Isaiah 44:3 – I will pour my spirit (πνεῦμά μου) upon your descendants, and my blessing (εὐλογίας) on your offspring.

Ezekiel 36:26 – a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you (πνεῦμα καινὸν δώσω ἐν ὑμῖν)

Ezekiel 37:6, 14 – I will put my spirit (πνεῦμά μου) within you, and you shall live

In the heavenly places -- ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις

[1:10 – gather up all things in him, things *in heaven* and things on earth; cf. 3:15]

1:20 – the Messiah seated at the right hand of God in the *heavenly places*

2:6 – seated us with him in the *heavenly places* in Jesus the Messiah

3:10 – rulers and authorities in the *heavenly places*

6:12 – spiritual forces of evil in the *heavenly places*

¹ Markus Barth (*Ephesians*) and N. T. Wright (*Kingdom New Testament*) separate 1:3 from 1:4-14 as a theological thesis statement or topic sentence.

The Mystery of God through Christ in the Spirit

Why We Read: To understand Paul's insight into the mystery of Christ (Eph 3:3-4)

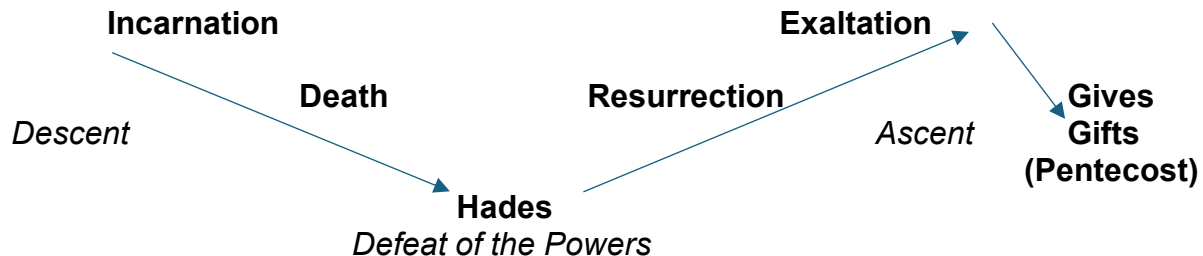
- A. The mystery of Christ unfolded (Eph 1-2; set forth in Christ, Eph 1:9)
- B. The mystery of Christ focused (Eph 2:11-22)
- C. The mystery of Christ revealed (ἀποκάλυψιν; Eph 3:1-13)
- D. The mystery of Christ summarized/creedalized (Eph 4:4-6)

The mystery is the “word of truth, gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13; cf. 3:6; 6:19).

1. A Redemptive-Historical or History of Salvation Lens: The Story of God

- a. What is “the plan of the mystery” (Eph 3:9; οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου; cf. Eph 1:10)? It is to unite or sum up all things (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) in heaven and earth in Christ. Recapitulation is a new creation theme (cf. Irenaeus)—the restoration and glorification of God's good creation in Christ. This entails that Christ will fill all things (Eph 1:23; 4:10), and the church as the body of Christ *represents* (or images) the Messiah and *participates* in the realization of the reign of the Messiah on earth.
- b. The Narrative World of Ephesians
 - i. Creation—the foundation of the world
 - ii. Israel—the covenanted people who experience the gifts of God (“blessed”)
 - iii. Christ—Israel's Messiah now reigns at the right hand of God
 - iv. Church—God reveals the mystery of Christ by the Spirit through the body
 - v. New Creation—the age to come but is already present in the exalted Lord
- c. The Mystery of Christ

The Messianic Centerpiece: A Theological Reading of Ps 68 (Eph 4:8-10).
[See Brain's theological/figural exegesis of Eph 4:8-10.]



Psalm 68 celebrates God's victory over enemies, the march through the wilderness to Sinai, the trek to Israel's inheritance, and then enthronement in Zion where Yahweh resides and receives the processional praise and honor due to the divine king (in which women participate and announce the good news; 68:11, 25). From this exalted position in the sanctuary, where the “kingdoms of

the earth” offer praise, the God of Israel distributes blessings and gifts (“gives power and strength to his people,” 68:35; cf. Psalm 67:1, 6-7).

- i. The Divine Initiative to Bless Israel and Include the Gentiles (Eph 1:3-14).
- ii. The Death and Rising of Jesus—Israel’s Messiah—as the New Human (Eph 2:1-22).
- iii. The Ascension and Out-Pouring of the Spirit for the One Body (Eph 4:7-16).

2. A Triune Lens.

- a. There is one Father, one Lord, and one Spirit (Eph 4:4-6).
- b. The Father blesses through the Son in the Spirit (Eph 1:3-5, 13-14; 3:11).
- c. We access the Father through the Son in the Spirit (Eph 2:18; cf. 3:12).
- d. Triune Work—to the praise of God’s glory (Eph 1:6,12,14):
 - The Father blesses (1:3): elects (1:4), predestines (1:5), graces (1:6-8), reveals (1:9), adopts (1:5, 11), loves (2:4, 7), gifts (2:8), recreates (2:10), forgives (4:32) and erects a new temple (2:21-22) as eternal purpose (3:17).
 - The Son is the locus of the blessings (1:3) as the one in whom and through whom all things are gathered up (1:5,10), brought near to God (2:13; cf. 1:12), in whom we are recreated (2:10); and reconciled (2:7, 13,16) through his incarnate life (2:17), death (1:7; 2:16), resurrection (1:20; 2:5), and enthronement (1:20-21; 2:5-6) who has loved us (3:19; 5:2, 25).
 - The Spirit, by whom we access the Father (2:18) is the source of illumination and revelation (1:17-18; 3:5, 18-19), the seal of our inheritance (1:13-14; 4:30), the power of new life (1:19; 3:16), the unity of the Spirit (4:3), means of prayer (6:18), and the means of God’s temple dwelling (2:22; 5:18).

The “Economic” (οἰκονομία) Trinity: the Father acts through the Son in the Spirit, and we have access to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

3. A Cosmic Lens.

- a. *The goal:* to bring all things in heaven and on earth under one head who is the Messiah, or to sum up the whole of the cosmic story in the Messiah, or to recapitulate everything in heaven and earth in the one new human (Eph 1:10, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι).
- b. *The redemptive act:* God enthroned the Son (the Davidic Messiah) as head over all things for the benefit of or with respect to the church (Eph 1:22; ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ). The church participates in the reign of the Messiah over all things as his body (Eph 2:6). The Messiah is not head of the body as a ruler but the prominent aspect of the whole that rules over (ὑπὲρ) all things (including the powers in both heaven and earth).

- This involved putting everything under the Son’s feet (1:22, πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοῦς πόδας αὐτοῦ). The latter is an echo of Psalms 8:7 and 109:1 (LXX), or Psalms 8:6 and 110:1 in the NRSV.
 - This includes “all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come” (Eph 1:21; πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι).
- c. *Inaugurated Eschatology*: The blessed (the saved, the rescued) are presently “made alive together with Christ” and “raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6) so that “in the ages to come (ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις) he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace” (Eph 2:7). The rulers of this age, however, are still at work in the world.
- This age (Eph 1:21; αἰῶνι τούτῳ) is the present reality of this world (Eph 2:2; τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου). This age follows the “ruler of the power of the air” (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος).
 - At the same time, in the present the church proclaims the mystery of Christ “to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10; νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας).
 - The people of God struggle “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12; πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκοτους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις).
- d. *Inheritance*: full redemption from the powers (Eph 1:14, 18) in the reign of God and the Messiah over the cosmos (Eph 5:5).

4. *The Indicative and the Imperative in Ephesians.*

<u>Epistle</u>	<u>Descriptive</u>	<u>Prescriptive</u>
Ephesians	1 Imperative (chs. 1-3)	40 Imperatives (chs. 4-6)
Romans	13 Imperatives (chs. 1-11)	49 Imperatives (chs. 12-16)
Colossians	4 Imperatives (chs. 1-3)	26 Imperatives (chs. 4-6)
1 Thessalonians	0 Imperatives (chs. 1-3)	22 Imperatives (chs. 4-5)
Galatians	3 Imperatives (chs. 1-3)	18 Imperatives (chs. 4-6)

- a. Indicatives (49) in Ephesians 1-3; only one imperative (2:11, “remember”).
- *God/Christ/Spirit* chose (1:4), graced (1:6), lavished (1:8), set forth (1:9), sealed (1:13), worked (1:20), put (1:22), gave (1:22), loved us (2:4), made us alive together with Christ (2:5), raised us up with Christ (2:6), seated us with Christ (2:6), prepared works for us to do (2:10), proclaimed peace (2:17), now made known the mystery of Christ (3:5), carried out the eternal purpose (3:11).
 - *We have* redemption (1:7), an inheritance (1:11), marked with a seal (1:13) and pledge (1:14), saved by grace (2:5, 8), are God’s work (2:10), brought near to God (2:13) so we now have access (2:18), no longer strangers (2:19) but members (2:19) joined together in a temple (2:21).

b. Imperatives (40 in Eph 4-6)

- speak the truth (4:25)
- be angry but do not sin (4:26)
- do not let the sun go down on your anger (4:26)
- do not make room for the devil (4:27)
- stop stealing (4:28)
- labor, working with your hands (4:28)
- let no evil talk come out of your mouths (4:29)
- do not grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30)
- put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and slander (4:31)
- be kind to each other, forgiving one another (4:32)
- be imitators of God (5:1)
- walk in love (5:2)
- immorality and greed should not be named among you (5:3)
- be sure the immoral and greedy will not inherit (5:5)
- let no one deceive you (5:6)
- do not associate with the disobedient (5:7)
- live as children of light (5:8)
- take no part in the works of darkness (5:11)
- awake (5:14)
- rise from the dead (5:14)
- be careful how you live (5:15)
- do not be foolish (5:17)
- understand what the will of the Lord is (5:17)
- do not get drunk with wine (5:18)
- be filled with the Spirit (5:19)
- husbands, love your wives (5:25)
- love your wife as yourself (5:33)
- obey your parents (6:1)
- honor your father and mother (6:2)
- do not provoke your children to anger (6:4)
- bring them up in the discipline of the Lord (6:4)
- obey your earthly masters (6:5)
- masters, do the same to them (6:9)
- be strong in the Lord (6:10)
- put on the whole armor of God (6:11)
- take up the whole armor of God (6:13)
- stand, fastening the belt of truth around your waist (6:14)
- take the helmet of salvation (6:17)

c. Relation of Indicative and Imperative (4:1-6).

- the indicative grounds the imperative
- the indicative empowers the imperative
- the indicative is realized in the cosmos through the imperative

Blessed be God (Ephesians 1:3-14)

Paul opens the letter with a long blessing or doxology that is a single sentence (from verse 3 to verse 14). While our English translations do not reflect this (because that would be bad English), the rhetorical flare of the single Greek sentence is magnificent, explosive, and comprehensive.

Opening the letter by blessing God sets the tone for the whole document. God is at the center of what is happening in the story Paul is telling as he explains the mystery of Christ. God takes the initiative to act in Christ by the power of the Spirit for the sake of the world.

God blesses (1:3), chooses (1:4, 11), predestines (1:5, 11), lavishes grace (1:8), reveals (1:9), purposes (1:9), includes (1:13), and marks (1:14). God does this to sanctify (1:4), adopt (1:5), redeem (1:7), reorder the world (1:10) and to fulfill God's purposes (1:11).

God is motivated by love (1:4), the divine will (1:5), grace (1:6-7), and good pleasure (1:9). God does this in or through Christ (the Jewish Messiah; 1:3-5, 7, 9, 11-13) and marks the people of God by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). *In other words, the story of salvation is a Triune work of the Father, Son, and Spirit.*

This Triune structure is, perhaps, reflected in the structure of the blessing itself, which highlights the praise of God. Three times Paul states the goal of God's work: it is to the praise of God's glory (1:6, 12, 14). We might outline the doxology in this way to capture its comprehensive movement.

- The Divine Initiative: God blesses, chooses, predestines for the "*praise of his glory*" (1:3-6).
- The Christological Center: in Christ there is redemption, a reordering of the cosmos, and an inheritance for the "*praise of his glory*" (1:7-12).
- The Spirit's Guarantee: marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit for "*the praise of his glory*" (1:13-14).

God is glorified through the work of the Triune God. God receives glory through the blessing, reordering, and sealing of a people who inherit the renewed cosmos (new creation). God accomplishes this through the mystery of Christ that gifts humanity with an inheritance as the people of God. In other words, God is glorified when God unites with humanity in the person of Christ through the presence of the indwelling Spirit. The glory of God, we might say with Irenaeus, is a human being fully alive or fully flourishing as the images of God in the world God created.

The "us"- "you" contrast in the doxology suggests salvation history. God blessed Israel not only for its own sake but to include the gentiles (nations). The language of blessing, choosing, redemption, and inheritance among other terms flow from the story of God with Israel. In other words, this is another way of saying, "To the Jew first, and then to the gentiles." This recognizes the priority of Israel's priestly role among the nations which is ultimately realized through the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Calvinists and Arminians: Common Ground Regarding Election

Several biblical themes provide a framework for articulating a common ground that can propel us beyond the impasse between Calvinists and Arminians. I do not claim any theological ingenuity or originality here. Quite the contrary, these theological principles are common ground between believers. It is precisely because this is true that they may provide a way to unpack a common theological framework.

1. *Theological: Divine Initiative*

Whatever the doctrine of election means, it at least insists that God took the initiative in redemption. God made the first move. We love because God first loved. We believe because God first acted. We are redeemed because God accomplished redemption.

Initiative involves not merely the first act (as if God acted first and then passively sits back to see how we respond), but that God continuously acts in unrelenting pursuit of a people as a treasured possession. God's love pursues us, engages us, and moves us.

Further, this entails that all boasting is negated. We have nothing about which to boast except what God has done through Jesus in the Spirit. Election means that God has removed all grounds for human merit and has located the ground of salvation in God's own gracious and loving acts.

2. *Christocentrism: Christ as the Elect One*

Christ is the Elect One. God chose Christ as the savior of the world. He is God's chosen vessel for redemption. Both Calvin and Arminius emphasized this point, and it has been powerfully renewed in the 20th century by Karl Barth among others. Election is Christocentric since Christ is God's Elect One. Whatever election we have, we are elect because we are in Christ and because of Christ.

Before we become steeped in the theoretical underpinnings of election, we must not lose sight of this foundational soteriological insight: God has chosen us in Christ because he has chosen Christ. We are only elect through Christ. His election is logically and ontologically prior to our own. We cannot think biblically about election if we do not first acknowledge that our election depends on the election of Christ.

3. *Economic: Revealed within Salvation History*

The election of Christ, of course, is a revealed point. We only know that God has acted decisively in Jesus as the Elect One because God has revealed this in the history of Israel and Jesus of Nazareth. And God has interpreted those actions within the narrative of Scripture. We only know our election in Christ because God has revealed the Elect One.

This is part of the point in 2 Timothy 1:8-11. God "has saved us and called us to a holy life," and the ground of this salvation and calling is not our own works, but God's "purpose and grace." We know this grace by God's decisive act in Jesus. Even though it was hidden before creation, "it has now been revealed through the appearing" of Jesus. The mystery of Christ has now been made known by God's apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20).

Debates about the “secret” will of God are unprofitable exactly because that will is “secret.” We know our election through the revelation of God in Christ. God has revealed election through Christ, and we have no other access to it. Consequently, we ought to think about election within the salvation history of God’s story, that is, within the revealed history of God in Israel and Christ.

Thinking about God’s electing grace in terms of the “eternal” mind of God is speculative, but thinking about divine election in the light of Jesus Christ is rooted in God’s historical revelation. We perceive our own election only through the revelation of that election in Christ. When we step outside of or seek to go beyond this historic revelation, we most typically enter worlds which our minds have created rather than what God has revealed. Election and assurance are economically tied to Christ. There the focus should begin and end.

4. Faith: the Means by Which Election is Embraced and Experienced

Faith is the means of both justification and sanctification (if we grant the historic distinction in Protestant theology). When we make justification dependent upon sanctification, then we begin a never-ending journey since we will never be sure whether our sanctification is sufficient (in terms of its depth, amount, comprehensiveness and quality). When we sever the relationship between justification and sanctification, we become antinomian and discredit the role of sanctification as evidence of justification.

The way to avoid legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other is to see faith as the principle that unites justification and sanctification. We are justified by faith, and we are sanctified by faith. Faith is primarily a trusting allegiance, a loyalty, a submission to the King of Israel.

We are justified before God by faith, and faith is the means by which the Spirit transforms us. Faith is the means of salvation and assurance from beginning to end. We are elect, then, through faith in Christ. Faith functions as an instrument, not as a meritorious act. It is the way we come to know our own election.

Conclusion

We know we are elect through trusting in Christ. Whatever theory may lie behind one’s theology of election, these four points are healthy common ground for unity. Both Calvinists and Arminians affirm them, though with additional nuances and caveats. Faith is the means of election, and our only access to know God’s election is through faith.

Calvin, for example, correctly says that the question is not, “Am I elect?” but “Do I trust Christ?” Calvin spoke of Christ as “the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may contemplate our own election” (*Institutes*, 3.24.5). Calvin thought whoever pursues the question by asking whether they are elect or not “plunges headlong into an immense abyss, involves himself in numberless inextricable snares, and buries himself in the thickest darkness... Therefore, as we dread shipwreck, we must avoid this rock, which is fatal to everyone who strikes upon it” (*Institutes* 3.24.4).

The assurance of election is rooted Christological: We are elect when we trust in Christ as the Elect One. Election “from below” is mediated through faith in Christ. Here Calvinists and Arminians can agree. “If Pighius asks how I know I am elect, I answer that Christ is more than a thousand testimonies to me” (*Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 8.7).

Paul's Prayers in Ephesians 1:15-22 and 3:14-21

Ephesians 1:15-19	Ephesians 3:14-19
<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction (1:15-16)</p> <p>For this reason (Διὰ τοῦτο) . . . I remember you in my prayers <i>Theology:</i> your faith (πίστιν) in the Lord Jesus and love (ἀγάπην) for all the saints (εἰς πάντα τοὺς ἁγίους)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction (3:14-15)</p> <p>For this reason (Τοῦτου χάριν). . . I bow my knees before the Father <i>Theology:</i> from whom every family (πᾶσα πατριὰ) in heaven and on earth takes its name (ὀνομάζεται).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Content of Prayer (ἵνα).</p> <p>That he may give to you (δῶῃ ὑμῖν)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Content of Prayer (ἵνα).</p> <p>That he may give to you (δωῖ ὑμῖν)</p>
<p>Spirit (or, spirit) of wisdom</p> <p>and</p> <p>revelation in knowing him (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ).</p>	<p>according to the riches of his glory (κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ)</p> <p>to be strengthened with power (δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι through his Spirit in the inner person,</p> <p>Christ to dwell in your hearts (καρδίαις) through faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως), rooted and grounded in love” (ἀγάπη).</p>
<p>So that with enlightened eyes of your heart (καρδίας) you may know (εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι)</p> <p><i>what</i> (τίς) is the hope of his calling</p> <p><i>what</i> (τίς) are the riches of his glorious inheritance (ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ) among the saints (ἁγίους), and</p> <p><i>what</i> (τί) is the immeasurable greatness of his power (δυνάμεως) for us</p>	<p>In order that (ἵνα)</p> <p>you may have power to comprehend (ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι) with all the saints (σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις),</p> <p>and</p> <p>to know (γινῶναι) the love (ἀγάπην) of Christ that surpasses knowledge (γνώσεως)</p>
<p>According to the working of his great power (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ).</p>	<p>In order that (ἵνα)</p> <p>you might be filled with all the fullness of God (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Proclamation (1:20-22).</p> <p>The power God worked in Christ (ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ). . .the fullness of him who fills all in all (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Doxology (3:20-21)</p> <p>The power at work in us (τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν)</p>

Paul's Prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21

<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction (1:15-16)</p> <p>For this reason . . . I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction (3:14-15)</p> <p>For this reason . . . I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Content of Prayer (1:17-19)</p> <p>That the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory, may give to you</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Content of Prayer (3:16-19)</p> <p>That he may give to you according to the riches of his glory</p>
<p>Spirit (or, spirit) of wisdom and revelation in knowing him</p>	<p>to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith, rooted and grounded in love.</p>
<p>so that with enlightened eyes of your heart you may know</p> <p>what is the hope of his calling</p> <p>what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and</p> <p>what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe</p>	<p>In order that</p> <p>you may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and</p> <p>to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge</p>
<p>according to the working of his great power</p>	<p>In order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Proclamation (1:20-22)</p> <p>God worked his power when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,</p> <p>Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come</p> <p>And he has put all things under his feet and has made him head over all things for the church,</p> <p>Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Doxology (3:20-21)</p> <p>Now to the one who is able to do abundantly more than we might ask or think by his power that is at work in us</p> <p>To him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations forever and ever.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Ephesians 2 and Ezekiel 37

(Based on Suh's article)

Common Vocabulary

<i>Ezekiel</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Ephesians</i>
37:26	Covenant	2:12
37:26	Peace	2:14, 15, 17
37:16, 17, 19, 22, 24	One	2:14, 15, 16, 18
37:22	Two	2:15
37:27, 28	Dwelling Place	2:21, 22
37:11	Hope	2:12
37:24	Law	2:15
37:9	Dead	2:1, 5
37:23	Sin	2:1
37:24	That They Might Walk In	2:2, 10
37:3, 5, 9, 14	Make Alive	2:5
37:22, 24, 25	Prince	2:2
37:1, 5, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14	Spirit	2:2, 18, 22
37:7	Joining	2:21
37:7	Draw Near (Approach)	2:18

Common Structure

<i>Ezekiel 37</i>	<i>Ephesians 2</i>
Looking forward to the establishment of the new sanctuary in a single Davidic reign (24-28)	Looking forward to the final establishment of the new sanctuary in the reign of Christ (19-22)
Unification of Judah and Israel (15-23)	Unification of Jews and Gentiles (11-18)
So that people might know that he is Lord (13-14)	So that people might know the riches of his grace through Christ (7)
Bringing them to the promised land (12-13)	Seating them with Christ in the heavenly places in Christ (6)
Raising Israel from the graves (12-13)	Raising them with Christ (6)
Making Israel alive (5-10)	Making them alive with Christ (5)
Israel as dead bones (1-2)	Jews and Gentiles dead in their sins (1,5)

Key Parallel Themes

New creation from death to life (Ezek 37:1-11; Eph 2:1-10)

Walking in the way of the Lord (Ezek 37:24; Eph 2:10)

Covenant (Ezek 37:26; Eph 2:12)

Peace (Ezek 37:26; Eph 2:14-15, 17)

Promised Messiah/Davidic King (Ezek 37:22, 24-25; Eph 2:13-17, 20)

Temple/Sanctuary/Dwelling Place of God (Ezek 37:26-28; Eph 2:19-22)

The work of the Spirit (Ezek 37:1,14; Eph 2:18, 22)

Ephesians and Colossians Compared

Concept/Word	Ephesians	Colossians
Dead in Trespasses (νεκρούς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν)	2:1, 5	2:13
Uncircumcised (ἀκροβυστία)	2:11	2:13
Flesh (σαρκός)	2:3	2:13
Made Alive with Christ (συνεζωποίησεν)	2:5	2:11, 13
Raised with Christ (συνήγειρεν)	2:6	2:12; 3:1
Seated with Christ (συνεκάθισεν)	2:6	No reference
God's Work (ποίημα // ἐνεργείας)	2:10	2:12
By Grace (τῇ χάριτί // χαρισάμενος)	2:8	2:13
Through Faith (διὰ πίστεως // διὰ τῆς πίστεως)	2:8	2:12
In Baptism (ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ)	No reference	2:12

Colossians 2:11-13: In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ, having forgiven us all our sins. . .

Ephesians 2:8-10

1. *For you have been saved by grace* (Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι)
 [2:4, rich in mercy; through his great love]
 [2:6, by grace you have been saved]
 [2:7, showed his incomparable riches of his grace]
 [2:7, kindnesses to us in Christ Jesus]
2. *through faith* (διὰ πίστεως)
 [2:5, he made us alive with Christ]
 [2:6, he raised us up with him]
 [2:6, he seated us with him in the heavenly places]
 not from (ἐξ) *yourselves* (it is the gift of God),
 not from (ἐξ) *works* (ἔργων) so that no one may boast.
3. *For we are God's workmanship* (αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν ποίημα)
 created in Christ Jesus to do good *works* (ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς),
 which God prepared in advance for us to do,
 that we might walk (περιπατήσωμεν) in them.

The Central Theological Claim (Ephesians 2:11-22)

This is the “key and high point of the whole epistle” (Barth, Ephesians, 1:275).

Salvation History: “The Uncircumcision” Through a Covenantal Lens

“Then You Gentiles in the Flesh Were”	“But Now in the Messiah”
Without the Messiah	In the Messiah
Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel	Citizens with the saints; no longer aliens
Far Off	Brought near
Strangers to the Covenants of Promise	No longer strangers
No Hope	Access to the Father
Without God in the World	Members of God’s Household
Hostility	Peace

The Effect: New Temple through New Creation

That *he might create* in himself one new human
 by making peace (2:15), and
 that *he might reconcile* both groups to God in one body through the cross (2:16),
 by killing the hostility in/through him/it, and
 having come, the Messiah proclaimed the good news of peace to you gentiles (2:17)
 because both have access to the Father through Christ in the Spirit (2:18).

Therefore, both are members of God’s household (οἰκεῖοι),
 built on the foundation of the apostles & prophets, the Messiah the cornerstone,
 in whom the structure (οἰκοδομή) has become a holy temple in the Lord,
 in whom you are built together (συνοικοδομεῖσθε)
 into a divine habitation (κατοικητήριον) in the Spirit (3:5; 5:18; 6:18)
 (Eph 2:19-21).

The Means: The Work of Christ (2:14-16)

Thesis: “brought near by the blood of Christ” (2:13)—given access (2:18).

Elaboration: “he is our peace” (2:14-15a).

In his flesh,
 having made both groups into one, and
 having broken down the dividing wall—the hostility (ἔχθραν) between us,
by having abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances
 (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας)

Result (ἵνα): new creation and reconciliation (2:15b-16).

Messiah might create one new ἄνθρωπον out of two,
 making peace and
 might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross,
 having put to death the hostility (ἔχθραν) in/through it/him (ἐν αὐτῷ)

Did the Cross Abolish the Law?

The Messiah put to death the hostility between Jew and gentile and united them in one body—the new human. How did the Messiah put to death the hostility?

Three Primary Options

1. *The Messiah abolished the whole law and thus created something wholly new.*

D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics: A Text-book* (1888), 131-32: “It would seem impossible to make a statement plainer than this. The Gentiles and Jews have lost all distinction; they are all on the same footing; the law which had served as a partition wall between them had been removed. They were not under the law, but had been brought together in Christ.”

2. *The Messiah abolished the “ceremonial,” separatist boundary markers, or some specific aspects of the law and thus removed the barrier between Jew and gentile.*

Jean Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, cv. 2:15: “What had been metaphorically understood by the word *wall* is now more plainly expressed. The ceremonies, by which the distinction was declared, have been abolished through Christ. What were circumcision, sacrifices, washings, and abstaining from certain kinds of food, but symbols of sanctification, reminding the Jews that their lot was different from that of other nations. . . so that they no longer differ from each other, but that the mark of difference has been taken away; for ceremonies have been abolished.”

3. *The Messiah enabled full access for gentiles in God’s new habitation and destroyed the balustrade that prevented gentiles from access to God in the Herodian temple.*

Argument for the Third Option (cf. Windsor, pp. 134-140).

1. If Ephesians claims Jesus abolished (καταργήσας) the law, this stands in tension with Jesus (καταλύσαι) in Matthew 5:17 and Paul (κατήργηται) in Romans 3:31. It does not easily comport with their use of the Torah in their ethical teaching (Matt 22:36, 40; 23:23; Rom 13:8, 10) and even Ephesians itself (6:2).
2. The law did create a distinction between the covenant people and uncovenanted people, but the Torah itself did not prescribe the sort of separation or hostility noted in Ephesians 2 (cf. Lev 19:33-34; 24:17-22; Num 15:11-16; Deut 16:11; 29:10-11; Ex 12:19).
3. The phrase “of the commandments in ordinances” (τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν) qualifies the law (τὸν νόμον). This is the only appearance of “law” (νόμος) in Ephesians. This is not the whole law itself, but some aspect related to “the commandments in dogmas.”
4. The use of “ordinances” (δόγμασιν) qualifies the commandments and suggests the specific reality Ephesians has in mind. The word typically refers to decrees/judgments that regulate behavior by an external authority (Luke 2:1; Acts 16:4; Acts 17:7). It may refer, then, to post-Torah regulations imposed by authorities such as the dividing wall at the temple.
5. The abolition of “the law” in this qualified sense is how the *dividing wall* (2:14) is destroyed—the hostility between Jew and gentile.
 - a. Some identify the dividing wall as a metaphor for the hostility or even the law itself.
 - b. Windsor identifies the dividing wall as a concrete expression of the hostility or separation of Jew and gentile. This is the balustrade in the temple that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women. It symbolized and enforced sacred separation.
6. A contextual clue in Ephesians is that now both Jew and gentile have access to the Father in the temple of the one body (2:18; cf. 3:12). The dividing wall no longer exists because that ordinance(s) has been deregulated (cf. Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). The death of Jesus created peace through forgiveness and holiness in the temple of his body.

Ephesians 3:2-13 (see Owens article)

Context

The cosmic agenda in new creation through the mystery of God means the glory of the enthroned Messiah fills his body and the cosmos (Eph 1:9-10, 22-23). This creates cosmic unity in the body of the Messiah as one new human through a renewal of God's temple-dwelling in his body (Eph 2:11-22).

Function of 3:2-13 in the Letter

1. Digression: it is a "long parenthesis" (Kirby) that is superfluous to the argument of the letter, or an apostolic defense Paul's gentile mission (Lincoln; Arnold).
2. Explanation: given the triumph of God's Messiah over the powers (Eph 1:20-2:22), this section addresses why Paul is in prison. Answer: Paul is an agent of divine triumph over the powers through his ministry (Gombis) and/or Paul's imprisonment does not threaten God's eschatological plan (Sherwood).
3. Missional Participation: Paul encourages the Ephesians to participate in the purpose (mission) of God rather than being discouraged by his imprisonment and giving up what God is doing through the church. It is a plea for perseverance (Owens).

The Structure of 3:2-13

For this reason (3:1; τούτου χάριν): I, Paul, am a prisoner for (ὑπὲρ) you gentiles.

I am graced (χάριτος) with managing (οἰκονομίαν) the mystery to the gentiles.

That mystery was revealed to Paul, and he writes to share his understanding.

The mystery was once hidden but now revealed.

The mystery is that the gentiles have become fellow-heirs and sharers in the promise with Israel through the gospel.

Paul is graced as a servant of this gospel according to God's power.

I am graced

to proclaim the good news the boundless riches of Christ to the gentiles, and to bring to light the mystery previously hidden in God who created all things,

so that (ἵνα)

God's wisdom might be made known to the powers through the church.

This was God's eternal purpose which he carried out in Jesus the Messiah, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

*Therefore, I pray that you **do not lose heart** over my sufferings for (ὑπὲρ) you.*

They are your glory!

For this reason (3:14; τούτου χάριν): I bow my knees before the Father.

The gracing (gifting) of the church is a primary topic following Paul's prayer (4:7-15).

The Unity of the Body in Ephesians 4:1-6

Classic Text in the Restoration Movement

Alexander Campbell referred to Ephesians 4:4-6 as “the constitutional grounds of unity in the Christian kingdom.”² And, “*Union in truth* amongst all the baptized followers of the PRINCE OF PEACE, has been inscribed on our banner from the day of our Christian nativity till now. We not only pray for it, but we speak, write, and labor for it as a consummation devoutly to be sought. There is but one body of Christ, one spirit, and one hope, as there is but one God and Father of all; and *one Lord, one faith, and one baptism* are the basis of this sacred incorporation. ‘We are all baptized into one body by one Spirit; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or freemen, we are all made to drink into one spirit.’ Christians, then, are radically, essentially, spiritually one; and ought not their union to be visible and manifest to all?”³ And Barton W. Stone: “This union is pourtrayed [*sic*] by the pen of an inspired Apostle, in Eph. Iv. 5, 6.”⁴

Ephesians 4:1-16

7. Unity (Eph 4:1-6)

- a. Relational: Mutual Forbearance in Love (Eph 4:1-3; ἐν ἀγάπῃ)
- b. Oneness: The Mystery of Christ (Eph 4:4-6)
 - One body (σῶμα): 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 28, 30.
 - One Spirit (πνεῦμα): 1:13, 17; 2:18, 22; 3:5, 16; 4:3, 4, 23, 30, 5:18; 6:17, 18.
 - One hope (ἐλπίδι): 1:18; 2:12; 4:4.
 - One Lord (κύριος): 1:3, 15, 17; 2:21; 3:11; 4:1, 5, 17; 5:8, 10, 17, 19, 20, 22; 6:1, 4, 5, 7-9, 10, 21, 23-24.
 - One faith (πίστις): 1:15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 14; 6:16, 23.
 - One baptism (βάπτισμα): no other use, but probably 2:5; 5:26, possibly 1:13.
 - God and Father (θεὸς καὶ πατήρ): 1:3; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23, or πατήρ in 1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23.

This describes a united visible body—united in love for each other and rooted in the reality of a shared foundation. “Therefore” in 4:1 grounds 4:1-6 in the previous three chapters. Because of the mystery of Christ revealed and enacted, live worthy of your calling with each other (embody the mystery) and recognize the unity the Spirit has established through the mystery of Christ (the seven “ones”—what God has done).

2. Diversity (4:7-16)

- a. The Exalted Christ Gives Gifts (Eph 4:7-11)
- b. The Function of Gifts in Love: Maturation (Eph 4:12-16; ἐν ἀγάπῃ)
Functioning almost like an *inclusio*, “each one” in Eph 4:7 (ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ) and Eph 4:16 (ἐνὸς ἑκάστου) highlights how every part of the body is gifted to participate in the maturation of the one body in love (αὔξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ).

² “Notes on a Tour to New York—No. 7,” *Millennial Harbinger* 5 (March 1834): 124.

³ “Union,” *Millennial Harbinger* 4ns (November 1840): 494.

⁴ “Unity,” *Christian Messenger* 13 (May 1843): 5.

Women Pastors/Teachers and Ephesians 4:11

1. Ephesians 4:8 quotes Psalm 68:18, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts (*δώρα*) to his people (*ἀνθρώποις*)”.
 - a. Psalm 68 celebrates the movement of Israel from Egypt (v. 7) to Sinai (v. 8) and then to Canaan (vv. 9-14) whereupon God ascends the throne on Zion in Jerusalem (vv. 15-18). Paul uses Psalm 68 to describe the ascension and enthronement of Jesus in Ephesians 4:8. Jesus rose from the grave, ascended to the throne, and *gave gifts* to the church (people, *ἀνθρώποις*) through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Psalm 68:25 places women in the liturgical procession of singers and musicians to the temple. Like Miriam, young women played tambourines as part of the procession. They *visibly* participated in Israel’s public worship in the assembled congregation.
 - c. Psalm 68:11 reads: “The Lord gives the command; great is the company of those who bore the tidings” (KJV). In the Septuagint “bore the tidings” is the same word as in the New Testament for “preaching the gospel” (*εὐαγγελιζόμενοις*) or evangelists.
 - d. Significantly, in Hebrew, the word is *feminine*. Psalm 68 envisions a *great company of women* who declare the good news (ASV, ESV, NIV). In the light of Paul’s application of Psalm 68 to the ascension of Christ, we hear an echo of the gifting of women to *preach the gospel* when God poured out the Spirit and gifted the church with a variety of functions. This included prophets and evangelists (*εὐαγγελιστάς*; proclaimers of the gospel) in Ephesians 4:11.
2. The Gifts: “the apostles, and” (*δὲ*), “the prophets, and” (*δὲ*) “the evangelists, and” (*δὲ*) “the pastors [shepherds] and (*καὶ*) teachers.”
3. Women exercised the first three gifts in the church.
 - a. Paul identified Junia as an apostle (Romans 16:7).
 - b. Female prophets are present in the church: Pentecost in Acts 2, Corinthian prophets (1 Cor 11), and Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:9).
 - c. “All except the apostles were scattered...those who were scattered went from place to place proclaiming (*εὐαγγελιζόμενοι*) the word” (Acts 8:1, 4).
 - (1) Only two Evangelists are named: Philip (Acts 21:8) and Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5).
 - (2) Philip was one of those who scattered and went to Samaria where he “proclaimed the good news” (*εὐαγγελιζόμενῳ*) according to Acts 8:12. This scattering included women (8:1, 4).
 - (3) Psalm 68:11 identifies women as people who “proclaim the good news.”
 - (4) When Paul refers to women as his co-workers and those who labor in the gospel, he is probably referring this gift of ministry. For example, Euodia and Syntyche “struggled” (*συνήθησαν*) with Paul “in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers (*συνεργῶν*), whose names are in the book of life” (Philippians 4:2-3).
4. The Exegetical-Theological Statement of the Case for Women Pastors/Elders/Teachers:
 - a. Since women are gifted with apostolic, prophetic, and evangelistic ministry, and
 - b. since apostles, prophets, and evangelists are given priority (in some sense) because:
 - (1) the order is important, and this order is ranked in 1 Corinthians 12:28: “first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...,” and
 - (2) the function of the apostles and prophets was foundational to the building of the church (Ephesians 2:20; 3:6), and
 - (3) apostles, prophets, and evangelists (e.g., Timothy) spoke the word of God as public servants for the edification, instruction, and guidance of the church,
 - c. *therefore, why are women excluded from exercising the gift of pastoring/teaching?*
NOTE: There is, significantly, only one reason—1 Timothy 2:12.

Submission in the New Creation (Ephesians 5:15-6:9)

Four Reading Strategies (see Witt's chapter; #1 is added to his threefold typology).

1. Traditional Patriarchy or Hard Complementarianism (Most of Christian History)

James A. Allen. "It is the law of nature, and the law of God, that the influence of woman must be exercised through man, and when she takes the reins in her own hands it works evil to both man and woman by lifting her out of the sphere in which she was placed by the Creator. The influence of a woman is behind the achievement of every great man who has figured in the destiny of the world. But God has not created her to take the lead or to occupy the platform in politics or religion." ("The Woman's Christian. Temperance Union," *Gospel Advocate* 49 [December 19, 1907]: 812.)

Doug Wilson: "Women have a deep creational need to be loved and led, so that they might submit and follow, and men have a deep creational need to be respected and followed, and when these needs are thwarted or otherwise frustrated, the end result is deep unhappiness for both sexes" (Thesis #9). . . "Submission that is invisible is not really submission at all. As submission is cultivated in the home, it needs to be expressed. It cannot exist as a set of hidden resolves or good intentions. Respect must be verbalized, and the demeanor of submissive deference must be plain to everyone in the home" (thesis #20). (<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/21-theses-submission-marriage.html>)

2. Servant-Leadership Patriarchy or Soft Complementarianism (Since the 1970s)

Renew.Org. "In marriage, husbands and wives are to submit to one another, yet there are specific gender expressions: husbands model themselves in relationship with their wives after Jesus' sacrificial love for the church, and wives model themselves in relationship with their husbands after the church's willingness to follow Jesus." (Renew.org Statement on Gender in Sproles, *On Gender*, p. 5). Sproles writes, "Headship encompasses the concept of authority...while authority is part of headship, sacrificial love is also part of headship. While leadership is part of headship, submission, honor, and understanding are also parts of headship. . . Before giving particular instructions to wives and husbands, Paul calls for mutual submission. This is followed up with two clear calls: submission and agape love" (p. 73).

3. Revolutionary Submission (Barth, Keener, Marshall, Witherington)

Ben Witherington. "The emphasis on the modified behavior required of the head of the household (who receives the bulk of the exhortations, as husband, parent, and master), especially in loving and acting in a Christian manner with family members, has the rhetorical effect of setting up a trajectory or momentum in a direction of a more egalitarian approach to the marital situation" (*Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians*, 323).

4. Mutualist or Egalitarian Submission (Barth, Witt, Padgett, Cohick, Gorman, Westfall)

Markus Barth. "The call to mutual subordination seems to relativize, if not blur and destroy, any clear notion of authority and subservience. . . The subordination of wives is an example of the same mutual subordination, which is also known by the husband's love, the children's obedience, the parents' responsibility for their offspring, the slaves' and master's attitude to one another" (*Ephesians*, 2:610).

Reading Ephesians 5:15-6:9 -- Walking Wisely in Evil Times

Be careful how you walk

not unwise, but wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil

On account of this,

don't be foolish, but discern the will of the Lord

don't get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit

speaking [psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves]

singing and making melody [in your hearts to the Lord]

giving thanks [to God the Father at all times

and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ]

submitting [to one another out of reverence for Christ]

Wives (αἱ γυναῖκες) [submit] to husbands as to the Lord

Husbands (οἱ ἄνδρες) love your wives as Christ loved the church

The profound mystery: union (σάρκα μίαν) in 5:31-33

Children (τὰ τέκνα) obey your parents in the Lord

Parents (οἱ πατέρες) raise up your children in the Lord

Slaves (οἱ δοῦλοι) obey your masters as to the Lord

Masters (οἱ κύριοι) do the same to your slaves—same Lord.

Ephesians 5:21-33 as “Christian Alternative Discourse” (see Mutter’s article)

Genre: *Haustafel* (Household Code) – Instructions organized around relational pairs.

Xenophon (*Oeconomicus*): the husband is the wife’s instructor (παιδευτής).

Aristotle (*Politics*) provided the social backdrop of these pairs (others followed).

The husband rules (ἄρχω) his wife in his monarchy. He is ruler (ἀρχή).

Arius Didymus (see Balch, “Household Codes,” 41-42) sees the husband as the ruler (ἀρχή) of the house with aristocratic authority (ἀριστοκρατικός)—superior and naturally functioning as master/ruler.

This social world depicts the husband-wife relationship in terms of power and status.

Language in Ephesians 5 is Contextualized by the Whole Epistle.

The language of “one body” with a shared inheritance shapes how we read this text.

“One another” (ἀλλήλων) expresses a communal standard (4:2, 25, 32; 5:21).

“Mystical Union”—husband/wife as example of the union of Christ and the church.

We have been adopted into the household of God with God as father (πατέρα).

Alternative Language: submission (ὑποτάσσεται), love (ἀγαπάτε), and respect (φοβῆται) replace the language of ruling and authority found in Greco-Roman *Haustafeln*.

1. While the latter is hierarchical, the language of Eph 5 is mutual and reciprocal.
2. The Christological rationale recontextualizes the relationship (“as to the Lord”).
3. The use of head (κεφαλή) instead of “ruler” (ἀρχή) suggests it is not about authority but relationship to the body, which is about mutuality, interdependency, and oneness (unity as in speaking of Christ and the church). This “submission” is not hierarchical but an expression of the unity of head and body as one flesh (Hemphill). Head ((κεφαλή) occurs only 1:22; 4:15; 5:23 (cf. Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19). I think “head over” (authority) is quite different than “head of the body” (unity).
4. Paradigm shift: from authority and power to mutual submission for the sake of the other. The husband must love his wife so *that* (ἵνα) she may respect her husband (5:33; see Miller & Walsh).

Ephesians 5:18-19 and Churches of Christ

The Use of Ephesians 5:19 in the Boswell-Hardeman Discussion (Nashville, 1923)⁵

1. *Absence of Instruments in Eph 5:19.* There is no authorization by command, example, or inference in the New Testament for the use of “mechanical instruments” in the worship assemblies of the church. Hardeman: “with reference to worship, it was to be governed and guided purely by that which is taught in the New Testament, and without authority thereof, or plain, express declaration in a form unquestioned, nothing was to be had. . . Shall we be governed by what God says, or shall we be left every man to do after that which is in his own heart. . . if there be not a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ for that act of public worship of the church of God, I want to drop it. . . since the New Testament says not a word about instrumental music, the organ must forever go, for there is not a shadow of a shade of an intimation of a mention of the mechanical instrument through all of the New Testament. If silence, therefore, is to be regarded, there is absolutely no hope for my opponent. . . Where is the direct command? Where is the practice? Where is the inference?” (40, 42, 118, 187, 190).
2. *The command to sing.* Ephesians 5:19 specifies “sing” and “making melody in the heart,” and therefore excludes all *coordinate* actions. The “sing” excludes “playing.” Hardeman: “Now, get it, when God says ‘sing’ and ‘make melody in the heart,’ that forbids making it upon a mechanical instrument . . . God says ‘sing;’ and when you play, you do that which God has not commanded or granted the right, and, hence, you have no liberty. . . There is music. How many kinds. Just two. Are they subordinate one to another, as cane is to walk? O, no! They are coordinate terms. Out of these two coordinate expressions, God picked out one and said ‘sing.’ Therefore, the instrument, which is the coordinate term, cannot by any process of logic be made as a supplement unto another equal, coordinate” (148, 168, 203).
3. *Eph 5:19 specifies the instrument.* It is the heart, and thus all other instruments are excluded. Hardeman: “What is the instrument? God has said, and he said the instrument with which you ‘psall’ is the human heart. . . What is the instrument? Paul says it is the heart, and that forever settles the matter” (78, 104).
4. *“Making melody” does not include mechanical instrumentation.* If making melody (ψάλλοντες) assumes the use of mechanical instruments (particularly as an implied command), then everyone must participate in making melody (playing an instrument) and such music is a commanded requirement rather than an expedient. Hardeman: “if the word means that and you cannot obey God without doing that, how can a man say that I can worship either with or without the instrument? . . . ‘Psallontes’—making melody. Who? Plural—every one of you. If it means mechanical instrument, Brother Boswell, it cannot be fulfilled until each member has an organ himself and each one plays on it. . . [Psallontes] “cannot be done by proxy” (57, 103, 166).

⁵ Ira M. Boswell and N. B. Hardeman, *Boswell-Hardeman Discussion on Instrumental Music in the Worship Conducted in the Ryman Auditorium, Nashville, Tenn., May 31 to June 5, 1923* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1924). Ebook is available through Google: <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=q5H-tGI0F6AC&pg=GBS.PA4&hl=en>

Reading Ephesians 5:18-19⁶

1. *The Temple Context.*⁷

Ephesians 5:18 – “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit” (μη μεθύσκεσθε οἴνω, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν ἄσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι).

2 Chronicles 7:1 – “the glory of God filled the temple” (δόξα κυρίου ἔπλησεν τὸν οἶκον).

Ezekiel 43:5 – “The spirit lifted me up (ἀνέλαβέν με πνεῦμα), and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (πλήρης δόξης κυρίου ὁ οἶκος).

Ezekiel 44:4 – “Then he brought me (εἰσήγαγέν με) by the way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD (πλήρης δόξης ὁ οἶκος κυρίου); and I fell upon my face.”

The temple language in Ephesians prepares us to hear this as a contrast between the temples/assemblies of the gentiles and the temple/assemblies of the people of God. To be filled with the Spirit is to experience the glory of God in God’s heavenly temple, and thus the people of God speak Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, sing, make melody, give thanks, and submit to one another as part of the assembly as God’s people which God fills with the Holy Spirit.

2. *The Psalm Context* (see Beale).

Ephesians 5:19 – “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς). Paul previously quoted Psalm 68 in Eph 4:8, which is a “A Psalm. A Song” (ψαλμὸς ᾠδῆς).

Psalm 67:0 [LXX, 66:1] – “To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song” (Εἰς τὸ τέλος, ἐν ὕμνοις· ψαλμὸς ᾠδῆς).

⁶ Some accessible resources contextualized by the discussion among Churches of Christ are: Bobby Valentine, “What are the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of Ephesians 5.19?,” <https://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2020/11/30/what-are-the-psalms-hymns-and-spiritual-songs-of-ephesians-5-19/> and “‘Making Melody to the Lord . . .’ Paul’s Debt to the Psalter When Talking about Worship,” <https://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2017/04/03/making-melody-to-the-lord-pauls-debt-to-the-psalter-when-talking-about-worship/>; also, Jay Guin, “The Fork in the Road: Eph 5:19 and the Psalms,” <https://oneinjesus.info/2010/04/the-fork-in-the-road-learning-from-the-history-of-worship-part-5/> and in dialogue with Bruce Morton, “Ephesians 5:18-21: The Work of the Spirit Through Son in a World Under Siege,” <https://oneinjesus.info/2010/04/an-experiment-in-christian-dialogue-a-post-by-bruce-morton-revised/>.

⁷ See Bobby Valentine, “Worshipping Through Ephesians: Dwelling in God’s Temple,” <https://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2018/04/16/worshiping-through-ephesians-dwelling-in-gods-temple/> and “Ephesians & The Temple: A Conceptual Framework, Afternoon Thoughts,” <https://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2023/05/21/ephesians-the-temple-a-conceptual-framework-afternoon-thoughts/>

Psalm 76:0 [LXX, 75:1] – “To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song” (Εἰς τὸ τέλος, ἐν ὕμνοις· ψαλμὸς τῷ Ἀσαφ, ὡδὴ πρὸς τὸν Ἀσσύριον).

The recitation or singing of Psalms was a communal event at the temple. The early assemblies of early church sang the Psalms, quoted the Psalms, heard the reading of the Psalms, and preached the Psalms (e.g., Hebrews).

3. *The Language of the Text.*

The language of Ephesians 5:19 duplicates and echoes the Psalter.

Ephesians 5:19 – “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ).

Psalm 27:6 [LXX, 26:6]– “I will sing and make melody to the LORD” (ᾄσομαι καὶ ψαλῶ τῷ κυρίῳ)

Psalm 33:2 [LXX, 32:2] – “Praise the LORD with the lyre (ἐξομολογεῖσθε τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν κιθάρα); make melody to him (ψάλατε αὐτῷ) with the harp of ten strings [ἐν ψαλτηρίῳ δεκαχόρδῳ].”

Psalm 57:7-8 [LXX, 56:8-9] – “My heart is steadfast, O God; my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody (ᾄσομαι καὶ ψαλῶ)! Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.”

Psalm 108:1-2 [LXX, 107:2-3] – “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make melody (ᾄσομαι καὶ ψαλῶ ἐν τῇ δόξῃ μου). Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn.”

Psalm 147:7 [LXX, 146:7] – “Sing (ἐξάρξατε) to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre (ψάλατε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν ἐν κιθάρα).”

The singing of the Psalms and making melody in the heart, given the language of the Psalter, included the presence of “mechanical instruments” such as the harp and the lyre. Ephesians 5:19 is soaked in the experience of the Psalms and their use in the temple. Paul envisions the activities of speaking, singing, making melody, giving thanks, and submitting as characteristics of the temple experience (or assembly experience) of worshipping as a community.

Cosmic Struggle in Ephesians

Owens (pp. 88-89): Given the allusions to Isaiah 11:5, 52:7, and 59:17 in Ephesians 6:14-17, “this text portrays the church as a community of ‘divine-warriors’ who continue Christ’s mission by extending the new creation.” It functions, then, to summarize the whole letter. The armor is “more than a defence against the devil, but instead helps expand the new creation inaugurated by Christ’s death and resurrection.”

Allusions to Isaiah

Isaiah: New Exodus	Ephesians: New Creation
“Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) shall be the belt (ἐζωσμένος) around his waist (τὴν ὀσφύν), and faithfulness (ἀληθεία) the belt around his loins” in 11:5.	“Stand, therefore, and fasten the belt (περιζωσάμενοι) of truth (ἀληθεία) around your waist (τὴν ὀσφύν) and put on the breastplate of righteousness (δικαιοσύνης)” in 6:14.
“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings (πόδες εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοὴν εἰρήνης, ὡς εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθά), who proclaim salvation (σωτηρίαν), who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” in 52:7.	“As shoes for your feet (πόδας) put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης)” in 6:15.
“He put on righteousness as his breastplate (ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα), and the helmet of salvation (περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου) on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak” in 59:17.	“Put on the breastplate of righteousness (ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης)” in 6:14 and “Take the helmet of salvation (περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου)” in 6:17.

Wisdom 5:17-20 – “The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor (πανοπλίαν), and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; he will put on righteousness as a breastplate (ἐνδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνην), and wear impartial justice as a helmet (κόρυθα); he will take holiness as an invincible shield (ἀσπίδα), and sharpen stern wrath for a sword (ρόμφαίαν) and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes.”

Significance of Ephesians 6:10-20

Paul urges his readers to participate in the mission of God to defeat evil by sharing in God’s role as divine warrior (cf. Longman). They dress in God’s armor (thus, God’s truth, righteousness, salvation, gospel of peace, God’s word/sword). This participation is both offensive and defensive. The proclamation and embodiment of the gospel is not only a witness to new creation but a participation in new creation which struggles against cosmic powers and defeats evil in the strength of the Lord. Just as Joshua was encouraged to be strong and defeat the enemy to receive the inheritance (Joshua 1:6), so renewed Israel—as new humanity—participates in the defeat of God’s enemies through God’s strength and ultimately receives an inheritance.

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