

THE BENEFITS OF UNION WITH CHRIST

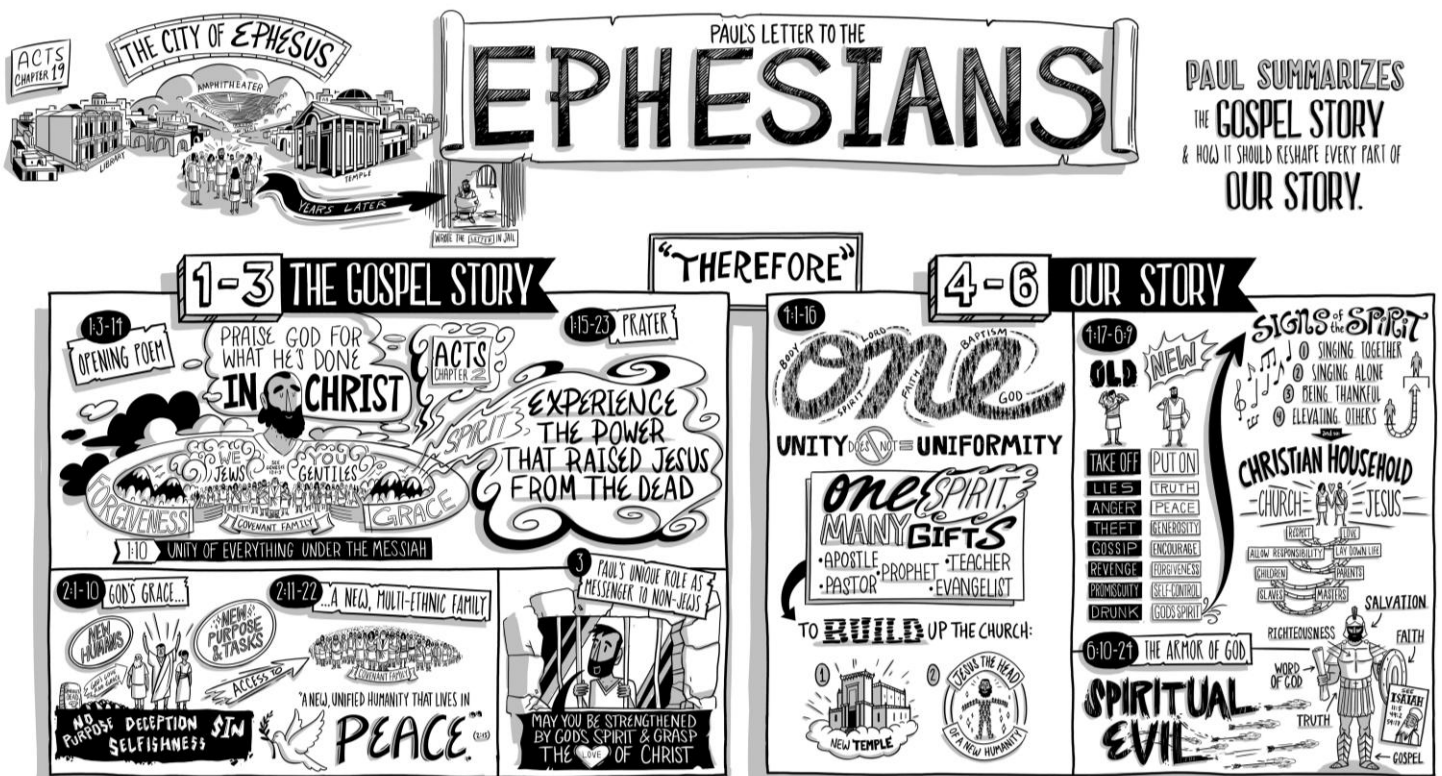
Discipleship in Ephesus

October 25, 2026

*Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing
Ephesians 1:3*

Take a deep breath before you begin reading this text

1. After a very short visit at the end of his second journey, Paul spends three years in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-40) teaching in the hall of Tyrannus, battling demons and idols, and establishing the church that became the leading church in the province of Asia (see Revelation 1:4 and 2:1).
2. This is a text built on prepositions: we are in, with, through, under and before Jesus.
3. Listen in this text for two things:
 - the blessings that come from those prepositions
 - the “apocalyptic” purpose of Paul’s beautiful prayer in 1:15-23



created by the Bible Project

Ephesians 1, Bless to be blessed

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

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ 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 one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

From election to adoption to redemption to sealing, all “to the praise of his glory”

1. Election is for a purpose

*¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

John 15

2. Predestined to a doption

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

Luke 15

3. Redemption according to his purpose, which is always more about Jesus than about me

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 3

4. Our assurance is an “inheritance” which is guaranteed (like a down payment) by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives

If you cannot feel His love in your heart, still trust Him. Oh! it was grand of Job—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” Truly, the vitality of faith is such that if He should spurn me from His presence—if He never gave me another look of love this side of heaven—if He gave me up to the lowest depths, and bade all His waves and billows go over me, yet is He such a faithful God, and so true, that I dare not even then give Him the lie. Blind unbelief would do so, but victorious faith says, “Never! He cannot lie. Let God be true and every man a liar.”

When faith is at her very worst, she is glorious, and sparkles like a jewel in the dark mine, and God will come and take her up out of all the depths, and set her in His own crown as a precious jewel. “Thy faith hath saved thee,” says Jesus. No, Lord, it is not faith that has done it, it is Thyself. He takes the crown royal of salvation’s glory, lifts it right off from His own head, and puts it on the head of the poor feeble woman’s faith. “Thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace.” And so will God do with your tempest tossed and exercised faith—put the crown upon it, and that faith of yours shall sing in heaven.

Spurgeon’s “The True Position on Assurance”

Some of you remember William Cowper. He is an example of how this paradox works. He was melancholy and introspective, and considered himself beyond hope. Christianity was true he said, but he was not capable of faith. He was rejected.

Then one afternoon in the garden of St. Alban’s Asylum he picked up a Bible. God focused his attention not primarily on the subjective reality of his own condition, but on the objective reality of God’s work in Christ. He read Romans 3:25: “God put Christ forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.” This is what Cowper later wrote about that moment: “Immediately I received the strength to believe it, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fullness and completeness of His justification. In a moment I believed, and received the gospel . . . Unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport; I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder.”

John Piper, “[God Has Chosen Us in Him Before the Foundation of the Earth,](#)” quoting Gilbert Thomas’ *William Cowper and the Eighteenth Century*, p. 132

5. All to the praise of God's glorious grace

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.

Martin Luther, for whom "grace alone" was foundational to his reforming work.
See also Spurgeon's "[The Treasure of Grace](#)"

Paul's prayer for the believers in Asia

1. Paul prays passionately for the church

³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20

2. God's prays apocalyptically for the church

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2 Kings 6

3. Paul prays that we might KNOW those blessings that are ours because of Jesus

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1