

*Living in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*¹

A SUMMARY OF EPHESIANS 1

1. The Father of Glow—I

1:1,2 *Greetings* from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3—14 The Father's abundance in and through Christ redeems his family, lavishing a *glorious inheritance* on us now, and in "the fullness of time".

2. The Father of Glory—II

1:15—23 Paul prays that *the Father of glory will* reveal himself to them so that they will know the abundance of this inheritance and his power to provide it.

3. The Blood of Christ

2:1—10 All of this occurs in the face of deep defiance, yet *by his grace* we are rescued and remade to see the mercy, kindness and love of God, now and in the ages to come.

2:11—22 This reconciliation is not solely personal, but, *by the blood of Christ*, for Jews and Gentiles (other nations). Peace comes through the cross where a new humanity is formed which shares in the life of the Trinity.

4. The Fullness of God

3:1—13 *The mystery of Christ is* the Father's declaration in creation, in history, to the celestial and terrestrial powers that all God's promises are fulfilled in this new humanity—the church.

3:14—21 An affirmation that *the fullness of God will* fill his church with all his dimensionless abundance. This fullness is the Father's glory; his action and presence through the Spirit in Christ.

5. The Unity of the Spirit

4:1—16 Hence we share in the unity and diversity of the *fullness of the Trinity*, which we know because of the humble, gentle, patient, and abiding love and peace that is God's presence in his family. This *unity of the Spirit* results in the body of Christ coming together to maturity, as they live the truth in love.

6. The Fragrance of Christ

4:17—5:20 Paul discusses the social and familial expression of living in love. These flow from *the fragrance of Christ's death*, which shows us the Father's love. We are urged to live in the light, to go on in the fullness of the Spirit, giving thanks to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:21—6:9 This *imitation of God's* divine relationships is evident in the divine—human relationship and in human relationships:
— Christ and the Church: husband and wife

¹ Studies prepared by Don Priest for St. Andrew's Church (Walkerville) Parish Camp, November 8-10, 1991

- the Father and the Son: parents and children
- God and humanity: masters and slaves

6:10—20 The full *armour of God* is our only defence against the evil celestial powers. In fact it brings us victory in the Spirit by the Word of God.

6:21—24 Peace, love, faith and grace come to those living in *the undying love of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Notes Unity brings aggregation, congregation, integration (4:16).
 God's plan is for unity not uniformity; diversity not division.
 "The *church* is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and they that dwell therein."

2. THE FATHER OF GLORY—II

1. Review

1:1—10 The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has
 —*blessed us in Christ* in the heavenlies with all his blessings. These are the fullness of the Father—Christ relationship, from eternity and in history.
 — *elected us to be pure and holy in his presence*— in Christ, sharing in the divine fellowship.
 — *destined us to be his family, adopted in love*.
 — *shown us (in this intimacy) the divine mystery*, the Father's plan to unify all creation in Christ so that when the times are complete all will be together in Christ.
 Each of these divine actions are parallel and equivalent, they are different perspectives on the one action, on Christ— his person and work. They are all the unrestrained outpouring of God, determined by his own nature— his wisdom and insight— and hence his goal for creation. They are all revelations of grace, his redemption of us to bring us together in and with him, forever.

2. The Father's Blessings in Christ— II

1:11 In Christ we are chosen to be heirs, we obtain an inheritance, we *have been made a heritage*. This again is the predetermined divine destiny decreed for us (Psalm 2:8). The Father's lavish and free giving relate not only to the revealing of his grace, but to the certainty of his achieving his goal in and by his grace. We receive an inheritance, not from, or by, or for ourselves, but in order that we be his heritage, so that in the fullness of history he achieves his plan to reveal himself in creation's redeemed family. Consequently we are heirs of the Father, in Christ.

1:12 "we"— i.e. the Jewish believers— are to be and live for the praise of his glory are to exalt "our" Father in being his outshining, in and through Christ.

1:13,14 "you"— the believers from other nations— along with the "we" of 1:3—12
 —heard the word of truth, the saving Gospel— of grace, of the Father's plan for his family, redeeming us in Christ.
 —believed in Christ— the focus and goal of the Father's redeeming grace, as in 1:3,4,5,10 and 11.
 —were *sealed with the promised Holy Spirit* as a pledge guaranteeing our inheritance until God's people are redeemed.

Notes —"Promise": all that has been said about the Father and the Son applies to the Spirit. He is not another part of the Father's action in Christ. He participates in the blessings,

in the election, in the adoption, in the revelation and in the consummation. He is the Spirit of grace, present in the proclaiming and hearing of the Gospel, bringing faith to the faithful. He is the Holy Spirit of promise, always working with the Father and Christ in their plan.

—The presence of the Spirit to us is both the Father’s indication to us of, and his means of ensuring our inheritance as his people.

3. The Body of Christ: The Father’s Fullness

1:15,16 Paul is thankful in knowing their love flows from their faith in Christ.

1:17—19 His prayer is that they know the Father of glory, the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Spirit in their spirits, and hence know
 — the hope to which they are called.
 — his inheritance among the saints.
 — the immeasurably great power for and in us that enabled this.

1:20—22 Just as the Father’s plan is accomplished by Christ’s blood, so his power is known in Christ’s resurrection and ascension. To be at the Father’s “right hand” is for the Father to “put all things under his feet” (Psalm 110:1). “Far above” means of God, of no celestial or terrestrial rule, whereas some “name” rules in an “age”, but not over death and sin.

1:23 Christ’s headship is for the church, the church is his body, and his body is the Father’s fullness. This fullness is all of 1:3—14.

3. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

1. Review

1:1—23 The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has, in Christ’s death and resurrection, blessed us with all his blessings; elected us to be pure and holy in his presence; destined us to be his family, adopted in love; shown us the divine mystery to unite all things in Christ; made us a heritage, heirs who receive his inheritance; and sealed us in all this as his people by the Spirit. All these revelations of God’s grace are to fill us with his own fullness.

2. Cosmic Rebellion: Divine Mercy

2:1,2 You were living death, following this worldly age, dominated by the “prince of the power of the air”— of created not divine breath. This spiritual disobedience is a complete contrast to Christ’s obedience.

2:3 As for you, so for us (c.f. 1:12,13). See the parallels: flesh — world, desire — rule, disobedience — wrath, and the false father — prince — spirit.

Notes

In this world 1:3—14 are unknown, and Paul’s prayer is unintelligible.

—The disobedience is in this context, not in a vacuum. Hence the wrath against God, and God’s wrath against this “death—style”

- 2:4,5 As always the wrath is the human experience of defying divine love. The great love, the lavish grace (1:7) and the great power (1:19) are the one. “But God ... “ says it all! Mercy relates to the misery of this “death—ing”, grace to its lethal guilt. Christ’s love unites him with us in our death, thus enlivening us to God in his resurrection. This is the grace of 1:6—8.
- 2:6 As in 1:3 + 20.
- 2:7 The “ages to come” are the goal of our hope and his plan (1:10,14,21). His kindness is his good pleasure (1:5,9) in being merciful and gracious.
- 2:8—10 Both grace from God and your faith are God’s gifts. No boasting, only praising the glory of his grace (1:6), and his glory (1:12,14). No longer the works from/for self, but God. “We are what he has made us” (c.f. Isaiah 26:12), his work, recreated (4:24) in Christ for the good works he fore—ordained (1:3,4 etc.).

3. Access through Christ, in one Spirit to the Father

- 2:11,12 The non—Jewish nations had no Messiah, no commonwealth, no covenants of promise, no hope and no God (c.f. 1:17,18 and 2:1—3)!
- 2:13—16 The blood of Christ was necessary for the Father to save the Jews, and to bring the Gentiles to share in their salvation. This was effective since God worked “in (Christ’s) flesh” to destroy the hostile divisions. We are alive “in Christ Jesus”: we died in his death. We are only saved in him: he does not save us away from us. His flesh took the full fury of our disobedience and our— and God’s— wrath, consuming them in and by his peace. His peaceful “poverty” in dying was more than adequate to destroy the deluge of human hostility. The old order of law/lawlessness was bankrupt to recreate. Only in Christ’s cross and death is a new, serene, reconciled humanity created (1:4,7,10,20, 2:10).
- 2:17,18 His proclamation of peace (Isaiah. 52:7, 57:14—21) was declared to those near and far in his cross. All is through Christ (1:3—12, 20—22, 2:5—10) and in the one Spirit the Spirit of oneness, 4:3). The Spirit is present in uniting us with Christ in his cross, and raising us to the Father. Our access is entrance into the divine fellowship of Father, Son and Spirit. As they work out their plan for creation, we work with them (2:10).
- 2:19—22 The Father’s goal is realised in Christ. “You” are with “us” in one body, filled full with the Father, Son and Spirit (1:22,23, c.f. 2:12):
 — citizens with the saints (in the commonwealth of Christ).
 — members of God’s house (with Christ as the cornerstone).
 — a holy temple (in the Lord): God’s dwelling place (in the Spirit).

4. THE FULLNESS OF GOD

1. Review

1:1—2:22 The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has, in Christ's death and resurrection, brought peace to the nations. This is his administration, where, in the Spirit, we are re—created from sin and death for good works as his household, his temple— where we receive his fullness by grace and mercy. All this is out of “the great love with which he has loved us even when we were dead through sin”.

2. The Mystery of Christ

3:1—4 “The above few words” are not abstract ideas, but Paul's own witness to his apostolic calling to preach grace to the Gentiles. “Grace” is “the mystery of Christ” revealed to him by God, and by which they are saved.

3:5,6 This mystery was unknown until the Spirit revealed it to the apostles and prophets (c.f. 1:17, 2:20, 4:11). Although the O.T. indicated that the nations would be blessed through the Jews, the “new humanity” of 2:15 was unknown. In Christ the nations (c.£ 2:12) are, through the Gospel:
 — co—heirs with Israel (1:11,14,18, 2:19,20).
 — co—members of the same body (1:4,22,23, 2:6,15,16,21,22).
 — co—sharers of the promise (1:5,10,13,18, 2:12).

3:7 Paul's commissioning and conversion were the one (c.f. 1:19ff, 3:1,2).

3:8,9 The persecutor is now proclaimer to:
 — bring to the Gentiles the unfathomable/boundless/unsearchable riches of Christ (1:6,8,18,23, 2:4,7)
 —bring to light the plan of the mystery (1:9,10,22, 2:10, 3:3) hidden for ages(1:10,21, 2:2,7) in God.

Notes — There could be no revelation of the mystery until Christ came. This is seen in the frequent references to Christ in 1:1 to 2:22.
 —The reference to creation relates to God's plan to re—create us in Christ, known from before creation began (1:4, 2:10,15).

3:10 God's wisdom and insight in showing the plan to us (1:8) is his hidden mystery which the church (1:20—23, 2:19 22) declares to the heavenly authorities (1:10,21, 2:1—3). The rich variety of this wisdom, evident in the church, (4:1—18) is due to the lavish grace of God (3:9).

3:11,12 The “eternal purpose” is that of 1:4—10, which brings us the bold and confident access of 2:17,18.

3:13 Just as Christ's sufferings are his (and their) glory, so are his are their glory.

Before the Father

- 3:14,15 The access in one Spirit through Christ to the Father (1:3ff, 2:4,8,10,18) reconciles all families— fatherhood— to the Father from whom they are named. This releases us from the hostility of the false family (2:1—3) into the harmonious peace and love shared in and by the Trinity.
- 3:16 Out of the riches of his Fatherhood, by Christ’s resurrection power (1:19,20), the Spirit comes to strengthen (c.f. 3:1,13) us.
- 3:17 This strengthening is— from the beginning onwards— the action of the love of the indwelling Christ.
- 3:18,19 As in 1:17—19, we— together— are to know the dimensionless love of Christ. It is his love that reveals (gives access to) the Father. Seeing his love opens us to being filled with all the fullness of God (1:3,10,23).
- 3:20,21 Paul affirms all he has written:
 — the power at work within us (1:19,20, 3:18).
 — the abundance of God’s goal (1:4,9,10,14,18,21, 2:10,22, 3:10,11).
 — the Father’s glory being in Christ and the church (1:6,12,14,17,18).
 — this being so for all ages/generations (1:21, 2:7, 3:10).

Note: Recall the list of the Father’s blessings in Christ from 1:3—14.

5. THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

1. Review

- 1:1—3:21 The mystery is now revealed. The church declares to all creation the excellencies of God’s plan to recreate in Christ the family of grace. This is his glory, his dwelling place both now and in the ages to come. We are his heritage, redeemed by the reconciling blood of Christ.

2. Filling all Things

- 4:1 From the same heart as 3:1—3,13, Paul exhorts his readers to live worthy of the churching/calling with which we have been churched/called.
- 4:2 This life is one with the nature and character of God in Christ.
- 4:3—6 The “unity of the Spirit” and the “bond of peace” were secured at the cross, and it is for us to “maintain” this unity. This seven fold unity is in one
 —body: of Christ (1:3—14, 20—23, 2:15—16).
 —Spirit: of promise (1:14,17, 2:18, 3:5,16).
 —calling: to fullness (1:4,5,10,11,18, 3:2).
 —Lord: of creation, church and history (1:9,10,20—22, 2:20—22, 3:11).
 —faith: in God’s grace as his gift (1:1,17,18, 2:8,9, 3:13,17).
 —baptism: into Christ’s cross and coronation (1:7,8,13, 2:4—6,16).
 —God and Father: above all, through all and in all; of all families (1:3ff,17,23, 2:9,10,18, 3:14ff).
 It is this unity that Paul has detailed in chapters 1—3, and is especially related to the Jew—Gentile and God—humanity hostility of 2:11 22.

4:7 “But”: diversity expresses the unity, and like unity, is a gift of grace. The “measure” of the giving is boundless (1:8, 2:4—10, 3:16—18) and in the Spirit (1:14, 2:18 c.f. John 3:34). It is Christ who administers the giving (1:10) and Christ who is given (3:17, c.f. 3:2).

4:8—10 There is no giving or receiving apart from the cross, resurrection and ascension. Also, his giving is adequate to fill all things (1:10,23, 3:19, 4:6,7). Christ’s reign is effected “through his blood” (1:7, 2:13—18). He gave all, taking into himself all our hostility, and so destroyed that, that being raised— filled— with him, we would find all our fullness in him.

[The quote is from Psalm 68:18 which speaks of God’s victory (e.g. 1—b,11). Paul alters “receiving” to “giving”, emphasising the overall emphasis of the Psalm.]

The Equipping of the Saints

4:11,12 The gifts were firstly proclaimers (2:17, Psalm 68:11) who understood the plan and purpose of God for the church (3:10). Christ is these nominated gifts par excellence. They— and we all— are called into Christ’s ministry: He is *the* apostle, . . .

4:12 This is the ministry of 2:10 with the goal of 2:21,22.

4:13 “All of us” (together) “come to” (not make) the unity of 4:1—6, and the knowledge of the Son of God (not named as Son until here— c.£ 1:5) as in 1:9,18, 3:17—19. This is “maturity”, the “measure” (4:7) of the full *stature of Christ* (1:10,20—22).

4:14 This is in great contrast to immaturity.

4:15 Here is the completion of the circular flow: from Christ to us (4:7) through his body (4:11,12), and returning to him. This is the Father’s glory (1:6,12,14) and the mystery of Christ (1:9, 3:4—10). It is our inheritance (1:11,14,18) and our access to the Father (2:18, 3:12). It is our life in the Spirit (2:18, 3:16,17) our growing “in every way into” Christ; our being “filled with all the fullness of God”. To “speak the truth in love” is to share with each other the reality of the Father’s blessings in Christ listed in 1:3—14. This is “what he has made us” for, which he planned “before the foundation of world” (1:4, 2:10).

4:16 Paul now sees the new humanity formed from the hostile nations through the cross as fully functioning: “joined and knit together” by the Spirit of one—ness; “equipped” according to Christ’s diverse sharing of himself; “working properly” towards the fullness of the ages and the goal God has as Creator—Redeemer; and each member of the body building each other up in love. Here is the “holy temple in the Lord”; “the dwelling place of God”— Father, Son and Spirit in all abundance.

6. THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST

1. Review

1:1—4:16 “Rooted and grounded” in the love of Christ, “filled with all the fullness of God”, “joined and knit together” in the “unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace”, God’s “new humanity”, reconciled “through the cross”, is at work— even in their sufferings— declaring “to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” the rich variety of the wisdom of God as “his plan for the fullness of time” is seen in the Father’s gathering “up of all things in (Christ)”.

2. Imitators of God

4:17—24 The “truth in Jesus” which renews “the spirit of (our) minds”, re—creating us in holiness and righteousness “according to the image of God (i.e. Christ)” is a complete contrast to the futile, alienating darkness of those who have abandoned themselves to unrestrained impurity.

4:25—5:2 We are to “live in (Christ’s and the Father’s) love”, so imitating God. Our lives are to reflect Christ’s— especially his death. Otherwise our focus would be on ourselves and not with our neighbours, grieving the Holy Spirit who is our “seal for the day of redemption”. Hence our imitation of God is in speaking the truth, not being wrongly angry, working honestly to share with the needy, being kind, forgiving

5:3—20 Those inheriting the kingdom (1:20—23) are “children of (Christ’s) light”. We are to be filled with the Spirit, to know the will of the Lord, and— through our corporate worship of Christ joyfully thank the Father “at all times and for everything”. This is our testimony to knowing God’s “plan for the fullness of times”, and the basis for living wisely and fruitfully, of being “pleasing to the Lord”. Nothing less is recommended in the context of the surrounding darkness and death.

3. Trinitarian Life

5:21 Reverence for Christ is reverence for his subjection to his Father.

5:22—33 Christ has come from the Father and has “loved the church and (given) himself up for her... so that she may be holy and without blemish”. This “mystery of his will”— the church— is bonded to her Lover, the Father’s Beloved. She is radiant full of splendour and glory: He is her Saviour. Here is the result of “gathering of all things” in Christ; the goal of the Father who “accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will”, and their dwelling place in the Spirit. Here is their goal in creation, their victory over evil heavenly rulers and “children of wrath”. “In the same way”, a husband’s headship and love, and his wife’s glory and awe, express their one—ness; their “being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ”.

6:1—4 The prosperity promised to those who honour their parents is a reflection of Christ’s inheritance from the Father (1:9—11,13,14,19, 5:5).

6:5—9 Just as Christ did “the will of God from the heart”, rendering “service with enthusiasm” to the Father, so are we to do when under the authority of others.

4. Strong in the Lord

6:10—20 ‘The full *armour of God* is our only defence against the evil celestial powers. In fact it brings us victory in the Spirit by the Word of God, and equips us to achieve the goal of the mystery of God. Such strength is the resurrection power of Christ.

Benediction

6:21—24 *The undying love of the Lord Jesus Christ*. has been the theme of the whole epistle, and the basis of Paul’s confidence in the Father’s plan for his creation and family. “Christ is the measure of Christian standing and blessing”, and the Spirit our assurance that we are secure in the Father’s beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Other N.T. References to the Ephesian Church

Acts 18:18—20:38, 1 Corinthians 15:30—34, 16:5—9, 1 Timothy 1:3—7, 2 Timothy 1:15—18, 4:12, Revelation 1:11, 2:1—7.