

Ephesians 1v1-14

Pray

Ask God to help you understand what you're about to read.

We cannot understand any of this without God's help!

Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful(1) 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(2) for adoption 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(3) 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 him, things in heaven and things on earth.

[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(4) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,(5) to the praise of his glory.

Footnotes

(1) 1:1 Some manuscripts *saints who are also faithful* (omitting in Ephesus)

(2) 1:5 Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

(3) 1:9 Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .*

(4) 1:14 Or *down payment*

(5) 1:14 Or *until God redeems his possession*

Ephesians 1v15-23

Pray

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[15] For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love⁽⁶⁾ 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.

Footnotes

(6) 1:15 Some manuscripts omit *your love*

Think

Every now and then, we'll introduce a Bible Handling Tool that will help you make sense of the passage. Over time, we hope these tools will equip you to understand the bible for yourself!

This week, we'll introduce the Author's Purpose Tool. Sometimes, the author will tell you explicitly why he is writing. For example, John tells us near the end of his gospel: "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20v31). You could call this sentence the executive summary or the mission statement for John's gospel.

Often, the written prayers in the New Testament letters give you a big clue to the Author's Purpose (i.e., the reason he is writing). The prayers reveal what the author wants for his readers, and it is very likely that the rest of the letter was written to achieve the very thing the author wants for his readers. The written prayers often serve as an executive summary or a mission statement for the whole letter.

Here are a few questions that may help you understand the passage better.

1. Author's Purpose Tool. This paragraph in Ephesians is a written prayer. What exactly does Paul want for his readers? What does it mean to see with "the eyes of our hearts"?

How does this compare to the kinds of things we normally pray for ourselves and for others?

2. The second half of this paragraph is all about Jesus. What exactly does Paul want us to know or to see about Jesus? And why is Paul so keen that we see Jesus in this way? That second question is a much harder but also very important question to answer.
3. (*Bonus*) Read Acts 19v21-41 to see what had happened in Ephesus just a few years before Paul wrote this letter. What would it have been like to be a Christian in Ephesus at this time? Why would Paul want these Christians to know "the immeasurable greatness of God's power"? Why do we need to know this today?

Ephesians 2v1-10

Pray

Ask God to help you understand what you're about to read.

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—[3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body(1) and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.(2) [4] But(3) God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Footnotes

(1) 2:3 Greek *flesh*

(2) 2:3 Greek *like the rest*

(3) 2:4 Or *And*

Think

Every now and then, we'll introduce a Bible Handling Tool that will help you make sense of the passage. Over time, we hope these tools will equip you to understand the bible for yourself!

This week, we'll introduce the Surprises Tool. Sometimes, the bible says something that is very surprising. It could be surprising because we were expecting the bible to say something else. Or it could be surprising because what the bible says is so radically different from what people would normally say. Often, the most surprising things you read in the bible are also the most important things the bible has to say.

Here are a few questions that may help you understand the passage better.

1. Surprises Tool. What's surprising about verses 1 to 3? What does Paul say we were like before we became Christians? How does that compare to the way we normally talk or think about ourselves before we became Christians?

What's surprising about verse 6? Notice the similarity between 2v6 and 1v20-21. What does Paul say about us now that we are Christians? How does that compare to the way we normally talk or think about ourselves now that we are Christians?

2. Why does Paul want us to see that we were once verses 1 to 3, and now we are verses 4 to 6? This is an important question, so spend some time thinking about this one.
3. Why does Paul remind us in 2v7 to 10 that we have been saved by grace? Don't settle for the first answer that comes to mind. Think about why these verses are here in this paragraph in Ephesians. In other words, how do they build on or connect to the picture that Paul paints in 2v1 to 6?

Ephesians 2v11-22

Pray

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[11] Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—[12] remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. [17] And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. [18] For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. [19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,⁽⁴⁾ but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by⁽⁵⁾ the Spirit.

Footnotes

(4) 2:19 Or *sojourners*

(5) 2:22 Or *in*

Think

Every now and then, we'll introduce a Bible Handling Tool that will help you make sense of the passage. Over time, we hope these tools will equip you to understand the bible for yourself!

This week, we'll introduce the Structure Tool. Sometimes, there is a very clear progression or grouping of ideas within a passage, and it is easy to break up the passage into smaller sections. When there is a clear structure within a passage, it is often useful to think about why the author has grouped the ideas in this way. It may help you understand the point the author is trying to make.

Here are a few questions that may help you understand the passage better.

1. Structure Tool. Break up this week's passage into three sections. Notice the progression of time or logic or ideas within the passage. Try to summarise what each section is saying as simply and as clearly as you can.

How does each section contribute to the overall point of the passage? How would the meaning or the impact of the passage change if it were missing one of its sections? You may even try reading the passage again, but this time drop one of the sections to see how it changes your understanding.

2. What does Paul want his readers to remember? And why does he want them to remember this? You will need to look at the whole passage to answer this difficult but important question.
3. Paul says that we're being built into a dwelling place for God, which is an extraordinary thing to say! Read Solomon's prayer about the first temple in 1 Kings 8v27-30. This passage will show you why having a temple at all is such a privilege. Now read what Hebrews 9v1-10 says about the limitations of the first temple. How do these passages help us appreciate the extraordinary privilege of being God's dwelling place? How does Ephesians 2v11-22 help us appreciate this extraordinary privilege?

Ephesians 3v1-21

Pray

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[1] For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—[2] assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, [3] how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. [4] When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5] which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. [6] This mystery is⁽¹⁾ that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. [7] Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. [8] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in⁽²⁾ God who created all things, [10] so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. [11] This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, [12] in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. [13] So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

[14] For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family⁽³⁾ in heaven and on earth is named, [16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Footnotes

(1) 3:6 The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

(2) 3:9 Or *by*

(3) 3:15 Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

Think

Every now and then, we'll introduce a Bible Handling Tool that will help you make sense of the passage. Over time, we hope these tools will equip you to understand the bible for yourself!

This week, we'll introduce the Repetition Tool. One way to work out the big idea of a passage is to take note of repeated words or ideas or themes. If someone keeps going on and on about the same thing, then you know it must be important (at least to them)! And if a passage in the bible keeps going on and on about the same thing, then you know there's something important God wants us to understand.

Chapter three is a long and dense passage, and in an ideal world, we'd spend two weeks studying it! Since we have only one week in this chapter, spend most of your time thinking about v1-13. We'll cover v14-21 in one of our prayer slots. Here are a few questions that may help you understand v1-13 better.

1. Repetition Tool. What is the main repeated idea of v1 to 13? Take note of repeated words and repeated themes. Sometimes, the author uses different words to say the same thing.

Why does Paul want us to understand this big repeated idea? Why is it such a big deal? This is a very difficult question, and you may want to come back to it after answering the questions below.

2. Paul tells us that a lot of people (and spirits!) are watching what God is doing with great interest. From v4 to 5, who else wanted to know what Paul is telling us now? And from v10, who else is watching us now? Why does Paul tell us that so many others are interested in what God is doing?
3. Sometimes, the author tells us explicitly what he wants us to take away from a passage. That's what Paul does in v13. Paul asks his readers not to lose heart, even though he is in prison (v1). Whatever Paul said in v1 to 12 was intended to be encouraging! So—what did you find heartening or encouraging from these verses? Don't worry if you're still not sure about the big idea of the passage. Take one idea that you found encouraging, and take heart in it, as Paul asks us to do.
4. (*Bonus*) If you're keen to think about verses 14 to 21, here's one question to consider. If you could ask the all-powerful God for one thing, what would it be? The answer to that question reveals where we think we need God's help the most. But what does Paul ask the all-powerful God to do for his fellow Christians? How does his answer compare to yours?

Ephesians 4v1-16

Pray

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

[7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. [8] Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."⁽¹⁾ [9] (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?⁽²⁾ [10] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) [11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds⁽³⁾ and teachers,⁽⁴⁾ [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,⁽⁵⁾ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Footnotes

(1) 4:8 The Greek word *anthropoi* can refer to both men and women

(2) 4:9 Or *the lower parts of the earth?*

(3) 4:11 Or *pastors*

(4) 4:11 Or *the shepherd-teachers*

(5) 4:13 Greek *to a full-grown man*

Think

Every now and then, we'll introduce a *Bible Handling Tool* that will help you make sense of the passage. Over time, we hope these tools will equip you to understand the bible for yourself!

This week, we'll introduce the *'So what?' Tool*. The bible is an applied book. The writers of the bible never teach us theology for theology's sake. They've always got an application for their readers. Therefore, it would be entirely wrong to read the bible like a textbook on theology. We must always ask ourselves—how has this changed the way I think? And how will this change the way I live?

Here are a few questions that may help you understand the passage better.

1. Sometimes, looking at how a passage starts and ends helps you understand the point of the whole passage. So, looking at verses 1 and 16, what seems to be Paul's primary concern in this passage?

2. The bits in the middle explain how we will achieve verses 1 and 16. Looking at verses 7 to 11, what has Jesus done to help us achieve verses 1 and 16?

Looking at verses 12 to 15, what are we supposed to do in order to achieve verses 1 and 16?

Note that the way Paul defines Christian maturity in these verses may not be the way we normally define Christian maturity. We need to understand what Paul means by that word in this passage if we're going to understand it properly. (Hint: Paul shows us the opposite of maturity in verse 14.)

3. *'So what?' Tool*. It's time to get practical! How does this change or reinforce your thinking on your role within the church? How does this change or reinforce your thinking on what we should be doing in church meetings? How does this shape your mindset before, during and after small group meetings? What difference will this make in what you actually do?

Ephesians 4v17-5v2

Pray

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[17] Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. [18] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. [19] They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practise every kind of impurity. [20] But that is not the way you learned Christ!—[21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [22] to put off your old self,⁽⁶⁾ which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[25] Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. [26] Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and give no opportunity to the devil. [28] Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. [29] Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

[1] Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. [2] And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Footnotes

(6) 4:22 Greek *man*; also verse 24

Think

Every now and then, we'll introduce a Bible Handling Tool that will help you make sense of the passage. Over time, we hope these tools will equip you to understand the bible for yourself!

This week, we'll introduce the Context Tool. Letters like Ephesians were intended to be read in one sitting. This means that many things said later in the letter can only be understood properly if we remember what has been said earlier in the letter. We should try as much as possible to understand ideas like 'old self' and 'love' by looking within the letter (in this case, Ephesians) before we go to other places in the bible.

Here are a few questions that may help you understand the passage better.

1. Context Tool. Paul clearly does not want us to live like the world! Go back and re-read 2v1-3 and 2v11-12. What has Paul said before about the 'old self' and about being a 'Gentile'? How does chapter 2 add weight to what Paul says here in chapter 4 about our former way of life?

Context Tool. In 4v24, Paul says that we should put on the 'new self' instead. Go back and re-read 2v4-10. Where is the new self now (2v6)? And what is God's purpose for our new selves (2v10)? How does chapter 2 add weight to what Paul says here in chapter 4 about our new way of life?

2. Tone and Feel Tool. Make a list of all the things Paul asks us not to do in 4v25-32. Think about how our culture would describe this behaviour. How bad is each on a scale of 1 to 10 in our culture?

Now look at the words Paul uses in 4v17-19 to describe everything on that list. How bad is it, according to Paul? How does that change the way we see things like lying and holding a grudge?

3. 'So what?' Tool. Paul doesn't want us to follow his instructions reluctantly. He is trying to change what we want, not just change what we do. So take a few of these very practical instructions, and ask yourself a few questions. Do I want to do what Paul asks us here? If not, why not? What lie am I believing instead? What truth do I need to hear and believe in order to change what I want? And pray that God will give you the strength to comprehend what he has done for you! (3v18)

Ephesians 5v3-14

Pray

Ask God to help you understand what you're about to read.

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Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[3] But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. [5] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7] Therefore do not become partners with them; [8] for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Think

We want every Christian to be able to understand the bible properly on their own. So here's another *Bible Handling Tool* to help you make sense of this passage.

This week, we'll introduce the *Linking Words Tool*. The teaching of the bible is often presented as a logical argument. Do this because of this. Or don't do this because of this. Look out for linking words like 'for' or 'since' or 'therefore' or 'but' that will help you understand the author's logic. Reasoning with us is one of the ways the bible tries to persuade us to change our thinking or our actions.

Here are a few questions that may help you understand the passage better.

1. *Linking Words*. First, list out all the commands. What are the things Paul tells us to do or not do? Next to those commands, list out the reasons Paul gives us to do or not do those things.

2. *Tone and Feel*. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being a 'take it or leave it' suggestion, 10 being a 'do this or else' ultimatum), how strong are the commands? How does that change the way you think about sexual immorality and sexual purity?

Tone and Feel. Notice the words and colours Paul uses to describe sexual immorality and sexual purity. Once again, how does that change the way you think about these two things? For instance, our culture might say that telling Christians not to have sex outside of marriage is backwards and repressive. What would Paul say?

3. *Context Tool*. Why is it so important that we get this right as a group of Christians? Think about what Paul has said so far about us as Christians. It may help to go back and read 1v22-23, 2v4-6, 2v10, 2v22, 3v10, 3v21, 4v1 and 4v14-16 to see why Paul is so keen that we get this right.

Ephesians 5v15-6v9

Pray

Ask God to help you understand what you're about to read.

Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. [25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.⁽¹⁾ [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

[1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] "Honour your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), [3] "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." [4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[5] Slaves,⁽²⁾ obey your earthly masters⁽³⁾ with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, [6] not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants⁽⁴⁾ of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, [7] rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, [8] knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. [9] Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master⁽⁵⁾ and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Footnotes

(1) 5:27 Or *holy and blameless*

(2) 6:5 Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

(3) 6:5 Or *your masters according to the flesh*

(4) 6:6 Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

(5) 6:9 Greek *Lord*

Think

We've got a few Bible Handling Tools at our disposal. Let's use them to understand this passage better.

1. Context Tool. To understand 5v15-21, we need to go back and see what Paul has already said about 'the will of the Lord' and 'being filled with the Spirit'.

What is 'the will of the Lord' according to 1v9-10? What is the Spirit's work according to 1v17-18?
What especially does Paul want us to know according to 1v19-23?

The activities in 5v19-21 are meant to help us understand the Lord's will with the Spirit's help. How will each of these activities (singing, thanksgiving, submitting) help us understand the Lord's will?

2. Linking Words. In 5v22-6v9 Paul looks at three pairs of relationships: wives and husbands (5v22-33), children and parents (6v1-4), slaves and masters (6v5-9). He compares each pair of relationships to the relationship we have with Jesus. Notice linking words like 'as' or 'for' or 'so that'.

How should our relationship with Jesus affect each pair of relationships in this passage?

How do these human relationships help us to understand our relationship with Jesus better?

3. So what? The instructions to slaves and masters apply equally well to employees and bosses today. How should your relationship with Jesus affect your attitude and behaviour at work? If you're married, how should your relationship with Jesus affect the way you relate to your spouse? If you have children, how should your relationship with Jesus affect your priorities as a parent?

Why is it so important that we all get this right together? Think back to your answers to question 1.

Ephesians 6v10-24

Pray

Ask God to help you understand what you're about to read.

Read

Read through the passage a few times.

[10] Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

[21] So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. [22] I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. [23] Peace be to the brothers,⁽¹⁾ and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Footnotes

(1) 6:23 Or *brothers and sisters*

Think

The tool we will need to use the most this week is the Context Tool. We're now at the end of the letter, and Paul draws together many of the ideas from earlier in the letter in this final passage.

1. Context Tool. To understand this passage, we need to know who our enemies are. The 'spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places' (6v12) actually turn up every time Paul opens a window into the heavenly places. Build a profile of our enemies from 1v19-23, 2v1-6 and 3v10.

2. Context Tool. Our orders are to stand firm (6v10, 11, 13, 14). But what does it mean 'to stand against the schemes of the devil'? What does it mean to 'be strong in the Lord'? To answer those questions, we need to see what Paul has said already about strength and stability.

Paul prays for strength in 3v14-21. What is God strengthening us to do?

Paul talks about stability in 4v14. What might cause us to lose our stability? And according to 4v15, how do we make sure that doesn't happen?

How do 3v14-21 and 4v14-15 help us understand what the devil is trying to do in chapter 6? So what does it mean to stand against his schemes? What does it mean to be strong in the Lord?

3. Context Tool. Our best line of defense is to put on the armour of God (6v11, 13, 14-17). Once again, to understand this properly, we need to see what Paul has said earlier in the letter. Read 1v13, 2v5, 2v8, 2v17, 4v11, 4v13, 4v15, 4v21, 4v24 and the verses around them to see what Paul has to say about truth, righteousness, gospel, peace, faith, salvation and the word of God.

What does it mean to put on the armour of God? This is not an easy question, but give it a go!