

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.

I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.

As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they much have longed for us to know Him as they did.

As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.

Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,

Margie Martin

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Paul's letter to the church in the port city of Ephesus, modern day Turkey, is probably his eighth letter. Ephesus was one of the three major cities of the eastern empire. It was a capital of the Roman province of Asia and was famous for the Temple of Artemis, one of the wonders of the ancient world. Paul undoubtedly made use of the strategic location of the city by sending his assistants up the valleys to evangelize the cities that John later wrote to in his book of Revelation while he stayed in Ephesus. Friends of his who stayed in this metropolitan city and continued with his ministry were Apollo, Priscilla and Aquilla, Timothy, Erastus, and Onesiphorus.

More than likely, Paul wrote this letter while he was in Rome under house arrest during his first imprisonment there (61-63 A.D.). For more background on why Paul was imprisoned, see the study on Paul at the end of this devotional.

For more background on his times with the Ephesians, see the following passages:

Acts 18:18-21
Acts 19:1-20:1

second missionary journey
third missionary journey

Other references to Ephesus are in these passages:

Acts 18:24-28
Acts 20:16-38
1 Corinthians 16:8

1 Timothy 1:3-4
2 Timothy 1:18 and 4:12



New Testament World

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus”

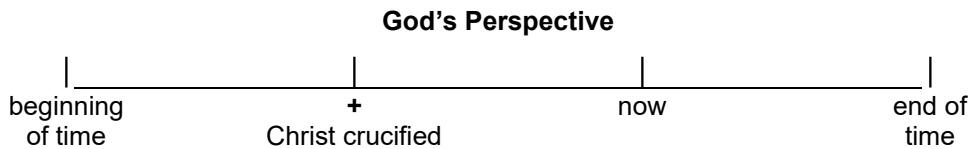
How many times have you received a compliment from a friend and said (or at least thought):

- “Oh, that isn’t really true.”
- “If she only knew the truth.”
- “Yeah, but . . . “

What if Paul had written, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus some of the time but most of the time an overbearing, dictatorial Jew who would rather be doing anything else than sticking his neck out for you ungrateful and wishy-washy, so-called believers who live in Ephesus?” Has a different impact, doesn’t it? Would you want to keep on reading? Is this someone you’d want to learn from? Not me!

Instead, Paul knew his real identity and the identity of his friends in Ephesus (and us). He knew his weaknesses and his struggles, but he also knew the One who had chosen, saved, and redeemed him.

He knew the struggles of his listeners, but he also knew God’s perspective of them: saints and the faithful in Christ. And Paul chose to agree with God’s perspective. But why Paul would make this choice is our clue as to why we should make the same choice. Among the possible answers, let me share one in the form of a timeline:



God knows the end from the beginning, all at the same “time.” While we can only see today and our own yesterdays, God knows the future—and He is in charge of the future. Therefore, who we really are is one of the saints and the faithful in Christ. So, if this is your real identity, how would you live differently on the highway, in a long line, when you miss the golf ball, when the police call in the middle of the night about your teenager?

The choices we make now in the “little things” will help us respond as we wish we would when the harder times come. What choices are you facing today? Are you inviting God to be involved?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 1:3-10

“ . . . *blessed us . . . chose us to be holy and blameless . . . predestined us to adoption as sons . . . have redemption in His blood, the forgiveness of sins . . . made known to us the mystery of his will . . .* ”

Years ago I was working in the junior high ministry at my church when a young couple joined our team. She had grown up in the church, but he was a new and growing believer. At one of our staff meetings, he was telling us about a conversation he had had that weekend while working as a bartender at a local pub. He was telling the patrons about Christ and how Jesus had reached out to him.

Some of the patrons were interested, but others started peppering him with theological questions, intending to put him on the spot.

I can still see him—a big man who worked outside with his hands, intelligent but not academic—leaning toward us just as he had probably leaned over the bar toward them, with love in his voice and on his face. His response? “I don’t know the answers to your questions, but let me tell you what I do know.”

After twenty-five years, I’m still challenged and encouraged by that statement. I don’t need to know the answer to every question, but what do I know? I don’t always know the answers to what’s going on in my own life or the lives of those around me, but what do I know? What has God told me that is true?

Well, today He’s told us that we:

Are blessed.

Are chosen to be holy and blameless.

Are predestined to adoption as sons and daughters.

Are redeemed.

Are forgiven.

Have had a *mystery revealed* to us.

I guess we really do know a lot! But what do you need to know today? What do you know?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 1:11-14

“ . . . for the praise of his glory . . . to the praise of his glory”

Praise and glory. Words we so often read, hear, and even say. But I must confess that when I read this section, these phrases were like Greek to me. What is the “praise of his glory?” What does that phrase mean? I actually did a phrase search on the internet and found that this section was the only place where Paul used this phrase. Let’s see if we can figure out what he’s trying to say.

Praise: When we praise someone or something, we speak favorably about strengths and positive attributes. We use words like *hooray; right on; you go girl; atta boy; and great job.*

Glory: Definitions of glory can include one I found on the internet: “a state of high honor; brilliant, radiant beauty, splendor, brightness, majesty; the infinite perfections of God.” When we look at God in Scripture and nature, we of course can’t see His face or His hands, but we can see His glory—the *reflection* of who He is.

It’s easy to think of the glory of God being seen in the beauty of a sunset or the majesty of snow-capped mountains. But Paul is saying that we—the Ephesians, himself, you, me—are the hoorays of who God is and what He is about. And as I heard once, God doesn’t make any junk. When His life is shining through us, our lives reflect His radiant beauty and splendor. How does that make you feel? Pretty special, I bet.

But Paul adds a couple of conditions in this section. We are to live knowing/believing/ counting on the fact that we’ve been chosen and predestined to conform to His plan. God really is in charge of what’s going on and will use everything (Paul’s word, not mine) to accomplish His plan. So what is His plan? Let’s look for it as we keep on reading. But be assured that God will be using what’s in your life to accomplish what He wants to do.

Are you ready to cooperate with the God of the universe today?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 1:15-23

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms . . .”

I was at the YMCA this morning doing my strength-building exercises and saw others doing the same (but usually more so). I'm always amazed at how strong the men are, especially my own husband. Afterwards I stopped at my local coffee shop on the way home and started reading this section. I was overwhelmed at the thought of God's power in contrast to the power/ strength I saw earlier at the gym.

What do you think of when you think of power: an elephant, a semi-truck, an earthquake, a bomb? Paul tells us in this section that God's power is more than the world can imagine. It raised Jesus from the dead—so it's stronger than death—and it took Him to the heavenly realms “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come . . .” (v. 21) God's power is stronger than anything we could imagine here on earth. And Paul prays that we may know and experience this great power in our lives.

Let's think for a minute about the areas in our lives that are looming over us, that wake us up at 3:00 in the morning. Maybe you want to write down the thoughts that keep running through your mind.

Have you ever considered that these areas and issues are there for a reason? Paul prays for us that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened so that we may know:

- The hope to which he has called us.
- The richness of his glorious inheritance in the saints. (v. 18)

Perhaps God is allowing, or even bringing, these situations so we'll discover His power instead of relying on our own earthly and human resources that don't get us where we want to be.

What do you think? To have a walk of faith we must have eyes of faith. Are you ready for God to work through the situations you've just written down?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 2:1-10

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ . . . and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”

After yesterday’s reading you may have thought, “That power was great for Jesus, but what about me?” I know that’s often my thinking. Paul answers that question today. He starts off by saying how dead *we* were before we knew Jesus. In fact, the first three verses of this chapter are somewhat depressing.

(It may be helpful to know that the word transgression has the idea of stepping over the line: doing what we shouldn’t be doing. While the word sin refers to missing the mark (like on a target) or not doing what we should be doing.)

However, the great words in this paragraph are but God. Apart from Him, we would have been left as dead.

But God . . . made us alive with Christ.

But God . . . raised us up with Christ.

But God . . . seated us with Christ in the heavenly realms.

The amazing non-earthly power we saw in yesterday’s section is at work in us if we’re in Christ. It’s true. It’s a fact. Even if we don’t feel it. We didn’t do anything to earn this power. In fact, God is using this truth for His own purposes—He didn’t do it just for our benefit.

But what do we do because of this truth? How do we live it out? Paul tells us to remember that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (v. 10) We don’t have to look for good works or try to create them; all we have to do is follow what He’s laid out for us each day.

What are good works? I have my ideas and you probably have yours, but let’s keep our eyes open for them as we continue reading this letter. (For me today it was to go to the vet with a friend who had to have her 17-year-old cat put to sleep.) Each day let’s ask our Heavenly Father to open the eyes of our hearts to what He’s about in our lives and in the lives of those around us, and then follow His lead.

What’s on tap for you today?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 2:11-22

“And in him [Christ Jesus] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

Have you ever felt that you weren't part of a group of people that appealed to you? Maybe you were older (or younger), lived in a different part of town, didn't play the same sports, didn't have as much money, weren't as “polished-looking,” or just dressed differently. Maybe they knew more, had known each other longer, had shared memories. Perhaps the right question is *when* was the last time you felt this way, not *if*.

The Ephesians must have felt this way toward the nation of Israel for Paul to remind them of the truth in this section. I've experienced these feelings in the last couple of years when we moved to a different part of the United States than I had ever lived in and started attending a church that was unlike any church I had ever experienced. The median age of the area and the church is the age of our sons and their wives. The women dress differently, and the lifestyle of the people in the area is radically different than we've known, mainly because of the weather. Everyone seems to know each other, but we don't have a history with anyone.

But we have learned the truth of this section:

- We are fellow citizens with God's people.
- We are members of God's household.
- The foundation is the apostles and prophets (teaching).
- The chief cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.
- We are joined together and are raised (together) to become a holy temple in the Lord.
- And we (the Ephesians, you, me) are built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

It certainly didn't happen right away for us; in fact, it's already been more than two years. (And it may take you a long time to feel like you fit in because of what God wants to do.) But we're now beginning to live this truth. I don't mean to say, “Look at us!” but rather, “God wants to put His people together—and He will put us together—in a way that we will ‘become a dwelling in which He can live by his Spirit.’”

How are you living in the dwelling of God?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 3:1-13

“In him [Christ Jesus] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

Have you ever thought about how you think about God, especially when you pray, even when you say grace before a meal? Take a couple of minutes, and write down some words or phrases that come to you. Please do this—it’s important.



More than likely what you wrote was similar to how the Ephesian believers felt in Paul’s day since their gods had been distant, inconsistent, capricious, and uncaring. Even to the Jews who had always known about God, He was powerful but distant, aloof, unknowable, and not personable. He was approachable only through sacrifices and only by the high priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year on their behalf. Even then the people were nervous that the high priest wouldn’t come back out alive.

But at Jesus’ death, the curtain that closed off the Holy of Holies was torn in half from top to bottom (and no one is reported to have seen how it happened). The separation between God and man was destroyed. From then on everyone could have direct access to God through Jesus Christ.

Now, because we’re in Christ and He’s in us, we may approach God with freedom and confidence. So, were these two of the words you wrote down? If not, you need to change your view of God.

Have you seen how a small child runs to meet his or her daddy at the end of the day and jumps into his arms, knowing the daddy will catch his child? That should be us.

When we pray, it’s as though we’re ready to enter the throne room of heaven. Jesus meets us at the door, and says, “Come on in; let’s go talk to the Father.” We walk with Him to the throne where our Heavenly Father is seated, and God says, “Welcome _____ (insert your name). I’ve been looking forward to our time together. Come and sit with me. Tell Me what’s on your heart, and I’ll tell you what’s on Mine.”

What would you say?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21

“And I pray that you . . . may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge”

What verse stood out to you as you read this section? The word that seemed to be out of place to me was *grasp*. I wondered if it meant “to understand” or “to take physically.” I reached for my reference books and also checked out some commentaries on the internet. What I found out was that neither definition was correct. The Greek word used here is translated into English as “apprehend.” One commentary author used the word “realized.”

So it seems to me that Paul wants us to realize, *with all the saints*, **all** of the love of Christ. This isn’t just a mental understanding of Christ’s love, since it surpasses knowledge, but it’s a knowledge that reaches into our very being and changes us from the inside out.

Then I wondered why Paul said we needed power to be able to realize this love. And I wondered. And I wondered. And then God allowed a painful situation to occur in my life where I was emotionally wounded. I had said some words to a friend with the best of intentions, but they had been received in a far different way; and just as my friend had been hurt, her response deeply wounded me.

As I was reading the next section in Ephesians, I realized that I needed to apologize for the pain I had inflicted. I had to follow the commands Christ was giving me. But how could I do this when I was still hurting? I could do it only by relying on His power through His Spirit in my inner being. It didn’t come easily or without emotional pain. This wasn’t the normal ebb and flow of life. It was a conscious decision to depend on the power we looked at in Ephesians 1:15-23. And I had to apologize before I could begin writing this day’s devotion. Do I now know more of the love of Christ because of being obedient? You bet!

Now, is there someone you need to make amends with or forgive, even without their asking? Or is there a place in your emotional life where you need to grasp the love of Christ and know it deep within yourself so you can continue loving while being in a difficult situation?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 4:1-16

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

Yesterday while eating brunch with my husband after church, we talked about role models in our society. He was saying that men had the choice of being like Maverick (who relied on his wits) or the Terminator (who relies on his brawn). We women have Jessica Fletcher from *Murder, She Wrote* (wits) or Zena, *Warrior Princess* (brawn).

Then I looked at today’s passage and was struck by the lifestyle that Paul calls us to and lived out himself. Paul says to *“live a life worthy of the calling we have received.”* You may want to think a bit about our calling—what is it? And how do we live a life worthy of it? What does this truth mean to you? Is God striking a chord somewhere in your heart?

Paul goes on to give us some areas of life; notice that these are attitudes, not actions:

- Be completely humble and gentle (and this comes from a man who has an A-type personality. (v. 2)
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love. (v. 2)
- Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (v. 3)

Think for a few minutes of situations where we need to be humble, be gentle, be patient, and maintain unity. Wouldn’t these be the situations where we’re tempted to be contentious, harsh, angry, argumentative, and prickly? My next question was “How can I be the way Paul commands me to be—the way he himself lived?” The answer: by remembering Who called me and then using the power He makes available through His Spirit!

Who are your role models for this radically different lifestyle? This section suggests we look at those believers who have been given the spiritual gifts to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Reading biographies is one way to learn from such role models. Another is by observing the more mature believers around you. Ask God to show you these folks in your life, and then watch. Evaluate what you see in them using the Scriptures as your guide. Finally, choose to depend on the powerful life of Christ within you to live a life worthy of his calling. In this way you’ll become a role model for the next generation.

So, who’s around you?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 4:17-32

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Oh, what a standard to live by. Let’s try it for a day and see what happens.



How did you do? I blew it in the first hour. I whined at my husband, something I rarely do (other negative ways of talking, yes, but not whining). Later on in the day when meeting with some friends, I found myself saying more words than were necessary, just to hear myself talk. Let’s look at the standard God is setting for us:

Do not let: something over which we have control.

Any: not even a few are allowed; zero is the goal.

Unwholesome talk: Wholesome talk promotes mental, moral, or social health, talk that calls for the best in ourselves and others. Unwholesome words are offensive and encourage discouragement, immorality, and a breakdown in society.

Building others up: adding to their walk with the Lord, not making it harder for them or ignoring another’s walk of faith.

According to their needs: not according to our desire to talk or show how much we know, but really thinking about—and praying about—what’s going on in their lives, what *they* really need.

That it may benefit those who listen: the real value of what we say is based on what the hearer receives—and that happens only if he or she is listening.

I don’t know about you, but I’m praying that this verse will be a life-changing one for me since what comes out of the mouth reflects what is in the heart. As we realize that we’re alive with Christ and we choose to live depending on the power of His life within us, our words will be wholesome, appropriate, and beneficial. How wonderful—for us, for those around us, and for the Kingdom of God.

What part of God’s standard do you need to start adopting today?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 5:1-21

“ . . . and find out what pleases the Lord.”

Have you found out yet just how fickle you are? One day you feel like wearing jeans and the next you want to dress up. One day you want chicken for dinner, and another you want steak or salad. On vacations you want to rest—or play—or stay home. And if you and I are fickle, how about those we live, work, and worship with? How can we ever know what pleases them, much less ourselves?

But Paul says we can find out what pleases the Lord. And what pleases Him will never change. He's not capricious. So what can we learn in this section about how to please God? (Note: Read down and not across.)

What Displeases God

- Even a hint of sexual immorality
- Any kind of impurity or greed
- Obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking
- Empty words
- Doing fruitless deeds of darkness
- Mentioning what the disobedient do in secret
- Getting drunk on wine

What Pleases God

- Exposing deeds of darkness
- Making the most of every opportunity
- Being filled with the Spirit
- Speaking to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
- Singing and making music in your heart to the Lord
- Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything
- Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ

Are you pleasing God with what you're saying and doing? What area of your life would you like to start changing today?

Anything you'd like to add to this list? You might want to keep it available as we finish Ephesians and as you keep reading God's Word.

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 5:22-33

“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church”

Have you ever considered that *how* you treat others expresses or reflects your own relationship with Christ? Paul said in the last sentence of the previous section to “*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*” (v. 21) This section and next two give us the primary—and hardest—relationships in which to live out this command: husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees.

This familiar section in Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus contains the command for wives to submit to and respect their husbands and for husbands to love their wives. But Paul’s emphasis isn’t on marriage, rather on a mystery, something that wasn’t known in Old Testament times but is now being revealed: Christ and His bride, the church (us!).

We have the privilege through our marriages to be a picture to the world of Jesus’ great love for us as He expressed it while here on earth: how He gave of His time, energy, attention, prayers, and sharing of His thinking and His heart. His final gift of giving of Himself was that He was willing to die for us to make us holy so He could present us to Himself as His bride. He held nothing back. Any smart bride in this situation would do what the church does—submit to Christ’s leadership and love, and then respect and honor Him.

If you’re married, how is your marriage a picture to the world of the Bridegroom and His bride? If things aren’t going well, remember, you’re only responsible for yourself and your attitudes. If you haven’t been taking this truth seriously, perhaps if you begin to change, your spouse will have the freedom to do so likewise.

Are you single? I think this passage absolutely applies:

Single women: Are you submitting to Christ as Lord and choosing to respect the men around you—individually and collectively? It’s so easy to think poorly of men and to say so to your female friends. But that’s not God’s way. And are you always letting others give you input, or are you going to God in His Word for how to think and act?

Single men: Are you learning to love and give of yourself as Jesus did? Is there *anything* you’re not willing to give up? Jesus was single while on earth, but He is the example for husbands—how much more is He an example for you?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 6:1-4

“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise”

Are you noticing yet that the commands we’re getting through the apostle Paul are the hardest things for us to do? No wonder we have to be commanded to do them!

Wives	Submit and respect
Husbands	Love as Christ loved, and share their lives (open up your hearts and minds)
Children	Obey and honor
Fathers	Bring up children <i>God’s way</i>
Employees and Employers	see tomorrow’s study.

All of these commands are examples of how to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (v. 5:21) Today, though, we’re looking at children—because we’re all a son or daughter.

You’ve probably heard about the little boy whose parents told him to sit down. After he did so he said, “I may be sitting down on the outside, but I’m still standing up on the inside.” Sound familiar?

What kind of a relationship did or do you have with your parents? As I’m getting older and hearing the stories of younger men and women, my heart breaks. My own childhood was probably an 8 or a 9 on a scale of 10, but I realized as I grew older that I tended to concentrate on the negatives in my parents instead of their positives. And what came out of my mouth as I talked about them to others was far from honoring. I certainly didn’t act as though I believed that God had chosen my parents for me.

As I sat at my dad’s deathbed a few years ago, I asked God to tell me why He hadn’t given me the type of father I had longed for. After a while, God lovingly impressed upon my heart that if He had given me the “right” dad, I would have never sought Him and known Him as my Heavenly Father. With that input, I could thank my dad for being just the dad he had been, and I could let him die with peace in my heart. I wish this experience would have happened years earlier so I could have emotionally let my dad be dad. But I’m grateful it happened before he died.

What about you and your parents? Have you allowed God to work through their weaknesses to bring you closer to Himself? Or are you just blaming them for your issues?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 6:5-9

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men . . .”

You’ve probably felt like a slave in some job you’ve had; I know some of my jobs have made me feel that way. But a real slave has no way out except by dying. So in this section, let’s think instead of employees and employers and look specifically at employees, because even if you’re an employer, you have a boss—the board of directors or even your clients who could just as easily go somewhere else.

I guess the real question is, who do you work for? If you’re a stay-at-home mom, you have the job of running the home and being the primary caregiver for your children. If you’re in school, your education is your job. If you’re retired, who do you answer to for how you spend your days?

Paul says that our boss is to be Christ. Let me share with you some of the lessons I learned in the working world that freed me up in my lifestyle that now has significantly more “free time” that I can potentially waste.

- I was to work for God as I did my job.
- I was to seek His approval, not just the approval of my boss.
- If I’m pleasing Jesus, I’m probably pleasing my boss.
- My promotions and raises come from God, not my boss or the company.
- God uses my jobs and bosses to work on my character and attitudes.
- Working for Jesus is hard, but freeing.
- Working for Jesus made me grow up and be responsible for my actions.
- God uses work to work on me.
- For most of the people around me, I will be the only “church” that they will know about.

What are some of the lessons that you have learned? Who is your boss? Really?

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 6:10-20

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.”

As Paul is finishing his “love letter” to the believers in Ephesus, he knows they’ll struggle with what he’s been telling them and so reminds them that their conflict isn’t with other human beings or even with themselves—no matter how intense the struggle may be. Paul reminds them that they have an enemy—in fact a whole bunch of enemies—that they can’t see or feel, but who are real just the same. And these enemies want to devour and destroy them. (If you haven’t read C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, it’s a must!)

So what do we do when in the midst of such a struggle? Paul says to:

- *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.* (v. 5:21)
- *Be strong in the Lord and His power.* (v. 6:10)
- *Put on the full armor of God.* (v. 6:11)
- *Stand firm.* (v. 6:14)
- *Take up the shield of faith.* (v. 6:16)
- *Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.* (v. 6:18)
- *Be alert.* (v. 6:18)
- *Always keep on praying for all the saints.* (v. 6:18)

In Jesus, the battle is won, but we’re still fighting the skirmishes. Paul wants us to live understanding this truth so we won’t be surprised or dismayed when conflict happens (and it’s going to happen!). In fact, we’re to use these opportunities to first make known the mystery (revealed, remember?) of the gospel in our own lives (as Paul did) and then share it with others as He gives an opportunity. Not easy to do, but if it were, we wouldn’t have to be commanded to live this way, would we?

Have you ever listed your battles? Now’s a good time to do it! Then determine how are you going to “fight” them.

Walking With the Father Through Ephesians

Ephesians 6:21-24

“Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.”

Have you noticed Paul’s references to being a prisoner as we’ve been reading through this letter to the Ephesians?

- 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the *prisoner* of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—
- 3:13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of *my sufferings* for you, which are your glory.
- 4:1 As a *prisoner* for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
- 6:19-20 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador *in chains*.

Over the years I’ve noticed many believers who become active in ministry early in their spiritual lives experience a time when God seems to take them out of the action, so to speak. I know this has happened to me a few times. Has it happened to you?

After watching these brothers and sisters go through this change of pace, I’ve seen them come back to a different type of ministry, often more individual-oriented than group-oriented. But what is really striking is the new depth to their love relationship with Jesus Christ, a depth that’s seen in their peace, faith, humility, and sacrificial love for others. I wonder if this is what happened to Paul during this imprisonment?

He doesn’t seem to be depressed or overwhelmed by his circumstances; rather he is depending on God’s amazing power to bring good out of bad and spiritual life out of a form of death. And when we realize that most of Paul’s letters were written when he was a prisoner, we can be grateful that God slowed him down from all his traveling for the benefit of the Church (us) through the centuries.

How do you talk about your circumstances? How can they be a prison that God can use in your life and for growth in the lives of others?
