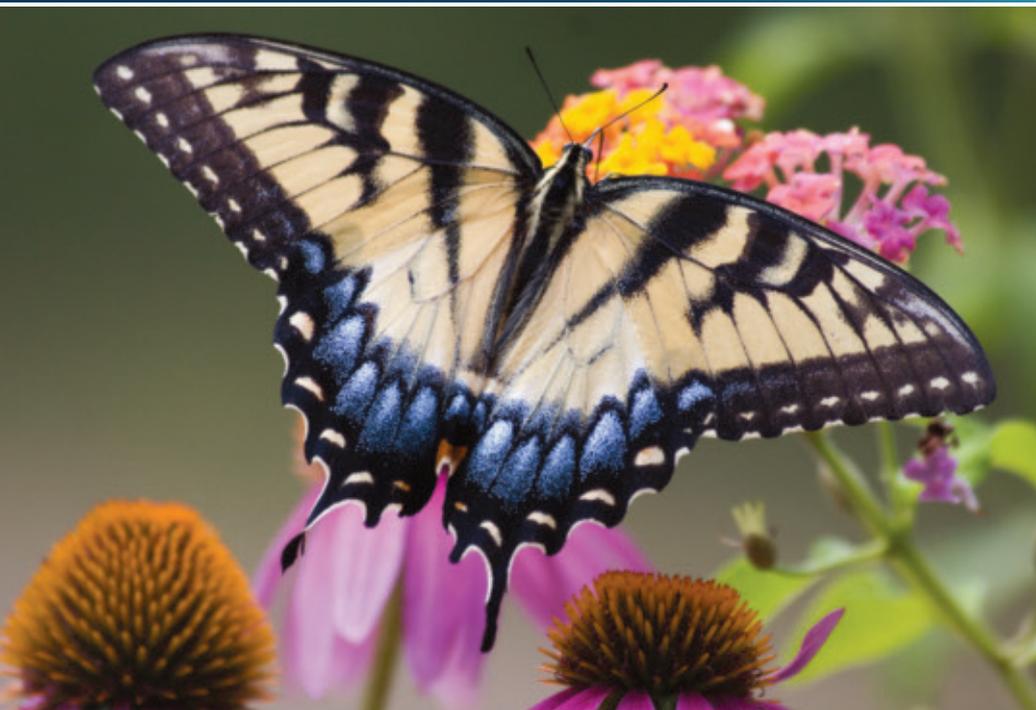


JANUARY 2018

CELEBRATING
30 Years

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*Put on the new self, created to be
like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Ephesians 4:24

EPHESIANS: Living Worthy of Salvation

A devotional from



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES

TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

One New Body



Did you know that 25 percent of the bones in your body are located in your feet? Your little finger contributes more than 50 percent of your

hand's strength. Like your fingerprint, your tongue has its own unique print. And the brain contains 86 billion nerve cells joined by 100 trillion connections—numbering more than all of the stars in the Milky Way.

Learning about the intricate and careful design of our physical bodies should impress upon us the wonder and artistry of our Creator. As Scripture tells us, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well” (Ps. 139:14).

Scripture speaks of another body, the body of Christ. Just as God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and filled him with the breath of life, the body of Christ is also God's creation, formed in Him and through Him, intricately weaving our lives with that of other believers.

In Ephesians, Paul explains the purpose behind this new creation: so God “might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through

the cross, having put to death the enmity” (2:15–16).

The purpose for this new created body of Christ is peace. The church is not merely an assortment of separate individuals trying to get along. Instead, God has made a new creation altogether, “one new man,” a living, breathing organism designed to work in harmony.

This new creation not only reconciles us to God but also to one another. It puts to death any division and hostility, replacing this ragtag group of nonconforming individuals with one new person, created in and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Each of us is called to play an important role within the body of Christ. As Paul reminds us, “From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16).

Together we are God's creation, designed to accomplish His work and growing together for His glory. No longer are we stubborn individuals, but in God's glorious grace, we are joined together in order to serve Him and bless each other. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

The Headship of Christ

When we speak of someone being the “head,” we are usually referring to power or authority. The head of a company is the CEO; the head of a school is the principal. In the book of Ephesians, Paul uses the language of headship to describe something about Christ’s authority, but the headship of Christ also emphasizes connection and relationship. According to Ephesians 1:10, God’s purpose is to unite all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Today these realms are separated. Christ is ruler over both, but in the present age the earth—and the church—still suffer from the collateral damage of sin (Rom. 8:22). The state of the church on earth differs from the church in heaven. Both are forgiven and share the same position in Christ, but the church on earth continues to struggle against the forces of a sinful world. Though the earth is the Lord’s (Ps. 24:1), those on earth often resist God’s will. Heaven is the realm where God’s will is always done (Matt. 6:10).

As a result of this separation, our experience in the church this side of heaven is often mixed. But God’s purpose for the church is guaranteed. In God’s perfect timing, the separation between earth and heaven will be

dissolved. God’s dwelling will be with humanity and His will done on earth as it is in heaven (Rev. 21:3). Then the state of the church on earth will be the same as that of the church in heaven. All its inconsistencies will be eliminated. God’s creation will also be renewed and the world’s fallen condition repaired (Rom. 8:19–21; Rev. 22:3).

This is not merely a theology of wishful thinking: we can have confidence in this future work because we have already begun to experience the reality of these promises by being included in Christ. We have been raised with Christ and are seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).

Because we have a share in Christ’s resurrection, we can experience its power now through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God’s down payment on our redemption. He is called a “seal” and a “deposit” (Eph. 1:13–14). The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is evidence that we belong to God. We have been united with Christ who is our head (Eph. 4:15; 5:23). ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1:1–23* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Baker).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Jamie Janosz

Trusting God in the Midst of the Hurricane

As I hang up my new calendar on our kitchen wall, I'm reminded that no matter what plans I think will fill the coming days and months, this new year will hold surprises. Not all of them will be good or desirable—as many of us can attest from this past year.

In 2017, as relatively new residents in Florida, my husband and I weathered our second year of hurricanes. We did our best to prepare for the enormous storm predicted to come our way: boarding up our windows, buying bottled water, and making sure our cars were filled with gas. But as Hurricane Irma steadily approached, my orderly life started to feel like it was about to spin out of control.

Our plans to attend Parents' Weekend at our daughter's college were cancelled. We struggled to decide about evacuation. No one knew exactly where the hurricane would land in the United States. Would it swing to the east coast of Florida, where we live? Would it head west? In the end, it turned toward the center, with Florida residents scrambling from one supposedly safe location to the next.

Not every storm in life is as dramatic as Hurricane Irma (or Harvey or Maria), but all of us can relate to having our plans upset by unpredictable events. We try

our best to schedule our days, to plan out the months and year ahead. And then the storm roars in and disrupts everything.

As a believer, I know that the safest place to be is in the center of God's plan. I was definitely not calm during those wee hours of the night as the hurricane winds howled around our concrete block home, rattling the shutters and sending branches hurtling down the street. But as we prayed and listened to the radio, with the lights flickering when the power went off for the final time, I was reminded that God—and not this house—was my refuge. He alone is my constant.

No matter what I am facing, whether a weather forecast, a medical diagnosis, or news from my family and friends, God has promised to be my safe place: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you" (Ps. 32:7–8).

Our house survived the storm. But the hurricane reminded us to trust more in God than in our plans. As we start the new year, let's resolve to make sure that we're in the center of God's loving eye, the only secure place we can trust. ■

VOLUME 31 • ISSUE 1

MANAGING EDITOR

Heather Moffitt

SENIOR EDITOR

Elena Mafter

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jamie Janosz

John Koessler

WRITER

Brad Baurain

ART DIRECTOR

Lynn Gabalec

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Larry Bohlin, Rachel Hutcheson

MARKETING & PRODUCTION

Paul B. Currie

MOODY GLOBAL MINISTRIES

PRESIDENT

J. Paul Nyquist

PROVOST

Junias Venugopal

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Steven Mogck

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Greg R. Thornton

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Ken Heullitt

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

Samuel Choy

VICE PRESIDENTS

Tim Arens

Larry Davidhizar

Jim Elliott

Bruce Everhart

John A. Jelinek

Collin G. Lambert

Frank W. Leber Jr.

Bryan O'Neal

Paul Santhouse

James Spencer

Janet Stiven

Anthony Turner

Debbie Zelinski

TRUSTEES

Christopher Denison

Orbelina Eguizabal

T. Randall Fairfax (Chairman)

Thomas S. Fortson

Manuel Gutierrez

Jerry B. Jenkins

Paul Johnson (Emeritus)

James Meeks

J. Paul Nyquist

David Schipper

Juliana Slattery

Mark Wagner

Richard E. Warren

Richard Yook

TODAY IN THE WORD™

Ephesians: Living Worthy of Salvation

On Monday, August 21, 2017 something happened that made many Americans look up in awe, forgetting for a while their everyday worries and scheduled agendas. That day they had the opportunity to experience a total solar eclipse. People gathered in groups and looked up at the sun. They shared special glasses, and they also shared a sense of wonder and community spirit.

As a community of believers, we share the same sense of wonder when we gaze upon our Savior, and we don't need anything like special glasses to look at Him. This month in *Today in the Word*, we'll look at the mystery of Christ's salvation in the book of Ephesians. We'll study what Paul has to say about God's purpose for our lives and how He wants His people to live in the light of His calling. We'll also explore the great theme of this letter—God's eternal vision for His church, the body of Christ.

We hope this month's study will help you look to Christ in all seasons and circumstances of your life. Our prayer for you echoes Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17). We thank all our readers for showing the love in the body of Christ with your prayers and support of this ministry. ■

Moody Global Ministries is the sole publisher of *Today in the Word*, copyright © 2018 by Moody Global Ministries. All rights reserved. Please direct all *Today in the Word* inquiries to Donor Resource Management, 820 N. LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610. Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV®, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Printed in the U.S.A. *Today in the Word* is published monthly. Printed on 30% recycled paper.

MONDAY
JANUARY

1

*Grace and peace to you from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 1:2

Greetings from Paul

The city of Ephesus, with a population of more than 250,000, was a major commercial center in New Testament times. It was a harbor on the Aegean Sea and situated along major trade routes. Located in modern-day Turkey, it was the provincial capital of Asia, mentioned in the same breath as Rome and Athens. Its Temple of Artemis, larger than the Parthenon, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world!

The apostle Paul first stopped in Ephesus, along with Priscilla and Aquila, on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). This was when the church there was planted. The city was home to many pagan religions, including emperor worship, and was known as a center for magic and the occult (Acts 19:13–20). Paul later returned and stayed over two years, using the city as a base for evangelistic and missionary endeavors (Acts 19:10). Timothy served there as pastor (1 Tim. 1:3).

Paul wrote his letter to “God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus” (v. 1) between A.D. 60–62. This is around the same time he wrote Colossians, when he was under house arrest in Rome—which is why they, along with Philippians and Philemon, are often described as the “prison epistles.” The church at Ephesus was the main audience, but it was also a letter that he intended to be circulated and read aloud at other churches in the region.

Now many centuries later, this letter continues to challenge, teach, and encourage believers. The book of Ephesians is our focus for this month’s devotional study. The epistle’s themes include salvation, grace, faith, reconciliation, unity, the church, God’s sovereignty and love, and how we are to live on the basis of all this.

APPLY THE WORD

As you begin this study of Ephesians, pray for openness to what God has to teach you this month. In fact, why not make this prayer a habit throughout the study? Pray for openness and teachability before reading each day’s Scripture passage. Then the Holy Spirit will be your guide and teacher as you encounter the Word’s truths!

PRAY WITH US

Join us in praising God for the past year and thanking Him for the year ahead. We’d also like to thank all our Moody family for your partnership through prayers and faithful support in 2017. Happy New Year!

*In love he predestined us for adoption
to sonship through Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 1:4–5

TUESDAY
JANUARY

2

God's Purpose: To Choose and Adopt Us

God gave David and Sheri Quirie of Lincoln, Nebraska, a strong desire to adopt internationally. After working with a trustworthy organization for years, their family now includes a son originally from China and a daughter who was born in Vietnam. The Quiries and many others believe that adoption is a powerful way they are called to demonstrate the love of Christ.

Today's reading explains why: adoption is one way God showed His love for us! Ephesians 1:3–14, which we'll take three days to cover, is a single sentence in Greek with 202 words! It has a trinitarian structure, moving from God the Father to God the Son to God the Holy Spirit.

The Father is described as taking three actions. First, He blessed us spiritually (v. 3). This umbrella statement encompasses the rest of the sentence. Second, He chose us before time began (v. 4). Our salvation was God's

sovereign choice, constrained by nothing, completely "in accordance with his pleasure and will." He was under no obligation whatsoever. His grace is "freely given" and entirely unmerited by us (v. 6). Third, He predestined us for adoption into His family (v. 5; see Rom. 8:14–17). This is an astonishing indication of how deeply He loves us (see 1 John 3:1).

Further, God had three purposes in saving us. In relation to Himself, our purpose is "the praise of his glorious grace." In relation to ourselves, our purpose is "to be holy and blameless in his sight." In relation to one another, our purpose is to live as God's adopted children in a family called the church.

Finally, it must be noted that all of this is Christ-centered. The blessings are in Christ. God chose us in Christ. We were adopted through Christ. Grace was given us in Christ. It's all about Christ!

APPLY THE WORD

From an eternal perspective, God chooses us for salvation. From our human perspective, salvation is when we choose to believe on the name of Christ and become children of God (see John 1:12–13). Have you believed on the name of Jesus and accepted God's gift of grace? If yes, rejoice! If not, we encourage you to make today the day!

PRAY WITH US

Include Moody's Board of Trustees in your prayers today as they continue to make decisions regarding the future of Moody Global Ministries. Thank God with us for providing godly, wise men and women to lead Moody's ministries.

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

3

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Ephesians 1:7

God's Purpose: To Redeem and Forgive Us

In his book, *Spiritual Depression*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones asserted: “I know of nothing worse than the person who says: ‘You know I have never really felt that I am a sinner.’ That is the height of sin because it means that you have never realized the truth about God and the truth about yourself. . . . If you have never realized your guilt or guiltiness before God you will never have joy in Christ. . . . Conviction of sin is an essential preliminary to a true experience of salvation.”

God's eternal purpose in salvation is to redeem and forgive us (v. 7)—one of the most joyful truths of the Christian faith! But there's even more in today's passage. In addition to redemption and forgiveness, we've also been given lavish grace (v. 8), knowledge of God's will concerning the mystery of salvation (v. 9), and future eschatological unity under Christ, that is, the day when the plan of salvation is historically complete

and every knee bows before Him (see Phil. 2:9–11).

Salvation shows us God's justice and love. Christ's death paid the price required by justice for sin, and God accepted this payment on our behalf to forgive us. Yet salvation far exceeds a basic pardon, for in Christ God has poured out His love and blessings on us. It's as if a prisoner was not only set free but given a mansion and millions of dollars as well!

God's sovereignty and wisdom are also on display. His plans and purposes are wise, the best possible. They will happen at just the right moment, “when the times reach their fulfillment” (v. 10). They are guaranteed to happen; nothing can stop them. And God has clearly revealed all this for all to know—not a “mystery” excluding all but a few elite, but a truth offered to the entire world.

APPLY THE WORD

The more we understand about God's eternal plan of salvation, the more we understand why it's called “good news.” It's the best news in human history! Who in your circle of relationships needs to hear it? It might be a family member, friend, or co-worker. Pray for that one by name, and look for God-given opportunities to share the gospel.

PRAY WITH US

Anthony Turner, vice president and dean of Student Enrollment Services, is grateful for your prayer support today. Remember him as his team prepares to welcome the incoming transfer students to Chicago. Thank you for your prayers!

*When you believed, you were marked
in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*

Ephesians 1:13

THURSDAY
JANUARY

4

God's Purpose: To Seal Us with His Spirit

Label-makers appeal to people who like to keep track of their personal belongings. Printing out “property of” stickers and putting them on things proves ownership. Items that are borrowed or lost might be returned—or at least no one else can claim them as their own.

This is in a small way an analogy for what it means to be marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit (v. 13). From the opening verses of the letter and again in today's passage we see this marvelous news: we were chosen by the Father for salvation in and through Christ (see Rom. 8:29–30). The Jews may have been “the first to put our hope in Christ,” but it had become clear that God's plan extended to the Gentiles as well, in Ephesus and elsewhere (v. 12; see Jan. 9–10). The ultimate purpose of it all remains “the praise of his glory” (v. 11).

Today's verses address the role played in salvation by the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14). He is a seal, marking us as God's property, or more accurately, as His family members and heirs. Seals in New Testament times also indicated authenticity or genuineness. Sealed objects were under the protection of their owners. Christ will return and claim His own!

The Spirit is a “deposit guaranteeing our inheritance,” a down payment on the future realization of salvation's fullness. As we wait on the Lord to complete His work in history and in our lives, the Spirit functions as a divine foretaste of the feast to come. From God's perspective, salvation is already accomplished, but from our perspective, it is yet future. The Holy Spirit's part in God's plan and work in our lives thus encourages us that our hope is solid and sure.

APPLY THE WORD

Ephesians 1:3–14 is doctrine framed as a statement of praise. All that God has done for us is “to the praise of his glory.” In response, praise the Lord today for His eternal plan of salvation and for your personal redemption and freedom in Christ. You could sing or listen to praise music, create art or poetry, or offer another act of worship to the Lord.

PRAY WITH US

Today, new transfer students are arriving at Moody's Chicago campus. They'll be in orientation for the next few days, preparing for the start of the semester next week. Would you pray with us for their smooth transition to Moody?

FRIDAY
JANUARY

5

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.

Ephesians 1:18

Paul's Prayer: To Know God's Purposes

A popular ice-breaker question asks, “What three items would you take with you if you were fleeing a burning building?” Thinking through the answer helps us sort out our priorities. The items we choose demonstrate what we value most in life.

Do we understand how much God values us? He loved us enough to give the life of His own Son to save us! Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in today's reading is that these believers would come to a greater knowledge of God's heart and purposes—the same redemptive purposes we've been studying the past three days (vv. 3–14).

Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, so why did he write, “. . . ever since I heard about your faith” and love (v. 15)? First, the scope of this pastoral letter included other regional churches he had not planted or did not know as well. Second, about four years had passed

since he had been there, enough time to assume that the church now included many new believers he had not yet met.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know God better (vv. 17–18). This work of enlightenment can only happen through “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,” that is, the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, “knowledge” is rarely just head-knowledge but also includes the dimensions of knowledge-in-relationship and knowledge-in-action. To know God is to know His purposes and plans and the hope to which He's called us. To know God is also to understand what He's done for us, how much He loves us, and that we're part of His family.

All will happen exactly as He's promised, including the future culmination of His plan of salvation and the receiving of our inheritance in Christ. All of this is to the praise of God's glorious grace!

APPLY THE WORD

The apostle Paul remained committed to prayer (v. 16). Many of his epistles begin by sharing his prayers for the recipient church, often starting with his thankfulness for them. Follow his example, and today pray for your church and its leaders. You can use the words from this passage to guide your prayer for your fellow believers.

PRAY WITH US

Lift up the Information Technology Services team in prayer as students come to them with technology questions. Ask that they would be a blessing to the students adjusting to Moody life and to faculty as the new semester begins.

God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

Ephesians 1:22

SATURDAY
JANUARY

6

Paul's Prayer: To Know God's Power

Standing fearlessly on Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah confronted the Israelites with a choice (1 Kings 18). Would they worship Baal or return to the Lord? They remained silent. So Baal and his priests were put to the test and failed. No fire appeared on their altar. When Elijah prayed, by contrast, “the fire of the LORD fell” and consumed everything (1 Kings 18:38)! God’s power stunned the people and they responded with awestruck worship.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know this power and the One wielding it. The phrase “incomparably great power” translates a series of superlatives—Paul’s effort to put divine omnipotence into words (v. 19). This is the power that defeated death, raised Christ to life, and now works in the lives of believers (v. 20). For Christ to be seated at the right hand of God indicates favor with God, His victory, and completed work of salvation from

sin. As one commentator noted, “It is this kind of power that is needed to survive the satanic hostile powers and worldly system that surrounds us.”

As God’s power is above all, so are Christ’s position and authority above all (vv. 10, 21). This is true already, in the here and now of “the present age,” and will be fully exercised in the age to come, at history’s consummation. Paul restated this important truth for clarity and emphasis: “God placed all things under his feet” (v. 22). This includes His church, of which He is the head (v. 23; see Col. 1:18).

What does it mean to describe the church in verse 23 as “the fullness of him who fills everything in every way”? Noting the use of the passive verb, the *Moody Bible Commentary* explains, “the Church is what He fills with His glory and power.”

APPLY THE WORD

It’s all too easy to disconnect the cosmic and the personal in our minds. What does a grand word like *omnipotence* have to do with our daily bread? Everything! It’s the same redemptive power at work. The cosmic *is* personal—so as you thank God for your daily bread today, praise Him for His all-surpassing power and omnipotence.

PRAY WITH US

Remember in your prayers Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary. He asks for continued grace and wisdom as he oversees the Chicago and Michigan campuses and leads the program teams.

God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

Ephesians 2:4–5

Salvation Is Moving from Death to Life

Pastor and author David Mathis called divine mercy “one of the most tragically misunderstood truths about God. . . . Many of us today are prone, by nature and nurture, to see God’s mercy as peripheral or incidental to who he is. We suspect that perhaps he shows mercy by accident or weakness. But if we let the Scriptures have their say, we will see that when God shows his mercy, he does so with utter intentionality and strength, and we as his creatures get our deepest glimpse of who he is [from it].”

God’s mercy shows His heart. As the apostle Paul continued to expound the truths of salvation, we learn more not only about God’s plan but also about His character. Salvation is moving from death to life. Death is conquered—God is a God of life!

Before salvation in Christ, we were “dead in [our] transgressions and sins” (vv. 1–3). Spiritually lifeless and unable

to turn to God, in a state of rebellion and alienation from Him, we lived in a worldly and even satanic manner, in that Satan and his fallen angels are the inspiration for all disobedience. Our top value in life was “gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.” This is less than human, not what God intended for beings created in His image. In this state, we fully deserved His wrath (see John 3:36).

But now we are alive in Christ! This also means we’re dead to sin. God’s love, mercy, grace, and kindness raised us to life and brought us into a state of friendship with God (vv. 4–7). In our own strength we were utterly unable to help ourselves, but in Christ we now share in His victory and are seated with Him at God’s right hand. Throughout eternity, we’ll be joyous evidence of the “incomparable riches of his grace” (v. 7).

APPLY THE WORD

We need not wait for heaven to confront the world with evidence of the incomparable riches of God’s mercy. Are you able to share your personal testimony as a meaningful “but God” story? “I was dead—but God.” “I was lost—but God.” “I was in bondage—but God.” Jot down notes for telling your story in order to give God glory.

PRAY WITH US

Let’s continue to ask for God’s guidance and direction for Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody’s president. Pray for him as he seeks to lead Moody’s ministries in a kingdom-oriented way that brings glory to God.

*It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—
and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Ephesians 2:8

MONDAY
JANUARY

8

Salvation Is by Grace through Faith

The movie *Amazing Grace* tells the story of William Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery in England. The title comes from the famous hymn by John Newton, the slave ship captain converted to the Christian faith. When he was set free from sin, he realized he could not continue in the business of human bondage. Throughout the movie, the themes of physical and spiritual slavery and freedom are inextricably intertwined.

Real freedom, salvation in Christ alone, comes by grace alone through faith alone (vv. 8–9). Today’s verses are a classic statement of how salvation works. *Grace* means God’s unmerited favor, or more strongly, His love, kindness, and forgiveness all wrapped into one. Though we were helpless, not to mention deserving of judgment, He acted in grace to rescue us. Our faith in Christ is ultimately a gift from God as well, so there’s no reason to boast or

take any credit. Our efforts played no role whatsoever in our salvation (see Titus 3:3–7).

Our salvation is entirely God’s doing. This gives us even more cause for praise, because we’re His “handiwork” or work of art (v. 10). As a living work of art, our purpose is to “do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Good deeds cannot save us, but they reflect God’s purpose in creating us. They serve as evidence that we have passed from death to life, that our salvation is genuine, and that God’s grace is full of power and richness.

It’s all part of the guaranteed certainty of God’s plan of salvation. If any of it depended in any way on anything human, we would be at least uncertain and likely doomed. Since it doesn’t, we can rejoice that our redemption—even while in process—is already an accomplished fact!

APPLY THE WORD

The hymn “Amazing Grace” was mentioned at the start of today’s devotion. Why not sing it as part of your time with the Lord? The lyrics are readily available in hymn books and online. They remind us: “I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see. . . . ‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.”

PRAY WITH US

Support in prayer Dr. Timothy Arens, vice president and dean of Student Life, as he shepherds students in Chicago and Spokane. Today is the first day of classes on Moody’s Chicago campus.

TUESDAY
JANUARY

9

*Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away
have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Ephesians 2:13

Salvation Includes the Gentiles

In the early twentieth century, Christian missionaries saw much spiritual fruit in the city of Pyongyang, now capital of North Korea. According to one source, it was “the most heavily Christian area of Korea, and the city became the hub for Presbyterian mission activity throughout Asia, including in China.” The city of Pyongyang was even called the “Jerusalem of the East”!

Given recent news headlines involving North Korea, this slice of church history may be surprising or even shocking. That’s how the Jews felt when they grasped that God’s plan of salvation included the Gentiles! The Ephesian church included Jews but was largely comprised of Gentiles. God’s plan of salvation amazingly included not only His “chosen people,” but the “uncircumcised” as well (v. 11).

Before salvation in Christ, the Gentiles were “separate from Christ, excluded

from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God” (v. 12). Any hope of redemption through human merit would have been absolutely crushed by such a description.

This is not to say that the Jews were somehow more worthy of God’s grace (see Matt. 3:9). Paul had made sure to call circumcision a human thing. Yet they were God’s chosen people, with whom He made covenants, and through whom He had promised that all nations would be blessed (see Gen. 12:3; Rom. 9:3–5).

From this perspective, we Gentiles have much to be thankful for. Formerly far from God, mostly oblivious to His plans and purposes, we’ve now been brought near and reconciled to Him through the sacrifice of Christ (v. 13). Salvation by grace through faith includes pagan Gentiles like us!

APPLY THE WORD

Without the grace of Christ, all of us would be far from God and aligned with the world, the flesh, and the devil. God’s power and grace should motivate us to pray for those who seem so far from His salvation. Whether it’s your unsaved loved ones or even the people of North Korea, pray that unbelievers will turn to Jesus and find salvation.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. James Spencer welcomes your prayers today. As vice president and dean of Moody Bible Institute, he makes many decisions about our educational programs. Ask God to give him strength and joy as he does so. Thank you for your prayers!

He himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier.

Ephesians 2:14

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

10

Jews and Gentiles Made One in Christ

The classic hymn, “Beneath the Cross of Jesus,” paints a vivid picture of the meaning of salvation: “Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand, / The shadow of a mighty Rock within a weary land . . . / I take, O cross, thy shadow, for my abiding place; / I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of His face; / Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss, / my sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross.”

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. God’s plan of salvation includes both Jews and Gentiles, not as “first class” and “second class” but as equal members of the family of God, made one in Christ and all members of His body, the church (v. 14). For believers, whether Jew or Gentile, there is only one basis for salvation: Christ.

Not only has the “vertical” separation between humanity and God been

overcome, but so also has the “horizontal” separation between Jew and Gentile. The “dividing wall” metaphor may allude to a sign in the temple warning Gentiles that death would be the likely consequence for passing beyond a certain point. But now Jesus has made peace and “is our peace” between humanity and God and between Jew and Gentile.

The Mosaic Law has been set aside by the only One who kept it perfectly (v. 15). In Him, a “new humanity” has been created—a previously unthinkable union of Christ-following Jews and Gentiles. Their previous hostility to one another and to God has been put to death at the cross (v. 16). Whether they had originally been “near” (Jews) or “far” (Gentiles) from salvation history, such peace was an essential part of God’s plan of salvation (vv. 17–18; see Isa. 57:19).

APPLY THE WORD

The Jews and Gentiles had good reasons for enmity. How could divisions be bridged? Yet in the gospel, they were bridged by Christ. Our society, too, harbors hostilities and divisions. Prejudice, hatred, or denigration against other believers dishonors God and the gospel. We’ve been made one in Christ and must strive to live out this truth!

PRAY WITH US

Thank God with us for our faculty, specifically those who teach Lifetime Fitness classes. Pray for Jean Penfound, Daniel Dunn, Dana Daly, and Christopher McHugh as they instruct our students and teach health and wellness.

THURSDAY
JANUARY

11

You are . . . his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Ephesians 2:19–20

The Household of Christ

The last personal contact Paul had with the Ephesian church was his farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus in about A.D. 57 while en route to Jerusalem (Acts 20:13–28). He left them with this final word: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

This shows how highly Paul valued the body of Christ. This is the “new humanity” mentioned in verse 15, the union in Christ of Jews and Gentiles, who had until now been fundamentally different and antagonistic groups. In addition to being the body of Christ, this new reality of the church is also referred to as His “household,” that is also to say, His family (v. 19).

This building metaphor puts Jesus in the place of “chief cornerstone” (v. 20). He is the first and primary

building block, to which all else must be aligned, an image that fulfills messianic prophecy (see Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 10:4). The “apostles and prophets” of the early church served as the “foundation.” Since then, believers down through the ages have added to the “whole building” as it “rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21). Paul’s point was that the “temple” was no longer a Jewish building in which God dwelt—and certainly nothing like a pagan temple—but it is rather a people with whom God dwells (see 1 Cor. 3:16).

In Ephesus, Jewish and Gentile believers were in the process of becoming “a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (v. 22). Knowing God—His character, plans, and purposes—they could by grace live out the truths of salvation with the strength of His Spirit.

APPLY THE WORD

Genuine community is a work in progress. In what ways are you and your church working toward becoming “a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”? Make this your prayer focus today, and invite others in your church or small group to join you in praying for growth in community and reconciliation as part of bringing glory to God.

PRAY WITH US

Remember in prayer Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications. He asks you to pray that God would further the mission of Moody Publishers, as it seeks to provide the global church with resources to disciple all people.

*This mystery is that through the gospel
the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel,
members together of one body.*

Ephesians 3:6

FRIDAY
JANUARY

12

The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

In *The Drama of Ephesians*, Timothy G. Gombis writes: “Ephesians gives us the compelling and life-giving drama of God’s redemption in Christ. And like any drama, it contains some twists and surprises. It involves subversion. . . . We all love stories of triumph, and we want to be on the winning side, but God does not defeat his enemies in the way we might anticipate. In fact, God subverts human triumphalism in that he wins by losing. He unleashes resurrection life on his world through the dying and rising again of Jesus Christ.”

The gospel was unexpected! Paul called it “the mystery made known to me by revelation” (v. 3). The pagan religions of the day used the term *mystery* to refer to secret knowledge known only by a few insiders. Paul used it to refer to a part of God’s plan that had previously been known only to God Himself but now was revealed to all the world to be proclaimed to all.

No one had anticipated the Son of God becoming a man in the Incarnation. No one had expected Him to suffer and die to redeem people from their sins. No one had predicted His resurrection from the dead. And no one had foreseen the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in His body, the church (vv. 5–6). That the Gentiles would be blessed had been known since the Abrahamic covenant. The surprise was that they would be united with the Jews on an equal footing.

Paul had received this gospel by revelation from Christ Himself (see Gal. 1:11–12). He had been specially called to bring it to the Gentiles; the phrase “administration of God’s grace” indicates stewardship or responsibility (v. 2). He had been put in chains for its sake (v. 1). The purpose behind this very epistle was to give the Ephesians—and us—insight into the gospel (v. 4)!

APPLY THE WORD

Paul was under house arrest in Rome when he wrote this letter, yet he says little about his imprisonment—he expected to suffer for the sake of the gospel. So should we (see 1 Peter 4:12–19). It’s an honor to accept Paul’s invitation: “Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God” (2 Tim. 1:8).

PRAY WITH US

Pray for the Moody Publishers Marketing team today: their prayer for this year is that God would reach two million more readers through MP books. Pray for Ashley Torres, David Dehaan, Grace Park, and Janis Todd.

SATURDAY
JANUARY

13

*I became a servant of this gospel
by the gift of God's grace.*

Ephesians 3:7

Paul's Passion: To Serve and Proclaim the Gospel

Isabella Thoburn was a pioneering missionary to India from 1870 until her death from cholera in 1901. She shared the gospel, opened a school for girls, and started a Hindi-language newspaper called *Women's Friend*—all in a society in which women were powerless and unvalued.

Isabella Thoburn shared Paul's passion to serve and proclaim the gospel. This was the cause to which he had given his life, yet at the same time his ministry, like salvation itself, was a gift of God's grace (v. 7). He didn't assert any kind of superiority or even intrinsic worthiness. He wasn't looking for personal fame or influence. He didn't think God was lucky that Paul had joined His team. Instead, he understood the tremendous privilege and responsibility he had been given as the apostle to the Gentiles (vv. 8–9). The message of God's grace is the most important one ever preached! Even so, the focal point was not himself

as messenger but rather God's plan of salvation, the good news of the gospel, the "boundless riches of Christ."

The revelation of the mystery of God's plan is intended not only for people but also for Satan and his fallen angels (vv. 10–11). The Lord's sovereignty includes not only *what* happens but also *who*, *when*, and *why*. To at last perceive the incredible wisdom and power of God's plan, and the absolute superiority of the Son (1:20–21), must have been a severe blow to the rebel spirits. And notice how they recognize this truth: "through the church" (v. 10).

In our everyday personal spiritual lives, these cosmic truths mean that we can "approach God with freedom and confidence" (v. 12). Jesus has opened the way to the throne of grace (see Heb. 4:14–16). Suffering for Him should not make us discouraged but give us hope in which to glory (v. 13).

APPLY THE WORD

Do you think God can't save you? That you've said too much, done too much, been His enemy for too long? Then your view of His love and forgiveness is far too small! Paul himself started out a rabid anti-Christian. He pursued the early Christians in order to imprison and persecute them. If God can save a person like that, He can save you!

PRAY WITH US

Continue to remember the Moody Publishers' Marketing team as they promote books that exalt Jesus Christ, edify the church, and reach the lost. Pray for Jeremy Slager, Jeremy Williamson, and Kevin Utecht.

To know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:19

SUNDAY
JANUARY

14

Paul's Prayer: To Grasp God's Love

In his commentary on Ephesians, Harold W. Hoehner wrote: “[T]he purpose of Ephesians is to promote a love for one another that has the love of God and Christ as its basis. Paul approaches this very carefully because forced love is not genuine love. He uses the example of God’s and Christ’s love to the human race in general, and to believers in particular, which serve as the basis of the believers’ love for one another. This provides the basis for unity.”

Another of Paul’s prayers was for the Ephesians to grasp how high and wide and deep and long is the love of Christ. In light of God’s purpose and plan in salvation, he knelt before God in reverence (v. 14). He knew that because God is our Father (*pater*), the family (*paternitas*) of God can pray with confidence on the basis of the close relationship brought about by Christ (v. 15).

In this confidence, and aware of God’s infinite resources, Paul prayed for inner spiritual strength and power for the Ephesians, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (v. 17). This kind of power is transforming and sanctifying! He also prayed that they, “being rooted and established in love,” would gain an ability to understand the incalculable vastness of God’s love (vv. 18–19; see Rom. 8:35–39). Yet he admitted that no one can fully know this—such love “surpasses knowledge.” He still prayed as he did, though, because God is the God of the impossible.

Paul anticipated that the result of his prayer would be that the Ephesians would be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”—that is, that we would be filled with God’s love, not to our own capacity but to His capacity.

APPLY THE WORD

In Paul’s day, people customarily stood to pray, but here he kneels in prayer, overcome by emotion in response to the breathtaking love, power, and wisdom of God in the unfolding story of the gospel. Try praying in different postures—sitting, kneeling, or standing. How might your body language in prayer today reflect a heart filled with worship?

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, oversees Moody’s undergraduate and graduate education ministry. May the Lord grant him favor and bless the work of his hands in all he does. Would you pray for him with us?

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies and *Open Line* Host

Q **What does the Bible say about plausibly setting a date for the Rapture or the return of Christ?**

A For generations, beguiling preachers and teachers have used strange signs and events to predict the date when Jesus would return. Just recently, based on a misinterpretation of Revelation 12, many people believed that September 23, 2017 would be the date of the Rapture.

This kind of date setting opposes the clear teaching of God’s Word, for several reasons. First, date setting contradicts the words of Jesus Himself. He said of the Rapture, “About that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matt. 24:36). When His disciples began to enquire about the time of the end, He said: “It is not for you to know times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). How strange (and brash) that any preacher would claim to know what the Lord Jesus has said only our Father in heaven knows!

Second, date setting erodes biblical authority. In the week before the predicted doomsday scenario on September 23, the secular press ran several stories about the prediction. The failure of the prediction could lead

people to dismiss as nonsense what the Bible does say about the return of the Lord Jesus. In the words of Peter, people will scoff, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?” (2 Peter 3:4). Every time there is a failed prediction, some people will dismiss and doubt what the Scriptures truly foretell—that Jesus will indeed return.

Third, date setting undermines genuine faith. People caught up in spurious speculations begin to rely on sensationalism rather than the sound teachings of God’s Word. Paul warned Timothy of this danger, describing the product of the sensational teachers of their day this way: “Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God’s work—which is by faith” (1 Tim. 1:4). We should have faith in the good news because of the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, not because of sensational speculations.

Finally, date setting minimizes the imminent return of the Lord Jesus, which will be sudden and surprising, “like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Using the analogy of the thief in the night in Matthew 24:43–44, Jesus said, “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” If we could know when the Rapture would happen, we wouldn’t need to get ready for it every day.

*God has placed His fingerprints on every person,
making each one valuable to Him.*

The Rapture most likely will not happen on any predicted date. That's because the Father would never want to endorse the silly speculations and fabricated falsehoods of the prophets of doom. Neither should we.

Q **Does the Bible have anything to say about racism?**

A First, the Bible teaches that God loves all people: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). And although God considers racist ideology a grotesque evil, He still loves racists and longs for them to come to repentance and to a true knowledge of forgiveness in the Lord Jesus.

Second, Scripture declares that God made all humanity in His image (Gen. 1:27). God has placed His fingerprints on every person, making each one so valuable to Him, that the Father paid an infinite price to redeem humanity, the death of His one and only Son. Third, when it comes to spiritual matters, the Word of God says that God does not show favoritism among peoples (Acts 10:34). When it came to God's justification of sinners, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female" (Gal. 3:28).

This doesn't mean that in God's eyes the world consists of one homogeneous people, anymore than it means that all people of faith become androgynous. Rather, it means that all people are justified the same way: through faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

Fourth, God celebrates ethnic diversity. The Bible depicts heaven as "a great multitude . . . from every nation, tribe, people and language," worshiping their worthy Savior (Rev. 7:9–10). God redeems people from all the nations, receiving and enjoying worship from all these diverse peoples. In the end, worship in heaven will be a vast, glorious, multicultural event.

Finally, the followers of Jesus are to stand against the vileness of racism. God warns, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil" (Isa. 5:20). We must condemn evil and never justify it (Prov. 24:11–12). God's people must oppose racism! As my wife, Eva, frequently says in her classes at Moody: "Racism is a three letter word: S-I-N." Oh that those of us who follow Jesus would love Him and hate sin, even the sin of racism!

MONDAY
JANUARY

15

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine . . . for ever and ever!

Ephesians 3:20–21

Paul's Prayer: All Glory to God!

The doxology “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” was originally written by an Anglican bishop named Thomas Ken for his students at Winchester College in England. He wanted them to be faithful in their Bible study, prayers, and personal worship times, and had written morning, evening, and midnight hymns for this purpose. The final stanza of each of these hymns was this doxology still sung today.

A doxology is a resounding statement of praise, as in today's verses. Paul's doxology here is a fitting close to the first three chapters of Ephesians and their focus on God's extraordinary plan and work of salvation. It also signals a transition to the letter's second half, which focuses on how to live out the gospel in daily practice.

The basis of Paul's doxology is the character of God (v. 20). He is infinite

in power, knowledge, and love, able to “do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” His omnipotence is not out there somewhere, but “at work within us.” It pushes forward the Spirit's sanctifying work (v. 17), gives us an understanding of divine love (v. 18), and fills us far beyond what we can humanly hold (v. 19).

The ultimate purpose of Paul's doxology is the glory of God (v. 21). The place in the world in which it is to be most on display is the church. Just as God is glorified in and by Christ's mission of redemption, and by all He said and did during His life on earth, so also should God be glorified by all that we as Christ's redeemed followers say and do.

The gospel transforms enemies into friends, Jews and Gentiles into one “household,” and dead people into ones who will live eternally with God. Amen, let it be so!

APPLY THE WORD

We rarely spend enough time praising the Lord! Often our prayers are overbalanced in favor of petitions or requests, and some church cultures minimize corporate times of praise. Spend time in praise and thanksgiving for who God is. Paul's doxology in today's reading, Romans 16:25–27, or Psalms 145 through 150 could help set the tone.

PRAY WITH US

We invite you to join us in prayer for the faculty and students at Moody's Spokane campus. Pray God's blessing on them in this winter season, that He would keep them safe and remind them of His love.

*I urge you to live a life worthy
of the calling you have received.*

Ephesians 4:1

TUESDAY
JANUARY

16

Calling: Living Worthy of Our Salvation

Pastor and author John Piper explained in a sermon: “The deep horror of our sin is not simply that we cross over some line that God told us not to cross. The ultimate essence of evil is not simply that we break God’s commands. The problem with our sin is that we love or prefer anything over God.” If we fail to understand this, “the glory of Christ’s victory on the cross, the majesty of God, and the deep satisfaction of the Christian life will all be lost on us.”

To live worthy of our salvation, then, means to value God above all else. Obedience to His commands follows from that. Just as Paul had devoted his life to his calling to proclaim the gospel (3:7–8), so now he exhorted the Ephesians and us to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (v. 1). Here “calling” refers to God’s sovereign choice of us for adoption, redemption,

and forgiveness (1:3–14). We’re to live worthy of His grace and gift of life (2:8–10). That’s a lot to live up to! Fittingly, this can only be done in God’s strength.

What does this mean specifically? Today’s passage gives us three examples. First, it means to be humble and gentle (v. 2). These qualities, seen as weak, were not prized in Roman culture. Second, it means to be patient and loving. And third, it means to live in unity and harmony with our fellow believers (v. 3).

Paul expanded on this third command, in keeping with his focus on the church in this epistle (vv. 4–6). Unity or oneness among fellow believers is founded upon a series of “ones”—one Spirit, one hope (of salvation, see 1:18), one Lord (Christ), one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

APPLY THE WORD

Water baptism is an ordinance or sacrament (depending on your tradition) of the church wherein we publicly identify ourselves as followers of Christ (see Rom. 6:4). It makes sense that Paul would refer to it when addressing unity in the body of Christ. If you’ve never been baptized, speak to your pastor or another church leader and learn more about it.

PRAY WITH US

Let’s continue in prayer for the administration team at Moody’s Spokane campus—Jack Lewis, Nathanael Schey, and Rashel Rogers—as they serve students and keep the administrative side of the Spokane campus running smoothly.

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

17

The body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature.

Ephesians 4:12–13

Calling: Using Spiritual Gifts to Build Up the Church

Kids have loved building with Play-Doh for more than 60 years. First introduced at schools in Cincinnati, this soft modeling clay was featured at a national education convention in 1955 and marketed in department stores the following year. It is estimated that children have played with some 700 million pounds of this famous material. In 1998, Play-Doh was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame.

The spiritual gifts of believers are the building materials of the church. That is, with our Spirit-given gifts, we serve the church and build up one another. Living worthy of our salvation is not an individualistic activity, as we often think of it, but a community enterprise. We “do life together,” as the current saying goes. The key is God’s grace (v. 7).

Salvation is about God’s kingdom and victory. In something of a rabbinic style, Paul comments on Psalm 68:18 to make

this point (vv. 8–10). Christ descended (became human and died) in order to ascend (His mission of redemption finished). He humbled Himself in order to reign. The “captives” are sin, death, and Satan. The “gifts” are grace and life.

Living worthy of our salvation happens when people use their spiritual gifts to serve and edify one another within the church (vv. 11–13). This is why the Spirit gives the gifts at all—to build up the body of Christ. Apostles and prophets were the “foundation” of the church (2:20). Evangelists, pastors, and teachers equip believers through their work. Other gifts are listed elsewhere in Scripture, and all serve the purpose of building up the church toward unity.

Just as salvation is both finished and in process, so also is unity. We both possess it and are reaching it. It will be complete when our knowledge of Christ is mature and perfect.

APPLY THE WORD

Are you using your spiritual gift as God intended? Sometimes we treat spiritual gifts as tools for self-understanding or self-expression. But they’re meant to be used for the benefit of God’s people. To learn more, read *Ministering through Spiritual Gifts: Recognize Your Personal Gifts and Use Them to Further the Kingdom* by Charles Stanley.

PRAY WITH US

Commit Janet Stiven to prayer today. As vice president and General Counsel at Moody, she provides advice and legal guidance in many situations that require prayer and wisdom. Thank you for your prayers!

Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:15

THURSDAY
JANUARY

18

Calling: Growing to Maturity

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Did you know medical research supports this idea? Specifically, one recent study found that eating fruits and vegetables with white flesh, such as apples, pears, bananas, and cauliflower, may protect against strokes. The white flesh contains beneficial chemicals that in the study lowered the risk of stroke by 52 percent.

Righteous knowledge is key to spiritual health. Verse 14 in today's reading begins a contrast by describing bad spiritual health, or immaturity. It's like being a baby—helpless, ignorant, and completely dependent. It's also like being a small boat in a storm, one that cannot hold its own and is at the mercy of the waves (see James 1:6). Finally, it's like being a loose piece of paper being blown about in a windstorm. The danger in each case is bad or deceitful teaching that misleads those who do not have an accurate understanding of

salvation and God's plan and purposes in it. Immature believers are weak, gullible, unstable, confused, and easily led astray.

Verse 15 finishes the contrast by describing spiritual maturity. It's like being a grown-up, able to stand on one's own two feet. It's about the ability to speak the truth in love to one another and thus to grow *together*. Mature believers are wise, loving, and submissive to Christ, and they embrace mutual responsibility within the body. Their faith is strong.

The church stands firm when it understands who Christ is and what He did. This doesn't mean growth is something we "do," for it comes from the Head, Christ (v. 16). We each definitely have a responsibility to do our part, but the power to do it and the glory for the results belong to Christ alone.

APPLY THE WORD

As followers of Christ, we're to be growing in our understanding of who Christ is and what He did and in our understanding of scriptural truths and doctrines. In what ways are you currently seeking to learn in this area? It's part of loving God with your mind! Remember, spiritual growth should be a community or relational endeavor.

PRAY WITH US

Remember in your prayers Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media. The goal of Moody Publishers and Moody Radio is to reach the world for Christ; please pray for Greg as he seeks to further this mission.

FRIDAY
JANUARY

19

*Put on the new self, created to be like God
in true righteousness and holiness.*

Ephesians 4:24

Calling: Putting Off the Old, Putting On the New

When the gospel arrived in Ephesus and Paul planted a church there, people stopped worshiping the pagan goddess Artemis, or Diana, at her famous temple. This had an economic impact that led to a riot. In addition, many who had followed occult practices dramatically chose to abandon their old lives by burning their scrolls of magic and sorcery. It is estimated that these were worth 50,000 days' wages (see Acts 19).

These actions were the results of the Ephesians' commitment to putting off the old and putting on the new. Moving from death to life and growing from immaturity to maturity require this kind of radical change (see 2 Cor. 5:17). "Putting off" and "putting on" indicate decisive choices and actions. An entirely transformed way of life is needed!

To put off the old means to stop living like unbelieving Gentiles, that is, like pagans (vv. 17–19). Their thinking is

ignorant and futile because they've suppressed the truth. Their hearts are hard and spiritually insensitive. They are far from the Lord. As a result, their behavior is given over to sensuality and self-indulgence. Impurity and greed characterize their lives. Wrong thinking leads to wrong actions.

To put on the new, by contrast, means to live in accordance with the truth of the gospel (vv. 20–24). Believers' thinking is aligned with the truth of Christ—or more exactly, is in the process of becoming so. Our lives as maturing disciples of Christ should be characterized by specific qualities and actions that add up to a righteous "way of life," which has the gospel at its center (Col. 3:9–10).

Our old selves were corrupt and deceived, but our new selves understand that we are created to be holy and Christlike. Right thinking leads to right actions.

APPLY THE WORD

One classic book on the topic of discipleship is *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges, who writes in an insightful, down-to-earth manner. Your Sunday school class or small group might benefit from studying this topic together, or you could host a book discussion group and invite friends to join you in learning more about holiness.

PRAY WITH US

Let's ask for God's leading and direction for Moody Radio's Programming team as they work on Moody Radio's broadcasts for all of our friends who listen around the country. Pray for Dan Craig, Jon Gauger, and Judy Kron.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30

SATURDAY
JANUARY

20

Practice: Righteousness in Daily Life

A 2016 survey by LifeWay Research revealed that 67 percent of Americans admit they're sinners. Of that total, only 5 percent are okay with it, which indicates that the rest want to change their lives. But just 28 percent say they rely on Jesus to overcome sin. The remaining 34 percent are working on being less sinful and improving themselves on their own.

This is hopeless, for salvation is by grace through faith, not works. Victory over sin comes only through the blood of Christ. Today's passage gives specific examples of righteousness in the daily lives of followers of Jesus—qualities to be cultivated, actions to be taken, commands to be obeyed.

Two examples come from the realm of speech or words (vv. 25, 29). We're to speak truthfully, not to lie. We've been liberated from ignorance and deceit and must instead speak the truth to one

another in love. We're also to engage in edifying talk, not unwholesome conversation. To edify means to communicate in a way that benefits the listener. This implies attentiveness, discernment, and care.

Another example is not to let anger become sin (vv. 26–27). As Christians, we should take care of issues as soon as possible, because to let them fester could give the devil a foothold in our lives and make things worse. Yet another example is to work hard and diligently, not to be lazy or dishonest (v. 28).

Additional examples of vices to put off are found in verse 31, and additional examples of virtues to put on are in verse 32. The overarching idea is not to do anything that would grieve the Holy Spirit and oppose His sanctifying work in our lives (v. 30). Sin saddens God, for it means we're choosing against His grace.

APPLY THE WORD

The exhortation to diligent work is not so that we can accumulate material blessings but so that we can share generously with others (v. 28). This runs counter to American culture, in which we tend to feel, "It's my money, I can do with it whatever I like." If needed, seek Christ's help to "put on the new"!

PRAY WITH US

Please continue to include Moody Radio's Programming team in your prayers. Chris Papendick, Dan Anderson, Kurt Goff, and Stephen Johnson serve the Lord with their skills, expertise, and diligent work at Moody Radio.

SUNDAY
JANUARY

21

Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Ephesians 5:2

Practice: Walking in Love and Purity

A recent survey found that many Americans are muddled about what constitutes marital unfaithfulness. Just 31 percent thought watching pornography was cheating on a spouse. Some 42 percent said that sending flirtatious messages to a romantic interest was fine—and 25 percent thought even sexually explicit messages were OK. About one in four didn't see a one-night stand as cheating, and about one in five didn't even consider regular sexual relations with someone not your spouse to be cheating.

Spiritually dead people are hopelessly confused in their moral thinking. To walk in love and purity, we must have biblical principles and standards. This means that we as “dearly loved children” need to imitate and obey our Father (vv. 1–2). Godliness, after all, means acting as God would act; Christlikeness means doing what Christ would do. What Christ did was love us to death, literally. We

should follow His sacrificial example and seek always to “walk in the way of love.” Such a life will be a “fragrant offering,” pleasing to the Lord (see Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 2:15).

Sinful and impure choices are foul-smelling offerings to the King of Kings. We must avoid such offensive foolishness at all costs! Sexual immorality and greed, for example, are “improper for God's holy people” (v. 3). Sins of the tongue are also unacceptable, including obscenity and coarse jesting (v. 4). Giving thanks is an effective antidote.

God's holiness cannot compromise. There shouldn't be “even a hint” of such behaviors or approval of them in the church, for people who live in this way prove through their actions that they're not really God's children and won't inherit eternal life (vv. 3, 5). False teachers might say otherwise, but God's grace leads to transformed lives.

APPLY THE WORD

Since it also deals with sins of the tongue, James 3:1–12 would be an excellent passage for additional reading today. Speaking in godly ways is not just a matter of self-control, for “no human being can tame the tongue.” Use these verses to guide your prayers for God to help you use your tongue in ways that glorify Him.

PRAY WITH US

Jim Elliot is the vice president of Stewardship. Along with his team, he invests in relationships with the Moody supporters around the country and across the globe, seeking to wisely steward what God provides. Pray for God's blessing on him and his team.

The fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.

Ephesians 5:9

MONDAY
JANUARY

22

Practice: Living as Children of Light

The manchineel tree looks innocent enough, but it can harm in multiple ways. Its fruit is toxic. Its sap, which is also found on the bark and leaves, causes burn-like blisters. Touching a leaf to your eyes can cause temporary blindness. Even having just a drop from it fall on you can cause severe pain. This is why this tree is called in Spanish *arbol de la muerte*, or “tree of death.”

A tree is known by its fruit (see Matt. 7:16–18). Similarly, Paul taught in Ephesians that the fruit of living in the light versus living in the dark is clear. “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (v. 8). What does this mean? It means to pursue goodness, righteousness, and truth (v. 9). It means that in all situations we should “find out what pleases the Lord” (v. 10). This carries the idea of cultivating wisdom and discernment, the ability to interpret biblical truths accurately and apply

them meaningfully in specific contexts. We already know from His Word what pleases God, so the point here is to “find out” in *practice*.

On the flip side, believers are to “have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them” (v. 11). There should be no participation, no association, no approval or implied endorsement. We’re also not to talk or gossip about sin, for dwelling on it is unhealthy and can lead to pride or voyeurism (v. 12). And we are not to tolerate or celebrate sin in the church. This can be bold and risky and often comes with a price, but it can also happen as part of our normal attempts to follow the path of Christ—for light by its very nature reveals what darkness attempts to conceal (v. 13). Because Christ has shone on us, we have ourselves become a light to the world (v. 14; see Matt. 5:14–16; 2 Cor. 4:6).

APPLY THE WORD

From the moment God said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) to the heavenly city which needs no light but Him (Rev. 21:23), imagery of light and darkness is found throughout Scripture. Last August, *Today in the Word* devoted an entire month of study to this topic. You can find it in the archives at our website: todayintheword.org.

PRAY WITH US

Express appreciation in prayer for Moody’s Donor Development team, who prayerfully serve our friends and partners. Pray God’s blessing on Bruce Everhart, Cherise Wilson, Claire Kniewski, Georgette Whittenhall, and Hadassah Carlson.

TUESDAY
JANUARY

23

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18–19

Practice: Being Filled with the Spirit

Pastor and author Stuart Briscoe explored Paul’s unconventional analogy between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit. From experiences in his younger days, he observed that when his fellow soldiers in the Royal Marine Commandos would go drinking, they would consume alcohol until it altered their thinking, changed their desires and motivations, and strongly influenced or even controlled their actions.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit alters our thinking, changes our desires and motivations, and strongly influences or even controls our actions—but unlike drinking excessive alcohol, the Spirit’s control brings glory to God. Living worthy of our calling, of the gospel, and of our salvation in Christ absolutely requires being filled with the Spirit.

A life of following Christ is put in terms of living wisely and “making the most of every opportunity” to share

the gospel (vv. 15–16). The gospel is the highest form of wisdom, though to the world it appears foolishness (see 1 Cor. 1:18–25). True foolishness, though, is failing to comprehend what the Lord’s will is, while true wisdom means to understand and follow it (v. 17). For example, once we understand that we’ve been chosen by God from eternity past as part of His redemptive plan, we should strive to behave in a manner befitting our chosenness.

This is where being filled with the Spirit comes in (vv. 18–20). We could never live this way in our own strength. Thankfully, God has provided His strength through His Spirit. The phrase “filled with the Spirit” is in the present continuous tense, which means it happens constantly or on an ongoing basis. Whereas drunkenness leads to debauchery, being filled with the Spirit leads to worship, thankfulness, and praise to the Lord.

APPLY THE WORD

Wise and godly living takes attentiveness. Being careless or thoughtless leads to sin and selfishness. Too often we live on autopilot, making choices from mere habit. Does your typical day demonstrate the values you say you hold? Are your activities worthy of your calling? Are you daily seeking to be filled with the Spirit?

PRAY WITH US

Keep praying for the Donor Development team today as they cheerfully communicate with our Moody family. Joe Forrider, Scott Veigel, Teri Vaughn, and Stephen Asare express their thanks for your faithful and joyful partnership with Moody.

*Submit to one another
out of reverence for Christ.*

Ephesians 5:21

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

24

Practice: Mutual and Wifely Submission

The idea that wives should submit to their husbands is controversial and countercultural in our day. People think it implies that women are somehow inferior to men, or that the Bible endorses male abuse of power. But that's not what Scripture means at all! The Word is quite clear that both men and women are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27) and equal in God's eyes (Gal. 3:28).

So how are we to understand this command (vv. 22, 24; see Col. 3:18)? The short answer is exactly as it reads, but through biblical lenses, not our cultural lenses. Wives should submit to their husbands "as you do to the Lord" and "in everything." Yet this does not imply any loss in dignity or equality or sanction any male abuses of power. If God the Son can submit to God the Father (John 8:28–29; 1 Cor. 11:3), we might need to rethink our cultural ideas about submission.

Verse 21 continues to build on the idea in the previous verses, so that submitting "to one another out of reverence for Christ" is part of being filled with the Spirit (v. 18). Does mutual submission mean husbands and wives should submit to one another? No; the command means, according to one study Bible, "submitting to others according to the authority and order established by God." Relevant responsibilities in family relationships are described in the verses that follow.

This verse, then, provides a statement of the general principle, and the following verses give examples of how it works in practice. It's proper for wives to submit to husbands, because "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" (v. 23). The reverse would not be appropriate, any more than it would be between Christ and the church.

APPLY THE WORD

We aren't great with submission to authority. We cherish our rights and admire vigilantes like Batman, explorers like Daniel Boone, and heroes like Audie Murphy. But submission to proper authorities is a Christlike virtue, whether in the family, church, or society (see Rom. 13:1–2). Ask the Lord to give you a submissive spirit today.

PRAY WITH US

In your prayer time today, bring Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer, before the Lord. Ask that God would give him joy in his work today, for "the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

THURSDAY
JANUARY

25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25

Practice: Christlike and Husbandly Love

A powerful biblical metaphor for God and His people is that of husband and wife. Christ is the Bridegroom and His church is the bride. The return of Christ means that “the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. . . . Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” (Rev. 19:7–9).

Christ’s love for the church is the model for a husband’s love for his wife (v. 25; see Col. 3:19). What a challenge! Husbands have been given by God the leadership role in the family not because they deserve it or are better human beings, but to provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate the kind of sacrificial love which they have experienced from Christ.

Paul knew that the command for wives to submit might tempt husbands to pride. So he swiftly spelled out the husband’s reciprocal duty: “Love your

wives, just as Christ loved the church.” How does Christ love? Sacrificially and purposefully; the husband should love his wife in a way that’s unselfishly committed to her wellbeing and to seeing God’s purposes realized in her life (v. 27).

A second, more down-to-earth comparison helps clarify this (vv. 28–31; see Gen. 2:24). A husband should love his wife as he loves his own body. This demonstrates the commitment to wellbeing, in that a man will take care of his body regardless of how he “feels” about it.

For both husband and wife, the model for marriage is the relationship between Christ and His church. This is a “profound mystery,” which marriage is intended to be an earthly reflection of (vv. 32–33). A godly marriage, then, is impossible without being filled with the Spirit!

APPLY THE WORD

Moody Theological Seminary professor John Trent has written practical books for spouses to improve their marriages: *30 Ways A Husband Can Bless His Wife* and *30 Ways A Wife Can Bless Her Husband*. He also leads the ministry and website StrongFamilies.com. Pray that Christian marriages will reflect the love between Christ and the church!

PRAY WITH US

Please play for WCRF, Moody Radio’s station broadcasting from northeast Ohio: Brian Dahlen, Kelly Reiter, and Kathleen Zion proclaim Jesus Christ and point people to Him every day. Your prayers are an encouragement to the team!

*Children, obey your parents
in the Lord, for this is right.*

Ephesians 6:1

FRIDAY
JANUARY

26

Practice: Parents' Authority

Two kids were talking one day. The first said, "I'm really worried. My parents work hard to give me a nice home, food, and clothing. They cook and clean and drive me places. I'm worried sick!" The other responded, "Worried about what? It sounds like you've got it made!" "I know," the first one said, "but what if they try to escape?"

Parenting jokes aside, part of God's order for the family includes children who are obedient to their parents. This is the third command in this "household code": first, wives submit to husbands; second, husbands love wives; and now third, children obey parents (v. 1). This is actually the fifth of the Ten Commandments (vv. 2-3), and "the first commandment with a promise." Originally, it was "so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Deut. 5:16). Paul broadened it here to "enjoy long life

on the earth," a phrase that implies a general state of blessedness. In other words, keeping proper order and authority in this relationship is essential to our wellbeing. Obedience and disobedience to God's commands have consequences.

Children's disobedience is a serious sin, included in a list of what godless people do (see Rom. 1:30). In addition, honoring one's parents extends past childhood. Paul also taught that caring for aged parents is part of this command (see 1 Tim. 5:4).

Parents have a reciprocal responsibility not to be tyrannical or abusive in their exercise of authority. Fathers, as the head of the home, are told not to "exasperate" their children (v. 4). This term can be translated "provoke" and means to anger or discourage. Instead, he should raise his children in a God-honoring manner (see Prov. 22:6).

APPLY THE WORD

Not all of us might have spouses or children—but all of us have had parents! Pray about how you can glorify God by respecting your parents. If they're believers, give thanks for that spiritual heritage. If your past includes painful experiences with your parents, ask the Lord to heal your brokenness and thank Him for being your perfect Father.

PRAY WITH US

Continue to remember Moody Radio's WCRF in your prayers today. Doug Hainer, Paul Carter, and Scott Krus all serve to keep the station running smoothly, so more people can learn about God and His Word.

SATURDAY
JANUARY

27

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the LORD, not people.

Ephesians 6:7

Practice: Other Authorities

Slavery is not just an injustice of the past, though it is officially illegal in every nation. One report estimates that nearly 46 million people live in some form of slavery today, typically involving forced labor or sexual exploitation. Sixty percent of these modern-day slaves live in just five countries: India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Uzbekistan.

In the Roman Empire, the institution of slavery sometimes differed from what we know from American history. While it did involve ownership of human beings and many cruelties, abuse, and injustices, it was often more like indentured servitude. Slaves may have comprised as much as one third of the population of Ephesus. Most could expect emancipation by age 30. Nonetheless, owning another human being is clearly unjust. Paul didn't endorse it, and his teaching here should be seen as a temporary measure within a fallen world (see 1 Cor. 7:21–24).

Within the context of that social institution, God again outlines a proper order, which was for slaves to obey their masters (vv. 5–8; see Titus 2:9–10). As a matter of Christian integrity, this obedience was not to be grudging, reluctant, or only when under observation, but at all times “as you would obey Christ.” The service should be given willingly and wholeheartedly. Ultimately, slaves were accountable to God and would be rewarded by Him.

Throughout this passage, Paul gave the masters the countercultural command of a reciprocal responsibility. They were to treat their slaves fairly, as if Christ's eyes were on them at all times (v. 9). Specifically, they were not to “threaten” or verbally abuse them, nor to show favoritism nor use their authority capriciously. They would ultimately be held accountable by God.

APPLY THE WORD

For many of us, this passage applies to our work experience. Our work should be done honestly and well, “as if you were serving the Lord.” Putting on a show for a performance review doesn't honor the Lord, nor does snitching office supplies because “they'll never miss them.” Doing our jobs with integrity is part of our Christian witness!

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, Moody's chief financial officer, asks for your prayers today. We are thankful to have a person of integrity, character, and kindness overseeing Moody's finances. Pray for his wise leadership of our financial decisions.

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:11

Our Spiritual Battle

The Great Wall of Gorgan is one of the most impressive structures ever built. Constructed 1,500 years ago to protect the Persian Empire from enemy raiding parties, it stretches for more than 120 miles in northwestern Iran. Recent excavations have revealed the quality and careful engineering that went into it. At any given time, about 20,000 soldiers would have been stationed along the wall to protect the border.

A strong defense is an important dimension of spiritual warfare. “Finally,” Paul wrote, “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (v. 10). Having discussed God’s purposes and plans in salvation, and having urged the Ephesians to live worthy of the gospel and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, he now moved to close his epistle with an exhortation regarding spiritual warfare.

Christ has finished His work of redemption and is seated at God’s

right hand, far above all other spiritual powers. Yet at the same time, the battle rages on in the history of the church and in our own lives. We shouldn’t try to fight in our own strength but instead rely on God’s “mighty power” given to us in His “full armor” (v. 11).

Spiritual warfare consists of standing against the devil’s schemes. Satan is the enemy or adversary of God and the gospel, so by definition any plan or intention he has is wicked. He and his fallen angels, all the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms,” take every opportunity to try and undercut God’s work in the world (v. 12).

We shouldn’t view other people as the enemy. They are made in God’s image and loved by Him. Instead, our real enemy and the real battle are spiritual (see 3:10–11).

APPLY THE WORD

The literary genre of fantasy is one way Christian writers have explored what spiritual warfare might look or feel like. Three insightful novels that take spiritual realities seriously are *That Hideous Strength* by C. S. Lewis, *War in Heaven* by Charles Williams, and *The Alpine Tales* (actually four books) by Paul J. Willis.

PRAY WITH US

Your prayers will be an encouragement to the faculty and staff at Moody Theological Seminary’s Michigan campus. Pray for Amber Tucker, Eric Moore, and Eugene Mayhew as they minister to students this semester.

MONDAY
JANUARY

29

Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Ephesians 6:16

Putting On the Armor of God

Crews installing cables recently at St. John's College, Cambridge University, found a “magic shoe” inside a wall. Placed there perhaps 300 years ago, its purpose was to “protect” college administrators from evil spirits. In addition to shoes, dead cats and horse's skulls were sometimes put into walls in order to prevent evil spirits from entering the room.

Such notions are superstitions based on fear. The armor of God, however, is based on God's truth and God's power. With it, we can stand our ground against spiritual attacks (v. 13). The idea behind the metaphor is intense, hand-to-hand combat.

Paul listed six pieces of armor that must be put on. First, there is the belt of truth (v. 14). Just as a belt holds everything together, so spiritual warfare is hopeless without a firm grasp on

truth. Second, there is the breastplate of righteousness. A breastplate protected the heart, the source of life. God Himself is pictured as wearing this when doing battle (see Isa. 59:17). Third, there are “feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (v. 15). The gospel provides a firm place for us to stand and is the only “pair of shoes” we should ever wear in spiritual warfare.

Fourth, there is the shield of faith (v. 16). Paul was no doubt thinking of the leather shields of the Romans, which they soaked in water before battle so they would act as fire extinguishers. In the same way, the shield of faith helps us resist Satan's “flaming arrows.” Fifth, there is the helmet of salvation (v. 17). Sixth and finally, there is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (see Heb. 4:12). Notice that this is the only offensive weapon on the list.

APPLY THE WORD

Some people read this passage every morning before getting out of bed in order to “get dressed” for the day. Look online for a picture of the armor worn by Roman soldiers, which Paul likely had in mind when he created the metaphor of the “full armor of God.” As you do, focus on Paul's instruction to be prepared for spiritual battle.

PRAY WITH US

Continue to remember in prayer the faculty and staff at Moody Theological Seminary in Michigan. James Wood, John Restum, and Joseph Tucker are investing in student's lives for the gospel. May the Lord turn their faithful service into a spiritual harvest!

*Pray in the Spirit on all occasions
with all kinds of prayers and requests.*

Ephesians 6:18

TUESDAY
JANUARY

30

Praying in the Spirit

Respondents to research done by the Barna Group were asked whether they had prayed to God in the previous week. In Barna’s 2017 Cities report, this data was used to identify the most prayerful city in America as Augusta-Aiken, Georgia, where 98 percent said they had prayed in the past week. The least prayerful city was Springfield-Holyoke, Massachusetts, at 53 percent. The national average was 78 percent.

Praying in the Spirit is an essential activity that accompanies putting on the armor of God (v. 18). After all, how can we expect to draw on God’s strength unless we’re in constant communication with Him? As has been true throughout Ephesians, we don’t pray on our own but in the Spirit. He intercedes on our behalf, always “in accordance with the will of God” (Rom. 8:26–27).

When is the right time for prayer? “On all occasions.” How should we pray?

“With all kinds of prayers and requests.” For whom should we pray? “For all the Lord’s people”—the household of faith. In what way should we pray? Alertly. Peter similarly wrote: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). How often should we pray? “Always keep on praying.” This phrase indicates that persistence in prayer is important. Prayer should permeate all our attitudes and activities. It is an essential part of a life of worship!

Paul gave the Ephesians an immediate opportunity to do this by requesting prayer for himself (vv. 19–20). Perhaps surprisingly, he didn’t ask for release from prison but for evangelistic boldness and courage. He accepted being an “ambassador in chains” as long as God continued to enable him to “fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.”

APPLY THE WORD

Pray today with your eyes open! Perhaps you’ve always been taught to pray with your eyes closed, but for some, that can too easily lead to a drifting minds. Therefore, if we desire to pray alertly and attentively, we might need to open our eyes to do it. Whatever you choose to do, may your prayer time today be richly blessed!

PRAY WITH US

Today we bring Moody’s Procurement Services department before the Lord in prayer. Pray that Brenda Crump and Stephen Richardson would be encouraged in their work, as they further His kingdom through their service to Moody’s employees.

*Grace to all who love our
Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.*

Ephesians 6:24

Conclusion of the Epistle

Ephesians was one of the first New Testament books to be recognized as Scripture by the early church fathers. In one of his writings, Polycarp (A.D. 69–155) quoted from Psalm 4:5 and Ephesians 4:26 in such a way as to clearly indicate that he regarded both as the inspired Word of God. As we conclude this month's study of Ephesians, we must remember that it's God's Word to us today! The call to live worthy of the gospel, and our need to clearly understand God's purposes and plan in salvation, are as relevant and urgent today as they were two thousand years ago.

Tychicus, one of Paul's trusted ministry partners, delivered the letter and would have been able to authenticate it as from the Apostle (vv. 21–22). He also brought personal greetings and news of how Paul was doing under house arrest in Rome. He may have been based

there for a time during Paul's third missionary journey (see Acts 20:4) and would return at least once more in later years (see 2 Tim. 4:12). He also carried the epistle to the Colossians, in which Paul referred to him as a "dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord" (Col. 4:7).

In closing his letter, Paul wished the church at Ephesus peace, love with faith, and grace (vv. 23–24). While a standard sign-off, these also summarize the gospel. We have peace with God and unity with one another because of Christ's reconciling work. We rest secure in God's love in Christ, which is higher and wider and longer and deeper than we can ever fully understand. We're saved by grace alone to the glory of God alone, and the best response is to "love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love" or "love incorruptible."

APPLY THE WORD

What lessons has God taught you through this month's study? What truth have you seen in a new way? What attitude or action has the Holy Spirit convicted you to relinquish or adopt? Our prayer for you is that your "undying love" for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has been fanned into a flame that will encourage others and bring glory to God.

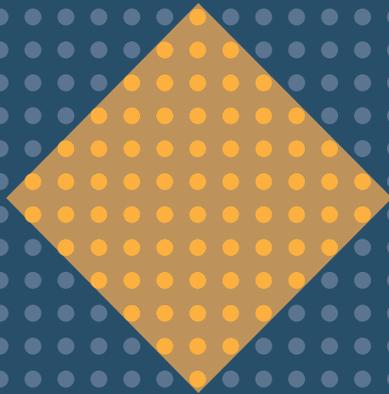
PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our prayer time for the month, let's thank God for everything we learned together from the book of Ephesians in *Today in the Word*. What a joy to know that Christ dwells in our hearts so that we can show His love to the body of Christ.

Moody Bible Institute Founder's Week

February 5–9, 2018

One **New** People



Awe-inspiring Bible teaching and worship. Powerful messages from respected Christian leaders, including Mike Bullmore, Ralph West, Anne Graham Lotz, James Ford Jr., Ed Stetzer, and Matt Chandler.

foundersweek.org

the LAND and the BOOK

MOODY ISRAEL TOUR • OCTOBER 2–13, 2018

See the places where Jesus and His disciples walked. Hear insightful teaching from Dr. Jim Coakley, host of Moody Radio's *The Land and the Book*.

Register now for a unique tour that leads you to spiritual transformation.

(972) 690-0092 • moodyglobal.org/israel



Visit us online to request resources and view past issues.

TodayInTheWord.com



Today in the Word



@TodayintheWord



TodayInTheWordDevotional



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES®

Moody helps equip you with the truth of God's Word as you impact your community and the world for Christ. We believe that understanding and sharing God's Word is a lifelong journey. Let us help you take the next step in your relationship with Christ.

Learn more at MOODYGLOBAL.ORG or call (800) DL MOODY today.

MOODY
Bible Institute™

moody.edu

MOODY
Theological
Seminary™

MOODY
Bible Institute™
DISTANCE LEARNING

MOODY
Publishers®

moodypublishers.com

MOODY
Radio®

moodyradio.org