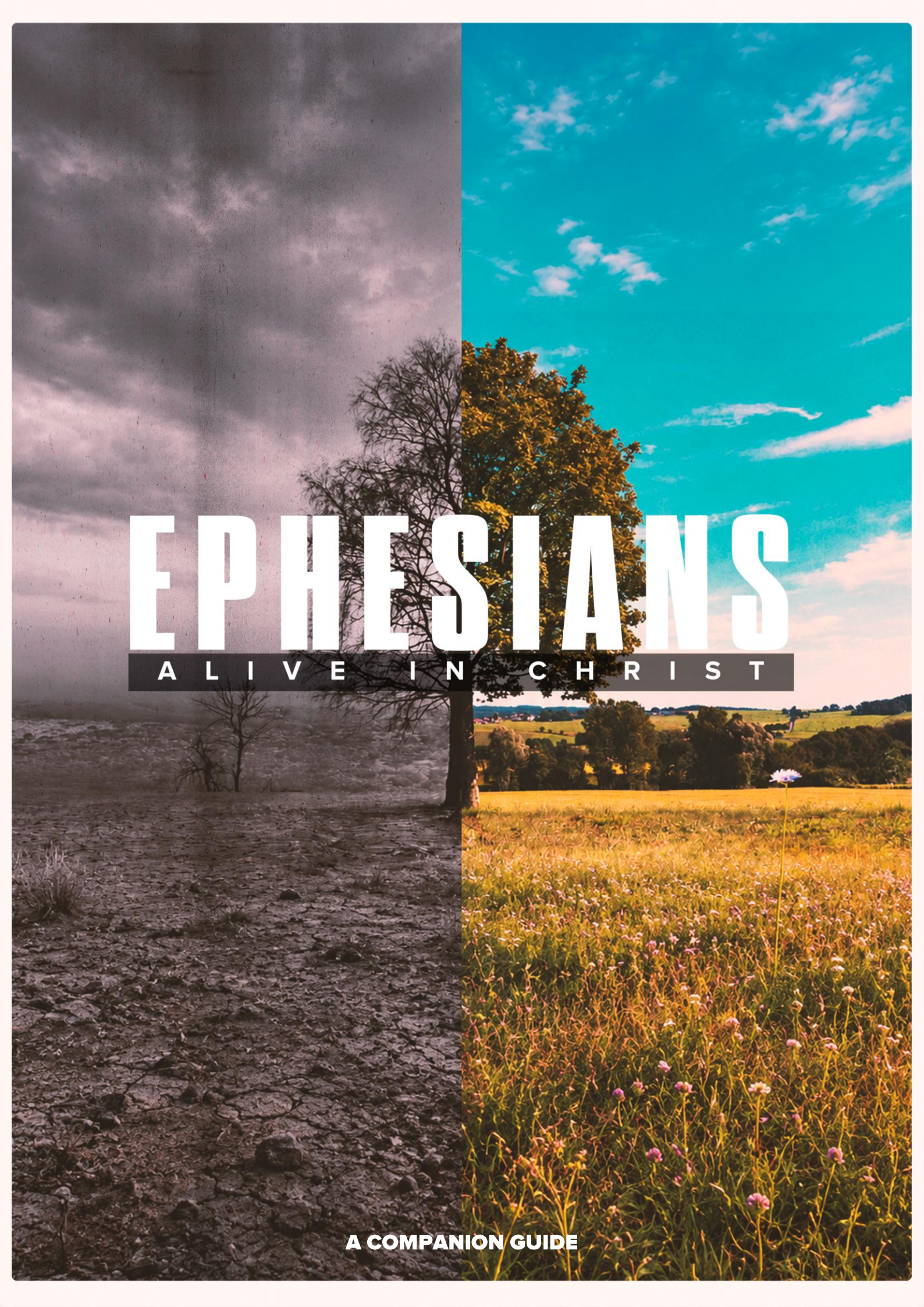




EPHESIANS

A L I V E I N C H R I S T

A COMPANION GUIDE

“³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

Ephesians 1: 3-4, ESV

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1.

INTRODUCTION

“⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
Ephesians 2: 8-9, ESV

The letter to the Ephesian church is an incredibly rich epistle, helping us to gain a cosmic view of **who Jesus is, what He’s done** for us and what our new **spiritual identity** is!

Jesus isn’t just the *man* who walked the dusty streets of Galilee – He is seated at the right hand of the Father, in heavenly places, *“²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”* (Ephesians 1: 21-23).

The work that He’s done for us by bringing redemption to mankind, uniting us with God (and each other), is a plan from before the foundation of the world!

And our new spiritual identity goes beyond just our earthly surroundings and how we conduct ourselves in human relationships: because of Jesus’ resurrection, we have been seated *with the Father, in Christ Jesus* in the heavenly places!

Although there aren’t many personal references made by Paul in this letter (Tychicus is the only person mentioned by name), it is clear that he has great affection for the Ephesian church. In Acts 19 we read of his ministry in Ephesus, and the powerful way the Holy Spirit came upon those who listened to Paul. He spent 3 months preaching & reasoning in the synagogue there, and then a further *two years*, preaching on a daily basis in the hall of Tyrannus – where God used him powerfully!

The letter itself divides neatly into two halves: chapters 1-3 include grandiose & wonderful theology, which lead into their practical outworking in our daily lives as outlined in chapters 4-6. There are doxologies throughout (outbursts of glory given to God), prayers prayed for others, Old Testament scriptures quoted and a breathtaking look at the great work of the Holy Spirit, in Christ, as God works out His eternal purpose for His people.

Unlike many other epistles, there are no specific problems addressed or areas of concern. The complex Greek, in which the letter is written, is incredibly developed in thought & argument.

We pray that this companion guide will give you beautiful revelation to help you better understand the letter to the Ephesians, and what it means for your life *right now*. Even spending 10 weeks preaching through this phenomenally profound letter can’t even scratch the surface of the *“unsearchable riches of*

Christ” – but we pray that you will come to marvel at Jesus and the new heavenly identity you now have, and that the knowledge of these truths will transform your every-day relationships and outlook!

As you keep reading this brief companion guide, you’ll get a sense of **who** wrote this letter, **when**, and under what circumstances. We’ll cover some **key concepts & themes** that are important in this letter, and conclude with some **practical takeaways**. Our aim is to provide the kind of insight you would get from reading multiple Bible commentaries – but simplified and condensed into one smaller resource, supplementing our 10-week preaching series, *Ephesians: Alive In Christ*.

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2.

EPHESIANS OUTLINE

I. Greeting (1: 1-2)

- a. Paul, the apostle to the Ephesian church (1:1)
- b. Opening benediction (1:2)

II. Christ's Work In the Fullness of Time (1: 3-14)

- a. *Praise for God's predestined blessings in Christ (1: 3-10)*
- b. *Our inheritance and its guarantee, the Holy Spirit (1: 11-14)*

III. Paul Gives Thanks & Prays For Spiritual Revelation (1: 15-23)

- a. Thanksgiving for the Ephesians' faith & love (1: 15-16)
- b. Prayer for revelation in knowing God & His power (1: 17-19)
- c. The superiority of Jesus (1: 20-23)

IV. Alive With Christ By Grace, Through Faith (2: 1-10)

- a. *Our default & inherited nature: spiritually dead without Christ (2: 1-3)*
- b. *Alive in Christ by grace (2: 4-9)*
- c. *Created by God for good works (2:10)*

V. Unity & Peace of Christ (2: 11-22)

- a. *Unity between the Jew & Gentile (2: 11-15)*
- b. *One new people reconciled to God (2: 16-22)*

VI. The Revealed Mystery of the Gospel (3: 1-13)

- a. *Paul's ministry (3: 1-7)*
- b. *God's purpose revealed: the eternal riches of Christ (3: 8-13)*

VII. Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Revelation Revisited (3: 14-21)

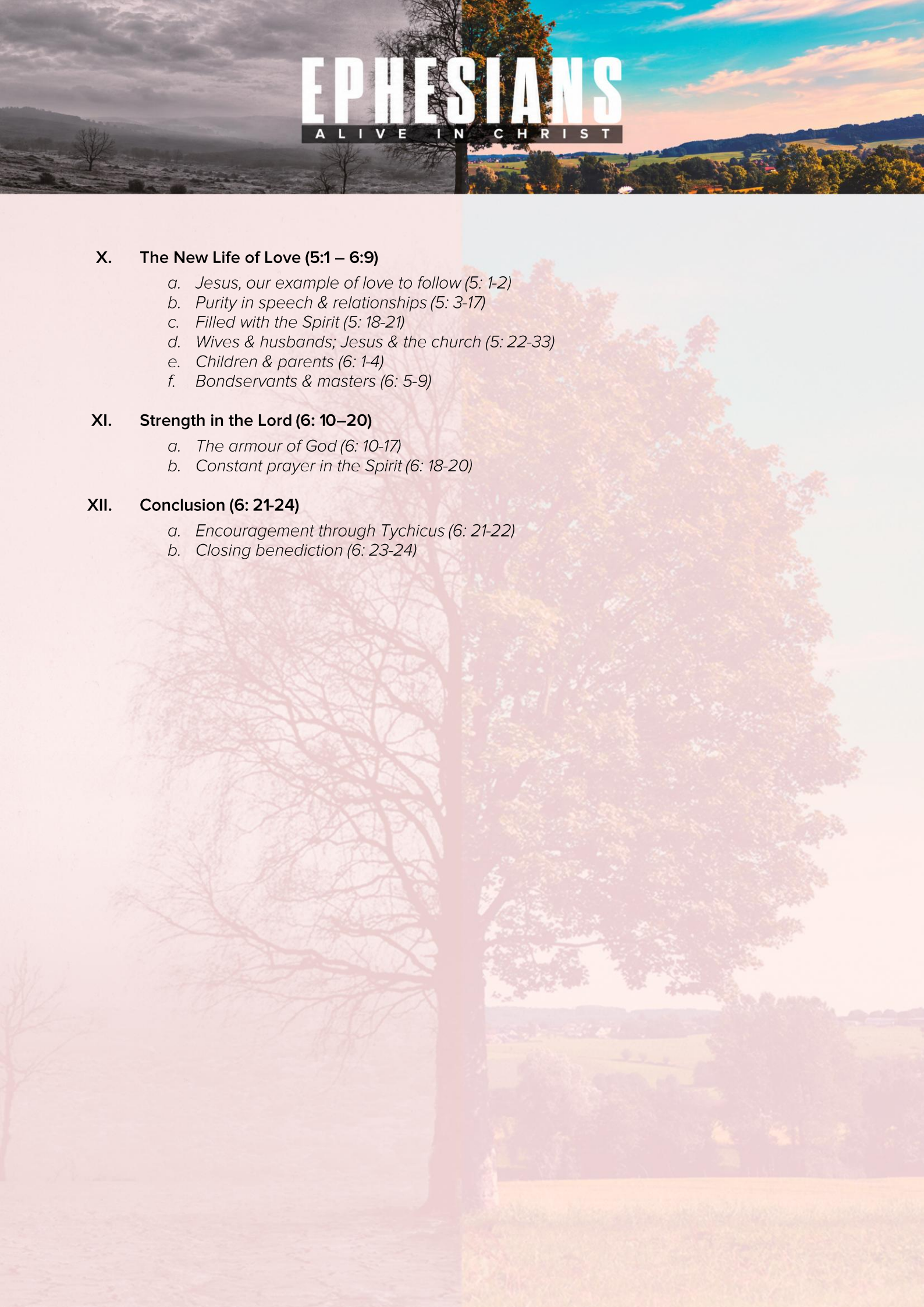
- a. *Spiritual strength to comprehend the fullness of Christ's love (3: 14-19)*
- b. *Doxology: glory to the one who does abundantly more! (3: 20-21)*

VIII. Maintaining Unity in the Spirit (4: 1-16)

- a. *One in faith... (4: 1-6)*
- b. *...but different in gifting (4: 7-16)*

IX. The 'Old Self' and the 'New Self' (4: 17-32)

- a. *Alienated from God through hard-heartedness (4: 17-19)*
- b. *Putting off the old and living in the new (4: 20-32)*



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X. The New Life of Love (5:1 – 6:9)

- a. Jesus, our example of love to follow (5: 1-2)*
- b. Purity in speech & relationships (5: 3-17)*
- c. Filled with the Spirit (5: 18-21)*
- d. Wives & husbands; Jesus & the church (5: 22-33)*
- e. Children & parents (6: 1-4)*
- f. Bondservants & masters (6: 5-9)*

XI. Strength in the Lord (6: 10–20)

- a. The armour of God (6: 10-17)*
- b. Constant prayer in the Spirit (6: 18-20)*

XII. Conclusion (6: 21-24)

- a. Encouragement through Tychicus (6: 21-22)*
- b. Closing benediction (6: 23-24)*

3.

AUTHOR, DATE & DESTINATION

“I Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus”
Ephesians 1:1

AUTHORSHIP

As expected in a letter of this kind, the author identifies himself in the opening sentence: Paul, the apostle – which is reiterated in 3:1 where Paul also refers to himself as a “*prisoner*.” Some have argued that since Ephesians is different in *form* to other letters attributed to Paul (Ephesians is written more like a sermon to be circulated than a directly addressed letter), and has a clear difference in *style & vocabulary* when compared to his other letters (particularly the long Greek sentences, and 38 words used that don’t appear in any of Paul’s other writings), and that the author is supposedly too *impersonal* (with less personal references than other Pauline writings, even for a letter intended to be circulated as a sermon rather than addressed to a particular church) that Ephesians was in fact penned by someone other than the apostle himself.

Most of these differences can be attributed to the *purpose* of the letter itself, since this determines much of the style and vocabulary (for example, many of the 38 words used that aren’t found in Paul’s other writings relate to his teaching on the *armour of God* – which he doesn’t write about elsewhere). Although the letter itself may have less personal mentions of people by name, or references to specific issues in a local church (as do many of his other writings), you can hardly call the letter “impersonal!” The “*saints who are in Ephesus*” (Eph. 1:1) make up a group of Christians sprawled over a wide area, and Paul intended for his letter to be generally circulated to them all – many of whom would have come to faith *after* Paul’s earlier preaching ministry in Acts 19, so it can hardly be expected that he would know them all by name!

The early church universally accepted the authenticity of this letter, with the Apostle Paul as its author, and although there are easily explainable differences in style & vocabulary, there are also features in the letter so typical of Paul that it would be hard to imagine an imitator being their source: the way in which Paul connects doctrinal truth with moral duty & *lived* faith; Paul’s habit of breaking his train of thought to deal with a new topic (compare Ephesians 3: 1-4 with Romans 5:13 onwards and Philippians 3:1 onwards); the way in which Paul praises the glory of Christ, and the declaration of the wonder of His purpose for the church! As is so common to Paul, the letter is written with a clear sense of *authority*

matched only with its *humility* – which isn't surprising, since someone writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will speak with **authority** because of their *Source*, and **humility** because that source is the Lord and not themselves! And finally, while *Tychicus* was alive, he certainly could've vouched for the authenticity of the letter itself!

DATE & PLACE OF WRITING

Since Paul mentions his imprisonment three separate times in the letter (Eph. 3:1; 4:1 and 6:20) we can confidently say that he wrote it in AD 62 when he was held in Rome, but before his death somewhere between AD 64-67.



The Setting of Ephesians

(c. A.D. 62)

Ephesus was a wealthy port city in the Roman province of Asia. It was a center of learning and was positioned near several key land routes in western Asia Minor. Paul probably wrote his letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28).



THE ORIGINAL RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER

Paul addresses his letter in the opening verse, “*To the saints who are in Ephesus*” who he describes as “*faithful in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 1:1) – having “*heard of (their) faith in the Lord Jesus and (their) love toward all the saints*” (Eph. 1:15).

On two separate occasions he addresses his readers as “*you Gentiles*” (Eph. 2:11; 3:1), although he makes it clear that those who were formerly considered “Gentiles” are now fully part of the “saints” – previously having been separated from the Jewish people (the original inheritors of the promises of God), but now “*brought near,*” “*made one,*” designated “*one new man,*” “*fellow citizens,*” “*members of the same household*” and together being built up into a “*dwelling place for God*” (Eph. 2: 13-22) all because of the work of Christ, by the Spirit, as purposed by the Father.

Ephesus was originally a Greek colony, and at this time, the capital of the Roman province of Asia. As a busy commercial port, it also housed the headquarters of the cult of the goddess Diana (or Artemis) and as a city, was fascinated with magic and the occult, was generally wealthy (while being home to many household slaves as well) and made up of many who had come to Christ – whether from a Jewish or Gentile background. Paul therefore speaks to this new *unified* community of faith, and his letter would’ve been circulated to a number of churches in the extended area.

EPHESUS IN THE TIME OF PAUL (C. A.D. 60)

The city plan below shows those features of the city of Ephesus that archaeologists have so far identified as dating from the time of Paul. Many of the notable buildings uncovered in the excavation at Ephesus date from later periods.



4.

KEY CONCEPTS & THEMES

As mentioned in the *Introduction*, the letter itself (in many ways, more of a sermon to be circulated) breaks into two halves: the first three chapters show the incredible work that God has done, in Christ, to redeem fallen & spiritually dead humanity, blessing us with unfathomable spiritual riches, all as a work of grace that cannot be earned, and thus also creating a *new* community of faith (the church). Chapters 4-6 then show the practical outworking of these incredibly rich truths in the daily lives of Christians.

PREDESTINATION, ADOPTION & IDENTITY

Paul begins his letter by reminding the hearers of the **cosmic** nature of the work of Jesus, our identity in Him and the blessings we have: these are realities in the “*heavenly places*” (Eph. 1:3), set out before the “*foundation of the world*” (Eph. 1:4) with purposes and good works prepared by God “*beforehand*” for us to walk in (Eph. 2:10) – not just here-and-now, or accidental or done on purely human terms.

What this means, is that we as believers in Christ, were *chosen* by God before we were even born (His divine sovereignty & eternal purpose) but have *freely responded* to Him in faith, to receive salvation and all its blessings. Our salvation is **fully** the work of God, so that we cannot boast anything in ourselves, but that we all still need to respond in faith and **choose** to walk in His good works – all to the “*praise of His glory*.” It is therefore the responsibility of every person, as they hear “*the word of truth, the Gospel of (their) salvation*” to **believe** it in order to be saved (Eph. 1:13).

This gives us such security in who we are as Christians: we have been adopted as children into God’s family by the redeeming work of Jesus, with an inheritance waiting for us. We are “*holy and blameless*” before God because of Jesus (Eph. 1:4), and God has revealed His will to us – because of Jesus!

“⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...”

Ephesians 1: 4-5, ESV

Some may struggle with these two seemingly opposed realities in the Scriptures (that salvation is fully the work of God, not dependent on us, as He chooses - and that we still freely need to respond). They may feel there is no point preaching the Gospel to others, because it must surely be impossible for someone to be saved if God hasn’t already chosen them. Or they may see God as harsh and unfair, only choosing *some* for salvation, while neglecting others (or worse yet, *choosing* them to be damned). God’s divine will & eternal sovereignty, and our human free will & responsibility are like parallel train tracks that will meet somewhere in eternity: right now, it may not fully make sense to us, but both realities exist side by side and will be revealed when we no longer “see in part.”

We must be like Paul, who preached the Gospel to everyone he could (even though he had a special passion for the Gentiles), wanting to “bring to light for **everyone** what is the plan of the mystery...” (Eph. 3:9). Those who are not alive in Christ, are spiritually dead “because of the **ignorance** that is in them, **due to their hardness of heart**” (Eph. 4:18) and have willingly given themselves over to sin, and disobedience to the Gospel. The very same Gospel is what gives “readiness” to our feet, so that we are willing to go wherever we need to, as we stand against the schemes of the devil.

GRACE & FAITH VS. WORKS

“⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus... ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2: 4-6, 8-10, ESV

Part of what’s so incredible about our salvation (aside from all its other blessings, and our future inheritance in Jesus) is how we go from being spiritually **dead** to now **alive** in Christ – it’s not just a matter of becoming a better person or suddenly religious. Once again, we can see that this is something *God* does and this as a gift to us – He makes us alive; we can’t make ourselves alive! It is completely an undeserved gift of His grace to us, but it is received “*through faith*” – not earned in any way through good works. Once alive in Christ, we are “*seated*” with Him and in Him in “*heavenly places*” – something which will be fully realized one day as we take complete possession of it, but is as good as done in the here and now because of the Spirit in us, guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph. 1:14). Therefore, our standing right now is one of justification and righteousness in Jesus – already having a glorious identity in Him, all of which serves as a demonstration of God’s grace for all to see.

Paul makes it clear that we’re not saved *by* good works – but that we are saved “*for*” good works, or “*unto*” good works, not as a means to secure salvation but as a *fruit of* our salvation, and by doing them, we reflect the character and action of God Himself.

UNITY BETWEEN JEWS & GENTILES

Paul addresses the disconnect & animosity between Jewish believers (those ethnically part of Israel who have put their faith in Jesus) and Gentile believers (those not of Jewish background, but who have also now put their faith in Jesus) specifically in Ephesians 2: 11-22. The point Paul makes here is not that faith in Jesus has made the Gentiles *like* the Jews, or brought them up to their “*level*” – but that Jesus has made something completely new & different for Himself through His death on the cross, bringing both groups together into the “*new man*” who are fellow citizens with all the saints, and members of the same



household of God.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, we have been reconciled to God and brought near to Him – but have also been reconciled and “brought near” to *each other*. In Ephesians 2:14, Paul refers to how Jesus has “*broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*” which may have a literal application to an actual wall: In the Temple in Jerusalem, the actual temple was off-limits to Gentiles. If you weren't a Jew, you could go only as far as the *Court of the Gentiles* – which was walled off from the Temple proper with a stone wall, on which was an inscription in both Greek & Latin which read:

“No one of another nation to enter within the fence & enclosure round the Temple. And whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.”

Here then is a very poignant illustration of the barriers to accessing God's presence which have now been removed! Later, in Ephesians 3:12, Paul will refer to Jesus as the one, “*in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*”

“⁴There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4: 4-6, ESV

The basis of our unity, and reconciliation to one another, stems from our common faith in Jesus. This was true of Jews and Gentiles in the 1st century AD, and is true of our world in 2026. In Christ, we are all related by blood – it's just not our own!

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4: 22-24

Christ's people are renewed to new lives of holiness in thought, word, and deed, and must reject their old sinful lifestyles. Chapters 4-6 address practical areas of living that now look different for those who have found life in Christ:

- Maintaining **unity** with another, as we live lives of humility, gentleness, patience and peace with another as a result of the love of Jesus in us, and the work of the Spirit through us. (Eph. 4:1-6)
- **Growing in maturity** in our faith, as we work together in the body, benefiting from gifts Christ has bestowed on His church in the form of *people* called to the fivefold ministry offices of the

apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. (Eph. 4: 7-16)

- **Purity** in our dealings with others: putting away falsehood, not sinning when we get angry, living honestly, putting away bitterness, slander and the like – rather, being kind and forgiving. This includes *sexual* purity as well, so that there is not even a *hint* of immorality among God’s people. (Eph. 4:25 – 5:15)
- Constantly **being filled with the Spirit** so that we live in reverential *submission* to God
- As a result, living in **submission** to one another – in a general sense, but also covering relationships between wives & husbands, children & parents, bondservants & masters (Eph. 5:21 – 6:9)

As we can see, “*putting off the old self*” and “*putting on the new self*” is an all-of-life expression!

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

Of all the beautiful imagery in the letter to the Ephesians, perhaps none is as well-known as Paul’s description of the “armour of God” in Ephesians 6: 10-17, by which we can stand against the schemes of the devil. Just as the letter begins with the cosmic nature of Jesus, His work and our identity in Him, the letter now ends with the cosmic nature of the spiritual battle we are in: we have opposition, and unseen spiritual adversaries raging against us.

“¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”

Ephesians 6: 12-13, ESV

These spiritual forces aligned against us are powerful, evil and cunning – and because they are not *human* opposition, they cannot be opposed with human resources; we need the full armour of God! This is why we are commanded to “*be strong in the Lord*” (Eph. 6:10), putting on His armour so that we will stand firm. Paul draws on imagery from Isaiah 11: 4-5 and 59:11 of the coming Messiah, who “*...with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins*” and “*He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.*”

We can stand firm in the face of our spiritual enemies because they are no match for our conquering King, Jesus and the armour He equips us with: truth, righteousness, readiness from the good news of peace, faith and salvation.

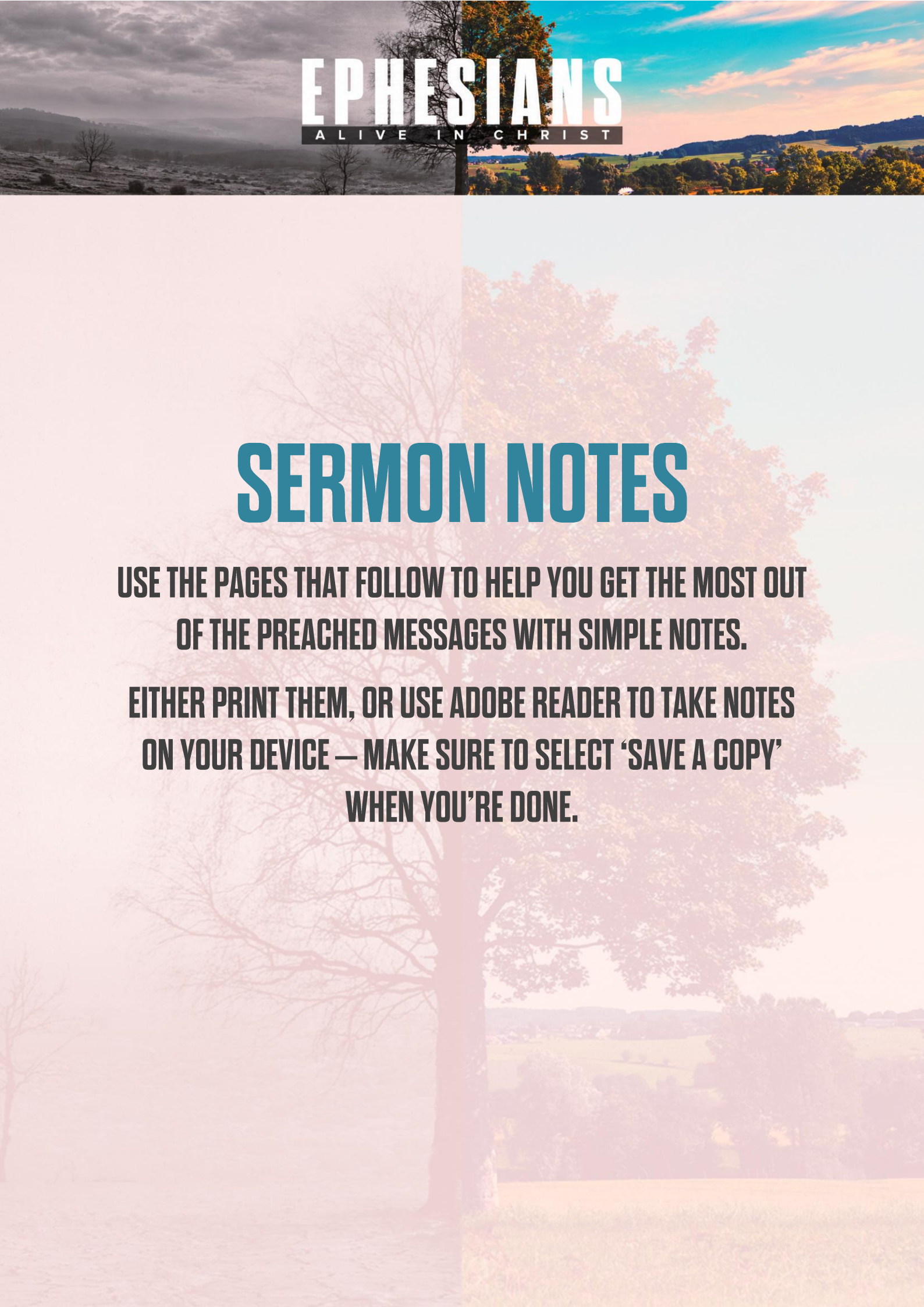
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PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

As you've read through this letter and listened to preached messages in the series, *Alive In Christ*, hopefully you've been challenged to put your faith into action in various parts of your life. Below are some questions to reflect on from the series, as well as sermon note pages you can use to make basic notes in upcoming messages.

1. *What does it mean to be a "saint," or "faithful in Christ Jesus?"*
2. *Which "spiritual blessings" in Christ are you most aware of in your life?*
3. *How are "spiritual blessings" different from "material blessings?"*
4. *How can you view yourself differently when you consider you have been **chosen** to be adopted into God's family? How does that give you security in your salvation?*
5. *Have you ever given up hope praying for other people to come to know Jesus as Lord, or stopped sharing the Gospel because you felt it was pointless because they simply wouldn't respond?*
6. *What does it mean to be "dead" in your sin? How does someone become "alive?"*
7. *Have you ever shared your story of how you came to faith in Jesus? Who could you share your testimony with?*
8. *Write down a few verses from Ephesians that describe the **greatness** of Jesus, and spend some time pondering over them.*
9. *Which part of the armour of God is currently the most relevant to you? What does it look like to "stand firm" and to "put on" the armour of God?*
10. *At the **end** of all of the preached messages (i.e after 22 November): Looking back on all of the preached messages over the last 2 months or so, what has stayed with you and challenged you the most? What do you wish was covered in the preaching material? (Consider sharing this last point with a Link Group leader or elder).*





EPHESIANS

ALIVE IN CHRIST

SERMON NOTES

USE THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW TO HELP YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF THE PREACHED MESSAGES WITH SIMPLE NOTES.

EITHER PRINT THEM, OR USE ADOBE READER TO TAKE NOTES ON YOUR DEVICE — MAKE SURE TO SELECT ‘SAVE A COPY’ WHEN YOU’RE DONE.



Sunday 20 September:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?



Sunday 27 September:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?





Sunday 4 October:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?



Sunday 11 October:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?





Sunday 18 October:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?



Sunday 25 October:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?





Sunday 1 November:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?



Sunday 8 November:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?





Sunday 15 November:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?



Sunday 22 November:

Write down the main point of the preached message in your own words, as you understand it:

What single thing stood out most to you, and what are you going to do about it?





EPHESIANS
ALIVE IN CHRIST