

Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological

Readings for Dec 6-12, 2020

Selections from Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and James

As the church began to grow and spread, the apostles wrote letters to the churches to encourage them in the faith, to instruct them in the life of Christian community, and to correct them in their misunderstandings and missteps...

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Salutation

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love; He predestined us to adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished on us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, which are in heaven and on earth. In Him also we have received an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will, that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, should live for the praise of His glory. In Him you also, after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and after believing in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Paul's Prayer

Therefore I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers, so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He performed in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet and made Him

the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all things in all ways.

From Death to Life

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among them we all also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and He raised us up and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them.

One in Christ

Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” in the flesh by human hands, were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both groups one and has broken down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of the commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile both to God into one body through the cross, thereby slaying the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the entire building, tightly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

Paul’s Ministry to the Gentiles

For this reason, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. You may have heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given me for you, how by revelation He made known to me the mystery, as I have written briefly already, by which, when you read it, you may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel. Of this I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the incomprehensible riches of Christ, and to reveal for all people what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ, so that now the manifold wisdom of

God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He completed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

To Know the Love of Christ

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would give you, according to the riches of His glory, power to be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Unity of the Body

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore, He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also He who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.) He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we may no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness with deceitful scheming. But, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him, who is the head, Christ Himself, from whom the whole body is joined together and connected by every joint and ligament, as every part effectively does its work and grows, building itself up in love.

The Old Life and New Life

Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord, that from now on you walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened, excluded from the life of God through the ignorance that is within them, due to the hardness of their hearts. Being calloused they have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn about Christ in this manner, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off the former way of life in the old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the

spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new nature, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.

Rules for the New Life

Therefore, putting away lying, let every man speak truthfully with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not give place to the devil. Let him who steals steal no more. Instead, let him labor, working with his hands things which are good, that he may have something to share with him who is in need. Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, that it may give grace to the listeners. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you are sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts, and blasphemies, with all malice, be taken away from you. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. And do not let sexual immorality, or any impurity, or greed be named among you, as these are not proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse joking, which are not fitting. Instead, give thanks. For this you know, that no sexually immoral or impure person, or one who is greedy, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Walk as Children of Light

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them. For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light— for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth— proving what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; instead, expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things are exposed when they are revealed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, He says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

See then that you walk carefully, not as fools, but as wise men, making the most of the time because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not be drunk with wine, for that is reckless living. But be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, being submissive to one another in the fear of God.

Wives and Husbands

Wives, be submissive to your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head and Savior of the church, which is His body. But as the church submits to Christ, so also let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and

without blemish. In this way men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord cares for the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I am speaking about Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Children and Parents

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise, "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Servants and Masters

Servants, obey those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of your heart, as to Christ, not serving when eyes are on you, but as pleasing men as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing any man does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is enslaved or free. And masters, do the same things for them, no longer threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

The Battle Against Evil

Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your waist girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, and above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication. To that end be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Pray for me, that the power to speak may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.

Final Greetings

Now that you also may know my activities and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you might know our activities and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Paul's Letter to the Colossians

Salutation

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ who are at Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thankfulness for the Colossians

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. For we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you have already heard in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has in all the world, and brings forth fruit, as it has also in you, since the day you heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. And you also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

The Person and Work of Christ

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing to all, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, enduring everything with perseverance and patience joyfully, giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled us to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of every creature. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell, and to reconcile all things to Himself by Him, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him, I say—whether they are things in earth, or things in heaven.

And you, who were formerly alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight, if you continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not removed from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Paul's Ministry to the Church

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and fill up in my flesh that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church. I have been made a servant of it according to the commission of God, which has been given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery which has been hidden from past ages and generations, but now is revealed to His saints. To them God would make known what is the glorious riches of this mystery among the nations. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present them perfect in Christ Jesus. In this I labor, striving according to His power, which effectively works in me. I would like you to know what a great struggle I am having for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for everyone who has not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and receive all the riches and assurance of full understanding, and knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone beguile you with enticing words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your orderliness and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Fullness of Life in Christ

As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, and abounding with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone captivate you through philosophy and vain deceit, in the tradition of men and the elementary principles of the world, and not after Christ.

For in Him lives all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all authority and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised with Him through the faith of the power of God, who has raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has resurrected together with Him, having forgiven you all sins. He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and contrary to us, and He took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed authorities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them by the cross. Therefore let no one judge you regarding food, or drink, or in respect of a holy day or new moon or sabbath days. These are shadows of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone cheat you of your reward by delighting in false humility and the worship of angels, dwelling on those things which he has not seen, vainly arrogant due to his unspiritual mind, and not supporting the head, from which the entire body, nourished and knit together by joints and sinews, grows as God gives the increase.

The New Life in Christ

Therefore, if you died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you subject yourself to legalistic rules? "Do not touch! Do not taste! Do not handle!" These all are to perish with use and are aligned with the commandments and doctrines of men. These things have indeed a show of wisdom in self-imposed worship and humility and neglecting of the body, but are worthless against the indulgence of the flesh. If you then were raised with Christ, desire those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth. For you are dead, and

your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death the parts of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. You also once walked in these, when you lived in them. But now you must also put away all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie one to another, since you have put off the old nature with its deeds, and have embraced the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created it, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

So embrace, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a spirit of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering. Bear with one another and forgive one another. If anyone has a quarrel against anyone, even as Christ forgave you, so you must do. And above all these things, embrace love, which is the bond of perfection.

Let the peace of God, to which also you are called in one body, rule in your hearts. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Social Duties of the New Life

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey your masters in all things according to the flesh, serving not only when they are watching, as the servants of men, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will receive for the wrong which he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give to your servants that which is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Exhortations

Continue in prayer, and be watchful with thanksgiving, while praying also for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may reveal it clearly, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, wisely using the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you should answer everyone.

Final Greetings

Tychicus, who is a beloved brother and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that he might know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you everything which is happening here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you

received instructions: If he comes to you, receive him), and Jesus, who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision. They have been a comfort to me. Epaphras greets you. He is one of you, a servant of Christ, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand mature and complete in the entire will of God. I bear witness of him, that he has a great zeal for you, those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. Greet the brothers who are in Laodicea, and Nympha, and the church which is in his house.

When this epistle is read among you, ensure that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you, likewise, read the epistle from Laodicea. Tell Archippus, "Make sure that you fulfill the ministry which you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

Paul's Letter to Philemon

Salutation

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon, our beloved fellow laborer, and to beloved Apphia, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

I thank my God, always mentioning you in my prayers, whenever I hear of your love and faith, which you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may be most effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you from Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and encouragement on account of your love, because the hearts of the saints are refreshed through you, brother.

Paul Pleads for Onesimus

Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you to do that which is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—I appeal to you on behalf of my son Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment, who in the past was unprofitable to you, but now he is profitable to you and to me.

I have sent him back. Therefore receive him as my own heart. I wanted to keep him with me, so that in your place he might serve me during my imprisonment for the gospel. But without your consent I would do nothing, so that your goodness would not be forced, but given willingly. Perhaps this was why he departed for a while, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

If then you consider me a partner, receive him as you would me. If he wronged you or owes you anything, charge this to my account. I, Paul, have written this with my own hand. I will repay it—not to mention that you owe me even your own self. Yes, brother, help me rejoice in the

Lord, refresh my heart in the Lord. Being convinced of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will also do more than I say.

But, in addition, prepare also lodging for me, for I hope that through your prayers I shall be graciously restored to you.

Final Greetings

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow laborers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Salutation

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love; He predestined us to adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished on us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, which are in heaven and on earth.

In Him also we have received an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will, that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, should live for the praise of His glory. In Him you also, after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and after believing in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Paul's Prayer

Therefore I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers, so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He performed in Christ when He raised Him from the

dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet and made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all things in all ways.

From Death to Life

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among them we all also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and He raised us up and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them.

One in Christ

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” in the flesh by human hands, were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He is our peace, who has made both groups one and has broken down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of the commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile both to God into one body through the cross, thereby slaying the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the entire building, tightly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

Paul’s Ministry to the Gentiles

For this reason I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. You may have heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given me for you, how by revelation He made known to me the mystery, as I have written briefly already, by which, when you read it, you may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel.

Of this I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the incomprehensible riches of Christ, and to reveal for all people what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ, so that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He completed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

To Know the Love of Christ

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would give you, according to the riches of His glory, power to be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Unity of the Body

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another in love, be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also He who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.) He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we may no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness with deceitful scheming. But, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him, who is the head, Christ Himself, from whom the whole body is joined together and connected by every joint and ligament, as every part effectively does its work and grows, building itself up in love.

The Old Life and New Life

Therefore this I say and testify in the Lord, that from now on you walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened, excluded from the life of God through the ignorance that is within them, due to the hardness of their hearts. Being calloused they have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of

impurity with greediness. But you did not learn about Christ in this manner, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off the former way of life in the old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new nature, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.

Rules for the New Life

Therefore, putting away lying, let every man speak truthfully with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not give place to the devil. Let him who steals steal no more. Instead, let him labor, working with his hands things which are good, that he may have something to share with him who is in need. Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, that it may give grace to the listeners. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you are sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts, and blasphemies, with all malice, be taken away from you. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

The Letter from James to the Jewish Christians Scattered by the Persecutions

Salutation

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

Faith and Wisdom

My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith develops patience. But let patience perfect its work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without wavering. For he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed with the wind. Let not that man think that he will receive anything from the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Poverty and Riches

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a burning heat and it withers the grass, and its flowers fall, and its beauty perishes. So will the rich man wither away in his ways.

Trial and Temptation

Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither does He tempt anyone. But each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and when sin is finished, it brings forth death. Do not err, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no change or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

Hearing and Doing the Word

Therefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and remaining wickedness and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man viewing his natural face in a mirror. He views himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in his deeds. If anyone among you seems to be religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Warning Against Partiality

My brothers, have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, without partiality. For if a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, comes into your assembly, and also a poor man in ragged clothing comes in, and you have respect for him who wears the fine clothing and say to him, "Sit here in a good place," and say to the poor, "Stand there," or "Sit here under my footstool," have you not then become partial among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brothers. Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him? But you have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you and drag you before the judgment seats? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called?

If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as sinners. For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of breaking the whole law. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not kill." Now if you do not commit adultery, yet you kill, you have become a lawbreaker.

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For he who has shown no mercy will have judgment without mercy, for mercy triumphs over judgment.

Faith and Works

What does it profit, my brothers, if a man says he has faith but has no works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and lacking daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," and yet you give them nothing that the body needs, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But a man may say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God; you do well. The demons also believe and tremble.

But do you want to be shown, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? Do you see how faith worked with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? The Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. You see then how by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

The Tongue

My brothers, not many of you should become teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment. We all err in many ways. But if any man does not err in word, he is a perfect man and able also to control the whole body. See how we put bits in the mouths of horses that they may obey us, and we control their whole bodies. And observe ships. Though they are so great and are driven by fierce winds, yet they are directed with a very small rudder wherever the captain pleases. Even so, the tongue is a little part of the body and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles. The tongue is a fire, a world of evil. The tongue is among the parts of the body, defiling the whole body, and setting the course of nature on fire, and it is set on fire by hell.

All kinds of beasts, and birds, and serpents, and things in the sea are tamed or have been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring yield at the same opening sweet and bitter water? Can the fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a vine, figs? So no spring can yield both salt water and fresh water.

The Wisdom from Above

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show his works by his good life in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, do not boast and do not lie against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, and devilish. For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Friendship with the World

Where do wars and fights among you come from? Do they not come from your lusts that war in your body? You lust and do not have, so you kill. You desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have, because you do not ask. You ask, and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your passions. You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "He yearns jealously for the spirit that lives in us" But He gives more grace. For this reason it says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Therefore submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to dejection. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Judging a Brother

Do not speak evil of one another, brothers. He who speaks evil of his brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

Warning Against Boasting

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit," whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you are rejoicing in your boastings. All such rejoicing is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, it is sin.