

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

LAST GENERATION VERSION

Translation & Notes by Tim Warner

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Chapter 1

Greeting

Paul, Emissary of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Unique Blessings on the Hebrew Nation

3 Blessed¹ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly dominions² through Christ, 4 since, before the foundation of the world, He chose us in Him to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, 5 having foreordained us to adoption³ by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the delight of His will, 6 to praise of the glory of His grace by which He highly favored⁴ us *"in the one having been beloved."*⁵ 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the abundance of His grace 8 which He overflowed to us in all wisdom and understanding; 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good intent which He determined in Himself, 10 to administer⁶

¹ The adjective "εὐλογητός" (blessed), when used without a verb of being, it is a *Hebraism* with the sense of "may He be well-spoken of, extolled and honored." It always identifies the speaker as Jewish, (see: 2 Cor. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3).

² See Appendix 1

³ The "adoption" relates specifically to Israel (cf. Rom. 9:4, Gal. 4:4-5).

⁴ The adjective "εχαριτώσεν" (translated "made us accepted" - KJV) is better rendered "highly favored," (cf. Luke 1:28).

⁵ τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ, articular perfect passive participle, Lit., "in the one having been beloved," quoting from Moses' last words of blessing to Israel (Deut. 33:3-5, 26-29 LXX). It refers to God's deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, giving them His Law. David made a prophecy of Israel's eventual restoration, and used the same title for Israel, Psalm. 29:6 LXX. (See also: Isa. 44:2 & Jer. 11:15 LXX). The perfect tense indicates past completed action, as opposed to ongoing action. It refers to God's love for that nation manifest in His election. Had Paul meant Christ, he would have written τὸν ἀγαπητὸν (the beloved one), as in Luke 20:13.

⁶ Lit. "unto the administration"

the completion of the times [in order] to sum up all things together in Christ, what is in heaven and what is on earth — in Him. 11 In Him also we have received an inheritance, having been foreordained according to the purpose of the one who conforms all things according to the purpose of His will, 12 that we, having before hoped in the Christ,⁷ should be to the praise of His glory.

God's Grace Extended to the Nations

13 In Him you also, hearing the word of truth — the gospel of your salvation — in whom also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the deposit of our inheritance unto redemption of the purchased possession, unto praise of His glory.

Paul's Desire and Prayer for the Ephesians

15 Therefore I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love to all the saints, 16 do not stop giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your mind having been enlightened, that you may perceive what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the excelling magnitude of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He performed in Christ, raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenly dominions,⁸ 21 higher than all authority and power and might and government, and every name being named, not only in this age but also in the coming [one]. 22 And [He] placed all things under His feet, and gave Him headship

⁷ The earliest known commentary on this statement comes from Tertullian (2nd century), as follows: "Again, what Christ do the following words announce, when the Apostle says, 'That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ?' Now, who could have first trusted — ie., previously trusted — in God, before His advent, besides Jews to whom Christ was previously announced from the beginning? He who was thus foretold, was also foretrusted. Hence, the Apostle refers the statement to himself, that is, to the Jews, in order that he may draw a distinction with respect to the Gentiles, (when he goes on to say:) 'In whom you also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel (of your salvation); in whom ye believed, and were sealed with His Holy Spirit of promise'." (Tertullian, Against Marcion, xvii)

⁸ See Appendix A

over all things to the congregation 23 which is His body, the fullness⁹ of the all in all filling One.

Chapter 2

The Former Condition of Jew and Gentile

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you used to walk according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the dominion of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom we all also behaved in the lusts of our flesh, acting out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were naturally children of wrath, just like the rest.

God's Grace and Mercy, Uniting Jew and Gentile in Christ

4 But God, being abundant in mercy, through His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in sins, [He] made us alive together in Christ¹⁰ (by grace you were saved), 6 and [He] lifted us up, and made us sit together in the heavenly dominions¹¹ in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in coming ages He may demonstrate the superabundance of His grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you were saved through faith, and that not from yourselves; [it is] God's gift, 9 not from deeds, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His handiwork, having been created in Christ Jesus upon¹² good deeds which God foreordained, that in them we should walk.

⁹ Note that the "congregation" which is His "body" was already (present tense) the "fullness" of Christ when Paul wrote Ephesians (cf. Eph. 4:13).

¹⁰ The clause, "made us alive together *in* Christ," can also be rendered "made us alive together *with* Christ." "The Christ" is in the dative case, which requires that we supply a preposition in translation. Our judgment is that the context virtually demands "*in* Christ," since "εν Χριστος" (*in* Christ) occurs 4 more times immediately following this verse (vss. 6,7,10,13); "εν αυτω" (in Himself) occurs once in v. 15; "εν ενι σωματι" (*in one body*) occurs once in v. 16; and "εν ω" (*in* whom - referring to Christ) occurs once in v. 22. The sense of the whole clause is the union of Jew and Gentile together *in* Christ. This meaning is also clearly borne out by the remainder of the chapter. (cf. 1:10, 3:6,14-15)

¹¹ See Appendix A

¹² The preposition is "επι." Most translations have "unto" here. But, had Paul meant "unto," he would have used "εις." The preposition "επι" means "upon." Here it likely refers to the good example of Christ Himself, rather than the good works that believers are supposed to do.

The Former Plight of the Gentiles

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you, the gentiles, (being called in the flesh, “uncircumcised,” beneath her¹³ who is called “the circumcised” — done in flesh by hands) 12 that you were at that time without Christ, estranged from the community of Israel and foreigners to the promised covenants, having no hope and without God in the world.

Christ Rectifies their Plight and Unites them with the Saints of Israel

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He is our peace, the one who made both one and demolished the wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the obstacle — the law of commandments in ordinances — that with the two He might create in Himself one new man, making peace, 16 and might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, thereby having removed the obstacle. 17 And coming, He preached peace to you — those far away — and peace to those near. 18 For through Him with one spirit¹⁴ we both have access to the Father. 19 Therefore, now you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but [you are] fellow citizens among the saints, and God’s family, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the Emissaries and Prophets¹⁵, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being assembled together, is increasing toward a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you too are being built together in spirit¹⁶ toward a dwelling place for God.

¹³ Israel was referred to by Paul in the feminine gender. This may be a subtle reference to Hosea’s reference to Israel as an adulterous wife.

¹⁴ Whether to capitalize “spirit” in the clause, “with one spirit,” is a difficult decision. It can have two different meanings, either referring to the Holy Spirit, or the unity of spirit between Jew and Gentile (or unity of believers in general). The context seems to favor this latter sense, which is also the sense of the same clause in Phil. 1:27. When in doubt about whether to capitalize “spirit” when both make sense in the same context, I do not capitalize, so as not to attribute something to the Spirit of God that Paul did not intend. I have capitalized the word “spirit” when it has the definite article (the Spirit), when accompanied by an adjective of identification (eg. Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth), a pronoun that refers to God (His Spirit), or a genitive noun that identifies (eg. Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ), or when the context demands it.

¹⁵ The clause, “*the Emissaries and Prophets*,” forms a Sharp TSKS construction. Both terms are being united by a single article. In the plural, this can either mean “Apostles” who are also “prophets” (synonymous) or that both are united.

¹⁶ See note for verse 18.

Chapter 3

Paul's Administration of the "Mystery" for the Gentiles

For this reason I, Paul, the captive of Christ Jesus for you gentiles — 2 if indeed you have heard of the administration of God's grace which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I briefly wrote already¹⁷, 4 by which those reading might understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men in the way it has now been revealed to His holy Emissaries¹⁸ and prophets through the Spirit:¹⁹ 6 [that] the gentiles [should] be co-heirs, of the same body, and co-partakers of the promise in Christ through the message. 7 Of this I was made a servant according to the gift of the grace of God given me by the efficient operation of His power.

8 This grace was given to me, the least of all the saints, [that to] the gentiles I should preach the unimaginable abundance of Christ, 9 and illuminate everyone [regarding] the fellowship of the mystery, having been concealed from the ages in God who created all things through Jesus Christ, 10 so that the multiform wisdom of God might now be made known through the congregation to the authorities and powers in²⁰ the heavenly dominions,²¹ 11 according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by faith in Him.

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

13 Therefore, I request that you not weary of my burden for you, which is your glory. 14 For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom is named²² the whole family in heaven and earth, 16 that He would grant you the capacity to be strengthened [even] unto the inner man by His Spirit, according to the riches of His glory; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; being rooted and grounded in love, 18 that you may be able to absorb, together with all the saints, the width, length, height and depth, 19 to learn the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you

¹⁷ See Eph. 1:9-10

¹⁸ Note that "emissaries" (αποστολοι) is plural. Paul was not the sole conduit for the "mystery" as is claimed by many Dispensationalists.

¹⁹ εν πνευματι, the preposition "εν" implies instrumentality, not agency, as does also "Spirit" in the dative case. The Spirit was the instrument used by God to reveal the mystery to the Emissaries and Prophets. The revelation did not originate with the Spirit.

²⁰ The Greek word "εν" can mean either "in" (in a spatial sense) or "with" (in an instrumental sense).

²¹ See Appendix A

²² Note the present tense. Compare 1:10. This seems to imply the union of both Old and New Testament saints in one body in Christ (those in heaven and those on earth when Paul wrote).

may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 To Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that operates in us, 21 to Him be the glory in the congregation and in Christ Jesus to all generations, [to] the ages of the ages,²³ Amen.

Chapter 4

Maintain Original Christian Unity Around Essentials

Therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord, plead with you to live worthy of the invitation with which you were called 2 with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3,4²⁴ one body and one Spirit endeavoring to preserve the Spirit's unity using²⁵ the bond of peace, [just] as you were [originally] called with one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one immersion, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.

Gifts Provided for the Congregation's Maturity

7 But, grace was given to each one of us²⁶ according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says, *"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."*²⁷ 9 (Now this — *"He ascended"* — what does it imply but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fulfill all things). 11 And He indeed gave²⁸ the Emissaries, also the Prophets, also the Evangelists, also the Shepherds and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the performance of service, for building the body of Christ, 13 until we might²⁹ all attain to the unity of the Faith and knowledge of the Son

²³ The Bible does not conceive of "eternity" as being timeless, but as a series of finite, perpetual ages with no definite end in sight.

²⁴ It was necessary to rearrange the word order in verses 3 and 4 in order to place the subject before the verb as is proper in English. The clause *"one body and one Spirit"* is in the nominative case, and is therefore the subject of the verbal (*"endeavoring to preserve"*). Hence, the *"body"* and the *"Spirit"* are working together to preserve unity.

²⁵ Gr. *"εν"* in the instrumental sense, using *"the bond of peace"* as an instrument to maintain unity

²⁶ The first person plural pronoun can be either *"inclusive"* (meaning us and you) or *"exclusive"* (meaning only us). If it is the former, then Paul spoke of gifts given to himself and his readers. If it is the latter, he referred only to the Emissaries, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherd—teachers named in verse 11.

²⁷ Psalm 68:18

²⁸ The individual persons named are what He gave to the church, not *"offices"* to be filled.

²⁹ The verb translated, *"might attain"* is in the subjunctive mood, indicating Christ's purpose or intent when He gave these men to His church, but not necessarily the result.

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of God, to a mature man, to the measure of maturity of the fullness of Christ;³⁰ 14 so that we may no longer remain children, tossed about and carried off with every wind of teaching by the slight of men through cunning craftiness into the deception of heresy. 15 But, speaking truth in love, [we] may grow toward Him in every way who is the head — Christ, 16 from whom the whole body being assembled and assimilated together through the contribution of every joint according to the proportion of efficiency of each part, growth of the body is self-perpetuating to the building of itself in love.

Exhortations to Holiness

17 Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord: You are to no longer walk like the nations walk, in the depravity of their mind, 18 having their understanding blinded, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart; 19 who being beyond sensitivity, have surrendered themselves to promiscuity, to the performance of every impurity in covetousness.

20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him (since the truth is in Jesus) 22 to put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man, being corrupted according to the lusts of deceit. 23 And being renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 to put on the new man who was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore, putting away the lie, *"Let each speak the truth with his neighbor,"*³¹ for we are members one of another. 26 *"Be angry and do not sin."*³² Do not let the sun go down upon your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. 29 Permit no corrupt speech to come from your mouth, but what is good for building up the essentials, that it may bring grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed until the day of redemption. 31 Allow all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander to be removed

³⁰ According to Eph. 1:23, this state (the universal church becoming the "fullness of Christ") had already been reached. However, Paul still prayed that each local congregation would achieve this as well (Eph. 3:14-19).

³¹ Zech. 8:16

³² Psalm 4:4

from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind towards one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Chapter 5

Avoid Sexual Impurity

Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us — an offering and a sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma. 3 But illicit sex and all sexual immorality or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is proper for saints; 4 also obscenity, foolish speaking, coarse joking, which are not proper, but rather thanksgiving, 5 because this you know: that no promiscuous, sexually immoral, nor covetous person who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one seduce you with vain words, because these things bring the wrath of God on the children of rebellion. 7 Therefore do not be co-participants with them.

8 For you used to be darkness, but now [you are] light in the Lord. Live like children of light, 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 discerning what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no co-participation with the barren deeds of darkness, but instead condemn them. 12 For it is shameful to even mention what is done by those in secret. 13 But everything condemned by the light is exposed, for the light is what exposes. 14 That is why He is saying: *"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."*³³ 15 See to it that you walk very straight, not like fools, but like the wise, 16 making the most of the time because the days are perilous.

Use Music Instead of Drunken Revelry

17 Consequently, do not be foolish, but consider what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is ruin; instead be filled in spirit:³⁴ 19 speaking to

³³ If this is a quotation, there is no known source. Some scholars have suggested that it was from an ancient hymn. Paul may have simply revealed to the reader something he had personally heard directly from the Spirit.

³⁴ The preposition is "εν," meaning either "with" (instrumental) or "in" (spatial). The word "spirit" does not have the definite article, or any distinguishing adjective or genitive noun to identify it with the Holy Spirit. The command, *"but be filled in spirit,"* is held in contrast to the negative command, *"do not be drunk with wine."* There is no preposition in the clause, "drunk with wine." "Wine" is a dative noun, and is the indirect object. If Paul meant "filled with the Spirit" one would expect him to do the same, "the Spirit"

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yourselves with instrumental music,³⁵ and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music³⁶ to the Lord with³⁷ your heart, 20 offering thanks always for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Instructions for Relationships

22 Wives, [submit] to your own husbands just like to the Lord, 23 because the husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Congregation; and He is Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the Congregation is subordinate to Christ, so also wives [should be] to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just like Christ also loved the Congregation and gave Himself up for her, 26 that He might set her apart, cleansing [her] through the bath³⁸ of water [contained] in the message,³⁹ 27 so that He may present her to Himself a glorious Congregation, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she may be holy and flawless.

28 Likewise ought husbands to love their own wives just as [they love] their own bodies. The man who loves his wife loves himself. 29 No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just like the Lord does the Congregation. 30 For we are

being a dative noun. By changing the grammatical structure, and using the more explicit prepositional phrase, “in spirit,” it is more likely he did not mean “with the Spirit” but rather “in (your) spirit.” In other words, rather than filling your belly with wine, fill your spirit with music and praise to the Lord. There is no apparent way for the Ephesians to obey a command to “be filled with the Spirit.” One does not have authority over God’s Spirit.

³⁵ The Greek word is “ψαλμος” (psalmos), meaning the plucking of strings. According to Strong’s Greek Lexicon, “a set piece of music, i.e. a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a “psalm”).” (compare: Psalm 33:1-3, Psalm 92:1-3, Psalm 144:9, Psalm 149:1-3, Psalm 150:1-6).

³⁶ The Greek word is “ψαλλο” (psallo), means to pluck the strings. It is the verb form of “ψαλμος,” (see previous note).

³⁷ The preposition “εν” can either mean “in” (spatial) or “with” (instrumental). Nestle’s and UBS Greek texts do not contain the preposition.

³⁸ The Greek word is “λουτρον” (loutron) meaning either “bath” (the act of bathing) or the container in which one bathes. The prepositional phrase, “of water” identifies this “bath” with baptism.

³⁹ The “bath of water” was contained “in the message.” The prepositional phrase “εν ρημα,” does not refer to the written Word, but always refers to the spoken word – a saying, a message, or a command. Here it refers to either Jesus’ Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), or to the Gospel message (Acts 2:38-39).

members of His body, *from His flesh and from His bones.*⁴⁰ 31 *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.”*⁴¹ 32 This is a great mystery. And I refer to Christ and to the congregation. 33 However, each one of you in particular [must] love his own wife as himself, and the wife should respectfully honor her husband.

Chapter 6

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because it is right. 2 *“Honor your father and mother”* (which is the first commandment with a promise) 3 *“that you may prosper and remain long upon the land.”*⁴²

4 And you, fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, raise them in the training and instruction of the Lord.

5 Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh with respect and reverence, in sincerity of heart, just as to Christ, 6 not only when being observed, as those who patronize, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 serving with good will as to the Lord and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether servant or free.

9 Also you, masters, do the same to them, refraining from threatening, knowing also that your Master and theirs' is in heaven, and there is no preferential treatment with Him.

The Armor Necessary for Perseverance in the Great Tribulation

10 Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His strength! 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to withstand the trickery of the devil, 12 because we do not struggle with flesh and blood, but with authorities, with powers,

⁴⁰ This clause does not appear in Nestle’s or UBS Greek texts. It is apparent, however, that Paul was making a metaphor of Gen. 2:23, drawing a parallel between Eve’s being of Adam’s “flesh and bones” and the Church being one with Christ.

⁴¹ Gen. 2:24

⁴² The entire verse Paul quoted (Exodus 20:12) reads, *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the Land which the LORD your God is giving you.”* This is a reference to the “Land of Israel,” not to planet earth (the modern understanding of “earth”). In both Testaments, “earth” refers to dry land (excluding the sea and air), never to a planet (cf. Gen. 1:10). Paul was recognizing the Land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant as being for Christians, (see Gal. 3:16,26-29; Eph. 2:12-13,19; Heb. 6:13-20; Heb. 11:8-16,39-40).

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with the princes of the darkness of this age, against spiritual conspirators in the heavenly dominions.⁴³ 13 Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to stand firm in that day, the perilous one,⁴⁴ and having accomplished everything, to stand firm. 14 Therefore, stand firm having girded your groin with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having feet bound with the readiness of the message of peace. 16 Above all, raising the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the wicked one. 17 Also take the helmet of salvation, also the sword of the Spirit which is the spoken word of God, 18 through every prayer and petition, praying at all times in spirit, being vigilant in everything with perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 also for me: that speech may be given me to open my mouth with boldness to make known the mystery of the message, 20 for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that in this I may speak freely as I ought to speak.

Personal Remarks

21 But in order for you to also know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, 22 whom I have sent to you for this same purpose, that you may know our affairs and he may comfort your hearts. 23 Peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let it be done.

⁴³ See Appendix A

⁴⁴ “τη ημερα τη πονηρα” lit. “the day, the evil one.” The use of the definite article with both the noun and the adjective (2nd attributive position) indicates Paul meant to highlight a very specific future “day” known to his readers, during which the “armor of God” would be indispensable. This is a reference to the “Great Tribulation,” (Matt. 24:21).

**Appendix A:
The meaning of “Heavenly” in Ephesians and Hebrews**

One of Satan’s schemes against the pristine Faith has been the corruption of a few Greek adjectives used by Paul. These misunderstood terms have been used to covertly smuggle Gnosticism into Christian theology, and to make it extremely difficult to discover and remove the Gnostic corruptions of pristine Apostolic Christianity that occurred in the 2nd – 4th centuries). By imposing a Gnostic meaning upon these adjectives, and then imposing such definitions upon the texts in which they appear, Gnostic ideas have been placed in the mouth of Paul. The adjectives, “πνευματικός” (rendered “spiritual”) and “επουρανιος” (rendered “heavenly places”), are the main culprits. We will deal only with “επουρανιος” here.

Gnosticism was the enemy of early Christianity, and was attacked by Paul, John, and several of the early Christian apologists, such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus. However, many linguists, having accepted theologies which were heavily influenced by Gnosticism centuries earlier, have defined these terms for us. And the incorrect meanings have become the dominant definition in Greek lexicons and commentaries.

The Kittel – Friedrich, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT), which is the primary source for many other linguists and scholars, is a good example. The TDNT claims that “επουρανιος” refers to heaven itself, or the heaven of heavens. Many other lexicons followed its lead. The editors were German Protestant theologians, who were amillennialists. Their definition has not been opposed by dispensational writers either, who also rely on the same “heavenly destiny” concepts imposed on Ephesians and Hebrews by using the TDNT’s wrong definition of this adjective. The KJV illustrates the same error in Protestant thinking, rendering “επουρανιος” incorrectly as “heavenly places.” This erroneous definition has not only given cover to the latent Gnosticism of both amillennialism and dispensationalism, but has also spawned dabbling in the occult by misguided Charismatic Christians, under the guise of “spiritual warfare.”

The adjective, “επουρανιος” (ep-oo-ran’-ee-os), is a compound word, with the preposition “επι” prefixed to the adjective, “ουρανιος” (oo-ran’-ee-os), “heavenly.” The preposition “επι” means to superimpose something over something else – literally, “to

cover” (of time, place, or order). It could be used of covering a bed with a blanket, covering a particular city with a radio broadcast, or a state’s governmental authority over that state.

The TDNT denies that “επι” carries its usual force in this case. “επι here does not denote “upon” but “in heaven.”⁴⁵ It claims that “επι” acts as a superlative, as “highest heaven” or “heaven of heavens.” It then concludes, “But in Ephesians we find not only the OT idea of the throne of God in heaven, but also the gnostically influenced view to which Christ, exalted high above the heavenly world, reigns as its conqueror and ruler.”⁴⁶ In short, the editor of the TDNT was claiming that Paul himself, when writing Ephesians, had been influenced by Gnosticism, and thus had partly molded his Pauline theology from Gnostic ideas. The editor’s opinion elevates Gnosticism, the enemy of pristine Apostolic Christianity, to a fountainhead of truth equal with divine revelation. That is, Paul’s theology was a mixture of divine revelation and Gnosticism. It is from this presupposition that the editor defined the term “επουρανιος” for Christians, forever coloring their interpretations of Ephesians and Hebrews.

That the TDNT’s editor allowed his own corrupt theology (as well as other linguists) to color his definition is easy to demonstrate. Lexical definitions are developed by observing usage in all of the places where a term occurs, and finding a single basic meaning that explains them all. A good definition will fit well with every usage of the term in Scripture, both in the New Testament and in the Septuagint.

Compound words, such as the one we are dealing with, result from fusing two ideas together. We would expect, then, that the meaning would flow from this fusion of the two ideas, not contradict either or both.

The occurrence of “επουρανιος” in several passages clashes with Kittle’s interpretation, requiring “Gnostic” kinds of mystical (nonsensical) explanations in order to make sense of them. Both amillennialists and dispensationalists do not shy away from such Gnostic, mystical interpretations in these passages. Just read a few of the Reformed or Dispensational commentaries on Ephesians 2:6 for a sampling of such mystical

⁴⁵ TDNT Vol. V, p. 538

⁴⁶ TDNT Vol. V, p. 539

nonsense. This author is not surprised when amillennialists do this, since allegory is their default hermeneutic. But, dispensationalists claim a literal hermeneutic, yet do not in practice follow it in these passages.

If we assume Kittle’s definition, we are left with the following absurdities:

- Matt. 18:35 (Majority Text & TR) violates Sharp’s 2nd rule, making “The Father” synonymous with “the heaven” itself (“the Father heaven”).
- Eph. 2:6 puts Paul and the entire church of Ephesus in heaven at the time he wrote to them, being seated snugly on the throne of God along with Jesus at the Father’s right hand.
- Eph. 6:12 puts all the minions of hell in the highest heaven, where Paul and the Ephesians were allegedly seated beside Christ.
- Heb. 11:15 claims that while Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were living in tents in the Land that God promised to give them as an age-enduring inheritance, they were instead longing for a city and inheritance in heaven. This contradicts both Genesis and the context of Hebrews 11. It makes the “promise” to Abraham (which both Genesis and Hebrews claim was the Promised Land inheritance, into a promise of a city in heaven, no hint of which can be found in the Genesis account).

More recent and reasonable scholarship has shown that *επουρανιος* refers to heaven’s influence superimposed upon something else in the context. That is, the preposition “*επι*” retains its usual meaning – to superimpose, cover, hence abstractly, to completely influence or completely dominate. Prefixed to the adjective “*ουρανιος*” (heavenly) the sense is “heavenly dominion,” “heavenly domination,” or the scope of “heavenly influence” exerted upon earthly things. The new HELPS™ lexicon has this meaning: *“epouranios – properly, heavenly, referring to the impact of heaven’s influence on the particular situation or person.”*⁴⁷

The heavenly sphere of influence (dominion) is a much better understanding of the fusing of the preposition *επι* with the adjective. Since almost every occurrence of this compound adjective has the definite article and lacks a noun to modify, a noun must be

⁴⁷ HELPS™ Word Studies, © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc. <http://thediscoverybible.com>

inserted for our translation to be grammatically correct in English. (As the KJV wrongly inserts “places” in Ephesians) It is therefore natural and proper to take the sense of the noun we are supplying from the preposition that was prefixed to it. Hence, “επι” (literally, to superimpose) refers to dominion or sphere of influence which is “heavenly.” This meaning also makes good sense in every place where this word appears in the Bible. Here are some examples:

1. Daniel’s declaration to Nebuchadnezzar in the Septuagint about God’s judgment on him reads as follows: “...*from which you will know the power of heavenly [dominion],*” (Dan. 4:24 LXX). The primary point concerns heaven’s dominion over Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom, not the location of “heaven.”

2. In 1 Corinthians 15:40, Paul was not saying that resurrected bodies are in heaven or created in heaven, while earthly bodies are on earth or created on earth. Rather, he was saying that the natural body is under the earthly dominion (cursed, destined for death), but the resurrected body is under heavenly dominion (from whence its incorruptible nature flows). He clearly said, in vs. 42-43, that the very same corpse that is planted (in the grave) in dishonor is to be raised in honor! Therefore, the body cannot be in two different locations at the same time, nor can Paul be contradicting himself. Rather, the body is first under the dominion of the cursed earth (when buried) but under the dominion of heaven when raised.

3. Ephesians 1:20 speaks of Christ’s authority, rather than His location: “...*raising Him from the dead, and seating Him at His own right hand, in the heavenly [dominions].*” That “dominion” rather than location is the thought Paul had in mind is proven by the words which immediately follow: “*far above all principality 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 under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all,*” (Eph. 1:21-23 NKJV). Clearly, Christ’s location being vertically “high above” the location of others, including the Ephesian church, is not the point! Rather, within the “heavenly dominions” (that is the things that are NOW under submission to heaven, such as the church), Christ has been placed as an authority, exerting it within these realms of influence and dominion (as opposed to His unlimited dominion in His coming Kingdom – Psalm 2).

4. Ephesians 2:6 says that Christ has *“raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly [dominions] in Christ Jesus.”* Again, the point is not location, but heavenly authority within the realms that are subject to heaven. Christ’s being “seated” at the Father’s right hand is drawn from Psalm 110:1, which uses the “footstool” metaphor for total domination. Hence, being “seated” is a metaphor for having authority. The scope of this authority is limited by the clause, *“in the heavenly dominions.”* That is, our authority as Christians is active within those limited realms where Christ’s dominion extends, such as within the local church, or the Christian home. Taking this term to mean location here is an absurdity, and exegetically indefensible.

4. Ephesians 6:12 makes much more sense with our interpretation, rather than supposing that all the minions of hell run free in God’s presence in heaven. *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly [dominions].”* The last clause, *“in the heavenly dominions”* limits our sphere of spiritual warfare to those earthly realms that are already under the dominion of Christ, such as the church, or the Christian home. If Charismatics simply understood that our “fight” with spiritual forces does not extend to those realms which have not yet been placed under Christ’s footstool, (such as politics, government, society, or territory), much of the buffoonery and dabbling in Christian witchcraft could be avoided!

5. Finally, Hebrews 11:16 makes much more sense with our interpretation. Abraham was not yearning to go live in some city in the highest heaven, something never alluded to in the entire Old Testament. He was yearning for the fulfillment of God’s promise to him, plainly stated in Genesis, to give him and his Seed the land in which he lived as a pilgrim and alien, for a permanent inheritance. *“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.”* (Gen 13:14-18 KJV).