

The Epistle to the Ephesians

A New Rendition

Philip Abbott

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY



BYU Studies
Provo, Utah

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This Commentary Series is made possible by a generous gift from John S. and Unita W. Welch.

Significant support from the John A. Widtsoe Foundation in Los Angeles, California, as the Publication Sponsor for this Commentary Series is gratefully acknowledged.
<http://www.widtsoefoundation.org/>

Published by BYU Studies. To contact any member of the board of editors or BYU Studies, write to 1063 JFSB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 84602, or visit <https://byustudies.byu.edu> or <http://www.byunewtestamentcommentary.com>

ISBN 978-1-942161-69-1

Version 1.0. Substantive corrections, additions, questions, or comments may be sent to byu_studies@byu.edu.

About the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series

Welcome to the BYU New Testament Commentary, a project by a group of Latter-day Saint specialists offering to readers a careful, new look at the biblical records that witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the first generation of his church. The commentary series seeks to make the New Testament more accessible to Latter-day Saint general readers and scholars by employing much of current biblical scholarship while reflecting important LDS insights. At the same time, this effort may also be helpful to interested readers of other faiths who want to learn how a group of Latter-day Saint scholars understands the Bible. A fundamental article of faith for Latter-day Saints (Mormons) affirms the Bible “to be the word of God” while adding, understandably, that it needs to be “translated correctly” in order for it to be accurately comprehensible to modern language speakers.

These objectives have helped shape the purposes and parameters of this commentary series. Serious LDS readers of the Bible search the scriptures, looking for depth and breadth in passages whose meanings and mandates may ultimately be plain but not shallow. Such readers and interpreters are served by treatments that unite faith and research, reason and revelation, in prayerfully confronting profound and difficult issues that arise in the texts and affect one’s path of progression. The New Testament has served as an influential guide to western civilization for centuries. As such, its records have long been studied by lay people and scholars alike, resulting in a rich reservoir of information that illuminates the New Testament era culturally, historically, and linguistically. Selectively, the BYUNTC builds upon this vast body of knowledge, resting on the Greek texts of the New Testament and connecting helpful elements of linguistic, literary, historical, and cultural research and traditional scholarship together with LDS scriptures and doctrinal perspectives. The combination of all these features

distinguishes the BYUNTC from other commentaries, which are readily available elsewhere and which readers may also want to consult for more encyclopedic or specialized discussions.

The tone of the BYUNTC aims to be informative rather than hortatory, and suggestive rather than definitive in its interpretation. The opinions expressed in this series are the views of its contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Brigham Young University, where many of those involved here are headquartered; or anyone else, though these works have benefited from input and guidance from a number of colleagues, advisers, editors, and peer reviewers.

Each volume in this series contains a new working translation of the New Testament. Calling this a new “rendition” clarifies that it does not seek to replace the authorized KJV adopted by the LDS Church as its official English text. Rather, it aims to enhance readers’ understanding conceptually and spiritually by rendering the Greek texts into modern English with LDS sensitivities in mind. Comparing and explaining the New Rendition in light of the KJV then serves as one important purpose for each volume’s notes, comments, analyses, and summaries. This effort responds in modest ways to the desire President J. Reuben Clark Jr. expressed in his diary in 1956 that someday “qualified scholars [would provide] . . . a translation of the New Testament that will give us an accurate translation that shall be pregnant with the great principles of the Restored Gospel.”

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The Epistle to the Ephesians

Salutation (1:1–2)

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

In Praise of God's Premortal Blessings (1:3–14)

3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in the presence of Christ 4 when he chose us in him before the foundation of the universe to be holy and unblemished before him in love, 5 having preordained us for adoption as children unto himself through Jesus Christ, according to the benevolence of his will. 6 For the praise of his glorious grace which he showered upon us by his Beloved!

7 In him we have redemption through his blood—the dismissal of transgressions—according to the riches of his grace 8 which he has lavished upon us. In all wisdom and prudence, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his benevolence which he appointed beforehand in Christ 10 for the administration of the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ—things in the heavenly realms and things on the earth in him. 11 In him also we were appointed a heritage, having been preordained according to the plan of the one enacting all things according to the design of his will: 12 that we, who have already hoped in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

13 In him—after you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation) and believed—you were sealed by the holy spirit of promise, 14 which is a guarantee of our inheritance, confirming the redemption of his possession. To the praise of his glory!

Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving to the Father (1:15–23)

15 For this reason, I especially, having heard about the faith in the Lord Jesus among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not stop giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing him. 18 I pray that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us, the ones who believe according to the action of his mighty strength, 20 which he enacted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. 22 And he placed all things under his feet, and gave him as head over all things in the church, 23 which is his body—the fullness of the one filling all things in every way.

From Death to Life with Christ (2:1–10)

1 And you were dead through your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked in accordance with this present world, in accordance with the ruler of the dominion of the sky, the spirit who is now impacting those who are disobedient. 3 Among them, too, all of us once lived in the desires of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of its thoughts. And we were by nature children of wrath, even like the others. 4 But God—being rich in mercy because of his great love for us, 5 and we being dead through trespasses—made us alive with Christ (by grace are you saved!) 6 and raised us up and seated us together in the heavenly realms in the presence of Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the matchless wealth of his generous grace towards us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God. 9 It is not from works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are his handiwork, brought into being through Christ Jesus to do good deeds, which God prepared in advance in order that we might walk in them.

Unified through Christ (2:11–22)

11 So then, remember that at one time you, the Gentiles in the flesh, those called “uncircumcised” by the so-called “circumcision” (which is done in the flesh by human hands), 12 remember that in that time you were without Christ—excluded from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now you are in Christ Jesus; you who once were far away have become near in the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, the hostility, having negated by his flesh 15 the law of commandments based in regulations, in order that he might create through himself the two into one new human, thus making peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having put hostility to death in himself.

17 And he came and brought the message of peace to you who were far away and peace to you who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s family, 20 because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 and in him you also are built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul, God’s Minister to the Gentiles (3:1–13)

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— 2 assuming you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 that by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have already written briefly. 4 When you read this, you will be able to perceive my understanding about the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit: 6 the mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 7 Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the handiwork of his

power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable wealth of Christ 9 and to illuminate for everyone the administration of the mystery that was hidden from the beginning in God who created all things. 10 This was done so that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to the plan of the ages, which he set out in Christ Jesus, our Lord, 12 in whom we have courage and confident access through faith in him. 13 So then, I ask that you not lose heart because of my afflictions for you, which are your glory.

Prayer to Grasp God's Unspeakable Gifts (3:14–21)

14 For this reason, I kneel before the Father 15 (from whom every family in the heavenly realms and on earth derives its name) 16 so that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant that you be strengthened with power in the inner person through his Spirit. 17 I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, you being rooted and grounded in love, 18 so that you may be able to grasp with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to the one who is able, above all, to do more abundantly whatever we ask or consider thoughtfully, according to the power acting in us—21 to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations of time and forevermore, Amen.

The Expanse of Christ's Body (4:1–16)

1 I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling to which you were called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, 3 striving to maintain the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit (just as you have been called in one hope of your calling), 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 Now to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 This is why it says, "When he ascended on high, he captured a host of captives and gave gifts to humans." 9 Now, the expression "he ascended," what does it

mean except that he also descended to the lower regions of the earth? 10 He who descended is the very one who also ascended far above all the heavenly realms in order that he might fill all things. 11 And it was he who gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministering, for the building up of the body of Christ, 13 until we may all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, the perfect man, and attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 that we may no longer be children, tossed about by the waves and carried about by every wind of teaching, by human trickery, by cunning, in the scheming of deception. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow in every way unto him who is the head, Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint providing support, generates bodily growth, according to the activity of each individual part, for the purpose of building itself up in love.

Turning from the Old Life to the New (4:17–5:2)

17 Therefore I say this, and testify to it in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the emptiness of their minds. 18 They are blind in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that exists in them because of the hardness of their heart. 19 Having become callous, they have greedily given themselves over to licentiousness for the practice of every impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ—21 assuming you have heard about him and were taught by him, because the truth is in Jesus. 22 With regard to your former life, you were taught to put off the old person who is being corrupted by deceitful desires, 23 to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and to put on the new person who has been created by God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 So then, put off falsehood and let each one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26 “Be angry and do not sin.” Do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 neither give opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him work, doing good with his own hands so that he may have something to share with the one who is in need. 29 Let no harmful word come out of your mouth, but whatever is good for the building up of the one in need, that it may impart grace to those who hear. 30 And

do not offend the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting, and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other just as God in Christ forgave you. 1 Become therefore imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

From Darkness to Light (5:3–14)

3 But do not let sexual immorality, any kind of impurity, or covetousness even be mentioned among you, as is fitting for saints. 4 Neither allow filthy behavior, foolish talk, or coarse joking—things which are not proper—but rather, gratitude. 5 For of this you can be sure: no fornicator, unclean, or covetous person (such a person is an idolater) has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes upon the children of disobedience. 7 So do not become fellow partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light lies in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 proving what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 And do not take part in the fruitless works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For the actions that occur in secret are shameful even to mention. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for everything made visible is light. This is why it says, “Awake, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you.”

Music of the Heart (5:15–20)

15 So look carefully to how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore, do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but fill yourselves with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks for everything to our God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Husbands and Wives (5:21–33)

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church—he himself being the savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in every way. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to sanctify her—having cleansed her through the washing of water with a promise—27 that he might present to himself a glorious church, not having stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, 30 since we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I am speaking about Christ and the church. 33 In any case, let each one of you love his wife as himself, so that the wife may reverence her husband.

Relationships with Children and Slaves (6:1–9)

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and your mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.” 4 And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; instead, bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. 5 Slaves, obey the masters of your flesh with fear and trembling in the sincerity of your heart as you do to Christ, 6 not only while being watched—like people-pleasers—but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 Render service with good will, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, 8 because you know that if each person (whether slave or free) does something good, it will be repaid by the Lord. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, dispensing with threats, because you know that you have the same Lord in heavenly realms, and there is no favoritism with him.

God's Armor (6:10–20)

10 Finally, become empowered in the Lord and in his mighty strength. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil, 12 because our battle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, the authorities, and the cosmic lords of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able resist them on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. 14 Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on yourself the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having fitted your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, 17 so receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With every prayer and plea, pray at all times in the Spirit, and in it be watchful in all perseverance and entreaty for all the saints. 19 And pray for me that, when I open my mouth the word may be given to me to make known fearlessly the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, and that I may speak about it freely, as I should speak.

Final Greeting (6:21–24)

21 So that you also may know about my circumstances and how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make everything known to you. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose: that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.