

# Outline of Ephesians Emphasizing Love for God in Speech and Behavior

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The Epistle to the Ephesians stands as Paul's most comprehensive presentation of what it means to be the church - the body of Christ. Written during his Roman imprisonment (c. AD 60-62), this letter demonstrates how **love for God flows from understanding our blessed position in Christ to walking worthy of that calling through transformed speech and behavior**. The epistle's structure beautifully balances doctrine with practice, showing that right believing leads to right living[1][2][3].

## I. Our Position in Christ - God's Work for Us (Ephesians 1-3)

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The first half of Ephesians focuses on what God has done for believers, establishing the theological foundation that makes Christian love possible. Paul emphasizes that love for God begins with understanding how much God first loved us.

### Spiritual Blessings in Christ (1:3-14)

Paul opens with a magnificent doxology praising God for "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3) [4]. This passage contains one of the most concentrated presentations of God's eternal love and purpose in all of Scripture.

#### God's Eternal Choice (1:4-6):

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace" [5].

#### Redemption and Forgiveness (1:7-8):

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us" [1].

#### Sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14):

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance" [6].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Gratitude and praise for God's electing love; recognizing our identity as chosen, adopted, redeemed, and sealed
- **Speech Impact:** Thanksgiving and worship for God's grace; confession of our blessed position in Christ
- **Behavior Impact:** Living as those who are holy and blameless before God

### Prayer for Spiritual Knowledge (1:15-23)

Paul prays that believers would grow in their knowledge of God and understand the greatness of His power demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead[5][7].

- **The Hope of His Calling:** Understanding our eternal destiny
- **The Riches of His Inheritance:** Knowing our value to God
- **The Surpassing Greatness of His Power:** Experiencing God's resurrection power in daily life

### Made Alive Together with Christ (2:1-10)

This passage contains one of the clearest presentations of salvation by grace in the New Testament[8].

#### Our Former Condition (2:1-3):

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air" [1].

### God's Great Love (2:4-7):

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"[5][3].

### Salvation by Grace (2:8-10):

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"[9].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Humility about our former condition; gratitude for God's mercy and grace; commitment to good works as response to salvation
- **Speech Impact:** Testimony about God's transforming grace; refusing to boast in personal achievements
- **Behavior Impact:** Walking in the good works God prepared; living as God's workmanship

### Unity of Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22)

Paul describes how Christ broke down the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, creating "one new man" in place of the two[1][6].

### Christ Our Peace (2:14-16):

"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace"[8].

### Built on Foundation (2:19-22):

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone... in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit"[6].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Embracing unity across ethnic and cultural boundaries; valuing what God values
- **Speech Impact:** Words that promote unity rather than division; welcoming others regardless of background
- **Behavior Impact:** Breaking down barriers; treating all believers as family

### Paul's Prayer for Love (3:14-21)

This prayer represents the theological climax of the first half of Ephesians, focusing specifically on love[10][5][11].

### The Heart of Paul's Prayer (3:16-19):

"That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"[10][12].

### Key Elements of This Prayer:

- **Inner Strengthening:** Power through the Spirit in the inner person
- **Christ's Dwelling:** Jesus taking up permanent residence in our hearts
- **Rooted and Grounded in Love:** Love as both root system and foundation[12]
- **Comprehending Love's Dimensions:** Understanding the immeasurable scope of Christ's love
- **Filled with God's Fullness:** Experiencing the complete presence and character of God

### Doxology (3:20-21):

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen"[11].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Deep desire to comprehend Christ's love; allowing love to be our foundation; giving God glory
- **Speech Impact:** Prayer for deeper understanding of God's love; praise for God's abundant power

- **Behavior Impact:** Living from a foundation of love; walking in the fullness of God

## II. Our Walk in Christ - Our Work for God (Ephesians 4-6)

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The second half of Ephesians demonstrates how understanding our position in Christ transforms our practical living. Paul shows that love for God must be expressed through worthy conduct in all relationships[2][13].

### The Call to Unity (4:1-16)

Paul begins the practical section with a call to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4:1)[9][13].

#### Unity in Diversity (4:2-6):

"With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"[14].

#### Gifts for Building Up (4:11-16):

Christ gave apostles, pastors, teachers "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"[15].

#### Speaking Truth in Love (4:15):

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"[16][17].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Maintaining unity in the Spirit; using gifts to serve others; speaking truth in love
- **Speech Impact:** Words that promote unity; truth communicated with love; building up rather than tearing down
- **Behavior Impact:** Humility, gentleness, patience; using spiritual gifts for others' benefit

### Putting Off the Old Self (4:17-32)

Paul contrasts the believer's new life in Christ with their former way of living[14].

#### The Transformation (4:22-24):

"Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness"[14].

#### Practical Applications (4:25-32):

- **Truthful Speech:** "Putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor" (4:25)
- **Anger Management:** "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (4:26)
- **Honest Work:** "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need" (4:28)
- **Gracious Speech:** "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up... that it may give grace to those who hear" (4:29)[18]
- **Kindness and Forgiveness:** "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (4:32)[14]
- **Love for God Expressed:** Actively putting off sinful behaviors; putting on Christ-like character; imitating God's forgiveness
- **Speech Impact:** Truth-telling; words that give grace and build up others; avoiding corrupt speech
- **Behavior Impact:** Honest work; sharing with those in need; kindness and forgiveness

## Walking in Love (5:1-21)

This section begins with the clear command to imitate God and walk in love[19][20][18].

### Be Imitators of God (5:1-2):

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"[19][20].

### Walk as Children of Light (5:8-14):

"For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord"[21].

### Be Filled with the Spirit (5:18-21):

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ"[21].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Imitating God's character; walking in Christ's sacrificial love; being filled with the Spirit
- **Speech Impact:** Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs; constant thanksgiving; words that please the Lord
- **Behavior Impact:** Living as children of light; discerning what pleases God; mutual submission

## Christian Relationships (5:22-6:9)

Paul applies the principle of Spirit-filled submission to three key relationships[22][23][24].

### Marriage (5:22-33):

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle"[22][23].

- **Key Principle:** Marriage as a picture of Christ's relationship with the church
- **Husband's Love:** Sacrificial, sanctifying, self-giving love like Christ's
- **Wife's Respect:** Honoring and supporting husband's leadership

### Parent-Child Relationships (6:1-4):

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right... Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"[24].

### Work Relationships (6:5-9):

"Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man"[9].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Honoring God in all relationships; serving others as serving Christ; demonstrating Christ's love in marriage
- **Speech Impact:** Words that honor rather than provoke; encouraging family communication; honest work relationships
- **Behavior Impact:** Faithful service; sacrificial love; nurturing children in the Lord

## Spiritual Warfare (6:10-24)

Paul concludes by addressing the spiritual battle that Christians face[24].

### The Battle (6:11-12):

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"[24].

The Armor (6:13-17):

- Belt of truth
- Breastplate of righteousness
- Feet fitted with readiness of the gospel of peace
- Shield of faith
- Helmet of salvation
- Sword of the Spirit (Word of God)

The Warfare Through Prayer (6:18-20):

"Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel"[24].

- **Love for God Expressed:** Standing firm against evil; relying on God's strength; constant prayer
- **Speech Impact:** Bold proclamation of the gospel; prayer for other believers; words given by God
- **Behavior Impact:** Putting on spiritual armor daily; alert perseverance; fighting spiritual battles

Key Points All Christians Should Know from Ephesians

Theme	Key Teaching	Impact on Speech and Behavior
Chosen in Love	God chose us before foundation of world (1:4)	Identity rooted in God's love; grateful speech and humble living
Salvation by Grace	Saved by grace through faith, not works (2:8-9)	Humble confession of dependence on God; gracious treatment of others
Rooted in Love	Being rooted and grounded in love (3:17)	All relationships and actions flowing from foundation of love
Walk in Love	Walk in love as Christ loved us (5:2)	Imitating Christ's sacrificial love in daily relationships
Speaking Truth in Love	Truth communicated with love (4:15)	Honest communication that builds up rather than tears down
Unity in Diversity	Maintaining unity of the Spirit (4:3)	Working actively to preserve unity; valuing all believers
Spiritual Warfare	Standing against spiritual forces (6:11-12)	Understanding true battle; relying on God's strength through prayer

Summary

Ephesians demonstrates that **love for God begins with comprehending how much God first loved us and then expressing that love through transformed speech and behavior in every relationship**. The epistle's two-part structure - position and practice - shows that right doctrine leads to right living.

The central theme of Ephesians can be summarized in Paul's prayer that believers would be "rooted and grounded in love" (3:17) and his command to "walk in love, as Christ loved us" (5:2). This love is not merely emotional but practical, affecting:

Speech that reflects God's love:

- Speaking truth in love for healthy growth and unity
- Words that give grace to hearers rather than corrupt speech
- Constant thanksgiving and praise to God
- Prayer and supplication for all believers

- Bold proclamation of the gospel

#### Behavior that demonstrates Christ's love:

- Walking worthy of our calling with humility and gentleness
- Using spiritual gifts to serve and build up others
- Putting off old sinful patterns and putting on righteousness
- Imitating God's character in all relationships
- Sacrificial love in marriage that reflects Christ and the church
- Honest work done as service to Christ
- Standing firm in spiritual warfare through God's strength

#### Relationships marked by love and unity:

- Maintaining unity across ethnic and cultural boundaries
- Bearing with one another in patience and forgiveness
- Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ
- Nurturing family relationships that honor God
- Treating all work as service to the Lord

The epistle teaches that the church - as Christ's body - is meant to display God's manifold wisdom (3:10) and demonstrate His love to a watching world. This happens not through perfection but through believers who understand their blessed position in Christ and walk worthy of that calling.

Ephesians calls every Christian to move beyond merely knowing about God's love to being **rooted and grounded** in it - allowing that love to be both the source of spiritual nourishment and the foundation of all Christian living. When believers comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love, they are filled with God's fullness and enabled to love others as Christ loved them.

The practical result is a community of believers who speak truth in love, maintain unity in diversity, serve one another with spiritual gifts, and stand firm against spiritual forces of evil - all while imitating God's character and walking in the love that Christ demonstrated through His sacrifice. This transformed living becomes a powerful witness to the reality and power of the gospel.

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