

Block Diagram of Ephesians 1.1 to 2.10

Ephesians 1.1–2.10: An Introduction to Block Diagramming

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Preface

During the last half of the winter term 2024, Forge Road Bible Chapel sponsored short studies, this study of Ephesians being one. The intent of this study was to introduce a general method designed to reveal the structure of a Bible passage and its relationships with nearby ideas and larger themes. Diagramming encourages slow reading and attention to the text. There are many diagramming methods with varied complexity. We modified a block, or thought-flow, diagramming method described by Young,¹ and applied it to Ephesians. Useful diagrams should not be dependent upon the Bible translation used. We worked with the NET translation² to demonstrate the value in reading multiple translations and to access its many notes; we found the English Standard Version³ useful also. It is valuable to consult other translations, particularly where the underlying text is ambiguous or difficult to translate, where translators have found it necessary to emend or interpret for purposes of readability and clarity.

¹ Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach*, Broadman & Holman Publishers: 1994, 267–273.

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BLOCK DIAGRAM OF EPHESIANS 1.1–2.10

Bible *study* is more than Bible *reading*. Immersive reading—repetitive reading followed by more reading—produces more abundant fruit. Ephesians can be read in one sitting in 15–20 minutes; we were encouraged to read it weekly before diagramming. Some memorized.⁴ Meditating (Hebrew, muttering, talking to oneself) leads to memorization; memorization leads to muttering.

Praying while reading leads to muttering to God. Pray *over the text* even as you pray *the text itself*. God is there with you; his help is close. Ask God for wisdom and understanding ... to open your mind to his truth and to soften your heart to be receptive to it.

As you read, meditate, and pray, list your observations, interrogate the text, and write possible answers to your questions.

⁴ See, for example, Andrew M. Davis, *How to Memorize Scripture for Life: from one verse to entire books*, Crossway: Wheaton, Illinois, 2024 for a schedule to memorize Ephesians.

Introduction to the Method

The basic steps in diagramming are:

1. Place main clauses on new lines, beginning at the left margin of the page. Main clauses have a subject and verb that form complete thoughts.
2. Indent subordinate clauses on new lines under the main clauses they modify. (Occasionally, subordinate clauses may be indented above main clauses.)
3. Align subordinate clauses of “equal structural rank.” (See diagram beginning on page 37.)
4. Align lists of objects and characteristics.
5. Finally, join related sections of the text with vertical lines.

Variety in diagrams of the same text can reflect differences in emphasis, differences in understanding relationships between phrases, and differences in understanding of authorial intent. Diagrams are better judged by their usefulness than their correctness. Diagrams are increasingly useful when their construction more clearly demonstrates relationships. The goal is to let the text, as much as possible, determine how the diagram is constructed; priority

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is given to the text as written, not to human understanding of the text. There will be instances when one structure must be chosen over another in the placement of a phrase, but these decisions should be weighed while recognizing the influence of personal presuppositions and their effect on understanding the text. List possibilities. Keep options open.

A final word of caution: diagrams that are too general or too granular may obscure rather than reveal structural relationships within the text. The level of detail is governed by its ability to inform relationships and thematic development.

Our observations and questions appear in parallel columns followed by a consensus diagram of the text based upon the NET translation with occasional modifications for emphasis or attributed to the ESV or a more literal translation. This diagram is a melding of our individual efforts and demonstrates the method as we employed and tested it; others may find variations of this diagram more useful. Participants made their own general outlines at the beginning of the study and built their diagrams around it, making revisions as we progressed. One such outline is presented in Appendix A. Principles that guided our interpretation of the text are listed in Appendix B.

Observations and Questions on the Text

Ephesians 1:1-2 (NET) 1 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus. 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Observations	Questions
<p>vv. 1-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Of the 13 letters of Paul, 5 open with “by the will of God” (1 & 2 Cor, Eph & Col, and 2 Tim; 1 Tim “by the command of God”). “Grace and peace” appear in the opening of all.• The text suggests the saints are faithful.	<p>v. 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the significance of the consistent use of “grace and peace?” in all of Paul’s letters?

Ephesians 1:3-14 (NET) 3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. 4 For he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that

we may be holy and unblemished in his sight in love.⁵ He did this by predestining us to adoption as his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of his will—⁶ to the praise of the glory of his grace that he has freely bestowed on us in his dearly loved Son.⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight. ⁹ He did this when he revealed to us the secret of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ,¹⁰ toward the administration of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ—the things in heaven and the things on earth.¹¹ In Christ we too have been claimed as God's own possession, since we were predestined according to the one purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, would be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation)—when you believed in Christ—you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.

Verses 3 through 14 of the first chapter form one sentence in the original text. The NET version divides these 12 verses into 7 sentences in 1 paragraph, the ESV into 5 sentences in 2 paragraphs. Our outline split the single sentence into 2 parts in order to emphasize the blessing upon God: the first part (v. 3) is a doxology—by derivation, a word that expresses the right opinion—that praises God for the second part, for giving us benefits in Christ (vv. 4–14). Other outlines keep vv. 3–14 together to focus on our blessings in Christ.

How did the Holy Spirit write such a lengthy sentence, *adding* one phrase to the preceding one, *allowing* us a sense of when God did something or how he did it, *explaining* his purpose or *causing* us to reflect on the significance of what he accomplished while *making* it readable and understandable to the reader? Primarily by using participles: in English, participles are formed by adding -ing suffixes to verbs. Examples seen in the previous sentence are *italicized*. These participles modify “write.” Greek is a participle-intensive language. In vv. 3–14 there are 9 participles in 7 vv. Recognizing that participles are verbal adjectives, the translators of the NET Bible broke the big sentence into smaller sentences by translating some of the participles as main verbs; the participles became main verbs and the subjects of the verbs were supplied in order to create smaller sentences for ease of reading.

We noted that participles have several uses in Greek. When participles are used to modify verbs (one of many uses), these participles may provide information about:

- the time of the action of the participle relative to the time of action of the main verb
- the manner in which the action of the main verb was done (add color)
- the means by which the action of the main verb was done (explain or define how)
- the cause of the action (explain why)
- a condition of the action (if the action was done)
- the basis of the action (although the action was done)
- the purpose for the action (to emphasize the design of the action)
- the result of the action (to emphasize what the action accomplished)

All of these uses are not employed in this lengthy sentence.

Observations	Questions
<p>v. 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is the one who blessed us. • God blessed us: 1) with every spiritual blessing; 2) in the heavenly realms; and 3) in Christ. • “Every spiritual blessing” describes the extent of his blessing. • The heavenly realms locate the origin of the blessings. • Christ is the means by which the blessings came. 	<p>v. 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the blessings? (The blessings are identified in the following vv.)
<p>v. 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sentence continues from v. 3: “just as he chose us in him ...” • God chose us: 1) in Christ; 2) before the foundation of the world; 3) so that we would be holy and unblemished in his sight in love; or 4) in love ... continue to v. 5 	<p>v. 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does “in love” intend that God views us in a loving way or did he predestine us in love (v. 5)? (Our diagram is intended to show this ambiguity. Ambiguity is often by intentional design of the Holy Spirit and should cause us to reflect and study the possibilities.)

v. 5

- “He did this by predestinating” (one word) is a participle. The translators and we understand its function to explain the means of how God chose us.
- The Greek word translated “predestine” occurs 6 times in the Greek NT. It is a compound word meaning to appoint or determine beforehand. God predestined in 5 vv., man predestined in 1 (Jews predestined [had determined before] to kill Jesus in Acts 4.28). God’s predestination is concerned with our

- Did God choose us to be holy and unblemished someday; or, did he choose us already in the state of our being holy and unblemished when he chose us before the foundation of the world (thus having the same characteristics as his Son).

v. 5

- Does “in love” at the end of v. 4 belong at the beginning of v. 5?

adoption as mature sons with privilege (here in Eph 1.5)—that we would obtain an inheritance (in the same manner in which sons who were born by their birth parents were adopted in the time and place in which the NT was written) (Eph 1.11). As sons we look like our Father; we are predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8.29); we are identical twins of our older brother, born of the same seed—singular—as Jesus Christ (Gal 3.16). God predestined us for our glory: glory is our final destiny for which God has determined beforehand (Rom 8.30 and 1 Cor 2.7 [“predestined” is translated “decreed”]). God predestined us for his glory (Eph 1.6).

- God chose us by predestining us: 1) to

adoption as his sons; 2) through Christ Jesus; 3) according to the pleasure of his will (not our choice); and 4) to the praise of the glory of his grace.

v. 6

- God predestined us for his glory (Eph 1.6).
- God's grace: 1) has been freely bestowed on us; and 2) is literally, in the Beloved. The word translated "freely bestowed" is in the family of words that has grace central to its meaning. ("The Beloved" is an example of a participle that does not modify a verb, literally, the one who is loved. The tense of the verb "love" indicates that God loved the Son in past time with the result that he continues to love him presently—just like us. See also, v. 3: God is the one who is blessed.)

v. 7

- Redemption and the forgiveness of sins are

v. 6

v. 7

blessings continuing from the list beginning in v. 3. (Grace and peace in v. 2 are blessings also.) We moved “In him” above and indented to align with “we have redemption.” See a corresponding structure in v. 11.

- In him we have: 1) redemption; and 2) the forgiveness of our trespasses.
 - Our redemption is through his blood.
 - The forgiveness (the forgetting) of our sins is according to the riches of his grace.
- v. 8
- He lavished his grace upon us: 1) in all wisdom; and 2) insight.

v. 8

- How should we understand “in all wisdom and insight”? That God deemed it wise to lavish his grace upon us? If the wisdom is God’s, is the insight also his? Is it proper to consider that God has insights? He decrees. Is the intent that our recognition of the

v. 9

- “He did this when he revealed” (one word) is a participle. The verbs it can modify, nearest to farthest, are lavished (v. 8), we have (v. 6), predestinating (v. 5), and chose (v. 3).
- He revealed: 1) the secret of his will; 2) according to his good pleasure; 3) that which he set forth in Christ. The revelation continues into v. 10.
- The word translated “secret” is better read as “mystery.” A mystery must be revealed in order to be known; it cannot be found out by study.
- “Good pleasure” (NET) is a more precise translation than “purpose” (ESV). The root of “set forth” and

forgiveness of our sins gives us insight into the extent of the riches of God’s grace?

- Is forgiveness of sins a part of redemption?

v. 9

- Is the function of the participle, “revealing,” temporal as indicated by the translators—he did this when—or, does the participle describe the means by which God lavished his grace upon us? If the participle is time-oriented, then we would understand God lavished his grace upon us at the time he revealed his grace to us rather than at a time before the foundation of the world. If the participle indicates means, then v. 8 would continue “by revealing to us ...” or by beginning a new sentence with “He lavished his grace upon us by revealing to us”
- Where should we place “that he set forth in

“purpose” in v. 11 is the same.

v. 10

- We understood “toward the administration of the fullness of the times” (NET) to be a time element. Another translation of the noun “administration” is “stewardship.” It does not have the same root as “set forth” (v. 9) and “purpose” (v. 11); it is a compound

Christ”? under “revealing” or under “good pleasure”? Should we accent that the revelation of the secret of God’s will was set forth in the person of Christ (place under revealing) or accent that it was God’s good pleasure to reveal his secret to make this revelation in Christ? (We decided to place it under good pleasure.) How significant is the difference?

- What is the “this” that God did in v. 9 (NET)?
- What is the secret of his will?

v. 10

- What are “the all things” that God is uniting in Christ? We see “the all things” 6 times in Ephesians, 3 times in the first chapter (1.10, 11, 23; 3.9; 4.10, 15). Other references include Col 1.16, 17, 20; Heb 1.3 (“the universe”); 2.8 (“everything”), 2.10 (2

word that translates literally as “household law.” The ESV uses the word “plan” for “administration.”

v. 11

- The NET begins with “[I]n Christ” because v. 11 is a continuation of v. 10 and because “Christ” is the nearest antecedent.
- “[W]e were claimed as an inheritance” (NET) and “we have obtained an inheritance” (ESV) is one word. A more literal translation would be “in whom we also were claimed as/have obtained an inheritance” followed by the participle, “predestined,” “being predestined according to his purpose that he accomplished according to the council of his will.” The NET notes the verb is passive: we were appointed by lot as an inheritance. This note also references support for the understanding that

times “for whom the all things and by whom the all things”); Phil 3.21; 1 Cor 8.6 (2 times); 15.27-28; Gal 3.22.

v. 11

- What are “the all things” that God accomplishes according to the council of his will?

we obtain an inheritance, but the verb is passive. This does not deny that we, too, have an inheritance as our inheritance is promised explicitly in v. 14. Israel is God's "inheritance" and "allotted heritage" (same Hebrew word in Dt 4.20; 32.9). God has given us to Christ (Jn 17). Be alert for a similar issue in v. 18.

v. 12

- The verse begins with a purpose clause, "so that we ... would be to the praise of his glory."
- "[T]he ones who first hoped" is another participle, here in the perfect tense. Those who first hoped in past time continue to hope now; the emphasis is on the present condition of the past action.

v. 12

- Should this purpose clause be placed under:
 - 1) "purpose" to emphasize we were predestined to the praise of his glory;
 - 2) "predestined" to emphasize why we were predestined; or 3(a) "claimed" or (b) "obtained" to emphasize the purpose of granting the inheritance? It seems unlikely that the purpose clause belongs to "who accomplishes all things" because working "the all things" suggests a broader scope; we would be

included in “the all things.” If the purpose clause modifies God’s purpose (choice #1 above), then we would understand the text to read “... according to his purpose, that is, that we ... would be to the praise of his glory.” If we follow the ESV (#3b) and we locate the purpose of our inheritance to be to the praise of his glory, then would not our inheritance lead to our glory—look at us and what we get—and detract from God’s ability to grant such an inheritance? If we follow the NET and understand the verse to mean that Christ claimed us as (part of) his inheritance (#3a) by predestinating us to the adoption as sons, then we understand that Christ’s acquiring us as his inheritance through our predestination (#2) leads to the praise of his glory. Thus, the diagram places, tentatively, the

v. 13

- Both the “hearing” and “believing” clauses follow “in him.” The ESV makes this clear in the “hearing” clause but omits “in him” in the second. We have seen many “in Christ,” “in him,” and “in whom” clauses scattered in our diagram of this chapter.
- The main subject/verb is “you were marked.” Hence, we aligned “you were marked” on the left margin and indented other dependent clauses above and below “marked.” Marked, or sealed (ESV), is in the passive voice; we did not do the sealing.

v. 14

- We did not divide the phrase “who is the

purpose clause at the end of v. 12 under “predestined.”

- Looking ahead to v. 14, does the phrase “to the praise of his glory” also suggest a purpose?

v. 13

v. 14

- What is the significance of the Holy Spirit being

downpayment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession", but suborned it under "Holy Spirit."

the downpayment or first installment of our inheritance? How do the Scriptures describe the scope of our inheritance?

- What is meant by "until the redemption of the possession" (literal translation) at the end of v. 14? Does the possession refer to our possession of promised blessings as the ESV interprets it ("until we acquire possession of it") or to God's possession of his people as the NET interprets it ("until the redemption of God's own possession")?
- Where do we place the final phrase "to the praise of his glory"? Are we marked for the praise of his glory (surely we are) or does this close vv. 3-4, to wit that God has blessed and chosen us to the praise of his glory?

Ephesians 1:15–23 (ESV) 15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering 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 of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Verse 15 begins a new sentence and a new section of our outline, a prayer of thanksgiving and a prayer for knowledge. The prayer concludes with a lengthy description of God's power.

Observations	Questions
vv. 15–16 • The main clause is in v. 16: “I do not cease to give thanks” The reason for the unceasing prayer is in v. 15. Therefore, we have indented “For this	vv. 15–16

reason” in v. 15, bringing it over the main verb, “cease,” in v. 16.

v. 17

- The main clause, “I pray” (NET), starts a new element of our diagram at the left margin. The content of the prayer is that God would give the Ephesians (and us) spiritual wisdom and revelation in/of the full knowledge of him. “Knowledge” is intensified in the text, which is taken as full knowledge. See Eph 4.13. Also Rom 3.20; 10.2; Phil 1.9; Col 1.9, 10; 2.2; 3.10 and many others.

v. 18

- We understand the perfect participle “having been enlightened” to indicate cause, i.e., because the eyes of their hearts have been enlightened The perfect tense indicates that the enlightening has been done in past time

v. 17

- The NET understands intensified knowledge as “growing knowledge.” If “full knowledge” is preferred, how would we understand it?

v. 18

- Is Paul praying so that the Ephesians might know the hope of God’s calling ... or, is Paul praying that they might receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they might know the hope of God’s calling ... ? Our diagram shows dotted

with the result that now the eyes of their hearts are enlightened.

Enlightening, then, is not an item for which Paul is praying, but that which enables his prayer. Thus, we show this clause above “pray” in v. 17.

- This prayer is not only a prayer of Paul on behalf of the Ephesians, but also of the Holy Spirit on behalf of you.
- “The hope of his calling” (NET) is not understood as God’s hope, but as your hope in God’s call for you. For thoughts on the glory of God’s inheritance (us, the saints), see the discussion of v. 11. This suggests God gave us, his inheritance, to Christ as Christ’s inheritance.

v. 19

- The Greek word translated “incomparable” is the word from which we get “hyperbole”—the hyperbolic greatness of God’s power toward us.

lines to allow for these possibilities.

- Should we consider the inheritance is passed from Father to Son?

v. 19

- The text, as written originally, had no punctuation marks. Thus, we consider that God exercised his incomparably great power when he enabled us to believe “according to working of the strength of his might” (literal translation). God had to exercise his great power in order for us to believe in him; our belief in God is not “simple,” not a trivial act of our volition.

v. 20

- The NET begins v. 20 with a new sentence, “This power he exercised ...” while the ESV acknowledges the participle by “when he raised him” from the dead.
- It took as much of God’s power for you to believe in him as it took for God to raise Jesus from the dead. You believe because God exercised his power in you. The Scriptures

v. 20

characterize the unregenerate as incapable of believing; they are:

- unable to enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3.5)
 - unable to come to Christ (Jn 6.44, 63)
 - unable to hear the word of God (Jn 8.43)
 - unable to receive the Spirit of truth (Jn 14.17)
 - unable to mind the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 2.14)
 - unable to keep from sinning (2 Pet 2.14); even the plowing of the wicked is sin (Prov 21.4)
 - unable to be subject to the law of God (Rom 8.7)
 - unable to please God (Rom 8.8).
- God exercised his power:
 - 1) in Christ; 2) when he raised Christ (look ahead

to 2.1 ...); 3) when he seated Christ.

v. 21

- The list of those subjected to Christ is very extensive. Verse 21 is diagrammed easily.

v. 22

- The first part of v. 22 is a quote from Ps 8.7. We understand the verse to continue to identify times at which God exercised his power, that is, when he put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church. The subject, "God," is not stated.

v. 23

- God gave Christ to the church as its head and God gave us to Christ as his inheritance. Christ is the head of the body.

v. 21

v. 22

v. 23

- How should we differentiate Christ's body and Christ's bride, if there is a difference? Are we going to be guests at the marriage supper of the lamb or are we going to be the bride?
- In what sense is the church the fullness of Christ, who fulfills the all things in all?

Ephesians 2:1–10 (ESV) 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Although chapter 2 begins a new sentence in our English translations and in the Greek text, the chapter continues from a long sentence in chapter 1 that extols the power of God. The punctuation in the opening verses of chapter 2 in both the NET translation and the Greek text is a bit awkward. The Greek text ends v. 1 with a comma, vv. 2 and 3 with semicolons; v. 4 with a comma, v. 5 with a dash, and v. 6 with a comma before ending the sentence at v. 7. The ESV acknowledges this awkwardness by ending v. 2 with a dash. This dash in the ESV is easily overlooked because

v. 3 follows without any break in thought; the dash at the end of v. 2 can appear to be extraneous, thus belying the punctuation issue.

Observations	Questions
<p data-bbox="196 402 243 427">v. 1</p> <ul data-bbox="167 454 507 1417" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="167 454 507 1417">• Verse 1 is a dependent clause, “and you being dead in your trespasses and in your sins ...”. Consider that the clause might depend upon v. 20 of ch. 1 to complete its meaning. We would then understand the text to be speaking of “the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead (1.20) ... and you, [when you were] dead in your trespasses and your sins ...” (2.1). If so, we can treat vv. 22-23 of chapter 1 as a parenthetical statement. The broader text is speaking of the display of God’s great power when he raised Christ from the dead and when he raised you who were dead in your sins. 	<p data-bbox="554 402 600 427">v. 1</p> <ul data-bbox="518 454 875 1417" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="518 454 875 1417">• What does walking according to the age of this world entail?

- We formerly walked according to “the age of this world.”

v. 2

- The spirit of the age of this world works in the sons of disobedience. This work contrasts with the great might of God’s power that he worked in you when God caused you to believe and when he gave both Christ and you resurrection life.
- The ESV identifies the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience as being the prince (ruler) of the power (authority) of the air. The NET, however, translates “the kingdom of the air, *the ruler of* the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience” (emphasis added), adding this note: The ruler of the kingdom of the air is also the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience.

v. 2

- What is the significant difference, if any exists, between the ESV and NET translations?

- The sons of disobedience are not understood to be disobedient sons, although they are disobedient. We are disobedient, too, but we are not sons of the Disobedient One, that is, sons of the devil. In contrast, we are sons of obedience, not because we obey, but because we have been born of the Obedient One; we are sons of God.

v. 3

- We all walked formerly as though we were sons of disobedience. We share a nature with the sons of disobedience, but we do not share their spiritual father. See previous verse.
- We walked formerly in the desires of the flesh, doing the will of our flesh and of our minds. We have fleshly minds and fleshly wills that are not aligned with God's; indeed, our desires and wills rebel against and are

v. 3

not compatible with the desires and will of God.

v. 4

- But God, being rich in mercy ... — God is rich in grace (1.7), incomparably so (2.7); rich in his glorious inheritance (1.18); rich in glory (3.16). There are unsearchable riches of Christ (3.8) ... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2.3). We need to dig for these treasures.
- The “great love” of God continues the list of God’s excellencies: “every spiritual blessing” (1.3), his “glorious grace” (1.6), “the riches of his grace” (1.7) “which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and knowledge” (1.8), “the riches of his glorious inheritance” (1.18), the “immeasurable greatness of his power” toward us who believe according to the working of his “great might” (1.19)

v. 4

v. 5

- Verse 5 continues the sentence from v. 4 with the same participle, “being,” that opens v. 4: “God being rich in mercy ... and we being dead in trespasses”
- Christ and we were dead, he physically (1.20) as our substitute in taking on our sins and we spiritually in our sins.
- God raised Christ from the dead (1.20): God made us alive together with Christ—at the same time God raised Christ from the dead he gave us life in Christ. We died with Christ and were buried with him and rose with him (Rom 6:1–4).
- An insertion interrupts the correspondence between what God did for us and what he did for Christ, “By grace you have been saved.” This is translated literally “by grace you are having

v. 5

- In considering the correspondence between what God did for us and what he did for his Son, is there a sense in which God also saved his Son?

already been saved.” This phrase is set off in the Greek text by dashes (—).

- The verb “to be” is often omitted in Greek as in English (“it is omitted in Greek as *it is* in English”). If v. 5 is translated literally, as above, the verb “to be” appears in the form of “you are”; it seems awkward and unnecessary in the literal translation. English translations avoid the matter with “by grace you have been saved” (ESV) or “by grace you are saved” (NET). A nuanced translation might be “By [God’s] grace, you are in a state of having been saved already.” (The verb “to be” is a state of being verb.) It is in the present tense. The verb “saved” is in the perfect tense. You have been saved in past time, already, such that now you remain saved. The present reality of the past action is being emphasized.

v. 6

- The correspondence with Christ continues.
 - We are raised up with Christ: Christ is raised from the dead (1.20).
 - We are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms: Christ is seated in the heavenly realms (1.20-21).

v. 7

- God continues to reveal his purposes. God displayed his power in Christ (1.20-23) and in us (2.1-6) so that he would later display the surpassing wealth of his grace in his kindness to us. It is the kindness of God that leads to repentance (Rom 2.4).

v. 8

- The text repeats the unusual phrase in v. 5, with emphasis: “For by the grace you are already having been saved ...” and then continues “by means of faith.”

v. 6

v. 7

v. 8

- Is the faith by which we are saved our faith or is it the faithfulness of Christ?
- What is this gift of God? grace or faith? our present state, i.e. grace-by-faith salvation

- Next we read “and **this** is not from you, *it is* the gift of God.” The words “*it is*” are absent in the original text and have been supplied here by the translators.

or something else? Likely neither “grace” or “faith” because both are feminine in gender while “this” is neuter. (Grammar requires the gender of the pronoun “this” to agree with the gender of the antecedent.) An argument can be made for the third possibility. Another is that this phrase is meant to be intensive as in “for by grace you are saved through faith, *and* [you are saved] *especially* not by works; a gift of God [emphasis added].” This emphasis can be understood where the same phrase occurs in Rom 13.11 (And *especially this*, you know the time), 1 Cor 6.6, 8 (*and especially* before unbelievers, *and especially* your own brothers), and 3 Jn 5 (*and especially* when you do it for strangers).

v. 9

- Verse 9 continues “not from works lest someone may boast.” The NET also adds “it is” here, viz. “it is not from works ...”

v. 10

- We are: 1) his workmanship; 2) created in Christ Jesus; 3) for (*epi*) good works; 4) “that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
- The preposition *epi* could mean, as translated here, “for.” More commonly, the preposition indicates “upon.” In this case, we would understand that we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus upon good works.
- A literal translation of the last phrase is “that we would walk in them.” The NET interprets this as “so we may do them,” adding this note: “Before the devil began to control our walk in sin and among sinful people, God had

v. 9

v. 10

- How should we understand the preposition *epi*?
- What are the good works that God determined before? What is their extent? Are they our works or Christ’s works? If these works are our works and if God has determined that we do them, does that mean that we don’t need to look for opportunities to do good because God will put us in situations that require our engagement; or, should we actively look for opportunities to do good knowing God will enable or prevent our efforts based upon his prior determination; or, should we do what we think is best, trusting that

already planned good works for us to do.”
 (Many find it easier to accept that God prepared good works for us beforehand than that God chose and predestinated us before the foundation of the world [1.4].)

- The preposition in this last phrase, *en* translated “in,” has multiple uses and can be considered in the following ways here:
 - In the sphere of good works: Christ’s good works surround and envelop us, we are immersed in them and cannot escape from their import
 - By means of good works: We walk by means of the good works of Christ, Christ’s good works enable our walk
 - Because of good works: We are able to walk because of Christ’s good works

God’s determination also governs our desires?
 Where is the balance?

- In formulating an answer, we can identify the actors and those acted upon in the letter thus far. **God** blesses us (1.3, 6), he chose us (1.4), he predestinated us (1.5), he lavished grace on us (1.8), he made his mystery known to us which he set forth in Christ (1.9), he will unite all things in Christ (1.10), he works all things according to the counsel of his will (1.11). **We** hope in Christ to the praise of his glory (1.12), we heard and believed (according to the immeasurable greatness of God’s power, 1.19) and were sealed with the Holy Spirit (1.13). Paul prays—**the Holy Spirit** prays for us—that God would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that we may know the hope of our calling, the

- With respect to good works or according to the standard of good works
- As an equivalent for the preposition *eis* when used with verbs of motion, for the purpose of walking in good works.

riches of his inheritance, and the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us (1.16-19). **God** raised Christ (1.20) and us (2.1, 6), God seated Christ in the heavenlies (1.20) and us (2.6), and God put all things under Christ's feet and made him head over all things to the church (1.22-23). **We** were dead (2.1), we lived according the course of this world (2.2), we lived in the passions of our flesh (2.3), we were by nature children destined for God's wrath (2.3); we were loved (2.4), we were made alive together with Christ (2.5), we were saved (2.5, 8), we were raised us up with Christ (2.6) and seated with Christ in the heavenlies (2.6). And God did all this for the singular purpose of showing to us the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness in Christ (2.7). God has gifted us (2.8); it is not

our work (2.9), rather, we are God's workmanship (2.10), we are his creation (2.10).

- How should we understand "walking in good works"?
 - When were these good works prepared? before the foundation of the world?
-

Ephesians

GREETING 1.1-2

- Eph 1.1 From Paul,

 _____ an apostle of Christ Jesus
 _____ by the will of God,

 _____ to the saints
 _____ [in Ephesus], the faithful in Christ Jesus.
- 2 Grace and peace to you

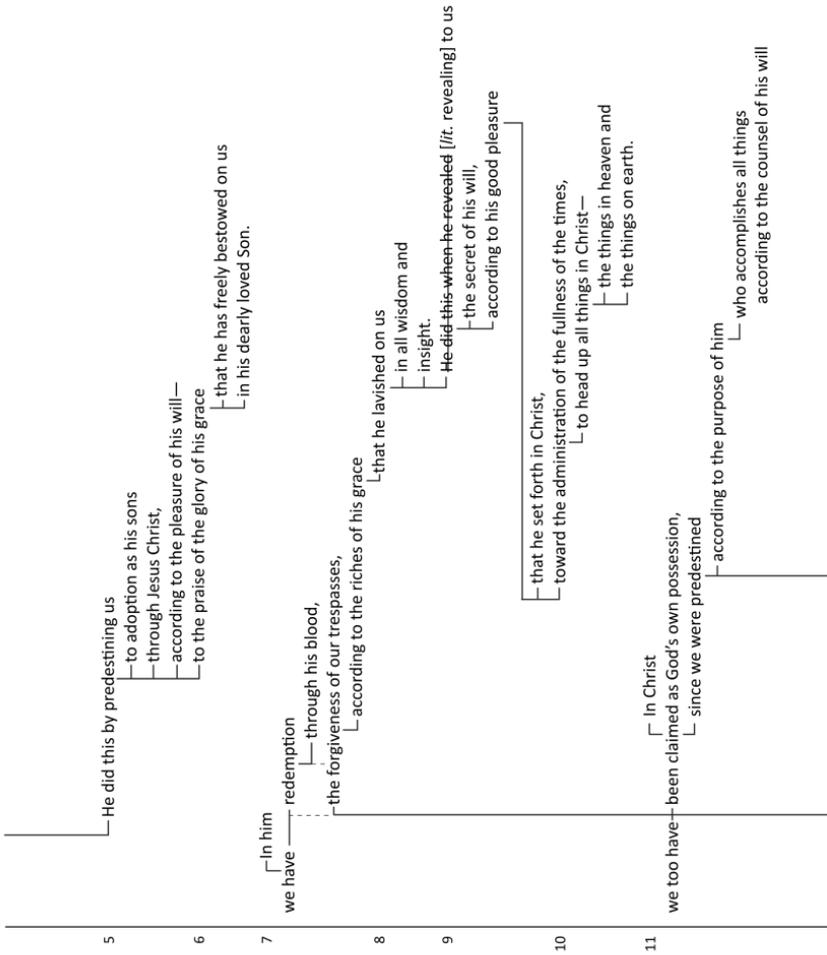
 _____ from God our Father
 _____ and the Lord Jesus Christ!

DOXOLOGY 1.3

- 3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 _____ who has blessed us
 _____ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.

BENEFITS OF BEING IN CHRIST 1.4-14

- 4 For he chose us
 _____ in Christ
 _____ before the foundation of the world
 _____ that we may be holy and unblemished in his sight (in love).
 _____ (in love)



12 _____ so that we, _____
 _____ who were the first to set our hope on Christ,
 _____ would be to the praise of his glory.

13 _____ And _____ when you heard _____
 _____ the word of truth _____
 _____ (the gospel of your salvation)—
 _____ when you believed _____
 _____ in Christ—

14 _____ you were _____ marked _____
 _____ with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit,
 _____ who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of
 _____ God's own possession,
 _____ to the praise of his glory.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND FOR KNOWLEDGE FOR EPHESIANS 1.15-19

15 _____ For this reason, _____ because I have heard of _____
 _____ your faith in the Lord Jesus and
 _____ your love for all the saints,

16 _____ I do not cease to give thanks _____ for you _____
 _____ when I remember you in my prayers.

17 _____ I pray _____ since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened— [from v. 18]
 _____ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you _____
 _____ spiritual wisdom and _____
 _____ revelation in your growing knowledge of him,

18 (moved above v. 17 —since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened—)

so that you may know

what is the hope of his calling.

what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and

what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us, [moved the comma here]

who believe as displayed in

according to the exercise

of his immense strength.

PRAYER CONCLUDES SHOWCASING THE POWER OF GOD 1.19-2.10

20 This power he exercised

in Christ

when he raised him from the dead and

[when he] seated him

at his right hand

in the heavenly realms

far above

every rule and

authority and

power and

dominion and

every name that is named,

not only in this age

but also in the one to come.

And God [when he] put all things under Christ's feet, and

[when he] gave him to the church as head over all things.

Now the church is his body,

the fullness of him who fills all in all.

- 4 | But God, — being rich in mercy,
 | — because of his great love
 | — with which he loved us,
 | — even though we were dead in transgressions,
 5 | — made us alive together with Christ [2.1; 1.20]
 | — by grace you are saved! —
- OR, to accent the character and activity of God, consider this alternative. Verse 6 follows both choices.
- 4 | — being rich in mercy,
 | — because of his great love with which he loved us,
 | — even though we were dead in transgressions,
 4 | But God, — (5) made us alive together with Christ [2.1; 1.20]
 | — and he raised us up — with him and
 | — and [he] seated us — with him
 | — in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,
 | — to demonstrate
 | — in the coming ages
 | — the surpassing wealth of his grace
 | — in kindness toward us
 | — Christ Jesus.
- 8 | For by grace you are saved
 | — through faith,
 | — and [especially] not from yourselves,
 | — it is the gift of God;
 | — it is not from works,
 | — so that no one can boast.
- 10 | For we are his workmanship,
 | — having been created
 | — in Christ Jesus
 | — for good works
 | — that God prepared beforehand
 | — so we may do them.

Appendix A: Outline of Ephesians

- 1.1–2 Opening greeting
- 1.3 Doxology
- 1.4–14 Benefits of being in Christ
- 1.15–19 Prayer of thanksgiving and for knowledge for Ephesians
- 1.19–2.10 Prayer concludes showcasing the power of God
- 2.11–22 Consequence of God’s power: Union with Christ and with one another
- 3.1–13 Consequence of union: The mystery of the gospel is revealed, namely, Gentiles are fellow heirs
- 3.14–21 Prayer for strength for Ephesians
- 4.1–6.20 Walk as what you already are:
 - 4.1–16 in unity
 - 4.17–19 not as the Gentiles (as your old self)
 - 4.20–32 in the newness of your new self
 - 5.1–7 in love, purity, and thanksgiving
 - 5.8–14 in light
 - 5.15–17 circumspectively
 - 5.18–21 by the Spirit
 - 5.22–31 in submission, wives and husbands
 - 5.32–33 to reveal ...
 - 6.1–4 in submission, children and parents
 - 6.5–9 in submission, bondservants and masters
 - 6.10–18 in strength (put on God’s armor, cf. 3.14–16)
 - 6.18–20 in persevering prayer
- 6.21–24 Final greeting

Appendix B: Interpreting the Text

1. Move from that which is known or dogmatically stated to that which is unknown or speculative.
2. Move from that which is clear to that which is ambiguous or unclear.
3. Move from that which is certain to that which is vague or less certain.
4. Tradition, logic, and experience are helpful, but not authoritative.
 - Scripture warns against following tradition. “See that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition” (Col 2.8)
 - Scripture warns against trusting logic and arguments. “I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.” (Col 2.4) “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God” (Rom 8.7)
 - Our experiences may confirm the truth and wisdom of the Scriptures, but our experiences do not shed light on the Scriptures: the Word of God sheds light on our experiences. “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Ps 119.105)
5. Consult commentaries after you have already done your own work with the text and after you have exercised your muscles of discernment. You will be better able, then, to assess the value of outside help.

m24vkk-2

"When people think about God by instinct, not by revelation, they ask many of the wrong questions. ... *What would God have you know? Himself. His glory. Nothing less than the Lord who is the centerpiece of the universe and history. Jesus Christ.* ... The letter to the Ephesians tears the doors off mysteries. The love of Christ beyond knowing, now known. The unfathomable riches of Christ, now fathomed. Things exceedingly far beyond all you can ask or imagine, now revealed in front of your eyes."

David Powlison
Take Heart: Daily Devotions To Deepen Your Faith
 New Growth Press, 2002, 103

This short work introduces a method of study designed to identify the structure and organization of Scripture to aid the reader in rejoicing in the revelation of Jesus Christ, marveling in the mysteries of the ages, and reveling in the refulgent glory of God.

Ephesians

GREETING 1.1-2

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 └ an apostle of Christ Jesus
 └ by the will of God,
 to the saints
 └ [in Ephesus], the faithful in Christ Jesus.
 2 Grace and peace to you
 └ from God our Father
 └ and the Lord Jesus Christ!

DOXOLOGY 1.3

3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 └ who has blessed us
 └ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.

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 └ in Christ
 └ before the foundation of the world
 └ that we may be holy and unblemished in his sight (in love).
 └ (In love)