

## ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY:

SELECT PORTIONS OF EPHESIAN (2:11-22; 4:1-6; 5:15-21; 6:10-20)

### 2:11–16 THE SALVATION OF THE GENTILES

**OVERVIEW:** Paul illustrates the extent of God's mercy to Gentiles (CHRYSOSTOM), whose former state was a preparation for their future spiritual state (EPIPHANIUS), which they now possess as the true circumcision (JEROME). They were strangers to truth and the covenants (TERTULLIAN, MARIUS VICTORINUS) and hence to God (JEROME). They are now called to accept their destiny as the true Israel (ORIGEN) and give thanks for the love of Christ (AMBROSIASER). Only he, our Creator, can overcome the flesh (MARIUS VICTORINUS), uniting Jews and Gentiles in a new humanity (CHRYSOSTOM) by breaking down their mutual animosity (AMBROSIASER) and overcoming the barrier between sin and God. The law was good in its time, though now it has been transcended (CHRYSOSTOM). Though the law's ceremonial rules are discarded (AMBROSIASER), the moral commandments must be kept in the spirit (THEODORET). A new creation is coming into being (CHRYSOSTOM) that embraces Jews and Gentiles (THEODORET). Christ is the true mediator because he alone is able to reconcile all things (CHRYSOSTOM). The new person in Christ (TERTULLIAN) is a unity of soul and spirit (MARIUS VICTORINUS). The resurrection brings that person peace with God (THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA). The crucified one joins himself with us to join us to God (GREGORY OF NYSSA), vanquishing the old enmity by taking us into his body (CHRYSOSTOM).

#### **2:11 *Gentiles in the Flesh***

**REMEMBERING THE CIRCUITOUS PATH OF SALVATION. CHRYSOSTOM:** Many are the evidences of God's love of humanity. God has saved us through himself, and through himself in such a special way, remembering what we were when he saved us and to what point he has now brought us. For each of these stages in itself is a great proof of his benevolence. Paul now reviews at each stage what he writes. He has already said that God has saved us when we were dead in sins and children of wrath. Now Paul shows to what extent God has raised us. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.11–12.

#### **ON THE FIGURE OF GENTILES IN THE FLESH.**

**EPIPHANIUS:** The phrase "Gentiles in the flesh" contrasts types of realities. The type in the flesh was awaiting the time of the spirit. The less perfect fulfillment of the circumcision is expressed in relation to its more perfect fulfillment. PANARION 42.12.3, THIRTY-SIXTH REFUTATION OF MARCION.

#### **DISTINGUISHING FOUR POSSIBLE GENTILES AND JEWS REGARDING CIRCUMCISION. JEROME:**

By calling the Ephesians "Gentiles in the flesh," he shows that in the spirit they are not Gentiles, just as conversely the Jews are Gentiles in spirit and Israelites in the flesh. Therefore the Jews and Gentiles are subject to a fourfold division: Some are circumcised in spirit and flesh, as were Moses and Aaron.... Some have been circumcised neither in spirit nor in flesh, as were Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh.... A third group are circumcised only in the flesh.... Lastly come those of whom he now speaks, ... believers such as today we see in the whole host of believing Gentiles around the world. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.12.

#### **2:12a *Separated from Christ***

**PREVIOUSLY DESTITUTE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.**

**THEODORET:** He wants to show that Christ is the provider of all goods for them. “For previously,” he says, “you were destitute of the knowledge of God and did not enjoy the goods promised beforehand to Israel.”

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.12.

**2:12b Alienated from Israel**

**TRUE ISRAEL. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** The true way of Israel consists in living according to the Spirit, thinking according to the Spirit and being circumcised from unworthy desires.

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.12.

**2:12c Without Hope and Without God in the World**

**HAVING MANY GODS BUT WITHOUT GOD.**

**JEROME:** When he says “having no hope, without God in the world,” he does not deny that the Ephesians had many gods before they believed in Christ. His point is that one who is without the true God has no god worthy of the name. And the next phrase, “without God in the world,” is significant: The Gentiles in a sense already had God indeed in the form of anticipation, because God knew beforehand that he would have them. In God’s foreknowledge they were never without God. But enmeshed in the world they were without God. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.12.<sup>7</sup>

**2:13 Once Far Off, Now Brought Near**

**FROM WHAT WERE THEY ONCE FAR OFF?**

**TERTULLIAN:** They were once far off from the Christ of the Creator, from the way of the Israelites, from the covenants, from the hope of the promise, from God himself.

Once far off, the Gentiles now come close in Christ to the things that were once far off.

AGAINST MARCION 5.17.12–13.

**NOW BROUGHT NEAR TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF TRUE ISRAEL. ORIGEN:**

Paul is responding to those who think that believers in Christ may enter into the commonwealth of Israel but that it is some entirely different one that has nothing in common with the history of Israel.... It is those who know the spiritual law and live in accordance with it who are made dwellers in the commonwealth of Israel, more so than those who are Israelites in the body only. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

**WHETHER ONE CAN BE FAR FROM GOD WHO IS EVERYWHERE. JEROME:**

God in his entirety is everywhere. Who can be separated from him when all things are in him?... He is, however, said to be far away from the unrighteous, according to Proverbs [15:29].... Just as far as the unrighteous are away from him, so close is he to the saints. Just when God seemed to be furthest from the Ephesians, he was coming close to them by the blood of Jesus. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.13–14.

**BROUGHT NEAR BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.**

**AMBROSIAS:** He reminds us that we were brought close to God by the blood of Christ in order to show how great is God’s affection toward us, since he allowed his own Son to die. We too, enduring in faith, should not yield to despair in any of the agonies inflicted on us for his sake, knowing that what he deserves from us exceeds all that our enemies can bring upon us. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.13.

**2:14a Christ is Our Peace**

**THE PEACEMAKER DESTROYS THE WALL OF PARTITION. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** Christ, he says, “is our peace.” Elsewhere Paul calls him mediator. He interposed himself of his own accord between divided realms. Souls born of God’s fountain of goodness were being detained in the world. There was a wall in their midst, a sort of fence, a partition made by the deceits of the flesh and worldly lusts. Christ by his own mystery, his cross, his passion and his way of life destroyed this wall. He overcame sin and taught that it could be overcome. He destroyed the lusts of the world and taught that they ought to be destroyed. He took away the wall in the midst. It was in his own flesh that he overcame the enmity. The work is not ours. We are not called to set ourselves free. Faith in Christ is our only salvation. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.14–15.

**HOW HAVE BOTH BEEN MADE ONE? THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA:** Christ, conferring immortality on us through his resurrection, has put an end to this division [between Jew and Gentile], for there can be no circumcision of an immortal nature. CATENA 2.13.

### ***2:14b Breaking Down the Wall of Hostility***

**THE WALL BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE BROKEN DOWN. AMBROSIAS:** The passion of the Savior made peace between the circumcision and the uncircumcision. For the enmity, which was between them like a wall and divided the circumcision from the uncircumcision and the uncircumcision from the circumcision, was abolished by the Savior. His command is that the Jew should not so presume on his circumcision as to reproach the Gentile, nor should the Gentile trust in his uncircumcision, that is, his paganism, so as to abhor the Jew. Both,

made new, should maintain in Christ their faith in the one God. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.14.1.

### **THE WALL BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY.**

**CHRYSOSTOM:** Some say that the wall between them is that of the Jews against the Greeks, because it does not allow them to mix. I do not think so. Rather I think that the wall between them is common within both. It is the hostility proceeding within the flesh. This was the midwall cutting them off, as the prophet says, “Do not your sins stand in the midst between you and me?” The midwall was the enmity that God had both toward Jews and toward Greeks. But when the law came this enmity was not dissolved; rather it increased. “For the law,” he says, “works wrath.”<sup>16</sup>HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.13–15.

### ***2:15a Abolishing the Law of Commandments and Ordinances***

**LAW AS FENCE. CHRYSOSTOM:** The law was a fence, but this was made for our security. This is why it was called a fence, so that it might fence us in.... Now he has “abolished the law of commandments” through his teaching. Oh, what love of humanity! He gave us a law that we might keep it, but when we failed to keep it and deserved punishment he dissolved the law. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.13–15.

### **CEREMONIAL LAW NO LONGER BINDING.**

**AMBROSIAS:** The law that he abolished was that which had been given to the Jews concerning circumcision and new moons and food and sacrifices and the sabbath. He ordered it to cease because it was a burden. In this way he made peace. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.15.

**UNDER THE GOSPEL THE TEN COMMANDMENTS STILL REMAIN FREELY TO BE OBEYED. THEODORET:** Christ dispelled the enmity between us and God. He gave his own flesh as a ransom for us. Once this was done, he put an end to the things that separated you and them. For this is what he means by “the law of ordinances.” He has not annulled the Decalogue.... For Christ the Lord himself held these up to the one who wanted to know the way to eternal life.<sup>21</sup> But by doctrines he meant the gospel teaching, since the realizing of full maturity lies in the responsive choices of the will.... Yet these gospel teachings are not laid down as laws. They are a matter of free choice. What he does lay down as law is what he inscribed on nature when he created it in the beginning. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.14–15.

### **2:15b *Creating One New Being***

**CHRIST UNIQUELY FITTED TO CREATE A NEW HUMANITY. TERTULLIAN:** He was born in a singular way from a virgin by the Spirit of God. He was born to reconcile both Gentile and Jew to God, both of whom had offended God. He reconciled them into one body through the cross. The enmity was in this way slain. This reconciliation took place in his flesh through his body as he suffered on the cross. AGAINST MARCION 5.17.15.

**THE NEW SPIRITUAL PERSON. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** Their souls have thus been reconciled to the eternal and the spiritual, to all things above. The Savior, through the Spirit, indeed the Holy Spirit, descended into souls. He thereby joined what had been separated, spiritual things and souls, so as to make the souls themselves spiritual. He has established them in himself, as he says, “in a new person.” What is this new person? The spiritual person, as

distinguished from the old person, who was soul struggling against flesh. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.14–15.

**CREATING ONE NEW PERSON IN PLACE OF GENTILE VERSUS JEW. CHRYSOSTOM:** Don’t you see? The Greek does not have to become a Jew. Rather both enter into a new condition. His aim is not to bring Greek believers into being as different kinds of Jews but rather to create both anew. Rightly he uses the term *create* rather than *change* to point out the great effect of what God has done. Even though the creation is invisible, it is no less a creation of its Creator. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.13–15.

**A SINGLE PERSON WITH ONE HEAD. THEODORET:** He has reconciled both, that is, those from Gentile and from Jewish backgrounds, in the one body that was offered on behalf of all, so that they may at last be made one body. And he has called all believers a single man because Christ our Lord is the one head, and those who have been favored with salvation fill the role of members. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.16.

**IN HIMSELF. CHRYSOSTOM:** He did not pass the task of reconciliation on to another. He made himself the means of combining one with the other. This produced one wonderful result. He himself was the first instance of this reconciliation, a result greater than all the previous creation. For that is what *in himself* means: Having assumed dominion over the Jew and then of the Greek, he himself became their mediator. He brought them together, doing away with all that estranged them. Now he has fashioned them anew through fire and water—no longer water and earth but water and fire. He became a Jew when he was circumcised. Then, being cursed, he became a Greek outside the law and one

more excellent than either Greek or Jew.  
HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.15.

### **2:15c *Making Peace***

**PEACE BETWEEN GOD AND SINNERS. CHRYSOSTOM:** “Making peace” may mean their peace with God or with one another.... The focus is primarily on peace with God, as is made clear by what follows. What does he say? He has fully reconciled both to God in one body through the cross. He did not say “to some degree reconciled” but “fully reconciled.” Even before this human nature was in principle reconcilable, as we see in the righteous and before the law. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.16.

### **2:16a *Reconciled to God Through the Cross***

**THE ENMITY IS SLAIN IN HIMSELF. GREGORY OF NYSSA:** Taking up the enmity that had come between us and God on account of sins, “slaying it in himself,” as the apostle says (and sin is enmity), and becoming what we are, he joined the human to God again through himself. AGAINST EUNOMIUS 3.10.12.

### **2:16b *Bringing Hostility to an End***

**HIS DEATH ENDED THE HOSTILITY. CHRYSOSTOM:** No expression could be more authoritative or more emphatic. His death, he says, killed the enmity, wounded and destroyed it. He did not give the task to another. And he not only did the work but suffered for it. He did not say that he dissolved it; he did not say that he put an end to it, but he used the much more forceful expression: He killed! This shows that it need not ever rise again. How then does it rise again? From our great wickedness. So long as we remain in the body of Christ, so long as we are one with

him it does not rise again but lies dead.  
HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 5.2.16.

## **2:17–22 THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**OVERVIEW:** Jews were near, Gentiles far off, but neither had any access to God except through Christ’s Spirit (MARIUS VICTORINUS). The one Spirit guarantees unity (CHRYSOSTOM), viewed eschatologically (JEROME). We receive an honor analogous to that of Roman citizens (AMBROSIASER). The church is built on the concordant witnesses of both covenants (ORIGEN, MARIUS VICTORINUS, AMBROSIASER). Christ is the foundation for both prophets and apostles (MARIUS VICTORINUS). Among the many images used of Christ (CHRYSOSTOM), that of the cornerstone expresses his foundational and unitive function. The resultant temple is the community in which God dwells (MARIUS VICTORINUS). It includes not only angels (JEROME) but also the Ephesians themselves (MARIUS VICTORINUS).

### **2:17 *Preaching Peace to Those Near and Far Off***

**JEWS WERE NEAR, GENTILES FAR OFF. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** He distinguishes “those who are far off” from “those who are near.” This refers to the Gentiles and Jews. For the Jews are obviously close and the Gentiles far off. Yet the Savior himself has brought the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul here mentions first that Christ by his advent has truly preached peace also to those who are far off, that is, the Gentiles, as is shown by many evidences. For those who come to belief from Gentile backgrounds ironically have a greater claim to be called sons than those from Jewish backgrounds. And yet, so that it may not be denied to the latter, he

adds “and those who are near.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.17.

## **2:18 Access in One Spirit to the Father**

**ACCESS TO THE FATHER. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** Both Jews and Gentiles “have access to the Father” through Christ himself. But how? “In one Spirit.” For the Spirit, who is one with Christ, enters into us when we believe in Christ. We then feel God’s presence, know God and worship God. Thus we come to the Father in that same Spirit through Christ. No one, whether Jew or Gentile, comes to the Father except through Christ. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.18.

**IN ONE SPIRIT. CHRYSOSTOM:** “We both” means not less to one and more to another but having access by a single grace. For he has dispelled the wrath through death and made us all beloved to the Father through one Spirit. Note that *in* here means “through.” HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 6.2.17–22.

**FULL CONSUMMATION YET AWAITING. JEROME:** However, it should not be thought possible to achieve perfect and complete reconciliation in this world.... The making of the new person in Christ will be fully consummated when earthly and heavenly things have been reconciled, when we come to the Father in one Spirit and with one affection and understanding. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.15 SEQ.

## **2:19 Fellow Citizens, Members of the Household of God**

**FELLOW CITIZENS ARE ONE WITH THE SAINTS. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** What are we to understand by “fellow citizens with the saints?” It implies a distinction between

citizens and saints. But if this is so, who are the saints and who are the citizens? *Saints* refers to the apostles, prophets and all who formerly experienced God or spoke divinely through the Spirit dwelling within them. They in some way beheld God’s presence, as did Abraham, either through the flesh, through the Spirit or through both flesh and Spirit, as with all the apostles. Those who have later believed in Christ without any such special means are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.19.

**THE ANALOGY OF CITIZENSHIP. AMBROSIASTER:** Believers become “fellow citizens” in a way analogous to all those who desired the peace of Rome. They brought gifts and were accepted as Roman citizens, as were the people of Cilician Tarsus. Paul was a Roman citizen of that city. So too anyone who has joined himself to the Christian faith becomes a fellow citizen of the saints and a member of God’s household. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.19.

## **2:20 The Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets**

**PROPHETS AND APOSTLES SHARE IN ONE DIVINE PLAN. ORIGEN:** These are fitting words to cite against those who would divide the Godhead and think that the prophets belong to one God and the apostles to another. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

**THE FOUNDATION FOR THE EDIFICE. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** Jesus Christ and his teachings are the foundation for the apostles. The edifice built on this foundation consists in life and character and one’s conduct and discipline. The primary foundation is for life; the rest of the edifice is for its adornment and edification. The primary foundation, I

say, is to believe in Christ, hope in him and trust in God. This foundation is the teaching of the apostles, which is also heard in the word of the prophets. Note the order of this distinction, first apostles and then prophets. The apostles beheld [God incarnate]; the prophets received the Spirit. These are the saints mentioned above: those who saw and those who were inhabited by the Spirit. Hence the teachings of the apostles and prophets are indeed the teachings of Christ, which proclaim the foundation of all eternal hope. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.20.

**THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD IS BUILT ON BOTH COVENANTS. AMBROSIAS:** This means that the household of God is built upon both the old and the new covenants. For what the apostles preached had been foretold by the prophets. In his words to the Corinthians, that “God placed in the church first apostles then prophets,” he is concerned with the order of the church. But in this case he is speaking of the foundation in the prophets of old. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.20.

### ***2:21a The Whole Structure Joined Together***

**JOINED TOGETHER FROM ABOVE AND FROM BELOW. CHRYSOSTOM:** See how he joins himself to us. Sometimes it is as if holding together and unifying the whole body from above. Sometimes it is as if joining the edifice from below, as if supporting the building with underpinnings and being its root. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 6.2.17–22.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CORNERSTONE TO THE BUILDING. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** He called this stone a cornerstone not merely because it is at the corner but because it is the first and most important stone. From it begins the foundation of the corner which joins

and couples two things to make them one. Souls above already with Christ are united together with those that live in holiness and receive Christ in a mystery that is present. Souls below that are Christ’s, including those of the Gentiles, are also joined by that cornerstone, Jesus Christ. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.20.

### ***2:21b A Holy Temple in the Lord***

**GROWING INTO A HOLY TEMPLE. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** All souls made spiritual through Christ are joined and built up into a holy temple, where God dwells. As Christ is in all and God in Christ, all are a temple of God through Christ. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.21–22.

**WHETHER THE ANGELS ARE WITHIN THIS EDIFICE. JEROME:** It is maintained by some that the whole edifice built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets comprises not only human souls but also angelic powers, so that all equally will become the abode of God. They argue that it would be absurd if angels and all the blessed forces who serve God in heaven would have no part in this blessedness. For in this is a building, put together harmoniously, that is growing into a holy temple of God to be an abode of God in the Spirit. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.19 SEQ.

### ***2:22 The Ephesians Also Built into the Edifice***

**THE EPHESIANS ARE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BUILT INTO THE EDIFICE. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** As he does so often, he brings the argument back to individuals, that is, to the Ephesians. They themselves have been built into that same temple cornerstone. Here he cleverly adjusts his language to form an exhortation.

They have not yet fully entered into this unity but are still being built up. There is a deficiency, and therefore he warns and exhorts them. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.2.21–22.<sup>1</sup>

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## 4:1–6 PAUL’S PETITION

**OVERVIEW:** Paul alludes to his own bonds (JEROME) to humble the temptation to pride that may accompany the lavish gifts of the Spirit (THEODORET). The fundamental virtue of humility (CHRYSOSTOM) is enhanced by other virtues (MARIUS VICTORINUS) and is perfected by longsuffering. Service in love is true freedom, beautiful and not oppressive, uniting people of all races (CHRYSOSTOM). The term *one body* expresses the relation between Christ and the church (JEROME). The one Spirit is inseparable from the living body (CHRYSOSTOM). The church has one hope because there is one kingdom (JEROME). Idolatrous washings cannot be called baptism (AMBROSE). Threefold immersion celebrates the Trinity (JEROME). The baptismal confession is implicit in the three prepositions: *of, through* and *in*—of the Father, through the Mediator, in the Spirit (AUGUSTINE, AMBROSIASTER). God contains all things (GREGORY OF NYSSA), transcending local confinement (ORIGEN).

### 4:1a A Prisoner of the Lord

**PRISONER OF THE LORD. JEROME:** Those who love Christ follow him. They are bonded with him in the ties of love. There is also another explanation [i.e., Origen’s], which it is the reader’s prerogative to accept or not:

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<sup>1</sup> M. J. Edwards, ed., *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on

Suppose what is called here the *prison* is the body. Because Paul has taken on the body for the ministry of the gospel, he is consequently said to be in bondage to Christ. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.4.1.

### CONTENT WITH HIS BONDS ON CHRIST’S ACCOUNT.

**THEODORET:** When Paul recalls his chains his intent is to encourage his hearers to rise above their own infirmities to moral excellence. It is as if he were saying: “Remember that it is in relation to you that I am in prison. Suppose I had refused to preach. I would have been free of all this.” In this poignant way the divine apostle elicits sympathy, for he is more content with his chains on Christ’s account than a king with his crown. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 4.1.

### 4:1b A Life Worthy of the Calling

**THE TEMPTATION OF PRIDE MAY ACCOMPANY THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. THEODORET:** They were enjoying the gifts of the Spirit. They were performing miracles, speaking in many tongues and experiencing much prophetic activity. But all this was prone to boggle their minds. Therefore it is about these that he first gives them advice. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 4.1.

### 4:2 Lowliness, Meekness, Patience

#### LOWLINESS THE FOUNDATION OF VIRTUE.

**CHRYSOSTOM:** How is it possible to “walk worthily” with “all lowliness”? Meekness is the foundation of all virtue. If you are humble and are aware of your limits and remember how you were saved, you will take this recollection as the motive for

Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 135–144.

every excellent moral behavior. You will not be excessively impressed with either chains or privileges. You will remember that all is of grace and so walk humbly.... “With all lowliness,” he says, not in words only or even in deeds but more so in the very manner and tone of your voice. And not meek toward one person and rude toward another but humble toward everyone, whether enemy or friend, great or small. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 9.4.1–3.

**DISTINGUISHING LOWLINESS, MEEKNESS AND PATIENCE. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** He speaks of several forms of forbearance, each of which prevents them from being carried away or proud. Lowliness is first, then meekness. Lowliness consists in having a humble mind. Meekness is a curb on pride and cruelty. Patience consists in bearing any adverse circumstance that may befall them. With lowliness and meekness they learn not to be afraid to suffer. With patience they learn how to respond if they must suffer. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 1.4.2–4.

**FORBEAR ONE ANOTHER. JEROME:** Anyone who understands what it is “forbear one another in love” will understand that this is a precept appropriate to the faithful. It is not indeed saints who have any need to “forbear one another.” Rather it is those in the earlier stages of Christian life, who being human are still under the control of some passion. Nor is it strange that this should be said to the Ephesians. Among them there were surely some who still had to bear patiently with others. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.4.2.

### ***4:3 Maintaining the Unity of the Spirit***

#### **THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.**

**CHRYSOSTOM:** In the body it is the living spirit that holds all members together, even when they are far apart. So it is here. The purpose for which the Spirit was given was to bring into unity all who remain separated by different ethnic and cultural divisions: young and old, rich and poor, women and men. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 9.4.1–3.

#### **THIS BOND IS BEAUTIFUL, NOT OPPRESSIVE.**

**CHRYSOSTOM:** Again he uses the metaphor of bonding. We have left it behind, and now it comes running back to us. Beautiful was Paul’s bond; beautiful too is this [bond of peace among Christians], and the former arises from the latter. Bind yourselves to your brethren. Those thus bound together in love bear everything with ease.... If now you want to make the bond double, your brother must also be bound together with you. Thus he wants us to be bound together with one another, not only to be at peace, not only to be friends, but to be all one, a single soul. Beautiful is this bond. With this bond we bind ourselves together both to one another and to God. This is not a chain that bruises. It does not cramp the hands. It leaves them free, gives them ample room and greater courage. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 9.4.1–3.

### ***4:4a One Body and One Spirit***

#### **THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH.**

**CHRYSOSTOM:** What is this one body? They are the faithful throughout the world—in the present, in the past and in the future.... The body does exist apart from its enlivening spirit, else it would not be a body. It is a common human metaphor to say of things that are united and have coherence that they are one body. So we

too take the term *body* as an expression of unity. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 10.4.4.

**ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT. JEROME:** His words *one body and one Spirit* can be taken most simply to mean the one body of Christ, which is the church. Or it could refer to the humanity of the Lord, which he assumed from the Virgin.... Yet indeed the one body can also refer to life and the works that are called in Greek “the practical life.” These are distinguished from the oneness of the Spirit in the heart that finds its unity in contemplation. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.4.3–4.

#### **4:4b Called to the One Hope**

**THE KINGDOM AND ITS CONSUMMATION. JEROME:** If the Father’s house has many mansions, how are we to say that we are called to one hope? One reply is that the one hope of the calling is the kingdom of God. It is as though we were to speak of the one house of God or say that in one house are many mansions. ... Or again, this subtler meaning may be implied: at the end and consummation of all things everything is to be restored to its original condition, when we are all made one body and formed anew into a perfect man. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.4.3–4.

#### **4:5 One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism**

**IDOLATROUS WASHINGS ARE NOT BAPTISM. AMBROSE:** There are many kinds of baptism, but “one baptism” is the cry of the apostle. Why? There are so-called baptisms among unbelievers, but they are not baptisms. They are washings but cannot be baptisms. ON THE SACRAMENTS 2.1.2.

**ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM. JEROME:** There is one Lord and one God, because the dominion of Father and Son is a single Godhead. The faith is said to be one because we believe similarly in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is one. We are all baptized in the same way in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are immersed three times so that the sacrament of the Trinity may be apparent.... There is one baptism in the Spirit, in water and in fire. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.4.5–6.

#### **4:6a One God and Father of All**

**WHETHER FATHER OF ALL OR SOME. ORIGEN:** He is “God and Father of all” by being the God but not the Father of some and both God and Father of others. It is as if, picking out ten men of whom five were someone’s sons and five his slaves, one said, “this is the lord and father of all ten.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

#### **4:6b God is Above, Through and in All**

**GOD TRANSCENDS LOCAL CONFINEMENT. ORIGEN:** It is impossible to speak of any parts or division in the incorporeal, but he is “in all and through all” ... insofar as he is understood as either Wisdom or Word or life or truth, an interpretation which undoubtedly excludes all local confinement. ON FIRST PRINCIPLES 4.4.31.

**A PHYSICAL ANALOGY TO A SPIRITUAL TRUTH. ORIGEN:** Here is a physical analogy to a spiritual truth: We can agree that the sun is “above all” things on earth. But by its rays it might be said at the same time to be “through all.” And insofar as the power of its light penetrates everywhere, it could also be said to be “in all.” It is in this way, I

think, that God’s majesty is denoted by the phrase “above all.” God’s all-sufficiency is denoted in the words “through all.” It also belongs to the power of God to penetrate into all, so that because of his being in all no one is entirely void of him. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

**SUCCINCT THEOLOGY. GREGORY OF NYSSA:** One God contains all and guides all as is fitting and is in all. This one saying of Paul suffices by itself to express everything succinctly, when he says that God is “over all and through all and in all.” REFUTATION OF EUNOMIUS’S CONFESSION OF FAITH 169.

**IN THE FAITHFUL BY THE SPIRIT. AMBROSIASTER:** God the Father owes his existence to no one. Hence he is declared to be “over all” and “through all.” He is “through all” in the sense that all things come from him. Necessarily he will be “over all” the things that come from him. And God is “in all,” that is, dwelling in all the faithful. For he is in us by our confession, because we confess him, and he has given us his own Spirit, through which without doubt he is dwelling in us. He is not in the same sense dwelling in unbelievers who deny that he is the Father of Christ. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 4.5.1–2.

**FROM THE FATHER, THROUGH THE SON, IN THE SPIRIT. AUGUSTINE:** Those who read very closely recognize the Trinity in this passage. Paul writes of God the Father “who is above all and through all and in all.” All things are “from God,” who owes his existence to no one. All things are “through him,” as though to say through the Mediator. All things are “in him,” as though to say in the One who

contains them, that is, reconciles them into one. ON FAITH AND THE CREED 19.<sup>2</sup>

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## 5:15–20 ABSTINENCE FROM SIN

**OVERVIEW:** We must be wise in our dealings with unbelievers (AMBROSIASTER), for the times are not our own. They mostly belong to the wicked (CHRYSOSTOM). We must strive to make all time God’s time (JEROME). God wills moderation so that others will respect us (AMBROSIASTER) and flagrant sins will be avoided (CHRYSOSTOM). To be drunk with the Spirit is to be truly sober (AMBROSE). The faithful are called to be filled with the Spirit and to practice the types of singing commended in the Psalter (CHRYSOSTOM, JEROME), using the mind (CHRYSOSTOM) but not neglecting the voice (AMBROSIASTER). Even in adversity Christians can thank God (JEROME) because they know Christ as their Redeemer (AMBROSIASTER).

### 5:15 *Not as Unwise But as Wise*

**PRUDENCE REQUIRED AMID UNJUST CIVIL AUTHORITY. AMBROSIASTER:** Paul has previously ordained that false and vicious lives be exposed by the servants of God. He now adds a qualifier: they are to be exposed in a careful manner to avoid scandal. The faithful must be prudent in their conduct among the faithless, especially at a time when the faithless hold dominion, trusting in an unholy ruler. If then a Christian encounters a troubler who is turbulent and angry, he should be cautious in his presence so as not to incite him to blaspheme or raise a storm. He will

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<sup>2</sup> M. J. Edwards, ed., *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on

Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 157–161.

utter his words where occasion offers.  
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 5.15.1.

### **5:16 *The Days are Evil***

**REDEEMING THE TIME. CHRYSOSTOM:** His motive for giving this counsel is not to urge them to be more crafty or underhanded. Rather he is saying: “The times do not belong to you. Now you are migrants and expatriates, strangers and foreigners. Do not seek honors. Do not seek glory, authority or retribution. Bear all things. Only by patience will you redeem the time. Pay whatever is required, all that they desire.” HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 18.5.15–17.

#### **GOD’S CREATION OF TIME ITSELF NOT EVIL.**

**CHRYSOSTOM:** When Paul says “the days are evil,” he does not mean that they are created evil or that they are by their very nature evil. Rather he says this of the troubling events that occur in time. We are in the habit of saying, “I have had a terrible day.” But that does not imply that the day of itself is intrinsically terrible. Rather it refers to what has occurred in the day. Some of the things that occur in it are good, as they are enabled by God. Some are bad, because they are brought about by evil willing. Therefore it is we humans who are the authors of the evils that occur in time. Only on this basis are the times called evil. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 18.5.15–17.

**AVOID CONSTANT CHANGE. JEROME:** Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, has risen. Rise up from the sleep of the age. Walk cautiously and prudently. Cast off folly. Take hold of wisdom. In this way you will be able to avoid changing yourself constantly as you walk through the vicissitudes of the times. Rather you will find a unity within yourself

even amid the diversity of the times. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.5.16.

### **5:17 *Understand the Will of the Lord***

**THE WILL OF THE LORD. AMBROSIAS:** Do what you have to do with moderation. This is the will of the Lord. Do not allow commotion and din or discord with bad feeling to give rise to estrangement. So Paul adds these words to what he has said about his wish that the servants of God should admonish wrongdoing. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 5.17.

### **5:18a *Maintain Sobriety***

**THE DUTY OF SOBRIETY. AMBROSIAS:** It is good conduct that strikes fear in the wrongdoer. Only one who is sober is prepared to counsel another realistically and with confidence. The person being counseled feels less resentment when he knows how good is the actual conduct of the one who admonishes him. But where there is intoxication there is also debauchery, and debauchery causes base deeds. Therefore it is our duty to be sober, so that the requirements of good conduct may be observed. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 5.18.

#### **WINE GIVEN TO GLADDEN, NOT INTOXICATE.**

**CHRYSOSTOM:** Immoderate indulgence makes one rash, passionate, prone to stumbling, anger and severity. Wine was given to gladden us, not for intoxication. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 19.5.18.

### **5:18b *Be Filled with the Spirit***

**SPIRIT-FILLED, NOT WINE-FILLED. AMBROSE:** One drunk with wine sways and stumbles. But one who is filled with the Spirit has solid footing in Christ. This is a fine drunkenness,

which produces even greater sobriety of mind. ON THE SACRAMENTS 5.3.17.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT ENTERS THE HOUSE RIGHTLY SWEEPED CLEAN FOR HIM. CHRYSOSTOM:** Be ready for the Spirit's filling. This happens only when we have cleansed our souls of falsehood, anger, bitterness, sexual impurity, uncleanness and covetousness. It happens only when we have become compassionate, meek and forgiving to one another, only when facetiousness is absent, only when we have made ourselves worthy. Only then does the Spirit come to settle within our hearts, only when nothing is there to prevent it. Then he will not only enter but also fill us. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 19.5.19–21.

### ***5:19a Sing Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs***

**TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT, LEARN TO SING PSALMS. CHRYSOSTOM:** Do you wish to be happy? Do you want to know how to spend the day truly blessed? I offer you a drink that is spiritual. This is not a drink for drunkenness that would cut off even meaningful speech. This does not cause us to babble. It does not disturb our vision. Here it is: Learn to sing psalms! Then you will see pleasure indeed. Those who have learned to sing with the psalms are easily filled with the Holy Spirit. But if you sing only the devil's songs you will soon find yourself filled with an unclean spirit. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 19.5.19–21.

**PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS. JEROME:** Our hymns declare the strength and majesty of God. They express gratitude for his benefits and his deeds. Our psalms convey this gratitude also, since the word *Alleluia* is either prefaced or appended to

them. Our psalms properly belong to the domain of ethics, teaching us what is to be done and avoided. The domain of the psalms is the body as an instrument of grace. But the domain of the spiritual canticles is the mind. As we sing spiritual canticles we hear discourses on things above, on the harmony of the world, on the subtly ordered concord of all creatures. These spiritual songs help us express our meaning more plainly for the sake of simple folk. It is more with the mind than with the voice that we sing, offer psalms and praise God. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.5.19.

### ***5:19b Make Melody to the Lord***

**SING WITH HEARTS ENGAGED. CHRYSOSTOM:** "Making melody to the Lord" means paying attention while you are singing. It means not letting your mind drift. Those who in singing do not offer this deep attention to God are merely mouthing psalms, uttering words, while their hearts are preoccupied elsewhere. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 19.5.19–21.

**SINGING FROM THE HEART. AMBROSIAS:** If we are living well, we are always being filled with the Holy Spirit so as to confess and extol the gift of God. The Holy Spirit loves this way of life. This is especially expressed in songs, that praise may be sung to God by every tongue. If the Spirit is dwelling within someone, he is always meditating on the Spirit. It is not only his lips that burst forth but his heart. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 5.19.

### ***5:20 Give Thanks in All Things***

**WHAT IT MEANS TO GIVE THANKS IN CHRIST'S NAME. AMBROSIAS:** We are told to give thanks to God for all his gifts. For God has stooped low to adopt us through Christ his own Son, through whom we know God. We

have learned that God, being Spirit, is to be adored in the Spirit. So we submit ourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ, who commanded us to pursue humility. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 5.21.

**EXTOL GOD ALWAYS AND IN EVERYTHING. JEROME:** Paul now calls us to “give thanks always and in everything.” This is to be understood in a double sense, both in adversity and in good times.... In this way the mind rejoices and bursts out in gratitude to God, not only for what we think good but for what troubles us and happens against our will.... It is obvious that generally we are called to give thanks to God for the sun that rises, for the day that goes by and for the night that brings rest ... for the rains that come, for the earth that brings forth fruit and for the elements in their course.... Finally, we are thankful that we are born, that we have being, that our wants are sufficiently taken care of in the world, as if we lived in the house of an extremely powerful family patriarch, knowing that whatever is in the world has been created on our account. In this way we give thanks when we are grateful for the benefits that come to us from God. All these things, however, the heathen also does, and the Jew and the publican and the Gentile. But the second sense of giving thanks is seen in the special gift of Christians to give thanks to God even in seeming adversity.... Those who are saintly in their own eyes are prone to give thanks to God because they have been released from dangers and afflictions. But according to the apostle the greater virtue is to give thanks to God precisely amid those very dangers and afflictions. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.5.20.

## **5:21–27 HUSBANDS AND WIVES** **[INCOMPLETE SECTION]**

**OVERVIEW:** True marriages are in Christ (JEROME). They bring relationships into social harmony (CHRYSOSTOM). Marriage partners are to be acquiescent to each other as if to the Lord. Meekness characterizes the whole of the Christian life (JEROME), excepting the case in which one is given an unjust command. The simile of the body endears wives to husbands and husbands to wives (THEODORET). It astutely defines the church’s relation to Christ (JEROME). The analogy between Christ and the church has limitations, however, since husband and wife are of the same nature (AMBROSIASER). Much is asked of husband, even more than is asked of the wife—readiness to die for the other (THEODORET, CHRYSOSTOM). Christianity, like marriage, is exclusive in its bonds. There is only one church that Christ loves, not two (CYPRIAN). Husband and wife are cleansed by the same bath of regeneration in baptism and ongoing repentance (AUGUSTINE). As the bride is made holy in faithful baptism (MARIUS VICTORINUS), so does Christ adorn the church (CHRYSOSTOM). So it is said that one spouse washes and cleanses another spouse through water by the Word (MARIUS VICTORINUS). Each looks for inward rather than outward beauty in the other (CHRYSOSTOM).

### **5:21** *Subject to One Another*

**CHRISTIAN LEADERS VIEW THEMSELVES AS SERVANTS. JEROME:** Let bishops hear this, let priests hear, let every rank of learning get this clear: In the church, leaders are servants. Let them imitate the apostle.... The difference between secular rulers and

Christian leaders is that the former love to boss their subordinates whereas the latter serve them. We are that much greater if we are considered least of all. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.5.21.

#### **SUBMISSIVENESS EXCEPT TO UNLAWFUL**

**COMMANDS. THEODORET:** We must not be submissive to those who command us to act unlawfully. But to those who call us to live with piety, we must be subject to one another. Having laid down this general law of obedience, Paul next advises the Ephesians in detail on their duties to another. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 5.21.<sup>3</sup>

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## **6:10–17 THE ARMOR OF GOD**

**OVERVIEW:** The faithful must arm themselves with Christ, trusting in God’s inconceivable might (CHRYSOSTOM, JEROME) to defend themselves against the subtle stratagem of evil powers (THEODORET, CHRYSOSTOM). This is a different kind of warfare, involving an alternative understanding of the cosmos (JEROME). The spirits rule not the natural order but within the wills of fallen humanity (THEODORET), which has fallen disastrously of its own choice (ORIGEN) and now must undertake a battle in the air (JEROME). The Old Testament speaks allegorically of the forthcoming day of battle (ORIGEN, JEROME), which will test our virtues to their limit (AMBROSIASTER). The faithful are girdled about by truth (CHRYSOSTOM). Righteousness, which must always accompany faith (MARIUS VICTORINUS), defends us like a breastplate (JEROME). Our feet must carry abroad the promised gospel (MARIUS VICTORINUS,

THEODORET), which will bring peace both to the nations and to us (CHRYSOSTOM, JEROME). Faith, the chief of virtues (MARIUS VICTORINUS), assures us of God’s providence (THEODORET) and thus acts as a shield against temptation (CHRYSOSTOM). Christ, as our helmet, protects our inward affections (JEROME). The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (MARIUS VICTORINUS), by which we put the devil to flight (THEODORET, CASSIAN).

### **6:10 *Be Strong in the Lord***

**THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. ORIGEN:** To be “strong in the Lord” is to be strengthened in word and wisdom and the contemplation of truth. All these qualities are encompassed in the titles applying to Christ. The greatest of these is the strength of his might, which is stronger than all human virtues combined. Moral corruption lacks power in his presence. This one virtue, being strong in the Lord, is inconceivably powerful. Those who are wise in these matters call it the strength of his might. It has some analogy with bodily might but far exceeds it. This strength is beautiful, as a strong body is beautiful. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

**THE CLIMAX. CHRYSOSTOM:** This is the rhetoric Paul always employs when he is about to conclude his discourse. Did he not already indicate at the very beginning that every person’s house is a bit like a military camp? Now you see he has drawn up every regiment ready for battle. He is ready to arm them and lead them into the struggle. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 22.6.10.

### **6:11 *The Whole Armor of God***

Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 189–194.

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<sup>3</sup> M. J. Edwards, ed., *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on

**THE DEVIL'S WILES. CHRYSOSTOM:** The enemy does not make war on us straightforwardly or openly but by his *wiles*. What are the devil's *wiles*? They consist in trying to capture us by some shortcut and always by deceit.... The devil never openly lays temptation before us. He does not mention idolatry out loud. But by his stratagems he presents idolatrous choices to us, by persuasive words and by employing clever euphemisms. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 22.6.11.

**CHRIST HIMSELF AS THE ARMOR OF GOD. JEROME:** From what we read of the Lord our Savior throughout the Scriptures, it is manifestly clear that the whole armor of Christ is the Savior himself. It is he whom we are asked to "put on." It is one and the same thing to say "Put on the whole armor of God" and "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Our belt is truth and our breastplate is righteousness. The Savior is also called both "truth" and "righteousness." So no one can doubt that he himself is that very belt and breastplate. On this principle he is also to be understood as the "preparation of the gospel of peace." He himself is the "shield of faith" and the "helmet of salvation." He is the "sword of the Spirit," because he is the Word of God, living and efficacious, the utterance of which is stronger than any helmet and sharp on both sides.<sup>5</sup> EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.11.

**WHO MUST FIGHT IN THIS BATTLE? THEODORET:** In ordinary battles the generals do not arm women or children or the aged. But our general, Christ the Lord, distributes this royal armory to all alike. He then teaches them the stratagems of the devil. This is what he means by the devil's *wiles*. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.11.

## **6:12a Contending Against Principalities**

**IT IS NOT FLESH AND BLOOD THAT DECEIVE.**

**JEROME:** The battle is not against flesh and blood or ordinary temptations. The scene is the war of flesh against spirit. We are being incited to become entrapped in the works of the flesh. ... But this is not merely a physical temptation. It is not merely the inward struggle against flesh and blood as such. Rather Satan has cleverly transformed himself into an angel of light. He is striving to persuade us to regard him as a messenger of goodness. This is how he throws his full might into the struggle. He employs deceptive signs and lying omens. He sets before us every possible ruse of evil. Then, when he has so ensnared us that we trust him, he says to us, "Thus says the Lord." This is not flesh and blood deceiving us. It is not a typical human temptation. It is the work of principalities and powers, the ruler of darkness and spiritual wickedness. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.11.

## **6:12b Against Powers and Rulers of This Present Darkness**

**PAUL'S UNIQUE TERM: WORLD RULERS OF THIS PRESENT DARKNESS. JEROME:** We have elsewhere read the expression *world rulers* nowhere in the Old or the New Testament—only here. Paul the apostle employs this name because it was necessary for him, in addressing the Ephesians, to apply new terms to new and invisible subjects. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.11.

**THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORLD RULERS.**

**THEODORET:** Paul calls them *world rulers* not because they have received authority to rule from God but because they have made

captive loose-living people as their willing slaves. The holy apostle has imitated the best sort of general. Wishing to drive out the unfit from his army, the astute general describes to them the exceptional courage of the enemy. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.12.

### ***6:12c Spiritual Hosts of Wickedness in Heavenly Places***

**HOSTS OF WICKEDNESS. ORIGEN:** From what ancient Scripture is Paul drawing when he speaks of “the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places?” My conjecture is that it comes out of the narratives written in Israel about wars and particular combats, like those of David and Goliath, and about the battles of the children of Israel against their enemies.... In each of these narratives there is some implication of the vanquishing and overcoming of demonic spiritual powers. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

**INIQUITY IN HIGH PLACES. ORIGEN:** Some spiritual creatures have sinned in heaven. It is against these that we now struggle, “against the spirits of iniquity in high places.” They first sinned in heaven. Now they are doing it again on earth. PALESTINIAN CATENA ON PSALM 118.119.

**WHETHER DEMONS COULD RESIDE IN THE SAME HEAVEN WITH GOD. JEROME:** “Hosts of wickedness in heavenly places?” This does not mean that demons dwell in heaven but that the air above has received this name, as birds who fly through the air are called “fowls of heaven.” ... It is indeed impious to suppose that the spirits of wickedness in the heavens occupy the same heaven of which God says, “It is my throne.”<sup>15</sup> EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.11.

### ***6:13 Being Able to Stand***

**WHAT IS MEANT BY “THE EVIL DAY.” JEROME:** The “evil day” may arguably signify the present time.... But the better interpretation is that “to stand in the evil day” is a reference to the final consummation and judgment. Then the devil, our enemy and our adversary, will struggle to keep us in his clutches. Who will be freed from him? One who understands what is said of the poor and needy: “the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.” ... Still another interpretation, however, expounds this more simply: The Ephesians are now being encouraged to prepare for future temptations and persecutions. Paul the apostle in his prophetic spirit saw them as coming at a later time. They are being counseled to do anything they can that might enable them to stand in the faith of the gospel and not to lapse under persecution. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.13.

**THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD. AMBROSIAS:** We are waging war against the fiercest of enemies. He is skilled in every deceit. We must therefore keep on the lookout, with all circumspection and care, that wherever they test our resistance they will find us protected and ready.... Against earthly foes the body must be strengthened with food and the mind aroused by drink to become bold enough to fight back. So against the spiritual weapons of iniquity we must fight spiritually. But our weapons must be sobriety and abstinence, that, having been imbued with the Holy Spirit, we may vanquish the unclean, warring spirits. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.17.1–2.

### ***6:14a Girding One’s Loins with Truth***

**WHY BEGIN WITH THE GIRDLE? CHRYSOSTOM:** The first art in tactics is to know how to stand firmly. From this firmness all else follows....

He is not speaking here of a literal girdle. He is setting in contrast, by this metaphor, the soldier who is slack and dissipated in his appetites, who lets his thoughts creep on the ground.... He speaks here of the loins. Just like the keel of a ship the loins are the central balancing support of our whole body. They are a kind of foundation. All is built up from them.... The girdle is used in combat to bind and hold together this foundation of ours. That is why we are also girdled when we run. It secures the strength within us. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 23.6.14.

### **6:14b Putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness**

**RIGHTEOUSNESS LIVES BY FAITH. MARIUS**

**VICTORINUS:** Faith lives in righteousness. Faith remains the fountain of all the virtues, as Paul has often stated. Righteousness is not as strong as faith because “righteousness lives by faith.” But the effect of righteousness is accomplished by faith. So in this battle we must strive toward righteousness. Faith is proven to be true faith when we live righteously. Then faith is seen to be useful to us, as the righteousness that accompanies faith is useful. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.13–14.

**WHY IS IT CALLED A BREASTPLATE?. JEROME:** One who has put on a sturdy breastplate is difficult to wound. Especially well-protected are those essential parts of the body upon which life depends. So put on the breastplate. Strap it together by iron rings and insert the hooks in their place. One protected by such a breastplate of righteousness will not be like a vulnerable stag that receives the arrow in his liver. He will not lapse into rage or lust. Rather he will be protected, having a clean heart, having God as the fashioner of his

breastplate, since he fashions the whole armor for every one of the saints. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.14.

### **6:15 Shod with the Equipment of the Gospel of Peace**

**AT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FEET?. MARIUS**

**VICTORINUS:** The gospel is to be carried abroad. It is to be preached among the nations. Wherever, then, it is preached, it must be heard. But so that all may hear, one must use one’s feet to travel. And so do we travel with haste and urgency. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.15.

**HAVING SHOD YOUR FEET WITH THE EQUIPMENT OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. JEROME:**

It is asked whether he says “the gospel of peace” to distinguish it from another gospel. Or is it rather the distinguishing property of the gospel that it may be called “the gospel of peace?” If anyone therefore has peace, he is shod with the gospel of Christ. With this footwear he is prepared to walk. Being prepared, however, he does well not to imagine himself already perfect. Rather he merely is prepared to press on and by pressing on hopes to arrive at the goal. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.15.

**ONLY BY BATTLING THE DEMONIC DO WE RECEIVE PEACE WITH GOD. CHRYSOSTOM:**

This war against the demonic puts an end to the previous war against God. As we are making war with the devil, we are making peace with God. Have no fear, beloved, the victory is already won. This is the good news. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 24.6.14–17.

**HOW LOVELY ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS. THEODORET:**

Your footwear is not put on in order that you may walk about foolishly but to accomplish the course of the gospel. In this way you will receive the

prophetic blessing: “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.15.<sup>28</sup>

### **6:16 Taking the Shield of Faith**

**THE CAPITAL VIRTUE. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** He returns to that capital virtue, the shield of faith. It contains all the other virtues and brings them all to fulfillment. Unless we are armed with this shield we will not have the strength to battle courageously and resist all these deadly powers. But with the protection of faith we repel all these blows and whatever attacks come from the whole host of powers. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.16.

**THE SHIELD OF FAITH. THEODORET:** In place of a shield you are to have faith. For this shield is the insignia of God’s governance. This shield opens up to you the prizes of war, the eulogies of the victors, the crowns of heroes. All this quenches the “fiery darts of the evil one.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.16.

**QUENCHING FIERY DARTS. CHRYSOSTOM:** By “his darts” Paul means both temptations and perverse desires. He calls them fiery because that is the nature of the appetite. Faith is capable of commanding hosts of demons. How much more is faith capable of ordering the passions of the soul? HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 24.6.14–17.

### **6:17a Taking the Helmet of Salvation**

**THE HELMET GUARDS THE HEAD. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** It is Christ indeed who is the author of salvation. He is our head. He descended to us and redeemed us by his own mystery. It is he indeed who guards the heads of the faithful. Therefore he is the “helmet of salvation.” He is the Word by

which the adverse powers are overcome and taken captive.... Christ, who is the Word of God, was sent to overcome all corruption and wickedness and even death itself. It is in this sense that Paul refers to “the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.17.

**THE HELMET OF SALVATION. JEROME:** Because of this helmet of salvation all the senses in our head remain intact. It especially protects the eyes. Solomon in Ecclesiastes notes that “the eyes of the wise are in the head.” Paul understood the importance of headship. He knew why the eyes are located in the head. If Christ is the head of a person of faith and “the eyes of the wise are in the head,” it follows that all our senses, mind, thought, speech and counsel (if, that is, we are wise) are in Christ. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.17.

### **6:17b Taking the Sword of the Spirit**

**THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. JOHN CASSIAN:** This is the sword that for our health spills the noxious blood that animates the matter of our sins, cutting out and excising whatever it finds in our soul that is carnal or earthly and, once it has made us dead to vices, causing us to live to God and flourish in spiritual virtues. CONFERENCES 20.8.11.

**THE WORD OF GOD IN US. THEODORET:** By “the sword of the Spirit” he means the activity of the Spirit. This is the *Word of God*. This means that just as God fashioned all by the Word, so the most Holy Spirit effects all that has to do with our salvation. With this sword the spiritual person rebukes the devil, and the devil flees. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.17.<sup>37</sup>

## 6:18[-20]–24 PRAYERS FOR PAUL AND THE SAINTS [INCOMPLETE]

**OVERVIEW:** We are at war (THEODORET). We call for the king himself to attend the battle (CHRYSOSTOM). We enter the battle with fervent prayer (MARIUS VICTORINUS) that issues from a pure conscience (AMBROSIASER). All pray for all. Let the inner man pray in the spirit, whether he prays aloud or not (MARIUS VICTORINUS). Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him that he may have both insight and boldness (AMBROSIASER). Though he has a new revelation to preach (JEROME), he is suffering novel indignities (AMBROSIASER) and therefore needs encouragement (MARIUS VICTORINUS). The commendation of Tychicus will endear him to the Ephesians (AMBROSIASER, JEROME). It illustrates Paul's humility and solicitude. Hoping to quell the discords of the Ephesians (MARIUS VICTORINUS), Paul prays for the peace that comes with faith and love (AMBROSIASER, JEROME). He blesses those who have true love for Christ (THEODORET), warning them against unseemly associations (CHRYSOSTOM) and promising them an eternal reward (MARIUS VICTORINUS).

### 6:18a *Pray at All Times*

**THE INNER MAN IS PRAYING IN SPIRIT EVEN WHEN NOT PRAYING ALOUD.** MARIUS VICTORINUS: This means that we should not say or utter particular words or recite them in our prayers as though they were premeditated or written down. We are to pray “in the spirit” and “at all times.” Let your deep affections enter into your praying. The inner spirit, that is, the inner man, is making his prayer with intense desire. He is praying all

the time, so that even when he is not praying aloud he is still praying in the spirit. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.18.

**DISTINGUISHING PRAYER AND PETITION.** MARIUS VICTORINUS: When he says “through every prayer and petition,” I think he has this distinction in mind: It is a prayer when we speak the praises of God and recount his great works and when we give thanks and worship him. It is a petition when we pray to God either to pardon our sins or to offer his grace to us. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.18.

**WITH A CLEAN CONSCIENCE.** AMBROSIASER: Insofar as our conduct is right we are rightly prepared for the Holy Spirit to abide in us. Hence we are more ready to obtain what we request. This therefore is what it means to pray in the Spirit at all times. We are directing our prayer to God with a clean conscience and sincere faith. One who prays with a polluted mind prays only in the flesh, not in the spirit. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.20.1.

**CALLING UPON THE KING.** CHRYSOSTOM: See how clever this blessed author is. He has armed them with the utmost protection. So now what remains? Only to call on the king and urge him to extend his hand. HOMILY ON EPHESIANS 24.6.18–20.

### 6:18b *Making Supplication for the Saints*

**WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE.** MARIUS VICTORINUS: Some might think that the phrase *at all times* means only the daytime. But, so that he could amplify the force of “at all times,” what does he say? “With all perseverance.” This calls us to a certain persistent disposition of the mind. We do not pray as if we were asleep. This is what some sound

like who pray by reciting or reading familiar phrases or uttering them routinely from memory. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.18.

#### **SUPPLICATION FOR ALL THE SAINTS. MARIUS**

**VICTORINUS:** The saints themselves, with the bishops and apostles and elders, are called to pray on behalf of the faithful and the catechumens and all the other members of the body. It is typical of Paul to make mention of the whole people of God in prayer. He also calls upon the whole people of God to pray on behalf of their leaders, bishops and saints, and then he adds: “Pray for me too.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.18–19.

**KEEP ALERT. THEODORET:** Those who have wars continually pressing on them do not even sleep. Therefore the holy apostle tells them under conditions of battle to keep awake and pray constantly, not giving in to the pains of the body but to bear them with the utmost fortitude. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.18.

#### **6:19a Praying for Paul**

##### **THOSE WHOM HE ADMONISHED HE NOW ASKS**

**FOR PRAYERS. MARIUS VICTORINUS:** Isn’t this wonderful? From those whom he himself has just now admonished, those whom he has instructed, to whom he has preached the gospel, he now asks for help. He is asking them for their prayers. He goes on to explain what he is asking them to pray for: “that utterance may be given to me.” His prayer is definite and specific, that a particular profit may accrue. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.18–19.

##### **HE REQUESTS PRAYER FOR FULL AND BOLD**

**UTTERANCE. AMBROSIAS:** He exhorts them to pray for him in two ways: first that his thoughts may be filled by the Spirit for the

full declaration of the mystery, and second that he may be given a faculty of bold utterance in proclaiming it. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.20.2.

#### **6:19b Boldly Proclaiming the Mysteries of the Gospel**

##### **ONLY WITH PURITY OF HEART IS THE MOUTH**

**OPENED BOLDLY. ORIGEN:** Boldness of speech is a possibility only and always for those who have a heart that does not condemn them ... and therefore the one who boldly makes known the mysteries is rare, because those who have boldness before God are rare. EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

**LET THE TREASURIES BE OPENED. JEROME:** This is to be understood as if he said, “Let the treasures be opened. Let the promises hidden from ages be revealed. Let the Spirit enter to bring forth those things that have been concealed.” That this is indeed the meaning of this passage ... is clarified by what follows: “in confidence,” he says, “to make known the mystery of the gospel.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 3.6.20.

#### **6:20a An Ambassador in Chains**

**AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS. AMBROSIAS:** This prayer God hears gladly. The apostle is being despised. God’s own mission is under challenge. So God will certainly not withhold his gifts from one who is upholding God’s own cause. Custom and law forbid the infliction of harm on human ambassadors. So would it not be presumptuous and rash to bring on the ambassadors of God not only harm but death? EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 6.20.3.

#### **6:20b Asking for Boldness to Speak**

**PETITION FOR BOLDNESS. MARIUS VICTORINUS:**

*Boldly* means “so that I may not fail to accomplish it fully and that my chains may not so work on my mind as to prevent my accomplishing it, the task of expounding the mystery, as I ought.” EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 2.6.20.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M. J. Edwards, ed., *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on

Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 206–215.