

PAUL'S
INSTRUCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO HOW TO LIVE
sent to the
EPHESIANS
and
Other Gentile Jesus-Followers in Asia
An English Translation of the Greek Text
Digital file version : Work in Progress-A
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Address and Greeting

PART 1

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Messiah Jesus by the will of God.
- 2•To the holy ones who are at Ephesus, even the believers who are in Messiah Jesus.
- 3•Grace to you and *shalom* from God, our Father, and from the Lord, Jesus the Messiah.

[1:1-2]

Introduction

§ 1 • *Praise to God for the Grace He Has Given to the Jews who Have Believed*

PART 2

- 2 Praise be to God, even the Father of our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, the one who has blessed those of us who are included among the followers of the *messiah* with every aspect of the Spirit-imparted blessing that consists of transcendent realities. 2•This he has done insofar as he chose us, before the foundation of the cosmos, to be “in him” so that we would be holy and unblemished before him, since—in an act of love, in accord with the desire of his will—he had predestined us, through Jesus the Messiah, for our adoption as sons in relation to him. 3•This is to the praise of the glory of his grace—the grace with which he graced us in the one who loved us. 4•In him we have freedom through his blood—the forgiveness of trespasses in accord with the riches of the grace that he bestowed in abundance upon us. 5•With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the secret of his will. 6•This secret was in accord with what he wanted—which he put forth in him—with regard to supplying with Life the throughout-all-time *pleroma*¹. 7•It follows that he gathers together all the members of the *pleroma* under one category—“being in the *messiah*”—uniting “in him” both those “under the skies”² and those “upon the land.”³ 8•Indeed, “in him”—having been predestined in accord with the purpose of the one who works all things in accord with the counsel of his will—we have been allotted an inheritance; and that is to the end that we—the ones who were the first

¹The “completed whole,” specifically, the “full and complete set of the people of God.”

²Those “under the skies” are Gentiles.

³Those “upon the land” are Jews.

to hope in the *messiah*—might exist to the praise of his glory.

[1:3-12]

§ 2 • Paul Responds to Fact That His Gentile Readers Are Included as Beneficiaries of God's Grace

PART 3

3 “In him” you also, having heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—“in him” you too, because you believed, were sealed by the Holy One with the promised spirit—which is the pledge of our inheritance—for the redemption of his possession, resulting in the praise of his glory.

[1:13-14]

4 Indeed, for this very reason, having heard of the belief in our Lord Jesus which is among you and of your love toward all the holy ones, I do not cease giving thanks when, in my prayers, I make mention of you. 2•My prayer for you is that the God of our Lord, Jesus the Messiah—the Father of glory—may give you his Spirit, who brings the revealed wisdom that consists in an understanding of him, when the eyes of your heart have been enlightened. 3•And this is to the end that you will know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of the glory of his inheritance benefitting the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe. 4•This power is in accord with the working of the strength of his might which he worked on behalf of the *messiah* when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the divine realm, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and far above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. 5•Indeed he placed all people in subjection under his feet, and he gave him as head over all people in the *ekklesia*⁴, which is the body of those who belong to him, the *pleroma* of the one who is filling the whole with all who are his.

[1:15-23]

Preliminary Considerations: God's Ultimate Agenda

§ 1 • God's Plan to Create One Eternal People

§ 1.1 • Paul's Gentile Readers Have Been Rescued by God's Plan for Extending Mercy to Sinners

PART 4

5 Now, as for you—you were dead in your trespasses and sins. 2•In these you formerly walked, in conformity to the times of this established order, in accord with the ruler behind the power of the atmosphere in which we live, of that intangible force now at work among the sons of disobedience. 3•Among them we too all formerly conducted our lives by the desires of our *sarx*⁵, doing the things wanted by the *sarx* and its intentions. 4•We were, in truth,

⁴An assembly, group, collection, or mass of people—specifically, that group of people that constitutes the eternal people of God.

⁵The word *sarx* means “flesh” (the meat that hangs on the skeleton of a human or animal). However, it is used as a synecdoche for the present state of our physical existence as human beings, taken as a whole (that is, it stands for human existence in our flesh here and now). And often it stands for the wickedness and depravity that constitute the moral condition that we have as human beings in the present physical state of our existence in the here and now. In this statement here, we could paraphrase “the desires of our *sarx*” as “the desires that arise naturally from the natural-born human beings that we are in our present state as sons of Adam.”

Does God Love Me?

Some Notes

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PART I

Love: Some Definitions

DEFINITION OF LOVE IN GENERAL

1. Every use of the word “love” involves an inclination to be good to or to wish good to come to the one who is loved.
 - 1.1. Therefore, there is an intrinsic connection between love and an inclination to promote someone’s well-being. If I claim to love a person, one can reasonably expect that I will desire good for the person I love, and (to whatever extent is possible) that I will work to promote good and well-being for him.
 - 1.1.1. ‘Hate’ is the opposite. My being hated by a person means that I can expect that person to desire my harm and (to whatever extent is possible) to work to promote it.
2. There are at least four different senses of the verb “love” as that word is used in the New Testament: love as desire, love as affection, love as esteem, and love as choice to do good (or, moral love). These four senses of the word “love” correspond to four different kinds of love.
3. However, it would seem that the word “love” can be used to denote a complex reality that involves one or more of these different “kinds” of love combined in one and the same act.
 - 3.1. When one says he “loves” his friend, he could very well be describing the fact that he has both love as affection and love as esteem for his friend.
 - 3.2. When a husband says that he “loves” his wife, he could very well be describing the fact that he has all of the following for his wife: love as desire, love as affection, and love as esteem.

DEFINITION OF LOVE AS DESIRE

4. If a man says to a woman, “I love you,” it may (in the right sort of context) mean that he has a particular sort of DESIRE for her (eg., sexual or romantic).
 - 4.1. The woman who is desired in such a way, can expect that the man will WANT to promote her well-being in everything he does, but there is nothing that is particularly morally good about such an inclination. It is as self-serving as it is not.
 - 4.2. Note that love as desire is a particular sort of FEELING experienced by the one who loves—a feeling engendered by the one who is loved. It is the feeling of desire.
 - 4.3. Love as desire can have persons, places, or things as its object.
 - 4.3.1. If I say, “I love ice cream,” I am using ‘love’ in this sense. I am saying that I have a particular sort of DESIRE for ice cream. Namely, I desire the pleasure of its taste. If I say, “I love Hawaii,” I am using love in this same sense. I mean that I have a particular sort of DESIRE that being in Hawaii satisfies.
 - 4.4. In the New Testament, John’s warning not to “love the world” is, in a sense, roughly like this. However, John may also mean it in a sense that includes love as affection and/or love as esteem (see below).

DEFINITION OF LOVE AS AFFECTION

5. If a man says to his child, "I love you," he means that he has a particular sort of FEELING toward the child (a tender, gentle feeling of fondness or liking). He means that the child is dear to him. He means that he values and treasures the child. He means that he finds delight and treasure in observing the child and relating to him.
 - 5.1. Note that the father who loves his child in such a way will FEEL like he wants to promote the child's well-being in everything he does. However, there is nothing that is particularly morally good about this inclination. It is as self-serving as it is not.
 - 5.2. Note that love as affection is a particular sort of FEELING that is experienced by the one who loves—a feeling engendered by the one who is loved. It is a feeling of affection for the beloved. When one feels affection toward another (and, therefore, feels delight in, values, and treasures the one he loves), then he will FEEL like he wants only good, and no harm, to come to the one he loves. However, in and of itself, the FEELING does not guarantee that the one who loves with affection will always act in a way that promotes the good of the one whom he loves.
 - 5.3. Love as affection could, conceivably, have persons, places, or things as its object.
 - 5.3.1. If I say, "I love my pet dog," I may very well be using love in this sense. I mean that I have a feeling of affection toward my dog.

DEFINITION OF LOVE AS ESTEEM

6. If one person says to another, "I love you," he sometimes means that he has a particularly high esteem for the other person. Love as esteem is not a feeling so much as it is an ATTITUDE. It is a regard for the one who is loved—a regard that is based on a judgment that the "loved" one (esteemed one) is virtuous in some way important to the one who esteems him.
 - 6.1. Note that the student who loves his teacher in this way will have an attitude of high regard for his teacher. He will respect who the teacher is and what he represents. He will desire to emulate one or more of the virtues possessed by the teacher.
 - 6.2. Unlike the other forms of love, the one who esteems another may not, by virtue of that love, *feel* like he wants to be good to the one he loves (esteems). However, he will most certainly form the judgment that *the other is deserving that good, rather than harm, come to him*. Such a judgment is implicitly contained within love as esteem.
 - 6.2.1. However, the judgment that the one loved by me deserves my being good to him will not, in and of itself, guarantee that I will always act in a way that promotes the other person's good. This sort of love is an attitude, a disposition, and a judgment. In and of itself, it is not an action.
 - 6.3. Love as esteem could, conceivably, have persons, places, or things as its object.
 - 6.3.1. If I say, "I love American values" I am using love in this sense. I mean that I have a high regard for the values at the foundation of American culture. I am saying that, as a matter of judgment, I respect those values and hold them in high esteem.
 - 6.4. When, in the Bible, we are exhorted to "love God," we are certainly being exhorted to esteem God.
 - 6.4.1. However, it is very possible that, when we describe a person as one who does, in

fact, “love God,” it is likely that what we are describing is a complex notion that includes not only love as esteem, but very possibly love as affection and/or love as desire (in some sense) as well.

- 6.4.1.1. However, having the requisite esteem—and living and behaving in a manner consonant with that esteem—is, I think, the only thing that is “commanded” of us.
- 6.5. The same thing can be said for the exhortation to “love one another (as believers).” Fundamentally, we are being exhorted to esteem fellow-believers in the right sort of way and to act and behave toward them in a way that is consonant with that esteem. We may, in fact, also have affection for a fellow-believer, but affection is neither commanded nor required.

DEFINITION OF LOVE AS A CHOICE TO DO GOOD : MORAL LOVE

7. When a person is commanded to “love his neighbor,” it is moral love that is in view. When a person is commanded to moral love, he is being commanded to act and behave in such a way toward his neighbor that he is being good to him and is contributing to his neighbor’s well-being. Nothing in this commandment requires one to FEEL in any particular way toward his neighbor, nor requires one to hold a POSITIVE judgment or evaluation of his neighbor.
- 7.1. Note that in this sense of love (moral love), then, one can love a person without having any positive feelings or regard for the one he loves. His love consists of nothing more than to act toward the other person in a manner that is loving (that is, in a manner that seeks to increase his well-being in some way). Hence, to love in the moral sense, is *to ACT*. It is not to feel, nor to hold a particular outlook, attitude, or judgment. One can genuinely love his neighbor in the sense without ever liking his neighbor.
- 7.1.1. It is possible to LOVE my enemy. That is, it is possible to *love* the person I *hate*. What would that mean? It would mean that I act toward my enemy in such a way that I contribute to his well-being. In so doing, I would be contributing to the well-being of someone that I might rather feel like harming. In other words, I would be loving morally the very individual that I am hating emotionally.
- 7.2. Correspondingly, being a loving (in the moral sense) person is to be a person who is inclined to love others (in the moral sense)—that is, to be a person who is inclined to act in the best interests of others.
- 7.3. The noun ‘love’ (in the moral sense)—eg., as in “In love he died on the cross for us.”—means *an act of love*, which is to say, an act that is intended to increase the well-being of another in some way, or to bring about good for another.
- 7.4. Love in the moral sense can only have persons as its object. One cannot love (in the moral sense) places or things.

PART II

Does God Love Me?

CLARIFYING THE QUESTION

8. The question “Does God love me?” is ambiguous. It could mean one of, at least, four different things:
 - 8.1. Does God desire me in any sense? Do I make him feel good?
 - 8.1.1. If I can answer “yes” to this, then it follows that I believe God is good to me because I make him feel good or desire me in some sense.
 - 8.1.1.1. God’s love for me in this sense would be a subjective state of God’s person.
 - 8.2. Does God have affection for me? Do I make him feel fond of me?
 - 8.2.1. If I can answer “yes” to this, then it follows that I believe God is good to me because he is fond of me.
 - 8.2.1.1. God’s love for me in this sense would be a subjective state of God’s person.
 - 8.3. Does God hold me in esteem? Does he respect me and hold me in high regard?
 - 8.3.1. If I can answer “yes” to this, then it follows that I believe God is good to me because he respects me and holds me in high regard.
 - 8.3.1.1. God’s love for me in this sense would be a subjective state of God’s person.
 - 8.4. Does God act to bring about good for me? Does he act lovingly toward me?
 - 8.4.1. If I can answer “yes” to this, then I understand that nothing else follows from his love for me. It does not follow that he acts in love for me because I make him feel good, because he is fond of me, or because he holds me in high regard. God’s being good to me is attributable to the goodness of God himself. Nothing beyond that is necessarily indicated.
 - 8.4.1.1. God’s love for me in this sense would be an objective action by God.
 - (A) God’s love for me in this sense would be a matter of his choosing to act toward me in such a way that it had a positive outcome for me.
 - (B) If God loves me in this sense, then he does not treat me well because he loves me; rather, his treating me well just IS his loving me.
 9. For our purposes, we can simplify the ambiguity of the question “Does God love me?” by reducing it to just two different questions:
 - 9.1. Do I cause God to enter a subjective state that is of such a nature that it inclines him to treat me well and do good to me?
 - 9.1.1. That is, do I cause God to want me, to be fond of me, or to greatly respect me in such a way that it inclines him to treat me well?
 - 9.1.2. We can frame this question this way: *Does God love me subjectively?*
 - 9.2. Does God choose to act toward me in a way that has a positive outcome for me?
 - 9.2.1. That is, when God acts, does he make choices that are intended to bring about good

for me?

9.2.2. We can frame this question this way: *Does God love me morally and objectively?*

THE BIBLE'S ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

10. According to biblical teaching, the answer to the question “Does God love me?” depends upon which of the two senses above is intended by the question:
 - 10.1. To the question, does God love me morally and objectively?
 - 10.1.1. The answer is an emphatic “yes,” if I am one of the elect whom God has chosen to be a part of the eternal people of God in the eternal age to come.
 - 10.1.2. The answer is a sorrowful “no,” if I am not one of the elect and my ultimate destiny is condemnation and destruction.
 - 10.2. To the question, does God love me subjectively?
 - 10.2.1. The answer is “no.” There is nothing about me that would give him any reason to do so.
 - 10.2.1.1. Therefore, from a biblical perspective, God’s objective love for me is not a reflection of some virtue that God sees in me and responds to subjectively. God’s objective love for me is a reflection of the being and character of God—he just is profoundly loving and merciful.

THE TYPICAL CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

11. However, the typical Christian today is inclined to answer this same question, Does God love me subjectively? with a “Yes.” The typical Christian believes that it is God’s subjective “love” for me that has induced him to act in kindness toward me.

EXPLANATION FOR THE DISCREPANCY

12. Why the discrepancy between what the Bible teaches and what the typical Christian today tends to believe? Why does the typical Christian today think that God loves him subjectively when the Bible teaches that God does no such thing?
 - 12.1. Why do we respond so enthusiastically to the idea that God loves us subjectively? Why are we so disturbed when someone challenges the claim that God loves us subjectively?
 - 12.1.1. The answer to these questions can be traced like this:
 - 12.1.1.1. Every human being wants to be valued, to be significant, and to be important to someone else.
 - 12.1.1.2. Many of us never experience these things from other human beings in this world. At least, we do not experience being significant to another to the degree that we desire.
 - (A) For this reason, I may very well desire to experience being significant to another more than anything else in the world! I want an answer to my aloneness, to my invisibility, to my feeling of insignificance, and to my lack of intimacy.
 - 12.1.1.3. If it happens to be true that God loves us subjectively, then it would follow that God values us, finds us significant, and considers us important. For his loving us subjectively just is his desiring us, being fond of us, and/or holding us in high es-

teem because of our value, significance, or import to him.

- 12.1.1.4. God—unlike fickle human beings—is constant, steady, and reliable. If he loves us subjectively, then he is constant, reliable, unchanging, and unchanging in the way he FEELS toward us. And, correspondingly, he is constant, reliable, unchanging, and unchanging in the way he sees us as valuable, important, significant, and/or dear to himself.
 - 12.1.1.5. This fact strikes us as the ANSWER to our unmet need for value, significance, and intimacy. If God, the ultimately reliable and faithful OTHER, loves me subjectively—if he feels that I am valuable, important, and dear—then I will always be able to feel and experience myself as being intimately significant, important, and valuable to someone else.
 - 12.1.1.6. Given the fact that I am eager for a solution to my aloneness, to my invisibility, to my feeling of insignificance, and to my lack of intimacy, I cling tightly to the claim that God loves me subjectively and I am greatly disturbed when anyone calls that claim into question.
 - 12.1.1.7. Note that this is precisely how the typical Christian seeks to sell Jesus and God to modern Americans: as a solution to aloneness, invisibility, feelings of insignificance, and lack of intimacy. And this is precisely what many modern Christians think they have obtained. Hence, when someone challenges the truth of the claim that God loves them subjectively, they get very upset—they feel like the whole point of their being a Christian has been challenged.
13. Given what the typical Christian today is wanting from his Christianity, he would rather embrace the comforting claim that God loves him subjectively than embrace what it might be that the Bible says is true. Therefore, the discrepancy between what the Bible teaches and what the typical Christian today believes and asserts is ultimately due to the unbelief of the typical modern Christian.

PROBLEM WITH SEEING GOD'S LOVE AS SOLUTION TO INSIGNIFICANCE

14. When we note the following, it becomes rather apparent that there is a glaring problem with the typical Christian's insistence that God loves us subjectively—
- 14.1. If my response to the gospel is nothing more than seeing its teaching as the fact that God loves me, and seeing that as the solution to my aloneness, invisibility, feelings of insignificance, and lack of intimacy, then some of the things that are central to the gospel are completely irrelevant to me:
 - 14.1.1. Jesus' messiahship.
 - 14.1.2. Jesus' return.
 - 14.1.3. Jesus' high-priesthood.
 - 14.1.4. Jesus' propitiation.
 - 14.1.5. Etc.
 - 14.2. If my response to the gospel is nothing more than seeing its teaching as the fact that God loves me, and seeing that as the solution to my aloneness, invisibility, feelings of insignificance, and lack of intimacy, then there are other things that are central features of the

gospel that, while they are not irrelevant to me, are reduced to secondary importance:

- 14.2.1. Jesus' death on the cross.
 - 14.2.1.1. For this is only relevant insofar as I am told it is evidence that he loves me.
- 14.2.2. The forgiveness of sins.
 - 14.2.2.1. This is only relevant insofar as I am told that he will overlook my sins and love me anyway.
- 14.2.3. Eternal life.
 - 14.2.3.1. Obviously eternal life has to be relevant; but what is of much greater import to me is that I feel significant now, not what happens in the distant future.
- 14.2.4. Etc.
- 14.3. Given what the typical Christian today is wanting from his Christianity, if he can be assured that he is loved by God subjectively, then nothing that is actually central to the gospel message is of much importance to him.

PART III

Biblical Solutions to Our Personal Needs

- 15. Since it is NOT the case the God loves us subjectively, does it follow that the God of the Bible (and his Son Jesus) do not provide any solution to our desperate need for intimacy, significance, importance, etc.?
 - 15.1. NO, It does NOT follow. For the TRUTH *does* provide solutions to the things we need. The TRUTH in the Bible *does* provide “answers” to our longings. But those answers do not lie in the truth that God loves us subjectively. They lie in other truths that the Bible teaches.
- 16. The biblical basis for my importance is found in the following truth:
 - 16.1. I am created in the image of God. I am a very important creation. God created me to reflect something of who he himself is.
- 17. The biblical solution to my sense of invisibility and insignificance is found in the following truth:
 - 17.1. As the author of my very being and story, God is intimately concerned with every aspect of who I am and what happens to me. I am never invisible to him. I am never insignificant to him. For I am never cut off from my author's focus, attention, and concern.
 - 17.1.1. A pot that is being formed and shaped by the potter is always the focus of the potter's attention. A pot on the potter's wheel is NEVER invisible or insignificant to the potter.
- 18. The biblical answer to my sense of aloneness and lack of intimacy is found in the following truth:
 - 18.1. Because God is the mind who conceives me, holds me, contains me, and wills me into existence, I am always intimately connected with the author of my being.
 - 18.1.1. “In him we live, and move, and have our very existence.” (Acts 17:28)

19. However, the biblical solution to all of these personal needs lies in WISDOM.
 - 19.1. That is to say, I can only experience intimacy, importance, significance, etc. to the extent that ...
 - 19.1.1. I actually believe what the Bible teaches me—about God, about me, and about the reality I inhabit—and to the extent that
 - 19.1.2. I view my life and think about my life in the light of what the Bible teaches about such things.
 - 19.2. If we are practical unbelievers (individuals who give assent to the biblical truths but who don't bother to think about their life and live their life in the light of those truths), then these biblical truths will not translate into an experience of importance, significance, and intimacy.
 - 19.2.1. These biblical truths are intangible truths that transcend our everyday experience. They are not tangible, easy to grasp, accessible truths that we see immediately and directly in everyday experience.
 - 19.2.2. These biblical truths become tangible only to the one who actively seeks to understand and view his existence in the light of them.
 - 19.2.3. Therefore, if we hold these biblical truths at arms length—giving assent to their truth but not *doing* anything with them, not *practicing* them—then they will not provide the desired solution to our very real personal needs.
20. Concluding summary: One can reject the spurious teaching that God loves us all subjectively and still discover within the teaching of the Bible some practical solutions to our very real needs for intimacy, importance, significance, etc.—if we allow the teaching of the Bible to make us WISE.