

# Ephesians Part I:

Communication with Christ's Church

## FIRST THINGS FIRST:

Prayers for:

**The people of the world:** That God be merciful in sending His Holy Spirit upon them that they come to believe and trust in Christ Jesus as the only means of Salvation.

**The Christian Church:** That we continue as faithful spoons in the hand of God neither being the engine nor the nourishment, but the vessels of God's Holy will.

**For those close to THIS PARISH:**

## Ephesians Background

- ✓ One of the 4 letters (Philippians, Colossians Philemon, Ephesians) written by St. Paul while he was in Roman prison (59-61 AD)
- ✓ Greek texts imply that this letter had a greater intended audience than just the Ephesians.

## Who wrote this letter?

Along with the declaration of authorship and "Pauline greeting" (Καὶ εἰρήνη), while some scholars debate whether the writing was similar enough to other letters many others agree the Greek writing style is consistent with St. Paul's other writings so Pauline authorship is generally accepted.

## Who is this letter for?

The earliest Greek manuscripts do not say **IN EPHASUS** (ἐν ἐφεσῶ)

*While many manuscripts DO have IN EPHASUS, the earliest ones do not. Modern Scholars propose that it is a general letter to Christian Congregations in the REGION of Ephesus. For more info, read Colossians 4:7, 16*

## Purpose of the Letter:

Unlike many of St. Paul's letters, this one was not for the purpose of correcting theological problems in the new church. This letter was more of a refresher course in existing doctrines and of course, our eternal and holy blessings from God, our Father and Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## So, what kind of theology are we looking to see here?

**Martin Luther:** *"In this epistle St. Paul teaches, first, what the gospel is, how it was predestined by God alone in eternity, and earned and sent forth through Christ, so that all who believe on it become righteous, godly, living, saved men and free from the law, sin, and death..."*

*"Then he teaches that false teachings and the commandments of men are to be avoided, so that we may remain true to one Head, and become sure and genuine and complete in Christ alone. For in him we have everything, so that we need nothing beside him..."*

*"Then he goes on to teach that we are to practice and prove our faith with good works, avoid sin, and fight with spiritual weapons against the devil, so that through the cross we may be steadfast in hope"*

Be on the look out for these points for discussion for chapter 1

- Greetings
- Divine purpose.
- Christ's "Headship"

Chapter 1:

Please read verses 1 and 2. This is what is looked at as a Pauline Greeting.

Notice how the letter starts. What is different between this letter and one that you or I might write?

Read verses 3-10:

Verse 3 has a lot of "blessing" talk.

- What is a "blessing"? ***A formal act of giving approval.***
- What does this say for our Lord's role in our life? Our salvation?

Verses 4-10: God has a plan!

- He chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him.
- Predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ... Adopted? If we are adopted, what family do we now belong to? Why?
- What does this say for God's desire for us to be His?

Read Verses 11-14: The benefits of God's plan

- Inheritance? Adoption seems to have benefits! What is the inheritance?
- Who is the benefactor?
- Who is the beneficiary?

Read Verses 15- 22

- Why is Paul thanking God for the people? How were they behaving?
- To Whom does Paul credit for their faithfulness?
- How do Lutherans explain this ability to be faithful? (Catechism time)
- Who can we give thanks to God for their faithfulness?



# Ephesians Part II:

## Gifts from our Lord

### Prayer

Lord God, you who sent your Son Jesus Christ to be crucified, dead and resurrected so that we might not be in darkness, separated by sin, we ask today that you hear our prayers:

### Petitions:

**For the world:** Lord, send your Holy Spirit upon those who do not know You. That those who do not believe come to the proper faith and belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord in your mercy.

**HEAR OUR PRAYER**

**For the Christian Church:** Lord, we humbly come before you in prayer that in your mercy, you would strengthen and uplift your church on earth. Teach your children to speak plainly and boldly about the truth that is our hope and our salvation, about our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord in your mercy.

**HEAR OUR PRAYER**

**For the faithful servants of THIS PARISH:** Lord God, righteous Father, Heavenly King, continue in your grace and mercy for the faithful souls of this parish. Keep us and lead us to continue in the study and proclamation of your Holy Word. We thank you for the many years of your mercy and if it is your will, let us continue for many more years as your humble and faithful servants of Jesus Christ who lives and reign with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever,

**AMEN**

## **CHAPTER 2**

**Please read verses 1-3:**

- How would you define "Dead in your transgressions and sins"? (Verse 1)
- What does it mean to follow the "Ways of the world"? (Verse 2)
- Please read John 15:19, What does our Lord say about "the world"?
- What does it mean to be an "object of wrath"? (Verse 3)
- Do these kind of conditions exist in people today?

**Please read verses 4-10:**

This section really helps us to see that our new life in Jesus Christ is a direct result of God's works. It is this work that shows that 1) He was alone in this 2) His work actually changes humans condition from death to life.

- What characteristics of God are described in verse 4?
- What does this tell us about our God?

- What are some examples of God's work alone in changing us?
- Is it important that we do not take part in our salvation? (Please read Genesis 2:10-13 (the blame game), 1 Samuel 8:6-7 (Who's the boss?), 1 Samuel 13:12-13 (Not the gift but the giver) and finally Matthew 26:33-35 (Not me, no way! Oops!))
- Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches that we have a father in Heaven who seeks us out for salvation. In the gospel of St. Luke (chapter 15), our Lord tells three parables:
  1. **The lost sheep (What is the basic idea of this parable?)**
  2. **The lost coin (What is the basic idea of this parable?)**
  3. **The prodigal son (What is the basic idea of this parable?)**
    - Why would a shepherd make a special trip to find a sheep? What dangers faced the sheep?
    - In the parable of the coin, what lengths does the woman go to, to find the coin? What does that say of our value to our Heavenly Father?
    - The Prodigal Son: How did the younger son behave? When the son confessed to his father, how did the father react? What does this say for a Christian's relationship with our Father who wants to save us?

Please read verses 11-22

Here we see how St. Paul changes his focus from the salvation of individuals, but he also shows that Jews and Gentiles are reconciled. List some ways that the relationships between Jews and Gentiles are described.

- In light of Jesus Christ, how are Jews and Gentiles compared now?
- Do Jews and Gentiles both need Jesus to be saved? (Verses 19-20)
- In 1914, Franz Rosenzweig came out with a theory that both Christians and Jews were saved by 2 covenants. For the Jews it was from Yahweh and for the Christians it was Jesus. What is the problem with this thinking?
- **Interesting Fact:** As of 2004, the only 2 Christian church bodies who are actively witnessing to Jewish people are the Southern Baptists and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

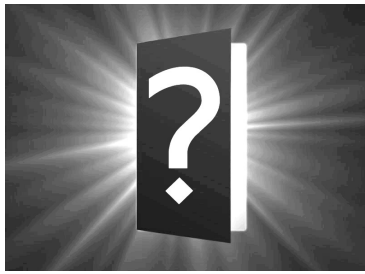
### CONCLUSION:

Our Lord as witnessed in both Word and Sacrament is actively reaching out to His people. We have a mighty advocate and intercessor in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we go out into "the world" this week, we should always remember these gifts we have been given. We don't deserve such wonderful gifts, but that is yet more evidence of our God who loves us. If you are presented with the opportunity to share this with someone, share it with confidence and trust that it is "Thy will be done".

### Closing Prayer:

Lord God our heavenly Father, your Word is good and it is salvation to your people. It confuses the evil one who seeks to distort salvation away from You and You alone. In your mercy, be with us this week as we go out and share the good news of Your gift of salvation. We pray this in Jesus' precious name,  
**AMEN.**

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# Ephesians Part III:

## The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed!

### **Prayer:**

Lord God, You are the giver of life, the author of history, the revealer of mysteries. That we may know You better, we give you thanks for this opportunity to be in your Word.

### **Petitions:**

In your mercy, we ask that You be with us today and help us to realize the message of salvation through Jesus Christ written in Your book. Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer**

**For the people of the world:** Reveal to those people the wonder and saving grace of your son Jesus Christ that the mystery their emptiness be revealed as their yearning for Jesus Christ. Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer**

**For the Christian Church:** Lord God, let your preachers be clear and straightforward about the mission of the church. Teach them to proclaim the Word to your children that your Word is no longer a mystery but a joy that they happily share with others. Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer**

**For the people of THIS PARISH:** Lord God, Savior, Leader, Defender and King, keep Your outstretched arm in touch with Your people here. Help us as You did Your servant Paul to reveal that glorious and precious salvation that comes from Christ alone who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever,

**Amen.**

### **Please Read Verses 1 -6:**

- Verse 1: Paul refers to himself as being a "prisoner". As we all know, Paul was in jail at the writing of this letter. He does not refer to himself as a prisoner of Rome, but a prisoner for Jesus Christ. Why do you think he would use that term?
- How would you describe the life of a prisoner? What are some main features?
- A prisoner has been removed from society and placed in with other people who have also lost their place in society. They have very little freedom, rights and yet, they still have a great deal of responsibilities that must be maintained. Do Christians have anything in common with these people?
- **NOTE:** Today Christians in China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Pakistan and many other countries are languishing in prison for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although some of them have been framed and arrested on false charges, the cause of their arrest is undoubtedly their religious affiliation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://www.christianmonitor.org/documents.php?type=Editorials&item\\_ID=22&action=display%E2%8C%A9=English&&PHPSESSID=d298403ed72f14962ae2ea82c25726b6](http://www.christianmonitor.org/documents.php?type=Editorials&item_ID=22&action=display%E2%8C%A9=English&&PHPSESSID=d298403ed72f14962ae2ea82c25726b6)

- What does it mean for us to be prisoners of Christ?
- Verses 2-6 switch to the focus of the rest of the epistle. So what's the mystery?
- This is big news! How are the Gentiles described?
- This is a solidification of the message of God's salvation!

**Please read verses 7-13:**

- Verse 7: By what means does Paul claim his entitlement to ministry?
- Verse 8: In contrast to verse 7, how does Paul describe himself?
- What does that say about the position of the Christian?
- What does it say for our Lord working in His ministers' lives?
- Verse 9: God has a plan, what is it?
- What greater plan is there than God saying "I want you to be mine!" So often, we have people that fall into great despair and turmoil because of a lack of understanding of this.
- Can you lose your job and still be a part of God's plan for salvation?
- What about a family member?
- Why do you think I am asking this?
- Verses 11-13 are our assurance.

**Please read Verses 14-21:**

- Paul is praying for the church in verses 14-19. What kind of things does he pray for?
- Why is this type of prayer beneficial to humble Christians?
- Is there anyone you might go to and ask them if you can pray for them? (Long-lost friend? Shut-in?)
- Verses 20-21: Paul concludes his prayer by exalting the one for whom he was imprisoned.

**Conclusion:**

The mystery has been revealed... the veil has been lifted (2 Corinthians 3:16)... the curtain has been torn (Matthew 27:51)... The good news of salvation through Jesus Christ's death on the cross and resurrection has been revealed to us. It has been said that "if the answer isn't Jesus, rephrase the question." Every day, we live as prisoners of Christ, set apart from the world because He has chosen us to be His heirs. In your daily life, take the opportunity to solve this mystery for others if the opportunity presents itself. Remember, as St. Paul said: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us," proclaim to others what has already set us free.

**Closing Prayer:**

Lord God our heavenly Father, we thank and praise you for revealing to us the mystery of our salvation. Give us your Holy Spirit that we might teach others what it means to be prisoners of Christ instead of prisoners of sin. We ask this in Jesus' precious name, **Amen.**

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# Ephesians Part IV:

## Unity in the Body of Christ

### Prayer:

Lord God, you call and enlighten, you strengthen and unite, that we might continue to grow in our unified faith, in Your mercy, we ask that You be with Your adopted heirs as we joyfully and humbly explore Your Word. **Lord in Your mercy Hear our prayer.**

### Petitions:

**For the people of the world:** Lord, God, heavenly Father, broken and sinful is this world. Its people run and hide from Your goodness and Your mercy. Send Your Holy Spirit upon those in disbelief so that sins evil veil be lifted from their eyes that they might come to know Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. **Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

**For the Christian Church:** Lord of mercy, Lord of power, keep and guard your church. Confuse false doctrines and make schism flee from you righteousness. Teach your people that unity comes not from compromising with the world but true unity comes from knowing, teaching and preaching Christ crucified and risen. **Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

**For the people of THIS PARISH:** Lord, You have blessed this congregation with the faith of your Holy Spirit. Your might and mercy are evidenced in your faithful children who you adopted as heirs to your heavenly kingdom. Keep these faithful servants strong in their convictions, united in the one, true faith in Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever,  
**Amen.**

### Opening and a little background:

There is a song that some of you might remember, the lyrics are: *"One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do. Two can be as bad as one; it's the loneliest number since the number one."*

- What sense is the word "ONE" being used in this context?
- What does this use of "ONE" imply?
- What are some other uses of the word "ONE"?
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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**The Church has some interesting uses of the word "one" as well.**

- How many God's do we worship? (p. 32 1943 Small Catechism, Athanasian Creed)
- How many Sons did God beget?
- How many ways do we find salvation?

### Please read Chapter 4, verses 1-6:

- What attributes does St. Paul prescribe for the Christians in verses 1 & 2?
- What does this behavior promote (Verse 3)?

**In our modern society, there is often a big push for "unity". The modern approach to unity in the secular world is "honor diversity". This is basically saying, we should all be united,**

while remaining completely different. Different beliefs are all “ok” and although they differ on the most FOUNDATIONAL levels, we can just chalk it up as agreeing to disagree.

- Does this sound like the message in verse 3?

We see not only church groups like the ELCA signing agreements of unity with other Christian branches even though their church doctrines don't agree. There is a greater importance of the appearance of unity.

- Does this type of “unity” reflect the Biblical or secular view of “unity”?
- Verses 4-6 describe our unifying beliefs. Why might these be unpopular in light of the modern push for secular unity?

Unlike some other church bodies, the LCMS holds an unwavering confession of beliefs as being second to nothing. Proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected for our salvation, the Trinity in unity, one baptism for remission of sins, the real presence of our Lord in the Lord's supper, Jesus Christ is the ONE AND ONLY way to God the Father. These and other doctrines make us stand out in the secular world (and even among other denominations) as being “too rigid” and they believe we should be friendlier to those who perhaps want to be “Christian” but have a hard time believing that Jesus did what we teach He did.

Please read verses 7-16:

- In verses 7-12 who is the giver of the gifts?
- The unity that we seek is not from the world, but from Jesus Christ, the one who saves. What does verse 14 say about symptoms of the lack of this unity? Does that sound like any modern secular and church examples?
- Instead of changing the message, as some churches have (foolishly) chosen, what do we learn from verses 15 & 16 to be the correct approach to unity?
- Does St. Paul waiver in his proclamation of Jesus Christ?
- Should we?

Please Read verses 17-24:

- What are we told NOT TO DO in verse 17?
- Why? (Verses 18-20)
- Does anyone know someone like this?
- What do verses 21-24 say to do instead?

Please read verses 25-32:

- Discuss some of the characteristics of this new life in Christ. What are they?

Christian unity is exactly what those two words sound like. Jesus Christ is our unifying faith and our one hope. Our Lord has shown a desire for us to be united, but on His terms and not the world's. Christ-like mercy and caring confounds the world that looks out for number 1. The world hates us for saying “Jesus Christ is the way to salvation.” Alas, in the end, our unity and our strength are not from ourselves or the world, but is from Jesus Christ who died on the cross so that we all might be with Him together... united.

Prayer:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, it is you who claims, heals and unites us. Thank you for this chance to renew that saving and unifying faith that only you provide. In Jesus' precious name, **Amen.**





# Ephesians Part V:

## God's Kind of Love!

**Prayer:** Lord God our Heavenly Father, You have created all things out of love that your majesty might be known. Out of Love, You sent Your only Son to die for us. Be with us today, that we might study your word and increase our love for you and for each other. **Lord, in Your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Petitions:**

**For the world:** Lord of mercy and love, you have taught us that it was your love for the world that you sent your only Son. Send out Your good news, so that the world can come to know and love You.

**For The Christian Church:** Mighty God, everlasting King, you have graciously given the church on earth Your Word and means of grace. Help your church to understand what it means to witness of you in love and compassion. **Lord, in Your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**For THIS PARISH:** Lord, once again, we gather here and marvel at the signs and wonders You have given to us. Help us to continue in Your love so that we might continue to be the messengers of Your love. **Lord, in your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER**

**Please start by reading verses 1 & 2:**

- When we think about parents what should we expect from them?
- What does God expect from children when it comes to their parents? (4<sup>th</sup> commandment)
- Did anyone's dad here teach them how to ride a bike? How did it go? Did you ride it instantly?
- As God's adopted heirs (children), what might we seek to imitate in our Father?(Verse 2)
- How did Christ walk in love? What does it mean that He did that? (Read Leviticus 1:3-4)

**Please read verses 3-14:**

- St. Paul lists some characteristics of behavior that are not compatible with Christians. What are they?
- Can anyone think of other characteristics that are incompatible with Christianity?
- Where do we see the most examples of bad behavior on any given day?
- Think about each list item, what does this type of behavior promote?

**Please read Verses 15-21**

- St. Paul lists some characteristics of behavior that are compatible with Christians. What are they?
- Who do we credit this behavior(s)?
- What is the benefit of such behavior(s)? (Remember Chapter 4?)
- How do Bible Studies at THIS PARISH mirror this?

**Please re-read verse 22-24:**

- What is the focus of these verses?
- What does St. Paul teach that women should do?
- **MARRIED WOMEN ONLY:** What role(s) have you played in your marriage? (Please read Genesis 2:18)
- What is the behavior of women being compared to (verse 24)
- Is there a more than one thing that can be learned from this imagery?(verse 21)
- Why is this important for the church of Christ/ for families? (See chapter 4)

**Please read verses 25-33:**

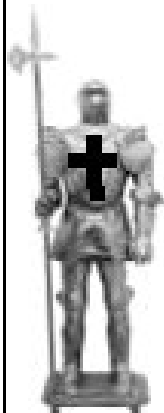
- What is the focus of these verses?
- What does St. Paul teach that men should do?
- First of all, we see that "love" word again. I hesitate to go over it too quickly, because it is a word that is CLEARLY defined in scripture. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:4-13
- How does this love teach us about Jesus Christ?
- What is the behavior of men being compared to (verse 25)
- Does Jesus have a bride?
- Who is "she"? (Please read Matthew 9:14, )
- What did Christ do for His love, His bride, the church?
- **MARRIED MEN ONLY:** What role(s) have you played in your marriage?
- Is there any man here who wouldn't give his life for his wife, even if it meant she would only live 5 more minutes?
- Jesus Christ, for the love of His bride, the Church gave His life so that she wouldn't live a short while, but for eternity!
- What level of importance does our Lord put on the responsibility of being a good husband?

**Closing Prayer:**

Lord God, heavenly Father, merciful king. By your power, You have given your creation the gift of marriage. Help us to be the kind of husbands and wives that are pleasing to You and lead us in Your purpose. Keep us focused on Christ, the Groom of the Church, that we know it is He who gave all for His bride the church. That Christ loves and cares for His bride now and forever.

We pray this in name of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever,

**AMEN.**



# Ephesians Part VI:

## The Armor of God Protects Us

### **Prayer:**

Lord God Heavenly Father, You who keep and guard us by sending your Son to die in our place, that we might not know the taste of death, guard us as we explore the truth as written in Your Holy Scripture. **Lord in Your mercy,**

**HEAR OUR PRAYER**

### **Petitions:**

**For the whole world:** God our Father, we humbly come before You that You would reach out to the World, that they be granted ears to hear and hearts to believe. Enlighten them with the truth of love and protection that only comes from Your type of armor. **Lord in Your mercy,**

**HEAR OUR PRAYER**

**For the Christian Church:** YHWH Eloheinu, mighty is Your Power and mighty is Your grace, continue in Your steadfast strength and love that Your people know to seek refuge in You, in Jesus Christ who died so we won't have to and who was resurrected as a foretaste of our own resurrection. **Lord in Your mercy,**

**HEAR OUR PRAYER**

**For THIS PARISH:** Mighty Father, uncontested King, your grace flows out upon us, we marvel at your continued grace as your great commission unfolds in this ministry. Continue with Your mighty armor and outstretched arm as you shield us from the power of the devil. All these things we ask in Jesus' precious Name who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever,

**AMEN**

### **FIRST THINGS FIRST!**

Last time, we talked about Husbands and wives. We looked at that scripture and examined it NOT (as popular critics of Christianity will accuse) an enslavement of women, but a description of God's special "set-apart" purpose for husbands and wives. In marriage we don't just see the individual, but we see a model for the entire Christian Church where Christ Himself is the groom that gave everything for His beloved bride you and me and everyone our Lord has called His own. Today, we will start off with the "underlings" of the husband and wife and then, we will take a look at the might and Grace of our God who seeks to guide, protect and make us His own!

### **Please Read chapter 6 verses 1-4**

- Who are the two groups of people being addressed here?
- Discuss the roles of each.
- St. Paul also harkens back to the fourth commandment. How does it read?
- God comes back to the topic of husbands again. What role are husbands SUPPOSED to play in the lives of a child? Is this common practice, today?

### **Please read verses 5-9:**

- Slavery is not a common practice, today in America. What might we compare this to?
- What does it mean to show obedience to our "masters"?
- How does this relate to our "position" as Christians?
- From the Master's point of view, what characteristics should they display?
- Why is it a good model for Christian leaders?
- As is the example of all of St. Paul's letters, what does he show in the big picture of the "master/servant" relationship?

### **Please read verses 10-20**

- What are we told to do?

- For what reason?
- This scripture seems to state that we have/do/will stand against the schemes of the devil.
- Like all things, we don't face them alone. Describe the imagery of the One who protects us.
- What is it that will "extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one?"
- And how do we acquire it?

**Please read to the end of the chapter**

The end of this letter is another reminder of its reality. St. Paul is in prison. His concern is not for his own release... not for his personal suffering and deprivation of the world and its surroundings. St. Paul continued to encourage those who needed it. St. Paul was secure that the walls that bound him could not capture or conceal the true freedom of Christians. Through our Lord's death on the cross and resurrection break the walls of racism, sexism, lies, murder, hopelessness, sin, death and power of the devil are not our masters. Our Lord has seen to that.

**Let's Recap!**

- **Chapter 1:** God has a plan.... We are chosen and adopted by Him... We are in a new family... We are beneficiaries...
- **Chapter 2:** God works alone... He changes us from being dead to being truly alive... Jews AND Gentiles are equal in need for the salvation that comes only from Jesus Christ... We are saved by grace through faith...
- **Chapter 3:** Mystery solved!... Prisoners of Jesus Christ with a set aside purpose... Prison for Christ is better than the freedom that the world offers...
- **Chapter 4:** We are united by Christ... Our behavior shows our unity in Christ... YES church doctrine matters...
- **Chapter 5:** Love... God's love for us... God's love for His children... God's love for marriage... God's plan for marriage... God's "set aside" purpose for husbands and wives...
- **Chapter 6:** Children... Workers... masters... a picture of the Kingdom to come... Husbands, recap: YOU HAVE A JOB TO DO... DON'T BE DEADBEATS!... we will face evil.... we are not alone... God is not only with us, He protects us...

**Closing Prayer:**

Our Father who art in heaven.... Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven... give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us... and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever

**AMEN**