

EPHESIANS

1

Body
Spirit
Hope
Lord
Faith
Baptism
God

Gerald Paden

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

Ephesians

by

Gerald Paden



3728 34th Street • Lubbock, Texas • 79410
1 (800) 687-2121 • Email: extschool@sibi.cc

Copyright ©2004
Sunset Institute Press

Printed and bound in the
United States of America
All rights reserved

All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from
THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL
VERSION®.

Copyright © 1973, 2978, 1984
by International Bible Society.

Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All
right reserved.

Cover design and formatting by Beth E. Miller

ISBN 0-9721615-7-0

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be
reproduced in any form without the written permission of the
publisher, including translation.

This book is dedicated to
Richard and Mary Baggett,
long-time co-workers at the
Sunset School of Preaching, now
Sunset International Bible Institute.

Their commitment and dedication to the Lord's
cause will long be remembered.

Special Acknowledgment

A special “*thank you*” to
Dr. A. D. and Sharron Smith
who made the printing of this book possible.

Preface to the Sunset Bible Study Library

Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a videotaped course. The voice track of the videotape was first transcribed then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Bible Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, and to the staff of Sunset Translation

Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

In addition to the English version, this book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible study library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders and grow churches that plant other churches.



A companion workbook on the study of Ephesians by Gerald Paden is available for purchase through Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies: 1(800) 687-2121.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction to the Letter	1
II.	The Church Purchased, Endowed, and Defined	13
III.	The Sovereign Christ	23
IV.	God's Grace and Man's Work	33
V.	God's Grace and the Gentile	43
VI.	The Mystery—the Church's Stewardship	52
VII.	Paul's Prayer and God's Power	62
VIII.	The Worthy Walk and Unity	72
IX.	Teachers unto Perfection	82
X.	The Christian's New Life-style	93
XI.	The New Life-style/submission	103
XII.	Submission and Conflict	114

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER

Welcome to the study of the letter to the Ephesians. It was written from a Roman prison by the apostle Paul. Originally it was sent to the church in Ephesus by Epaphras, a colleague of Paul in his mission travels. This letter is called a general epistle, for its message relates to all congregations of the Lord's people for all times. It seems not to have been directed to one particular congregation, though it was first sent to the Ephesian church. It was intended to be circulated among all the churches. From Colossians 4:6 it is evident that congregations of the church in New Testament times distributed and exchanged copies of apostolic correspondence. Thus, every congregation could have a copy of all inspired letters.

Ephesians is a companion letter to the Colossian correspondence. The book of Colossians was written to exalt the figure of Christ as "the head of the body" in all of His glory, His honor, and His dignity as a divine person. Ephesians is the counterpart to Colossians, and it completes the composite of Christ and His church because it exalts "the body of that head." It therefore shares in all of the glories, honors and dignities of Him who is the head of the church.

The Characteristics of the Ephesians Letter

Ephesians Is Not Written in a Context of Controversy

Ephesians is not a controversial book like some of the other apostolic letters. Be aware that there were, and still are, satanic forces at work against the church. They try to destroy its unique constitution by creating false notions about Christ, His church, and the moral standards of Christian people and their ultimate destiny.

Other Apostolic Books Are Written in a Context of Controversy

All other apostolic books contained some controversy on doctrinal, moral or practical issues. Other books did give an adequate picture of the church in many instances, but then proceeded to correct various teachings that tended to divide, corrupt or pervert the doctrine of the church.

Ephesians Has a Different Purpose

Ephesians, however, has a different purpose. It presents the church as God sees it, a model for all succeeding generations to imitate. Ephesians explains the plan of the ages that was made by God before time began, and it shows how Christ accomplished that plan in His sacrificial death on the cross. It also presents the Holy Spirit as He involved Himself as a guarantee to the church through the inspired message it would live by and conducting the church through that message to its ultimate destiny in Christ Jesus.

Man's View of the Church

Judged by the Externals Visible to Them

When men view the church, they have different criteria by

which they judge. They tend to judge it by the externals, by what they see through their eyes. Their criteria of judgment is generally based upon their local experience in a congregation. They, therefore, judge the church by the size of its membership or by the building in which it meets. They judge the church by the programs that it is involved in—what it does or does not do. They judge the church by its moral frailties and sins of its members, and by the seeming aimlessness in its drift. They judge the church by the sometimes coldness of its rituals of worship. They judge it by the dynamics or the lack of dynamics of its staff. They judge the church by the denominational confusion that is created by the divisions and sects that exist around the church. Therefore, men tend to judge the church with this limited view, and they become critical of it and everything it represents.

God's View of His Church

God has a different view of the church. His view is drastically different because He views the church as the end product of His own involvement with it throughout the ages. There is a series of differences between the way that God judges the church and the way that men judge it. God does not consider man's criterion at all. His criterion is based on the following nineteen concepts which also present an overview of the entire book of Ephesians.

An Overview of the Book of Ephesians

Number one, God looks at the church as it is rooted in the eternities before time and as it is destined to extend into the eternities beyond time. Therefore, God sees the church as timeless as He who built it. **Number two**, God sees the church as the arena through which all grace from heaven flows. **Number three**, He sees the church in Christ. The two words "in Christ" tell us the location or the arena in which all divine activity takes place. God sees the church, therefore, as the fullness of Christ who dwells in the heavenly places. The

church dwells, reigns, and rules with Him in all of His privilege as the exalted King. **Number four**, God sees the church under the blood of Calvary, and He, therefore, sees it as holy and without blemish because its sins have been atoned for. Men judge the church by the sins they see, but God does not judge it so, because the blood of Christ has covered those sins.

Number five, God sees the church as unique, as it shares in all divine grace. It is unrivaled, therefore, in every aspect of its nature, and it occupies the attention of all of heaven itself. **Number six**, God sees the church as the only organization through which He is able to carry out His work and extend His redemptive purpose among men. **Number seven**, God sees the church as guaranteed in its unity by the exclusive doctrines that have been built into its constitution. **Number eight**, God sees the church as exclusive in all of the endowments that God has given her through the gifts that make it possible for her to accomplish her mission on earth. **Number nine**, God views the church as provided with all of the human and all of the divine personnel necessary for its survival and for the conduct of its mission. **Number ten**, God sees the church as well instructed in its lifestyle that distinguishes it from the pagan societies and immoralities that surround it. The church is seen as the living dynamic of Christ's new creation.

Number eleven, the church reproduces all of the internal fraternities that make for peaceful relationships toward those who are within the kingdom of Christ and meaningful interaction with those on the outside. **Number twelve**, God sees the church as the glorious bride of Christ, sharing in all of the honors that derive from that honorable relationship with Him who is our head. **Number thirteen**, God sees the church as the only source of acceptable worship of the Godhead. God is worshiped by the church simply because of the dignity, the honor, and the glories that He possesses as God. Our worship of God also arises out of a deep sense of gratitude, love, and appreciation for the redemption that we enjoy in Christ. **Number fourteen**, God views the church as being glorious, not

so much for what the church is doing for Him but for what He has done, is doing, and will continue to do for it.

Number fifteen, the church is the direct object of satanic opposition because Satan wants this kingdom to fail. He is attempting to destroy its redemption, to negate its endowments, and to destroy its soul-saving mission among men. He is furious in his opposition to the church, and God is aware of that fact. **Number sixteen**, God has equipped, fully prepared, and armed the church for the battle against all enemy attacks on its doctrine and on its citizens. **Number seventeen**, the church is the proper subject and the only worthy object of all human endeavor. It deserves all of the support, all of the service, all of the resources, and all of the gifts with which man can serve and respond to the grace of God.

Number eighteen, God sees that the church must not be confused with the cheap imitations and false misrepresentations of it that are created in the denominational world and in the sectarian organizations that surround it. **Number nineteen**, God sees that the church cannot in any way be improved by man. It possesses everything that is essential for its existence, and it is perfect. It has to be perfect because it is the work of God.

God's View Is the Only One That Possesses Ultimate Value

Any perversion of any of the aspects of the church's life, doctrine, or Him who is its head, would result in the loss of identity as the body of Christ. Therefore, the book of Ephesians presents a challenge to every individual to bring his views into harmony with the views of God and to accept God's views as the standard by which the church will forever be identified. All of our thinking must be adjusted accordingly. His view is the one that possesses the ultimate value. All of these views of God serve as an outline of the book of Ephesians.

The Opening Salutation and Greeting

The Writer – Paul

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God . . .” (Ephesians 1:1). This verse tells us that Paul was not a self-appointed apostle; he was a chosen vessel. When Ananias was sent to Paul in the city of Damascus to complete the process of his conversion, Ananias was told by God to inform Paul that he had been specially chosen by God to do His work (Acts 9:15). God always appointed messengers to carry divinely revealed messages, therefore, the apostle Paul wrote this, not as his view of the church, but as God’s view.

The Recipients – The Saints and Faithful in Christ Jesus

Paul sent this letter to the church that was in Ephesus, to the saints. The term “saint” defines their moral nature. He sent it to the faithful in Christ Jesus, and that identifies their obedient response to Him whom they acknowledge to be their Lord. The two words “in Ephesus” were probably not a part of the original text, because the earlier and perhaps more reliable manuscripts that we have of the Ephesian correspondence do not contain them. However, since this book was first sent to the congregation in Ephesus, it is natural that its name would be associated with that church.

The Salutation – Grace and Peace

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 1:2) These words express the ordinary salutation of all apostolic correspondence with the church. It was a wish for divine benevolence that would create peaceful relationships between the believers in Christ and God himself. It also encouraged tranquil relationships with the rest of the human family in general.

The Praiseworthy Nature of the Church

In Ephesians 1:3 the apostle Paul begins his presentation of the nature of the church. Paul used the word “*blessed*” three times in this verse. Here, however, it is translated “praise.” These two words come from the Greek word *eulogetos*, and it is used in three different forms in this verse. It means to eulogize, to praise, or to give honor and glory to God, because He is deserving of all glory. The apostle wants us to know that God has shared with us His glory and has made us a subject of eulogy, of praise, and of honor because He has blessed us.

The phrase “*blessed us*” is a passive verb, and therefore, it tells us that God is the one who is pouring out upon us the privileges of His own praiseworthy nature. He has blessed us “... *with every spiritual blessing* ...” which means that we are the recipients of every blessing. No blessing that God gives of a spiritual nature is shared with anyone who is an outsider. They are enjoyed only by those who are in the kingdom of Christ—the saints and the faithful. That means that we share in a unique privilege that is exclusive to us as the body of Christ. That also tells us that there are absolutely no blessings of any kind that are to be enjoyed by any individual outside of what the apostle calls “... *the heavenly realms*.”

The term “*heavenly realms*” must be defined. Paul uses this term four other times in the book of Ephesians. The next time he uses it is in Ephesians 1:20 to tell us that Christ is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, far above all rule, principalities, and power. That is where Christ exercises His rule and reign over His kingdom. In Ephesians 2:6, the apostle tells us that God has raised Christians from their spiritual death into life. He lifted us out of the world and made us to sit with Christ in “*the heavenly realms*.” Thus we share the reign and rule of Christ in these heavenly realms. In Ephesians 3:10 the angels, as the principalities and powers in “*the heavenly realms*,” were “made aware” of the glory and the wisdom of God, as they viewed the church and how He brought it into existence. Then in Ephesians 6:12 Paul tells us, “*For our*

struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

That tells us that Satan is bringing his battle against the church.

These heavenly realms are to be identified simply as the kingdom of Christ. This is the church, where Christ carries out His reign over the kingdom of heaven. All spiritual blessings, then, are to be enjoyed exclusively by those who are a part of “*the heavenly realms*” of Christ Jesus.

The Church is Not an Afterthought

In Ephesians 1:4 the apostle goes back to before time began to show that it is the love of God that laid the plans for the church before the world was ever created. The church is not an afterthought. It was well designed and planned in the eternities before time.

Paul says that God chose us in Christ. The word “chose” comes from the Greek word *eklekte*. He chose His people before the world was ever created. Those choices have to do with our position and our privilege in Christ Jesus. That is an impressive fact because it tells that the church had been in the mind of God from the foundation of the world. It is, therefore, timeless in the purposes and plans of God Himself. He chose us, and that is impressive.

God chose us to be holy and without blemish. That holiness and blamelessness is not a result of our performance, because our performance is too frequently flawed by sin. Our performance is not all that blameless. Regardless, we are holy and blameless, which defines our moral standing, simply because of the grace that God has poured out through the blood of Calvary. The apostle tells us that we are holy and blameless before Him, that is, in His sight. We are not always seen that way in the sight of one another, but we are in the sight of God, and that is the view that counts.

God's Predestination of the Church

In Ephesians 1:5 Paul told us that God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world. He added that even before time God predestined us to be adopted as sons through Christ Jesus in accordance with His good pleasure and will. There is much confusion that clouds the issue of God's predestination and man's free will. Some assume that God's predestination negates man's free will. Redemption then would be the result of Divine decision rather than man's chosen course. All scripture affirms that man's sin is a chosen course and so is his salvation. Others acknowledge man's free will and tend to downplay God's predestination. Neither view reflects Biblical teaching. God chooses to redeem those who choose to be redeemed. God's choices and man's choices are not mutually exclusive.

The word "predestined" comes from the Greek compound word *pro orizo*. *Pro* means "before," and *orizo* is the horizon. The horizon is the line of separation between the earth and the sky. As Paul used the word, he affirms the fact that before time God drew a line around His people. He encircled them and claimed them as His own. God chose His people, and He drew a line around them.

The reason some have difficulty understanding God's establishment of destiny without negating man's free will is because they ignore another element Paul placed in the equation. Paul does not discuss God's foreknowledge in the Ephesian context but he does in Romans. In Romans 8:28-32, Paul mentioned six Divine actions involved in man's salvation. God's first action is defined as His "... *purpose*." In Greek the word "purpose" is *prothesin*. A thesis is a position statement. And the *pro* part of the word simply affirms that God drew up His position about the redeemed before time began. The word "... *called* ..." in Greek is *kletois*, sometimes translated with the word "elected." The most significant element of God's actions is His "foreknowledge." God foreknew our faith, our obedience to the Gospel of Christ; He foresaw and foreknew

our choices. God then made His choices based on our choices which He foreknew. The next two elements follow in logical order. They are “predestination” and “calling.” Note that God’s “predestination” follows His “foreknowledge.” The first three elements of God’s, “purpose, foreknowledge and predestination,” all took place before time began. The last three Divine actions, God’s “call, justification and glorification,” take place in time.

Notice how these involvements or actions on the part of God can be arranged in sequence. Three of them took place before time. In Romans chapter eight, Paul says that God purposed His people and foreknew them before time. He predestined them, drawing the line around them. Then in time, God called His people, and because they responded to the call, He justified them. Having justified them, God then glorified them. There are three actions before time and three actions in time. Before time, He purposed us, foreknew us, and predestined us. Then, through the gospel He called us, and we responded to that call. He then justified us, and having justified us, He then glorified us.

There is another passage of Scripture that uses some of these same terms to define these divine actions. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 some of the same terms that Paul used both in Ephesians and in Romans are stated. Paul harmonizes all of these elements. God chose us before time, and through our faith in the gospel of Christ Jesus that had been preached to us, He called us through that gospel. We responded to the call, and then God brought about our salvation through Christ Jesus. That makes us participants in the glorification of God. With these elements placed in proper perspective, the foreordination, or the predestination, of God is not seen as being manipulative or as eliminating the choices, decisions, and purposes of man. God’s view is simply worked out in harmony with the choices and decisions of men.

Conclusion

We can also foresee certain actions that are going to take place in our common experience. For example, if we see a blind man walking across the ledge of a tall building toward the edge, then we can foresee what is going to happen. We can even make some decisions about what will happen once he steps off the edge—the man is going to die. We do not cause this man's death simply because we foresee it. We simply predict what is going to happen because we are able to see what will take place when the man steps over the ledge. In that same way, God stands before events, and He foresees the choices that we make. He foresees our faith in Christ Jesus, and on the basis of our choices, God makes His choices.

We could take the life of an individual, an evil person, and study his history by seeing the evil choices that he made. We can see no faith in God and no response to the gospel of Christ. According to all the biblical information that we have, though we are not the judges, we are able to form some impressions about that man. According to Biblical truth, he is a lost person. The point is that we can make those judgments out of what we see, because we see the history of this individual and the choices that he made. The only difference between us and God is that God saw those same choices before time and arrived at the same conclusion that we do: this is a lost man. Therefore, he was excluded from the circle of God's predestined plan for the redemption of people. It is therefore clear that God's decisions did not cause the decisions of that man. God just makes His decisions out of what He foreknows. Paul, in Romans 4:17, tells us that God is able to call things that are not as though they were. The church is lovingly made into God's adopted sons and daughters as verse five affirms.

It is interesting that, because of all of this, Paul says that God planned and built the church so that it would be a body of people that would be a standing tribute to the praiseworthy, glorious manifestations of divine grace in the lives of sinful men (Ephesians 1:6). There was a purpose for all of the divine

plans before the beginning of time.

In the next chapter we will see how Christ has taken the divine plan, the divine blueprint, that was laid out by God before time, and how in time He built the kingdom of Christ in perfect harmony with the plan and purpose of God.

THE CHURCH PURCHASED, ENDOWED, AND DEFINED

Ephesians 1:7-14

This is the second chapter in the study of the letter to the Ephesians. It presents a commentary on Ephesians 1:7-14. The aim of this chapter is to confirm that Jesus established the church in perfect harmony with the plans—the blueprints—that God ordained before time began. The aim is to learn of the grace of God that made that plan effective in the lives of sinful men. The church, therefore, is unique in its enjoyment of all of the spiritual blessings and privileges that God has granted to her in her glorious status in Christ. In Ephesians 1:6 there are two elements of the grace that has been made available to the church through Christ. God planned us so that we might be unto the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed upon us in the one He loved.

The Manifold Grace of God

Fourteen Descriptive Adjectives That Define God's Grace

Paul used a number of adjectives to define the grace that has been made available through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary. The first element is that it is **praiseworthy** grace. It is praiseworthy because of the results that it produced and because of the sacrifice that was required to produce those

results The second is that it is a **glorious** grace that God has made available to us. When we discuss glory, we generally discuss the elements of deity or divine action that are impressive to the human mind. The word “glory” has its root meaning in the Hebrew word “fullness.” When we talk about the glorious grace of God, we are talking about grace in its complete manifestation, solving every problem that human sin creates. It is, therefore, glorious grace. Thirdly, the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 1:6 that God freely bestowed that grace upon us. The concept of **free** grace means that it was without cause on our part. He freely bestowed it, and it is a gift. It is not earned, nor is it the product of human endeavor. It is simply the divine and gracious action on the part of God for His people. This grace is a **given** grace.

Redeeming, Sacrificial, and Forgiving Grace

In Ephesians 1:7, the apostle added another ingredient to the amazing qualities of grace. He tells us that added to this praiseworthy, glorious, and freely bestowed grace, is the element of redemption. It is a **redeeming** grace. There are some other elements that define the grace of God in behalf of man. The concept of redemption in the New Testament suggests the idea of rescue by ransom. We have been rescued from the prison in which Satan was holding us because of our sin. It took a ransom price, however, as one had to redeem us. Christ had to pay the redemptive cost through His blood, and therefore, redemption means “rescue by ransom.” This grace is **sacrificial** grace. The price of that redemption was the blood of Christ, which results in the forgiveness of our sins—all of our sins. It is **forgiving** grace. Because of this active grace of God, we begin to understand why in Ephesians 1:4 the churches seem to be sinless, holy and without blemish. This is because the blood of Christ cleansed past sins and continues to cleanse present sins.

Rich Grace

The apostle then adds another ingredient to the grace of God. It is **rich** grace, and that is the new ingredient that the apostle wishes to grant to the element of grace, in order to build up our concept of its glory. The word “riches” suggests the idea of “more than enough.” The poor man evidently has more needs than he has resources to supply, and so there is always a shortfall for the poor man. The rich man, however, has a supply that not only covers the need but overlaps the need. That is the meaning of the riches of God's grace. It comes from the Greek word *ploutos*, and that simply means that God's grace is overflowing as it is made available to us in Christ Jesus.

Lavished, Wise, and Understanding Grace

In Ephesians 1:7-8 Paul uses other superlatives to define the grace of God. He **lavished** that grace upon us. A composite picture of the grace of God in these few verses is that it is a praiseworthy, glorious, free, bestowed (given), redeeming and rich grace that God has lavished. That simply means that we have been flooded with the grace of God. We are literally in a sea of divine grace that He has “ . . . *lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*” God's grace is **wise**; it is not wasted. He knows what He is doing. He has granted this grace with divine **understanding**. It is because of all of these qualities that the church enjoys its exclusive privilege of redemption in Christ Jesus. The grace of God grants a privileged position for the children of God who stand under that grace. He has lavished His grace upon us in all wisdom and insight.

Revealing Grace

In Ephesians 1:9 Paul points out that another ingredient of this amazing grace of God is that it has revealed to us what the apostle calls the mystery. It is **revealing** grace. That simply means that we have been made aware. God has made us to understand the purposes that He drew up before time and how

those plans are being carried out and extended through Christ Jesus in the church today. Therefore, the church participates in understanding the mystery of God.

The word “mystery” does not mean that God’s will is mysterious. It means that the plan was hidden. God drew up the plan before time, but it was not and could not be fully revealed until Christ came and accomplished it. Then, the revelation of that which was called the mystery was fully made known to the church, and through the church, in the inspired Word of God. Therefore, the apostle speaks of the privilege that comes to the children of God because they know the mystery. God has informed us; He has revealed to us His purposes. The beauty of knowing the purposes of God is that we are able to join our lives and our purposes with His. We are able to become living expressions, not only in the enjoyment of the privilege, but in the furtherance of the mission that comes to those who are under God’s plan. The individual who does not know the plan and purpose of God and who is ignorant of the mystery that is revealed is destined to clash head-on with the very purpose of his existence. He doesn’t know where he came from, and he has no idea as to why he is here. This individual is oblivious in the understanding of his eternal destiny. The people of God know that He is the source of their redemption. They know the purpose that they have here on earth, and they are confident in their destiny.

Jesus told the apostles in John 15:15 that it is a glorious advantage for the children of God to understand the counsels of heaven, because it enables us to join our lives with the plans of God. We are therefore able to harmonize the purposes of our existence with the plans and purposes of God that have been laid out for us before the beginning of time. A slave or servant does not know what the master wants him to do, and so finds himself in a dilemma. If a master commands his servant to dig a hole, then the servant must dig it without knowing why. Then if the master tells him to cover it, he will see no purpose in it. Therefore, the servant tends to rebel, because he does not

understand what the master is doing. However, the child of God who understands the plans and workings of God, knows that there is a purpose when Jesus tells him to dig. He may not understand all of the workings of the purpose, but he knows that if the master planned it and commands it, then there is a purpose to it. He is then able to dig with a sense of commitment and a sense of accomplishment because of those glorious plans and purposes that God has laid out for him. That is the advantage that comes to those who know the purpose of God. The apostle Paul says that God made known to us the mystery, the hidden plan that was to be accomplished in Christ, and it has now been made known to us according to His good pleasure, that He purposed in Christ.

Efficient and Unifying Grace

In Ephesians 1:10, God **put into effect** this plan or purpose. This is a beautiful statement about Jesus Christ, yet it also tells us that God is working perfectly in harmony with the unfolding of the scheme of the ages. It is called “the fullness of time.” It is interesting that in Greek the apostle Paul used the word “stewardship,” as God is controlling the calendar of events.

It is God who established when certain things were to happen in relation to church history. In the fullness of time, Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldeans into a land that God was going to give him as an inheritance. In the fullness of time, the children of Israel were called out of Egypt and headed for the promised land. In the fullness of time, God sent His own Son, born of a woman and born under the law (Galatians 4:4). In the fullness of time, Christ was raised from the dead, and He was exalted to the right hand of God taking His place as King over His kingdom, His church. Those are the accomplishments of the fullness of time. In the fullness of time, the church began on the day of Pentecost. In the fullness of time, through the unfolding history of mankind, individuals have responded to the commands of Christ and have entered into the kingdom. All

of this assures us that it is God who is controlling the calendar. He is the steward, the administrator of time. The church is always on schedule, and it is accomplishing the purposes that God had in mind.

This grace is a **unifying** grace. God planned everything so that the unfolding of this calendar of events would make it possible for Him to sum up everything under the headship of Christ. The words “sum up” are beautiful, because when one begins to “sum up” things, he draws a line and adds together all of the elements that proceed. All of those elements then form the summary as a common denominator, as an explanation, and as the rationale for all of the elements that preceded. The words “sum up” appear only one other time in the New Testament. They appear in Romans 13:8-10 when the apostle Paul was referring to the law of Moses.

Love is the summary of all God’s commandments. It is the explanation and the rationale for all of the other commandments that God has given. When you relate that concept to the fact that Jesus Christ is the summary of everything, then that tells us that anything that has ever happened or ever happens on the face of the earth happens in view of Christ and His relationship with the church. God tells us that Jesus Christ is the summary of everything, and that is a beautiful concept. That tells us that human history revolves around Jesus. He is the center; He is the core. He is the summary and the explanation of everything. However, it also tells us that the church is the summary of everything that happens because the church is in Christ. In Ephesians 1:10 Paul says that Jesus is the summary, not only of everything that happens on earth but also in heaven. That tells us that His work is cosmic. In other words, His work has influences, both terrestrial and extraterrestrial, and extends into ages yet to come because God has now summed up everything in Christ Jesus.

Inheriting Grace

In Ephesians 1:11 is seen that this grace is an **inheriting** grace because of His choosing us. The word “chosen” comes from the Greek word *kleronomia*. *Kleroo*, in this context, is the term for heritage, and *nomos* is the term for law. A heritage is a possession that an heir receives when he enters into dominion over his inheritance. The point of this passage is that God has built Himself a heritage, and the church is that heritage. This does not say that the church inherits. The church will inherit, but it is not this verse that claims that. This verse claims that it is God who inherits the church.

In Ephesians 1:18 the apostles pray for the saints to be enlightened. God is the heir of the church, and this passage says that He has chosen us, has elected us, and has made us His heritage in Christ Jesus. He has predestined us to be His chosen people. The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9 that in times past we were people in darkness. Now, however, we are the people of God who have obtained mercy. In Titus 2:13-14 the apostle tells us that God has planned all things so that in Christ Jesus He could build Himself a heritage. That makes God the heir of His people, and we His people are His heritage. We were predestined to that purpose, chosen by God before time to this end. The apostle says that all of this is in conformity with the purpose that He is now working out. In other words, He purposed our existence, and now Christ is working that purpose, bringing it into reality.

In Ephesians 1:12 the apostle states that all of this grace and purpose of God is now being effected through Christ Jesus. The church has been planned, “. . . *in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.*” God planned the church before time so that it would be “. . . *to the praise of his glorious grace . . .*” (Ephesians 1:6). He wanted to give a practical demonstration to the family of men of the effects that His glorious grace would have in their lives. Then Christ came and built the plan, and He built it so that it might be, in the existence of its reality, a glorious tribute to the

grace of God, “. . . *for the praise of his glory.*” (Ephesians 1:12)

In Ephesians 1:13-14 the apostle states that the Holy Spirit intervenes and seals the church with His own divine nature, to guarantee the church's existence in the eternities beyond time. All of this is so that it will be a tribute to the glorious grace of the almighty God. When he refers to those who had before hoped in Christ, he was probably referring to the Jews in Ephesians 1:12 because they had anticipated the coming of Messiah for many years. They were the ones who were hoping for His arrival.

Then Paul said in Ephesians 1:13, “*And you also* (He was probably referring to the Gentiles because they had no Messiah on their horizon) *were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit . . .*” The apostle states in this context that the Gentile, just like the Jew, has also been made a part of the heritage of God. The Gentiles were made a part of the heritage of God when they heard the word of the gospel, because it was through the gospel that God made His call to redemption.

God still makes His call to all men for redemption through the gospel. In 2 Thessalonians 2:14, He is calling men to salvation through the gospel. Therefore, when the Gentiles heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and when they believed it, God had foreknown their response. When they believed that gospel of truth, they were marked. They were sealed; they were stamped. A brand was placed on them, the brand being the Holy Spirit Himself. The indwelling of deity that seals the church is a guarantee of its inheritance in the eternities beyond time, when God completely wraps up the redemptive process. We inherit Him, and He inherits us. Therefore, the Holy Spirit serves as a guarantee to the church of our inheritance of God, of Heaven, and everything that will be enjoyed in the eternities beyond time.

The Seal of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, who seals the church and marks the church as God's people, also guarantees that God will possess us in the eternities beyond time. We have been sealed, the term “seal” being a stamp of approval. It verifies authenticity and establishes ownership. The very existence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the heart of Christian people confirms to them that they are God's people. He owns us, and we own Him because He inherits us, and we inherit Him.

When the apostle was talking about the promised Holy Spirit, he was probably relating to the promise of Joel 2:28, in which God promised to send the Holy Spirit in the latter days. The apostle Peter commented on that in Acts chapter two, saying that the outpouring of the miraculous manifestations on the apostles simply gave confirmation of the fact that the dual prophecy was being fulfilled. In Acts 2:38 Peter responded to the Jews who asked, “What must we do to be saved?” He said to them, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* That is what had been promised in Joel 2:28. Peter states that we receive this promised Holy Spirit when we believe in Christ, when we repent of our sins, and when we are baptized into the name of Jesus for the remission of sins.

Paul then says in Ephesians 1:14 that this Holy Spirit is what we inherit. The Holy Spirit is what God possesses, and the Holy Spirit is the guarantee. He is a two-way guarantee, both to God and to the saints that we belong to each other, so that we will be to the praise of His glory throughout eternity. A brand on a cow gives confirmation to the cowboy that it is his cow. This is a trite example, but hopefully it will help us to understand how the Holy Spirit confirms that we are God's people. God has placed His brand on us as the cowboy brands the cow. To the cowboy the brand guarantees that it is his cow. If she were not his cow, then the brand would not be there. That same brand also speaks to the cow guaranteeing her that the

cowboy is hers. If the cowboy were not hers, then why would she have his brand? This example illustrates how the divine Spirit, who indwells the Christian believer, gives confirmation to God that it is His child and gives confirmation to the child that he is the Father's. This creates confidence that we belong to God, and that we will continue to be to the praise of His glory throughout eternity.

THE SOVEREIGN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:14-23

Chapter three presents a commentary on Ephesians 1:15-23. The aim of this chapter is to prayerfully consider the sovereignty and the rule of the resurrected and now enthroned Christ over the world and particularly over the church. It is to see the blessings that derive from His reign as He brings these blessings to those who accept His rule.

In Ephesians 1:15 Paul says, “*For this reason . . .*” The reason that Paul mentions here goes back to all that he had been discussing in this epistle. He discussed the plan that God laid before the foundation of the world, the plan to build the church. He laid down the blueprints. Christ came into human history and then built the church in perfect harmony with that plan. The church has now been presented with outpourings of divine grace and glorious divine gifts. It is for that reason that Paul began this prayer for the Ephesian brethren. He prayed that they might be able to understand the glory of their position and their status in Christ. It is easy for the church to live below its privilege, because it does not understand the glory and the honors of that privilege. Therefore, Paul seems to be saying, “I think you need some divine help in putting all of this information together so that you can walk the streets of Ephesus, or the streets of whatever city the church lives in today, with a greater sense of dignity and pride in belonging to the church.”

God's Present Involvement With the Church

Paul's Prayer to God for the Church

Paul began his prayer for the church in Ephesians 1:15-16. Of course, Paul was thankful for the church because the church justifies the plans of God before time and the works of Christ in time. It is the church that gives validity to the plan and shows us the glorious consequences of the workings of God. Paul prayed for this congregation out of a deep sense of appreciation for their faith, because they validate the plans and purposes of God. Paul gave thanks to them for their love toward all of the saints, because they were expressing their solidarity and their common sharing in a common privilege with all of the brethren in Christ Jesus. Paul gave thanks for them, and he continued to pray to God on their behalf every time he remembered them.

Paul's Prayer Involves Three Measures of Understanding

This prayer was specific because Paul asked for three distinct measures of understanding. He wanted them, and us, to understand what he had been talking about. He even asked God to help us in our understanding. His prayer was offered to the glorious Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He asked for us, *"... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."* (Ephesians 1:17, NASB) He prayed that God would give, **first** of all, this measure of understanding—*"... a spirit of wisdom ..."* This was not the Holy Spirit. Paul was talking more about the attitude out of which a Christian uses the information that God has given to him. He was praying that God would give us the attitude of a wise man.

Paul encourages the Christians in Ephesians 4:23 to *"... be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ..."* (NASB). This "spirit" also is not the Holy Spirit. It is the attitude out of which man processes the information that God has given him. Paul prayed that the readers would receive a spirit of wisdom. In

other words, they were to be wise people while reading this word that Paul was presenting.

Secondly, Paul prayed to the Father of glory, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant a revelation in the knowledge of Jesus, so that we might know Jesus better. Paul was not asking God in his prayer to infuse by direct revelation, thinking and understanding in the heart and the mind of Christian people. The revelation of the mystery had already been made (Ephesians 1:10). Paul discusses that at length in Ephesians 3:3, when he tells us that by revelation he had received understanding of the mystery. When we read what he wrote, then we can understand his understanding of the mystery. Therefore, the revelation has been made.

However, Paul also prayed that we might understand the revelation. He prayed that we might read, understand, and see the revelation as clearly as he had seen it when he had received it by inspiration. We receive it by reading the message (Ephesians 3:3-4). Therefore, Paul prayed that we can understand the revelation that has been made so that we can better understand Christ, and so that we can see His role in the redemptive process, a role that He already accomplished on Calvary. It is a role of redemption that He is continuing to extend in our lives and through our lives to others outside of the kingdom of Christ as we carry on our mission. Paul prayed that God would give us a spirit of wisdom, making us wise men. He prayed that God would give us an understanding of the revelation that has already been made.

The **third** measure is one of understanding. The reason Paul wants the church to have enlightened eyes is so that they might understand what others do not understand. They are able to see things that other people did not see. Remember how men judge the church. They judge by the externals. They judge by what they see. Christians, however, judge the church with enlightened eyes, enlightened by the revelation of the Word of God. Therefore, Paul prayed that our evaluation of our privilege, our enjoyment of those privileges, and our expression

of those privileges to other people around us would be because we are manifesting the glory we now possess in Christ Jesus.

Three Amazing Blessings God Has for His People

Paul prayed for those three *measures of understanding*, so that we may understand three *greater privileges* that come from God out of that understanding.

The apostle continued his prayer. Paul says that there are three great privileges that he wants us to know. He prays that God will give us (1) the spirit of wisdom, (2) the revelation and the knowledge of Christ, and (3) the eyes of our heart enlightened so that we can know the three additional blessings that the revelation of God brings us (Ephesians 1:18-20).

God's Calling

The first blessing is the hope of His calling—this is God's calling. Sometimes, Christian people are nervous and perhaps uncertain about their hope in Christ Jesus. Generally, the reason is that they do not understand that their hope is not based on their own performance. If our hope is based on what we do for God, then God pity us, because we are hopeless individuals. Our hope, however, is based on His performance in our behalf.

The Hebrew writer explained the basis of the Christian hope in Hebrews 6:17-19. He went back to the days of Abraham and told us that God, out of His encounter with Abraham, wanted to prove something to those who would later live as the heirs of the promise that He made to Abraham at that time. God told Abraham that in him and in his seed all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. When God made that promise, He swore to Abraham that it would come to pass. The Hebrew writer refers to the oath of God, telling us that God wanted to show something to the heirs of the promise. The heirs are first century Christians and Christians of every generation since when God swore. He made His promise, and He backed it up with an oath. With His oath God shows the immutability and the unchangeability of His decisions and

choices. They will not be changed. The Hebrew writer tells us that is confirmed by the fact that God cannot lie.

All of this gives strong encouragement to us who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. It is a hope which we hold as an anchor of the soul. It is a sure hope. It is steadfast. It penetrates the veil where Christ has entered into the heaven of heavens on our behalf. The Hebrew writer assures us that our hope is based upon the immutable and unchangeable decisions of God, that are backed up by His oath. That is confirmed by the fact that God cannot lie. "And that fact," says the Hebrew writer, "anchors our soul in times of distress." This is what confirms to us the assurance of our hope. It is a steadfast and sure hope. It is a hope that has already conquered the barriers between heaven and earth in the very person of Christ Jesus, because He has ascended to the right hand of God. That is our hope, and Paul wants us to know the kind of hope His calling gives us (Ephesians 1:18).

God's Inheritance

For the second blessing, Paul says that he would like for us to know the glorious riches of God's inheritance in the saints. This confirms Ephesians 1:11 in which the apostle told us that we are God's heritage. There is something gloriously rich about the saints that cannot be seen with human eyes. It is seen with enlightened eyes. It is seen only by eyes that are guided by the revelation of God's Word. The apostle wants us to see the glory that God's people possess. There is a crown upon their heads. Of course, these crowns cannot be seen with the human eye. They are seen by revelation. Paul wants us to know that we are God's glorious heritage, Christ's glorious bride (Ephesians 6:26).

Our glory is impressive, yet it does not derive from what we are doing for God, but rather from what He is doing for us. There is a powerful parallel in Ezekiel chapter sixteen. God went back to the beginning of Israel's history when the descendants of Abraham descended into the land of Egypt and

became slaves. Their mother was a Hittite, and the father was an Amorite. In the day that Israel was born, her naval was not cut. She was not swaddled. There was no diaper placed upon her. She was cast out into the open. She was abhorred, certainly by Pharaoh and all of the hordes of Egypt. God passed by, and He had pity on her. Though she was dead spiritually, God gave her life. He then began to dress her with the finest of garments. The finest of food was her daily diet as God began to build her up. When He passed by Israel, He saw something of the beauty that He was developing in her life, and He fell in love with her. He proposed marriage; He married her and became her husband. Then He continued to endow her with rich gifts. He placed bracelets upon her wrists, and He placed earrings in her ears. He placed a beautiful crown upon her head, and she became a queen. Her beauty went forth among the nations, because she was famous and perfect. Ezekiel added these words on behalf of God: *"You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD."* (Ezekiel 16:13-14) That is parallel to the church in God's plan.

There is something gloriously rich about God's inheritance in the church. It is, however, glory that is derived. It is not native to us. It is a gift that has been given to us by God Himself. Therefore, the church enjoys the privilege of being crowned with glory and honor in the presence of the almighty God. It is a beautiful picture. However, if the church does not understand her glory, then she will certainly live below her privilege. Paul wants us to know the exceeding glory of God's inheritance in the saints.

Take as an example a piece of land that is barren, dry, growing weeds, and inhabited by jackals and all kinds of vicious serpents. The land is worthless. Then a rich man moves in, and he begins to cultivate the land. He builds a beautiful mansion and a wonderful fence around his whole land. He begins to plant the finest of grains and grass in the fields. He

stocks the field with the finest of animal herds. He builds irrigation channels, and he makes it into a beautiful piece of land. He spends a lot of money, but every cent that he spends on his possession just enriches his inheritance. In the same way, God is pouring out abundant showings of grace upon the church, and these build in the church her glorious privileges. He sees the beauty of her privilege under the shared honors that she derives from Christ. She is a glorious church, and she is a queen. God sees that because of what He has done for her.

God's Power

The apostle tells us in Ephesians 1:17-20 that the church not only receives the hope of God and is the glorious inheritance of God, but it is where God is exercising His power. That does not mean that the church is miraculous. It does, however, tell us that there is superhuman power that is being manifested in the church. It brings about the transformation from the state of sin that we were in and from the death sentence that was upon us, to restore us to life and gives us the glorious privilege of being the queen of God and the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. That takes power!

Awareness of God's Power at Work for the Church

God's Power Displayed in Christ for the Confidence of the Church

The apostle wanted to illustrate that power. It is the same power that found Jesus in the tomb and raised Him from the dead. It takes power to stand a dead man on his feet as though he had never died. It takes power to restore physical life to a dead body that had been destroyed on the cross of Calvary only a few days before. That power further manifested itself as God raised Jesus from the world, lifted Him out of the world, and exalted Him to His right hand. It took another showing of power to enthrone Him at the right hand in the heavenly realm,

far above all rule, authorities, powers, and dominions. Paul discussed the working of God's power in the life of Jesus, that took Him from the position of a dead man in the tomb and enthroned Him as the almighty, reigning, and ruling King in heaven. That is power!

The same kind of power is at work spiritually in the lives of Christian people. What God did for Jesus physically, He now does for us spiritually (Ephesians 2:5-6). God will lift us out of the tomb of spiritual death. He will translate us out of the kingdom of darkness into the exalted kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). Then He will make us to sit with Christ in the heavenly realms and at the right hand of God, sharing in His reign and in His rule (Ephesians 2:6). The power of God of a spiritual nature is at work in the church today.

What is the power of God? What is the glory of His inheritance in the saints? What is the hope that He grants to His people? Paul wants us to know these things according to the power that God is now using in the church on behalf of the reigning and ruling Christ.

Christ's Absolute Power Over Everything

Paul states in Ephesians 1:20-21 that the present age is the age of Messiah. It is the age of the kingdom. In the age that is to come, Christ will continue to exercise absolute authority and sovereignty over all other powers. All other powers are subservient to Him. All other rule is derived from Him. All other dominions exist because of His consent, as the apostle presents in this context. Therefore, Jesus is the reigning, the ruling, and the sovereign enthroned power over everything in heaven and on earth. Once again, that confirms to us that His sovereignty is cosmic. It relates not only to the world but also to the heavens, not only to the time now but to the time that is destined in the eternities beyond judgment day.

Acknowledge Christ's Sovereign and Providential Position Over the Church

The apostle tells us in verse 22 that God placed all things under the feet of Christ and appointed him to be the head over everything for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. God made Christ to be the head of the church. He is the head of the body and we are the body of that head. God has given to Christ the position of headship, and that not only means that He is the one who gives life to the body, but He is the one who gives direction to the body. He is the one who controls everything that has anything to do with the church. Christ is the head of its mission. Christ is the head of its redemption. He is the head of its worship. He is the head of its benevolence program. He is the head of its destiny. In everything that has anything to do with the church, Christ is the one who is the ultimate and supreme authority. It is Christ's word that must be respected in the pursuit of all of the activities that have anything to do with the relationship between God and His church. This is Christ's world, and so is the world to come.

Christ is the head of the church, and the church is the fulfillment of everything that is Christ (Ephesians 1:23) It is difficult to understand what the fullness of Christ is, but it relates to everything that He is and everything that He has. It relates to everything that He is in His divine essence and everything that He is in His identification with the human family, because He is man. He is God and man. The church is the fullness of Christ, and therefore, the church is the spiritual continuation of the redemptive work that He began when He was in His physical body on earth. The church is His body. It is not just any body; it is His. It is unique, and it is one. There is no second best. Christ is the head of it, and it is the fullness of Him. The word "fullness" comes from the Greek word *pleroma*. This fullness suggests the complete sharing in all that He is and all that He has. This word also suggests the idea that the church is the completion of Christ, making a living

functional body and a unit, mutually serving each other.

In Ephesians chapter one, it has been seen that God inherits the church, but the church also inherits God. That creates a relationship that is mutually rewarding both to Him and to those who are a part of the church. However, in Ephesians 1:22 we are informed that Christ is the head of the church, and therefore it is He who has a relationship with us and who brings rewards to us. The church, however, also brings completion to Him, and therefore, it is a relationship that is mutually rewarding to both. It is clear that Christ and the church complete each other. He needs the church. Many say that Christ does not need us. It is certainly true that we need Him, but He needs us too. What would a head be without a body? It would be like a king without a kingdom, a shepherd without sheep, a groom without a bride, and a vine without branches. Jesus used these figures to define His relationship with the church during His personal ministry.

Christ is the head of the church, the head of the body. The church is the body of that head. It is through this mutual relationship that He is carrying on His functions through the church. God first worked out the scheme of redemption on the cross of Calvary. It is now through the church that God is extending that scheme of redemption to the rest of the human family around us. That accomplishes the glorious mission that is defined in Ephesians chapter three. The church, then, needs to have a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and eyes that are enlightened by that revelation to know the function that Christ has in relation to the church and the responsibilities that the church has in response to its glorious head.

GOD'S GRACE AND MAN'S WORK

Ephesians 2:1-10

Chapter four presents a commentary on Ephesians 2:1-10. Paul has just concluded a presentation of the glory of the church in its present reality. God had planned the church before time; Christ built it and built into it manifestations of grace that are impressive to the mind of man. The glory of the church as God's heritage is made evident. The church must appreciate its status. Paul did an interesting thing in Ephesians chapter two. He moved the Ephesians back one stage in time to the period before they were converted to Christ, while they were still a part of the world and in a state of condemnation. He presented God's view of them when they were not the church, which helped draw the contrast between the unchurched and what they had become as the glorious church of Christ.

Spiritual Death Outside of Christ

The apostle wanted us to understand that when he presents a pathetic view of the Ephesians in their former status in chapter two, it is also a definition of anyone today who is outside of the spiritual realms of Christ. It defines one's neighbor across the street or down the road if he is not in Christ.

Outside of Christ You Were Dead

What is seen in the first few verses of Ephesians chapter two is God's view of the unchurched. The unchurched are those

who are unregenerate and, therefore, are still lost in their sin. The apostle began with this as a contrast, so that he could show the process of change that Christ had brought into their history (Ephesians 2:1). A dead man cannot do much; in fact, he can do absolutely nothing to change his state. Resurrection does not exist as a power in the dead. There are no resurrections in the cemetery. The apostle was discussing the hopelessness of their situation. They couldn't change it. They were dead for specific reasons, sins and trespasses.

Outside of Christ You Were in Transgressions and Sins

They were dead because of their trespasses and sins. There is a difference between trespassing and sinning. Trespasses, according to the Old Testament root of New Testament teaching, have to do with the moral or immoral actions that men do to men. People trespass the rights and privileges of others, thus offending them. A sin is a violation of the rules that have to do with God. Sins violate the "man to God" relationship, and trespasses violate the "man to man" relationship. Either one of them deprives an individual of life when it becomes a settled practice. Trespasses can kill, and sins can and do kill.

Outside of Christ You Lived a Wrong Pattern of Life

Paul presented the life of these people when they were still dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-2). Paul defines three different ways in which individuals arrive at and stay in the condition of spiritual death and separation from God. It doesn't mean that they are physically dead, because he says that they are still living. They live in what he calls the "*. . . ways of this world . . .*" He says that they live according to "*. . . the ruler of the kingdom of the air . . .*" and according to "*. . . the spirit . . .*" (attitude) that is at work in those who are disobedient. Those are three different ways of walking

according to the course of this world.

Paul previously discussed in Ephesians chapter one that Christ has assumed sovereignty over all rule, authority, and dominion—not only in this world, but in the world to come. In other words, this world has to do with our secular age. Christ rules it, and He is also the ruler over the world to come. There are some people, however, who live in this world as though there were no world to come. They can be called “worldlings.” They are secular-minded individuals and materialists. They are people who live in God’s world oblivious of and indifferent to everything of a spiritual nature. Paul says that is the way we used to be. We lived according to the course of this world and according to the path that people in this world travel.

We were walking, or we were living. In Greek, the term “walking” defines a career. The term “living” defines constant dwelling. We were living according to the ruler of the air, the spiritual ruler of the realm of spiritual life. That ruler is Satan himself. He is the spirit that is at work in those who are disobedient. That means that in times past we were living according to the course of this world, according to the Satan-manipulated lifestyle, and following his dictate. Therefore, he was the spirit who was at work in our lives, leading us in our disobedience. He was the one who was leading us away from God, away from His moral standards, and away from the purposes that God had in bringing about our existence in the first place. Satan was manipulating our lifestyle, and he was leading us to condemnation.

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:3 that we were living our way, ignoring the way of God. As a matter of fact, in Ephesians 2:2, Paul said that we were the children of disobedience. In Greek, that phrase appears as “the sons of disobedience.” A disobedient son is not ignorant of the commands of the Father. He is rebellious to the commands of the Father. He knows what he ought to do, but he does not do it. He is rebelling, and his disobedience says that he is rejecting his Father’s right to rule. That is the way in which we were all

living. We lived among people of that lifestyle, and we conformed our lives accordingly. We were the sons of disobedience, participating in the desires and appetites of the flesh and of the mind.

Outside of Christ Was the Local of All of Us

Paul says that we were, "... *gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature* ..." (Ephesians 2:3). That does not mean that we inherited a sinful nature. The word "nature" is not in the original Greek of this context. It was inserted by the translator. The apostle is not discussing an unhappy inheritance that we received because of the sins of Adam. He is discussing *our performance*; he is discussing *our walk*; he is discussing *our lifestyle*. He is discussing the one who is manipulating our life, and therefore, he is defining the sins and transgressions that we have committed. That is what produced our guilt, not something that we inherited from our forefathers. Maybe we inherited a bad example from them, and we are conforming to that example, but it is because of *our decision* that we chose this course of rebellion and disobedience to God. We choose to walk according to the course of the world and according to the Satan-dictated lifestyle. We were satisfying the cravings and yearnings of the flesh. Whatever the flesh desired, we did it. In other words, we were manipulated by our passions and by our appetites, rather than being controlled by our mind.

Paul wants us to be wise men. He wants us to be enlightened men. He wants us to have enlightened eyes so that we can make the proper choices. However, without all of that we are individuals who follow our animal instincts, and inevitably, that brings about our death that comes from our trespasses and our sins.

The End Result - Objects of Wrath

The apostle says that, because of our sins and trespasses, we were like the rest. We were by nature objects of wrath. The word "nature" does not indicate that we have a natural

inheritance of condemnation. Every individual is born as innocent and pure as God himself. In Matthew 18:1-4 Christ presented a little child as a model of innocence. In Matthew 19:13-15 Jesus said that the little children are those who have the nature of citizens of the kingdom of Christ. They are innocent. In Mark 9:36-37 Jesus tells us that he who receives a little child receives Jesus, because there is a spiritual identification between the children of God, little children, and Jesus Christ Himself. In these verses, Jesus gives a beautiful definition of the spiritual status of children. Therefore, when Paul says that by nature we were the children of wrath, the word "nature" means habit.

If one sows seed of sins and trespasses in his life, by nature he will reap the wrath of God. That is the by-product of sinful transgressing against man and against God. Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8, *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction . . ."* By nature, condemnation is a by-product of that kind of living. This is not an inheritance. It is a performance that produces this result. Paul says that we were, as the rest, children of wrath.

In Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul is talking about Jews before their conversion to Christ, because in verse eleven he begins to discuss, *" . . . you who are Gentiles . . ."* He then discusses the Gentile condition outside of Christ. In verses one through ten, he is referring possibly to former Jews or perhaps to those who are still unregenerate in their relationship to God, and who are still in the world under His condemnation.

In looking at the lifestyle of walking according to the course of the world, according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan), and according to that malicious spirit that is working and manipulating the sons of disobedience, it creates for us the natural by-product of the wrath of God. The apostle tells us that this is a pathetic condition for an individual to be in. There is no way that we can change this condition, because we do not have the powers of erasing the history of our sin.

There is no way that we can cover it, and there is no way that we can ignore it. We were as a natural by-product, victims of the wrath of God. There is a great difference between being outside of Christ under the wrath of God (Ephesians chapter two), and the glories of being under the grace of God, (Ephesians chapter one). The contrast can easily be seen.

The New Status in Christ

God Is the Great Changer

Paul presents a pathetic condition for the man outside of Christ. But the most glorious words in all of the revelation are the following two in Ephesians 2:4, "*But . . . God . . .*" Only He can bring about change. "*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive . . .*" Notice how His love motivates His mercy.

In Ephesians one, the apostle discussed the grace that God has been pouring out upon His people. In this verse, he discusses the mercy of God. Those are two ingredients that are essential in bringing about redemptive change in our lives. Grace, by definition, is unmerited favor. Grace is when we receive what we do not deserve. We are going to heaven, and there is no way that we have deserved it or can earn it. We will go to heaven because grace gives us what we do not deserve. Mercy, on the other hand, is when we do not receive what we deserve. We deserve to go to hell. We have earned it. Our trespasses and sins bring condemnation and the penalty of an eternal hell, and that is deserved. Therefore, when God gives us grace, He gives us that which we do not deserve, and when He gives us mercy, He does not give us what we do deserve. Those two qualities of divine intervention change our lives.

The apostle Paul says, "*. . . God, who is rich in mercy . . .*" (Ephesians 2:4). This contains an overlapping concept—the "more than enough" riches of divine mercy that bring about our redemption.

Three Great Changes God Accomplished for the Lost

God did three things for us in the context of Ephesians 2:5-6. (Ephesians 2:4-5). God loved us while we were still dead in sin. He did not start loving us when we straightened up our act and started walking properly, obeying His command. He loved us while we were still undeserving. That is the reason that mercy is required to bring about this intervention of God. Even while we were still dead in our trespasses and sin, God loved us, and out of that love He sent His Son so that no man should perish (John 3:16). It is by grace that we have been saved, so mercy and grace are joined together, and that brings about the salvation process.

In Ephesians 2:6 are listed the three things God's grace and mercy have done for those who were dead in their sins. He **first** raised them up, giving them new life in Christ. The church is now God's "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That new life was the fruit of the believer's obedient response to the Gospel, and it happened at the baptism. Romans 6:3-4 beautifully explains the place baptism plays in bringing about "newness of life." **Second**, God raised them up through post-baptism life that delivered them out of the world and "brought them into the kingdom of His Son" (Colossians 1:13). This is what Paul describes as God rescuing His people "from this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). He lifted them out of the world, and made them subjects of the kingdom of heaven, the church. No longer a part of Satan's world, they now reside in "the heavenly places" discussed in Ephesians 1:3. They no longer share the views, values or moral standards of the world from which they have been called. They definitely do not share a common destiny with the world. Even now they are granted "citizenship" in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

What God did for Christ, He now does for believers. Jesus was physically dead in the tomb. God first raised Him up, restoring His life. Then second, at Jesus' ascension God lifted

Him out of the world into the “heavenly realms” discussed in Ephesians 1:20. Third, God then enthroned Jesus as King over His kingdom. Paul used the physical transition the Father accomplished for His son to define an analogous spiritual transformation He accomplished for His people. Having made them alive, God then lifts them up to glorious realms.

The **third** thing God did for His people is defined in Ephesians 2:6. The exalted church shares in the reign and rule of Christ over the universe. Such a position of dignity contributed to the image Paul wanted the church to appreciate. The Apostle John wrote down what Jesus wanted the church to know about the present position it occupied in Him. *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne”* (Revelation 3:20-21). These verses in Revelation define a mutually rewarding relationship to both Christ and Christians. It is an intensive spiritual communion and fellowship that can be defined only by physical analogies. Jesus lifted, and still lifts, the church to spiritual heights in heavenly realms where He exercises His reign.

Paul adds a statement as an explanation of gratitude and praise when he writes that it is by grace that we have been saved (Ephesians 2:5). We are raised to new life, translated into a new realm, seated with Christ and this is all a product of the grace of God. Dead people cannot change their status by their performance. God is the source of all spiritual change.

The Glorious Purpose of God in Saving Man

In Ephesians 2:7 the apostle says that God has made us alive, lifted us out of the world, separated us from it, and made us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places. He did this for a purpose, so that in all succeeding generations of human history the glory of the church might be made evident to all men. The

church's glory continues to span the endless ages beyond time. In all of these ages God had a purpose in raising us up, and in making us to sit, reign, and rule with Christ. In Ephesians 2:7 Paul says that He did it, "*. . . in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*" Kindness is simply moral goodness that God expresses toward His people.

Paul says that God has done all of this. He planned it all so that we might give praise because of His glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6). Christ built the church so that we might give praise to His glory (Ephesians 1:12). The Holy Spirit seals us and guarantees our inheritance if we are faithful to Christ, so that forever we will praise His glory (Ephesians 1:14). In this context, Paul says that God changed our status from the dead to the living. He enthroned us. We are no longer dominated as subjects and victims of Satan, but we now share as rulers with Christ over the entire universe.

He has done this for His glorious purpose (Ephesians 2:7), which is another one of the qualities of divine grace. It is glorious grace. It is praiseworthy grace. It is rich grace. It is redeeming grace and all of the other qualities that were learned about in Ephesians chapter one. In Ephesians 2:5 it is merciful grace, and in verse seven it is the glorious grace of God exercised in kindness (moral goodness).

However, God wanted to exhibit His grace. He wanted to build a showcase for the entire world to see. He wants the church to parade the glories of its inheritance. He wants the church to demonstrate the grace that He has poured out on it, so that all men can see His kindness.

The Grace of God Released by the Faith of Man Brings Salvation

In Ephesians 2:8 the apostle says that we are saved by grace, not by works. Our works have only brought about our death (cf. Ephesians 2:1-2). Our works, our sins, and our trespasses have brought us into the condemnation of God and

have made us subjects of His wrath. It is, therefore, not our works that have produced our salvation. Paul clarified that point. Our salvation takes place through the grace of God and through our response of faith. God has done His part in making the grace possible. Our part is responding to Him through faith. This salvation is not from us; it is a gift of God. It is not by our works, yet our salvation is the result of **His** works in our lives (Ephesians 2:9). Our works produced our condemnation, whereas His works produce our salvation. We need to remember that we do not work for salvation. If we are Christian people, we work *because* we are saved.

The Saved Were Molded by God's Handiwork

The apostle tells us in Ephesians 2:10, "*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" It is interesting that in this context Paul tells us that our salvation is the product of Jesus' work. We are His workmanship. Workmanship is the end product of someone's activity. We are the end product of His activity. Therefore, we are not saved by our works, but we have been saved by Christ, and then we work. Our works grow out of our salvation. It is not our salvation that grows out of our works. If we can understand that, we will have a deeper appreciation of the grace, mercy, and kindness of God that bring about our salvation in Christ Jesus.

In this lesson we have seen the status of the Jew outside of Christ and the glorious change that the two words "*But . . . God . . .*" can bring about. The apostle then turns his attention to the Gentiles to let us know that their status is equally pathetic, but there are two beautiful words for them: "*But now . . .*" (Ephesians 2:13). That will be seen in the next lesson.

GOD'S GRACE AND THE GENTILE

Ephesians 2:11-22

Introduction

Chapter five presents a commentary on Ephesians 2:11-22. The specific aim of this chapter is to present the cross of Christ as the basis for unifying all people on the face of the earth into one body through the reconciling powers of the cross itself. It also presents Christ as the one eternal foundation on which all of the races are built together in the constitution of the spiritual temple of God which is the church.

In this section of Ephesians the apostle Paul begins dealing with the Gentiles in their condition before they were converted to Christ. In Ephesians 2:1-10 He presented the status of the Jew in his pre-conversion condition. According to Ephesians 2:1-3, the Jew was in a pathetic situation. He was spiritually dead, separated from God. He was walking according to the course of the world and according to the satanic forces that manipulated his lifestyle. He was actively involved in disobedience, rejection, and rebellion to the moral standards of God. Because of the natural consequences of that kind of living, he was the direct object of divine wrath. In other words, he was hell-bound and hell-deserving.

Two beautiful words changed the status of the Jew who was outside of Christ, and they are found in Ephesians 2:4, "*But . . . God . . .*" In other words, the Jew was in a pathetic condition, in a state of alienation from God, and there was absolutely nothing he could do to change that. "*But . . . God . . .*" the apostle says, being rich in mercy because of His great

love, changed things for the Jews. He brought them into a meaningful relationship through His grace, and He atoned for their sins through the sacrifice of Christ. He lifted them out of their condemnation, raised them out of the world, and enthroned them with Christ in the heavenly realms where He reigns and rules over the universe. They get to share in His reign. Therefore, the two words, “*But . . . God . . .*” drastically changed the pathetic condition of the Jews who were outside of Christ.

In Ephesians 2:11 Paul began to present the status of the Gentile who was outside of Christ. If the Jew was in a bad condition, then so was the Gentile. Both were in a desperate situation outside of Christ. As the Jew had two beautiful words that transformed his condition, so does the Gentile. In Ephesians 2:13 the Gentiles have five beautiful words that change their status, “*But now in Christ Jesus . . .*” Their former state of condemnation was totally changed.

The Gentile Without Christ

The Status of the Gentile Outside of Christ

Paul directly addressed the Gentiles about their former condition outside of Christ in Ephesians 2:11. Paul was discussing the former status of the Gentile, especially from the Jewish perspective, because the Jew considered the Gentile to be a “non-person.” In 1 Peter 2:10 the apostle discusses this, “*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*” Therefore, when the Jew looked upon the Gentile, he presented a picture of the Gentile as “the uncircumcised.” That meant that the Gentile was considered a “non-person.” The Gentile was in the uncircumcised state, and as far as the Jew was concerned that was a classical definition of their heathen status. They were considered to be dogs. A physical sign of belonging to God was circumcision, and the Jew was circumcised, giving him confidence that he belonged

to the covenant of God. However, the Gentile was uncircumcised, and therefore he had no internal or external signs of any relationship with God as far as the Jew was concerned. That is why the apostle says that the Gentiles were in a former status of uncircumcision.

In Ephesians 2:12 Paul presents a number of the devastating consequences of the Gentile alienation from God. Paul says that they were **separate from Christ**. That means that they had no Messiah, no future redeemer on the horizon. In Ephesians 1:11-12, the Jew had before hoped in Christ, because all of the prophets from Moses to Malachi had promised them that a Messiah was on the horizon. They anticipated the coming Messiah with great hope. However, the Gentile was without Christ. That means that he was separated from any of the promises that God had made concerning the coming Messiah. The Gentile, in his pathetic condition of condemnation, was a man without any future hope.

The next thing that they were to remember was that at that time they were **excluded from citizenship in Israel**. Citizenship in Israel made Jews the acknowledged people of God. In Acts 14:16, Paul mentioned the fact that in times past God had allowed all of the nations to go their own way. In other words, the Gentiles did not belong to the ways of God, and the Jews were at least able to boast in their heritage of belonging to God. Therefore, the Gentile was totally excluded from any covenant relationship with God. They were excluded from citizenship in the kingdom of Israel.

Then the apostle says that they were **foreigners to the covenants of the promise**. There were two covenants that promised the coming of Messiah. The first one was the Abrahamic covenant. It is found in Genesis 12:3 when God promised to Abraham, “. . . *all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you.*” It is interesting to note that in Genesis twelve, God was already including the Gentile in His plans. However, the Law of Moses came as another covenant, and it began to separate Jew from Gentile. When this happened, the

promise of salvation that God made through Abraham to all of the nations began to disappear for the Gentiles. The Gentiles seem to have been ignorant of the promises that God had made in Genesis 12:3. That is one of the covenants to which the Gentile, in his unconverted state, was a stranger. There was another covenant, and it was called the Mosaic covenant. The purpose of the Law of Moses was to bring the children of Israel to the Messiah. The Law of Moses was a kind of preparatory tutor or teacher, and its purpose was to bring the nation of Israel to the feet of the great master teacher—Jesus Christ himself (Galatians 3:19). That was the purpose of the Law. However, the Gentile was not a part of the Mosaic covenant, and he was, therefore, eliminated from the two covenants that made arrangements for the coming Messiah.

Then the apostle said in Ephesians 2:12 that separation from Christ is a pathetic situation—**without hope** in this world. In other words, their condition was hopeless. There was absolutely nothing in this world that could bring them any possibility of expectation of future redemption.

Paul said that they were **without God in the world**. In other words, they were a godless people. As seen in the earlier verses of Ephesians two, by being outside of Christ, the status of the Jew was a pathetic and helpless situation. Outside of Christ, the Gentile finds himself in an equally desperate situation.

Christ Totally Reversed the Gentile Status

All of this was true for the Jew until Paul told them in Ephesians 2:4, “*But . . . God . . .*,” and that changed the status of the Jew. Then, in Ephesians 2:13 Paul said, “*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ,*” and the situation was changed for the Gentile. The Gentiles were those who were far away. That means that they were aliens; they were strangers. They were outsiders, and they did not even look ahead with expectations of a coming Messiah.

Paul said that the Gentiles were brought near. The word “near” was used by the apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians, as well as in other references in the New Testament, particularly in Hebrews. To be brought near is to be given the privilege of entering into the throne room where God reigns and rules, and to stand in His presence in the full glory of the redemption of Christ Jesus. It is to feel comfortable in the presence of the almighty God, just as comfortable as Adam and Eve felt in His presence before their sin. The blood of Christ removed the sin of the Gentile and eliminated his state of alienation. Redemption brought him near to God in Christ Jesus who is the only source of his salvation. The Gentile, who once was far off, is now made near.

In Christ the Hostility Between Jew and Gentile Is Now Replaced by Peaceful Unity

In Ephesians 2:14 Paul mentions the fact that there was a natural state of enmity and hostility between the Jew and the Gentile. There was a barrier, a wall of separation that created the hostility. However, in Christ Jesus, peace is declared to the Gentile. Peace is a glorious relationship. It is not only the absence of hostility, but it is the presence of positive good will.

He Is Our Peace

When Christ established peace for the Gentile, it was peace between him and God Himself. That is the most important kind of peace. Paul, however, was stressing the fact that God, through Christ, brought peace between the Jew and the Gentile. He united them together in the beautiful fellowship that is possible only in Christ Jesus, because in Christ, the hostility between Jew and Gentile has been terminated. That is a second kind of peace that Christ has brought the Gentile. The third kind of peace is the peace that is felt within the soul. That is a state of tranquility that grows out of confidence in redemption. Paul said that Christ, through His cross and His blood, made one body of the two—Jew and Gentile—one

family and one people, confirming the fact that Jesus is the unifying factor of all of the racial distinctions all over the face of the earth.

The apostle tells us that Christ destroyed and removed the barrier between Jew and Gentile. He eliminated the wall of division. That wall of division was created by the Law of Moses—the Ten Commandments and the 613 other laws, ordinances, statutes, and commandments that God had given the Jews through Moses. What God did through Christ was eliminate the Law of Moses. In Ephesians 2:15 it is made very clear that it was this law that created the state of separation between Jew and Gentile. Until the Law of Moses was given, there were no Jews and no Gentiles. All people were one distinct nation, one nationality. However, in the giving of the Law of Moses, the Jew was separated from the rest of the human family. It made them different, and it was that difference that created hostility between Jew and Gentile.

Jesus removed the wall of separation by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations (Ephesians 2:15). His purpose in removing the Law of Moses was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace. Therefore, the cross of Christ unified the Jew and Gentile together into one new man. The new man, of course, is the new creation in Christ Jesus. It is the church wherein the Jew and the Gentile have common standing, common privilege, and common access to the Father.

Paul said in Colossians 2:14 that God was able to nail the sin debt of those under the Law of Moses to the cross, thus God eliminated everything that made the Jew special. Eliminating the Law, God made a public spectacle of its principalities and powers. In other words, He emptied it of its authorities. He stripped it of any ability to judge a man because of the commandments that it contained. In other words, the Law is now completely abrogated. Calvary brings both Jews and Gentiles to common ground in Christ Jesus. The Jew and the Gentile are the new man, and that eliminates the Jew-Gentile

distinction. In the church, there is no such thing as a Jew and a Gentile. All are the children of God (cf. Galatians 3:26-29).

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul said, *"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."* In Galatians 3:26-28 He says,

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In other words, in Christ there is the elimination of all racial, gender and social discriminations. In Christ there is only one individual, a redeemed person by the blood of the cross of Christ.

Today, we might not be impressed by the fact that the cross brought peace between Jews and Gentiles. They had, however, lived through approximately fifteen hundred years of continued hostility, warfare, and animosity. But in Christ Jesus all national distinctions disappear. *"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing."* (1 Corinthians 7:19) The Law of Moses is no longer required law for Christians. All of it has been eliminated with the constitution of the new covenant in Christ Jesus. Paul said in Colossians 2:16-17,

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Christ Reconciled Both to God Through the Cross

The apostle tells us in Ephesians 2:16 that Christ has created of the Jew and the Gentile one new man, and therefore

all national distinctions disappear. He brought them together through the cross. It was the cross of Christ that eliminated the division, the separation, and the natural animosity between the Jews and Gentiles.

In Ephesians 2:17-18 the apostle says that Christ came and preached peace to the Gentiles who were far away from all of the promises, covenants, and expectations of a coming Messiah. They were far away from all the privileges of redemption. However, God came through Christ and preached peace to them. The Jews were near, and they had a Messiah on the horizon. They had hope in the coming age of the Messiah. The Jews were near, and Christ came and preached peace to them. In spite of the fact that they were near and had the law that was designed to bring them to Christ, they were still alienated from God because of their sin. Therefore, the apostle tells us that through Christ, both Jew and Gentile have common access to the Father.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:19, *"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."* That means that they were family; they were sons and daughters of God, and therefore they were heirs. Before, they had been excluded, but now they are included in a new relationship with God.

The Foundation

In Ephesians 2:20, Paul presents the Jews and Gentiles as being *"... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."* How is Christ the foundation stone of the church if the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets? Because Christ is called the *"chief cornerstone"* some would assume He is over in a corner of the foundation. The term *"foundation of the apostles and prophets"* in the Greek is the genitive of possession and not the locative of position. The passage is more easily understood when translated as the *"apostle's and prophet's foundation."* Apostles and prophets are not a part of the foundation. Jesus is the only foundation the apostles

claimed, acknowledged and preached. Jesus is the total foundation which the apostles and prophets laid. The whole foundation is the "*chief cornerstone*." This construction perfectly agrees with Isaiah 28:16 from which Paul quoted in 1 Corinthians 3:10. "*Chief cornerstone*" appears in the text as an appositive that defines the foundation, thus creating a parallel between the "*cornerstone*" and the "*foundation*."

This statement comes out of a prophecy that God made concerning the Messiah in Isaiah 28:16. God said, "*See, I lay a stone in Zion . . .*" Zion is the residence of God. Therefore, the foundation that He is discussing is found in heaven itself. Heaven is where Christ is seated at the right hand of God—in the heavenly realms. Because of that, our foundation is a heavenly foundation, and Jesus is that foundation. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" However, in the Isaiah context, God said, "*See, I lay in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation . . .*" Christ possesses all of these qualities, and He is the unique foundation for the church in this or any generation of time. Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone.

The apostle says in Ephesians 2:21 that the church is the most sacred place in existence. It has to be sacred, because in it is where God dwells. Paul then gave to the Gentile one final word of confirmation and confidence. He has a proper position and standing in this kingdom of Christ Jesus. The Jew already enjoyed his place in the kingdom. Paul then confirms to the reader in verse twenty-two the exalted privilege that both Jews and Gentiles enjoy living together in common union and fellowship in Christ Jesus.

THE MYSTERY— THE CHURCH'S STEWARDSHIP

Ephesians 3:1-13

Introduction

Chapter six presents a commentary on Ephesians 3:1-13. The aim of this chapter is to present the revelation of the mystery of Jesus Christ. The mystery was the hidden plan of God, also called the plan of the ages. That plan, however, has now been revealed. It is no longer a mystery, and the apostle Paul sees himself as a steward of the message now revealed. A steward is a manager. He is an administrator of the new message God has to declare for the whole world. The apostle presents that same concept of stewardship to the church, because it is responsible for carrying this message to its fellow citizens who are outside of the kingdom of Christ.

In Ephesians chapter one, Paul presented the picture of the church as God sees it in all its glory. In Ephesians chapter two, he presented the desperation of people who are outside of Christ—the lost world outside of the kingdom of Christ. In Ephesians chapter three, Paul presents the mission of the church which was described in Ephesians one. It is the church that enjoys redemption and has all of the blessings and grace of God. That church has a mission to the world of Ephesians two, the world that is alienated from God and lost in its sin. Therefore, the message of Ephesians three is: **the mission of the church to the lost world.**

The Mystery of God

Paul began, first of all, by assuring us that he has been accounted by God as a steward, a manager, and an administrator of that which was once a mystery but now has been made known. Paul already referred to the mystery in Ephesians 1:10, but in chapter three he develops that concept. The mystery is not mysterious; it was simply a hidden plan of God. It could not be revealed until Christ came and accomplished the fulfillment of that plan, and only then was it time for the proclamation of the revelation of that mystery.

Paul’s Relationship to the Mystery

In Ephesians 3:1 Paul begins referring to his own stewardship of this message. He mentions the fact that he was a prisoner of Christ because he had been preaching to the Gentiles. He was a prisoner because of his attempt to evangelize them, that is, to share with them the good news of the mystery that has been made known. This preaching of the gospel resulted in his being put into prison by Gentile and even Jewish adversaries to his message.

Paul mentioned his imprisonment three other times in the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians 3:13 he referred to the fact that he was being afflicted, and that relates to his imprisonment. He did not want the Christians to be distressed over his imprisonment. In Ephesians 4:1 Paul says, “*As a prisoner for the Lord . . .*” In Ephesians 3:1 he was a prisoner *of* the Lord, and in Ephesians 4:1 he was a prisoner *for* the Lord. If there is any difference between being a prisoner **of** the Lord and **for** the Lord, it would simply be that the Lord has Paul’s permission to be in prison. Then in Ephesians 6:20, Paul referred to himself as an ambassador in chains.

Paul mentioned four times his suffering and imprisonment, but he was not playing on his readers’ sympathies. There were specific reasons why he mentioned his imprisonment. He wanted to encourage the brethren to face whatever peril would

be necessary in order for them to carry out their mission. He wanted them to do this even as he himself had faced the peril and accepted the consequences of preaching the gospel, even in the face of adversity and enemies of that message. The apostle also wanted the church (us) to understand, as he mentioned his imprisonment, that prison bars do not in any way diminish our mission. We are still responsible stewards of the message. Whether in prison or out of prison, a Christian takes advantage of every opportunity to share the message with those who have never heard it. There is one final value that comes from Paul's mention of his imprisonment. Prison bars do not in any way diminish our privilege. They do not destroy our relationship with God. They simply mean that the physical conditions in which believers live have absolutely nothing to do with the enjoyment of their privilege in the heavenly realms.

In Ephesians 3:2 Paul writes about the administration of God's grace. What was the administration? The Greek word used in this passage is *oikonomos*. *Oikos* is the house, and *nomos* is the law. The "law of the house" in the Greek language in New Testament times referred to a steward, a manager, or an administrator of household affairs who was under the commands of the master of the house. Therefore, the administrator was simply a steward. Paul was saying, "I have been made a steward of grace." In other words, Paul had a message, and He was held accountable by God for the proper dispensation and management of this message (Ephesians 3:2). God made Paul a steward.

In Ephesians 3:3-4 Paul says, "*. . .that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.*" Paul mentioned in this verse that the mystery was made known to him by revelation. The mystery was no longer a mystery when it was made known. This was information about the plan of the ages that God laid out in blueprint form before the foundation of the world. As far as the basic ingredients of that plan of the ages, God kept them a secret. He kept the plan hidden from men and from angels until the plan

was accomplished in Christ Jesus. Only then could it be revealed. Paul says that by revelation, this message was made known to him. Then he tells us that he wrote it down by inspiration.

It is a beautiful concept, as Paul indicates, that God had information about the plan that He was going to accomplish in Christ, and this information was only known to Him. However, that plan has been made known by revelation to the apostles. It was communicated through Christ to them and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The apostles in turn wrote it down upon the sacred pages. Paul said in verse three, “. . . *as I have already written briefly.*” He was referring to the glories of the church in Christ (Ephesians chapter one) and to the change that the preaching of Christ accomplishes in the lives of sinful men (Ephesians chapter two). Paul was saying, “I have already referred to that. I have already written it down for you.”

The Church’s Relationship to the Mystery

In Ephesians 3:4-5 Paul writes concerning the mystery of Christ. When we read what Paul wrote, then we are able to understand his understanding of the mystery. He says in Ephesians 3:4, “*In reading this, then you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. . .*” The word “understand” comes from the Greek word *sunesin*. *Sun* means “together or with.” In other words, God knew things that were not known to men, and by revelation, that information was shared with the apostles. Then their minds began to flow together with the mind of God. Paul says that “we,” the apostles, have understanding; “we” have *sunesin*. This word defines two rivers that are flowing in separate channels, but at one particular point they come together. They both begin to flow in the same channel, and there is unity and fusion. Therefore, through what Paul wrote by revelation, our understanding is fused together and flows together in the channels with the understanding of God. We are, therefore, able to perfectly understand the plan of the ages. We are able to see

things as God sees them. Paul wrote the revelation down, and when we read what he writes, we will understand with his understanding. At that point *sunesin* is achieved. Our mind begins to flow in the same channel with the mind of the apostle Paul, and his mind flows in the same channel with the mind of God. That makes it possible for us to see things as God sees them. According to Ephesians 1:18, we have enlightened eyes. The eyes of our heart are enlightened, because our mind flows in the channel of the divine understanding of things. We then understand the purpose and plan of God.

When we read what Paul wrote, we receive what he received. That reading is an intense kind of reading. Paul introduced this concept of reading with the Greek prefix *pros*, and that means “to stand face to face with it.” That suggests the idea of deep study. Superficial reading of the book of Ephesians does not result in total understanding. In going into the book, one must read it again and again to begin to process the information and correlate all the data, and it is then that things begin to be seen as Paul saw them. Things begin to be understood as God Himself has made revelation of them.

In Ephesians 3:3-5, Paul states that it was by inspiration through the Spirit that God revealed this mystery to His holy apostles and prophets. These are New Testament prophets, not Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament prophets lived in the period of the mystery. They lived in an era in which the plans of God that were to be accomplished in Christ were still hidden. There were divine purposes in keeping this plan hidden. These are New Testament prophets that made known—through their writings, through their teaching, and through their preaching—the revelation of the mystery that God kept secret in other generations. By His Holy Spirit, however, He has now fully revealed them.

The Content of the Mystery

In Ephesians 3:6 Paul relates the mystery to the specific relationship that God created between Jew and Gentile. They

both share in all of the privileges. The Gentile has become an heir, and that means that he inherits God. Heaven is the destiny of both the Jew and the Gentile. They are fellow members of the body. The Gentiles have joint participation with the Jews in the family of God. They have equal privilege as sons of God. They are fellow partakers of the promise that God made to Abraham centuries before the coming of the Messiah. God told Abraham that in him and in his seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The apostle Paul explains the specific blessing that God had in mind. God would bless all nations, and that included Jews and Gentiles. However in Galatians 3:8 Paul tells us, "*The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, . . .*" That was faith in Christ Jesus. "*. . . and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: . . .*" That was the good news of justification of the Gentiles by faith. God declared it to Abraham saying, "*. . . 'All nations will be blessed through you.'*" What then is the blessing of Abraham for the Gentile? The blessing is their justification, their salvation, and their redemption by faith in Christ Jesus.

There is an interesting question concerning the subject of the mystery. Why did God keep it a secret? Why was His plan of the ages hidden until Christ came? There are some very significant reasons, and understanding them will help us to process the reason why the apostle discusses the mystery in the first place. There is clear reference made to the mystery in Romans 16:25-26 where Paul said,

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him

...

God commanded the writing of the Scriptures by New

Testament prophets. Paul included the apostles in the group that he called the “prophets.” All of the apostles were prophets, but not all prophets were apostles. Therefore, Paul grouped them together saying that God commanded the writing of the mystery, which is now revealed upon sacred pages for all generations to understand and appreciate. It is clear that God made the plans, and He kept them secret until they were accomplished.

However, the question has still not been answered. Why did He keep it a secret? Paul gives an ample explanation in 1 Corinthians 2:6: *“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.”* The “. . . rulers of this age . . .” include the rulers of Rome. It includes the rulers of the Jewish nationality, the Sanhedrin, and even Pontius Pilate. Particularly, it includes Satan himself, as he is one of the rulers of the world (cf. Ephesians 6:12).

The apostle Paul then continued in 1 Corinthians 2:7, *“No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.”* None of the rulers of Jesus’ age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. It is interesting that Paul referred to the rulers of the world, and those included Rome, the rulers of the Jewish hierarchy, and certainly Satan himself. If they had known what God was going to be able to accomplish through the cross of Christ, then the cross of Christ would have been the last thing that they would have wanted. They would have contributed absolutely nothing to get Him crucified. However, it was a secret; it was a mystery. Because of that, Satan did not understand that when he contributed to the crucifixion of Christ through the jealousy of the Jewish people and through the animosity of the Roman governors in Palestine, he had lost. He thought that he had defeated the plan and won. However, it was through the cross of Christ that God was able to accomplish His plan. Therefore, when Satan contributed to the crucifixion of Christ, he outsmarted himself.

The apostle Paul tells us that God had to keep the plan a secret. He did not even inform the angels of heaven. In 1 Peter 1:12, even the angels of Old Testament times desired to look into the secret plan of the ages, yet God kept it a secret from them.

Paul's Awareness of His Exalted Position

Paul says in Ephesians 3:7 that he became a servant of Christ' gospel through the gift of God's grace and the working of His power. In other words, two things constituted Paul's apostleship: a gift of grace and the working of God's power. The power partially has to do with the revelation that God made to Paul by inspiration.

Paul then tells in Ephesians 3:8 what the glories of redemption are in Christ. Paul had a message that he was able to preach to the Gentiles, and of course, the church does, too. The point, however, that the apostle was expressing was that because he had persecuted the church in times past, he was not deserving of the grace that God had given to him. However, because he did it in ignorance, as he explained to Timothy, God permitted him to be a part of the glorious unfolding of the plan of the ages, as he proclaimed by inspiration the message of redemption (1 Timothy 1:12-14). Paul was privileged to preach the unsearchable riches to the Gentiles. That was his stewardship. It was not only a privilege, but it was a responsibility. It was a glorious responsibility because of the content of the message—the riches of Christ Jesus.

The Church's Responsibility Concerning the Mystery

Paul then writes in Ephesians 3:9 that he wanted to make all men see what he called his administration or stewardship of this mystery which had been kept hidden in God. He again reminds us of the secret past of the plan of God. It is clear that the apostle wanted this message to be proclaimed all over the face of the earth. Not only did he get to preach the unsearchable riches to the Gentiles, but he got to preach this message to all men.

All men need to see their potential glorious heritage in Christ Jesus. The church needs to understand that this is the day of the revelation, not the day of the mystery. This is not the day to keep the message of Christ hidden under a bushel. We are to put our candle on the lamp-stand so that it will give light to all people, as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:14-16). We are not to put it under a bushel. Jesus told His disciples that what they heard whispered in their ear was a secret. Now they and we are to shout it from the housetops. That is what Paul was speaking about.

God created all things for this purpose in Ephesians 3:10, even those who rule and are authorities in the heavenly realms. Those rulers and authorities probably relate to the angelic host and the heavenly creatures that surround the throne of God. It is through the church that God makes known His wisdom. As the heavenly beings view the church and the glories of its redemption, they are impressed with His wisdom. He devised the plan, kept it a secret until it was accomplished to keep Satan from frustrating it, and now makes it known through the church not only in what it is (the wisdom of God), but also in what it preaches (the manifold riches of Christ).

The church is brought into the realm of stewardship of the message. Like an individual that has been cured of a vicious disease, so the church has become a steward of the cure. The church has been cured of the disease of sin, and therefore it has become the steward of the cure. Jesus Christ is the cure. Jesus is the great physician (cf Matthew 9:12). He Himself bore our diseases, and in 1 Peter 2:24, the apostle Peter quoted Isaiah 53:5 saying, “. . . *by his wounds we are healed.*” Having been healed, we are given not only the privilege but also the responsibility of sharing this message with the rest of the world, who has never heard the unfolding of the plan of the ages.

In Ephesians 3:11 Paul writes that all of these things were done according to God's eternal purpose, a purpose that was accomplished through Jesus. The eternal plan was impressive

to the apostle Paul, because he constantly referred back to the fact that God had drawn up the plan of the ages before the world was ever created. Now that plan is being unfolded, and God first worked out the scheme of human redemption and the plan for the salvation of the family of men through Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Now, however, it is through the church that God extends this plan and explains the redemptive processes to those who have not yet heard it. That is in accordance with the eternal purpose of God that He accomplished in Christ.

The word “purposed” refers to the eternities before time, and the term “eternal” refers to those eternities before time, but it also looks forward to the eternities after time. It is clear that the apostle wanted the church to understand that until the end of time, they must carry out the mission of proclaiming the mystery. They must shout it from the housetops, share it with both Jew and Gentile, and share it with all people on the face of the earth, so that they may enjoy the privileges. Those are the exalted and glorious privileges of Ephesians chapter one.

In the next lesson, the apostle bows his knee to the Father and utters a prayer of intercession on behalf of the church. He prays that the church will have the resources given from God, and that it will be willing to use those resources in the conduct of its mission until Jesus comes.

PAUL'S PRAYER AND GOD'S POWER

Ephesians 3:14-21

The Power-Source for the Church

Chapter seven presents a commentary on Ephesians 3:12-21. The aim of this chapter is for the church to rejoice in the reality of God's empowering her through prayer, through the Holy Spirit, and through the indwelling of Christ. All of this enables the church to accomplish its sacred mission to the lost. God is working in and through His people to fulfill a task that is greater than they and greater than their resources, but the task is certainly not greater than His resources.

Paul's Prayer for the Church

The Reason for Paul's Prayer

In Ephesians 3:12 the apostle mentions his stewardship and his privilege of access to the throne of God. He takes advantage of this privilege in Ephesians 3:14ff, as he offers a prayer on behalf of the church, making note of the freedom and confidence that the Christian has in approaching the throne. The "freedom" spoken of in this verse is *parresian* in Greek. This word suggests the idea of the right of a free man to speak. It speaks of the right that we have to approach the throne of God. This is not a right that derives from ourselves. It is a right or a privilege that has been granted to us through Christ Jesus

Himself. Paul not only says that we have the right of access to the throne of God, but that we have the right to be there. We also have confidence in asking for His blessings. That is not only confidence and boldness in asking. It is also confidence in receiving the response to the prayers that we offer.

Before Paul asked God anything on the church's behalf, he asked in Ephesians 3:13 for the Ephesians to not be discouraged because of his imprisonment. Prison bars do not diminish the rights of the Christian in making his access before the throne of God. The reason for this relates to Ephesians 3:1 in the concept of the stewardship of this message that was once a mystery but is now revealed. Paul felt his sense of stewardship, his responsibility as an administrator, and therefore his accountability. He wanted the church to realize its stewardship of this mystery that has been revealed. We get to proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ through the message that we preach. We get to show to the angelic forces of heaven the wisdom of God in laying out the plans through what we are. We make the mystery known to the Gentiles through what we do. We make it known to the angels through what we are—what God has made us to be. We are a declaration of the wisdom of God to the angels of heaven. Because of that we have our stewardship. It is because of his relationship with God that Paul boasted of his privilege of access to the throne, and in this verse he took advantage of that privilege (cf. Ephesians 3:14).

Paul then prays to the Father in Ephesians 3:15. The *"whole family"* not only relates to Jews and Gentiles, but to what the apostle calls the *"family in heaven and on earth."* A part of the family has already gone on to its reward, and a part is still involved in the militant activity of proclaiming the gospel all over the face of the earth. Those who are in heaven are still family, and those of us who are on earth are still family. Paul said in Romans 14:7-8, *"For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So,*

whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." We are His people, and our physical death does not remove, destroy, or erase our relationship to the family. We are still family. Part of the family is still on earth carrying out its mission of redemption to the lost. The family receives its name from God, and that means that we are all called the "sons of God." He grants us the privilege of using the family name, and we know that as sons of God we are not only heirs, but we wear the dignity of the family name.

The Content of Paul's Prayer

Strengthened With Power

In Ephesians 3:16 the apostle prays that the church would be strengthened in its fiber, in what he called the "inner being." He prayed that we might be strengthened with power through the Spirit. This power is not miraculous, but it is the power that has already been used on the church when God exercised His power in raising Jesus from the dead, in exalting Him, and in enthroning Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1).

God used that power again upon His people in Ephesians 2:6 when He raised us up from spiritual death, from the spiritual grave, exalted us into this heavenly kingdom, and made us to sit with Christ in the heavenly realms. Therefore, this power is already being manifested in the spiritual lives of Christian people. This power source that has made our spiritual status to be changed from desperation to the glory of hope in Christ Jesus, is the same power that the apostle wants us to avail and yield ourselves to in the working of God in our lives. This power has to do more with our attitude concerning knowledge. We are to grasp, understand, and study His word given through the Spirit. His message gives us the strength, the moral fiber, the determination, the disposition of will, and the willingness to suffer, in order that we might be strengthened with all of the qualities that are necessary to carry on our

mission. He wants us to be strong and stalwart in our response to the glorious privileges that we have in Christ. That is the first thing that Paul asked the glorious Father for the church. He prayed that God would grant this to us out of His glorious riches.

Indwelt by Christ

The number two ingredient that Paul asked of the Father on behalf of this church with a sacred mission is that Christ live in the hearts of the Ephesians, through their faith (Ephesians 3:16-18). It is faith in the Word of God that gives an understanding of Christ, and it is through the comprehension of this message that makes it possible for Christ to indwell the church. We are the temple of the living God; He dwells in us. We are inhabited by Christ Himself, and therefore the apostle prays that Christ may dwell in us and abide with us. In other words, he prays that Christ may be our constant companion.

In Matthew 28:18-20, when Jesus gave the commission to preach His gospel all over the world, He promised them His constant presence as He closed out that assignment: *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Jesus promises His people who are under this mission that He will be their constant companion. *"... I am with you always ..."* That is a present verb tense in the Greek. Sometimes we feel as though Christ was with the church in New Testament times. We are convinced that He might be with the church in other times, but what Jesus promises is this: *"... I am with you always ..."* He is an ever present reality with His people, and this is part of our understanding of Him. Paul prayed in an earlier prayer on behalf of this church that they may have a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He wants the church to understand the Christ and His presence with them. Christ is ever present to maintain the church's motivation in proclaiming the message. He is there to help in decisions through the Word that He has given and through the comfort that He constantly supplies to His missionaries. Every

Christian needs to see himself as a missionary of Jesus Christ.

Rooted and Established

Paul prayed that we might be strengthened with power in the inner being, in the inner man through the Spirit. Part of that strengthening comes from the fact that Jesus indwells us, being our constant companion. Part of it also comes from the fact that we are rooted and established in love. An individual who is rooted and firmly established in love is planted. His feet are cemented in the love of God. Not only does the apostle insist that we understand how much we are loved, but we need to understand how much the love of God imposes obligations upon us. We have commitments that grow out of Calvary, and we have responsibilities simply because we have been redeemed.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul makes a statement about the love of Christ: *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."* His love constrains us. It obligates us because Christ died for all, and therefore all died. Paul then stated that we are, therefore, ambassadors for Christ. Our responsibility is to be those who proclaim Christ to others in the world (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, and that creates in us an obligation toward those who have never heard the message. His love motivates our love. Therefore, out of this love we carry on our mission of identification with those who have never heard about Him, those who are still lost. The apostle Paul prayed that we may be rooted and grounded, firmly planted in love for God, in love for our fellow man, in love for Christ, and in love for the privilege of carrying on our stewardship of proclaiming the revelation of the mystery.

Power to Grasp the Love of Christ

In Ephesians 3:17-18 Paul states that the power to grasp is the power to understand. It is the power to comprehend. Paul wants us to know how much we are loved. There is absolutely

no way that we can fathom the immensity of the love of Christ. Paul said in Romans 8:38-39 that he is persuaded that there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. He continued in that context to give a long list of things that cannot in any way separate the children of God from the love of Christ. It becomes clear that Paul is discussing a kind of love that we are only able to experience rather superficially. Even when we have the best grasp on the Word of God, we still do not understand how deeply we have been loved. We do not understand the love of Calvary, the love that would cause one to give up His life on behalf of others. However, Paul prayed that we may understand, grasp, and process the information about this love of Christ.

Know the Unknowable

In Ephesians 3:17-19 Paul wants the Ephesians, and us today, to know the unknowable love of Christ. How can we know that love? Paul wants us to understand it and have a clear perception of it, but how can we know it if it is unknowable? We can know it in the same way that an electrician knows about electricity. There are many things that the electrician does not understand about electricity, yet there are new inventions in the field of electricity that impress us on a daily basis. Men are discovering more and more about the magic of the unusual phenomena of electricity. Though we do not understand it all, we understand it enough to use it to light our houses, cool our buildings, heat our buildings, prepare our food, and accomplish many services. We do not understand electricity perfectly, but we understand enough of it to use it. Paul wants us to know the unknowable love of Christ. We cannot understand it completely, but we can understand it enough that we are able to enjoy it. We are able to relax under that love to know that we are loved beyond measure and beyond our ability to comprehend.

Filled to the Full

Paul wants us to be filled with God. The apostle sees the totality of divine involvement with the human family in this heavenly realm, in the kingdom of Christ. In Ephesians 1:22-23 Christ is the head of the church, and the church is the fullness of Him who fills everything. The church is the fullness of Christ. In Ephesians 3:19 Paul presents the church as being filled with the fullness of God. That is potential, and it is an option that is before us, because the opportunity for our being filled with God is made available to us. We avail ourselves or yield ourselves to the processes that make it possible for us to be filled with the fullness of God and with the fullness of Christ. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul prays that we be filled with the Spirit. When we talk about the fullness of God, the fullness of Christ, and the fullness of the Spirit, we are dealing with everything that they are and everything that they have. There is, therefore, absolutely no limitation placed upon God's grace, His manifestations, His assistance, and His empowering of His people. He places absolutely no limitation upon His involvement with us. We need to understand that.

This is a powerful prayer, that makes some powerful requests on behalf of the church that is under the mission and commission by Christ to make all men see and understand the revelation of the mystery. As Paul makes a list of the great requests that he is pleading for on behalf of the church, he wants us to understand that these are qualities that are essential in the accomplishment of our mission. These are qualities that strengthen us with power in the inner being by the Spirit. They strengthen us so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, and that we may personally be rooted and grounded in love for the lost, love for God, and love for Christ. This is so that, in our response to Him, we may know the unknowable measure of His love. Paul wants us to be filled with all of the fullness of God.

These are powerful requests that Paul makes on behalf of the church. As the church today, we should be praying that

prayer on behalf of our sister congregations who are spread all over the face of the earth. We should be offering that prayer so that the church will understand the enormous and unlimited abilities that God expresses toward us as we fulfill our mission.

Paul's Confidence and God's Willingness

The Exceeding Great Power of God

After having made those five requests of a fabulous nature of divine assistance toward the church that is under commission, Paul continued his prayer in Ephesians 3:20-21 with his knee bowed before the Father. *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,"* He says in substance, "Father, we understand that you are not limited in your ability to help us. We understand that you are not limited in your disposition to provide grace for us, to lead us, and to help us through your providence. You are not limited by our ability to ask. You are not even limited in your ability to help us, by our ability to dream or imagine that you would be willing to help us. We believe that you are able to do far beyond what our faith would lead us to believe that you can do." This is a prayer to an almighty God who is unlimited in His power and in His resources, and He is willing to use those powers and resources in measures that we would even be timid to ask for and in ways that we would be reluctant to even dream or imagine that He would be willing to do. Paul said, "We believe that you can use powers that escape our understanding of how powerful you are. In other words, your resources are totally at our disposition, and we are praying to you, Father, out of a deep faith that says that you can accomplish things that are far beyond our ability to ask or imagine. However, the beautiful thought is that you can accomplish those things through your power at work in us."

Paul prayed expressing his confidence that God is able to help us accomplish things in the conduct of our mission that

would be impressive to us. God is able to convert entire nations of people. Through our ministration of this glorious gospel and our stewardship of preaching it, God is able to lead us to the proclamation of this message all over the face of this earth. That was accomplished in New Testament times. Paul was able to say to the Colossian brethren that the Word of God was bearing fruit in all of the world (Colossians 1:6). The Word was also bearing fruit in the Colossian congregation.

Paul prayed that the church would understand that God is able to accomplish world-wide proclamation of the gospel, and that is a fabulous thing that requires power. It requires resources that are much greater than those that are possessed by the individual members of the body of Christ, or even by congregations of the body of Christ. The abilities that the apostle discussed are abilities that God is willing to share with His people. We believe, not only that God can do, but that He will do fabulous things through us as we accomplish the mission that He has given to us.

The Exceeding Great Glory Belonging to God

The apostle said in Ephesians 3:21, “. . . *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*” This is an unusual statement made by Paul that gives the church a great sense of dignity and a great sense of participation in the unfolding of the plan of the ages. The church becomes a great source of glory when it carries out the redemptive mission of proclamation of the gospel all over the face of the earth to make all men see His salvation (Ephesians 3:9). This mission is to proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8).

The mission is the privilege of the church, and it is the avenue or means by which the church brings great glory to God. Every time another soul is converted from paganism to Christianity, his sins are covered, and that gives Calvary that much more validity. It justifies the sacrifice of Christ one more time. It brings great glory to God, as the church, the great

family, the temple, and the dwelling place of God continues to be built by its mission, as it carries out the assignment that God has given to it. That brings to God a great degree of glory.

In Jude 1:24 the writer tells us that on the final day of days, Christ will take His people who have been redeemed by His blood, and He will present them to God with exceeding joy because they are the ones who justify His cross. Paul also writes in 3:21 that this assignment will continue until the end of time. It is a recurring assignment to every generation of believers in Christ Jesus to make all Christians proclaim to the lost the unsearchable riches of Christ. To God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for every generation forever and ever until Jesus returns!

THE WORTHY WALK AND UNITY

Ephesians 4:1-10

Chapter eight presents a commentary on Ephesians 4:1-10. The aim of this chapter is to set forth the doctrinal characteristics that have been built into the church by the Holy Spirit, characteristics by which the church is forever to be identified. The aim is also to see God's endowment of gifts to His people to equip them to carry on their sacred mission.

The Doctrinal Characteristics of the Church

The Worthy Walk to Which Christians Are Called

In Ephesians 4:1 Paul again mentions his imprisonment. One almost gets the impression that he was in prison willingly and voluntarily, if that was the price that had to be paid to fulfill his mission, or commission, of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

In this context that Paul wants God's people to walk worthily. That word "worthy" comes from a Greek word that means "balanced." It has the words "weights" and "measures" included in its definition. It suggests the idea of balance in the position that God has granted to His people. God has lifted His people to positions of dignity, of honor, and of praise-worthiness (Ephesians chapters one and two).

The charge that Paul presents to the church is that it bring into balance its performance, because it is a privileged body of people. However, its privilege is not a product of its own doing,

rather it is a product of divine investment in the church. The performance of the church is often below that which it ought to be. Therefore, in this passage, Paul was asking the church not to live below its privilege, but instead to lift itself by performance that is more in harmony and in balance with the privilege that God has granted to it. Paul called this “. . . *the calling you have received* . . . ,” and the call relates to heaven itself. It is also a call to stewardship, because the church has the responsibility of presenting the gospel to the whole world so that everyone may see the unfolding plan of the ages. Paul insisted that the church fulfill its mission, and that would be a part of the worthy walk.

Paul discussed the walk in a number of ways in the book of Ephesians. He was interested in the way that the church walks and in the way that it conducts itself. A walk has to do with a career, and therefore, the apostle was insisting that the church take on a consistency of life. Although the Greek word for this actually means “to walk,” it really carries the idea of a lifestyle.

Paul mentioned the term “walk” several times as he proceeded through the writing of this letter. In Ephesians 2:2 he pointed out that we formerly walked in sin and according to the course of this world. In Ephesians 2:10 he mentioned that God has prepared in advance good works by which the church should walk. They have been assigned. In Ephesians 4:1 he said to walk worthily, to walk the balanced life (cf. Ephesians 4:17). In Ephesians 5:2 Paul again discussed the walk, but this time he stressed that we need to walk in love. In Ephesians 5:8 he mentioned walking in light. That has to do with the knowledge of the Word of God, the illumination that God has given to His people through revelation. In Ephesians 5:15 Paul charged the church to walk accurately in wisdom. We are to walk as wise people. It is clear that Paul was concerned about the walk of God’s people. He, therefore, encourages us to walk worthily.

In Ephesians 4:2 Paul imperatively states that the worthy, or balanced walk, first of all manifests itself in proper attitudes

toward ourselves as Paul insisted that the readers learn with an attitude of **humility**. Because of its exalted position, he wanted the church to have an attitude of gentleness and humility that is without pride. The reason that Paul insisted that they be humble and walk gently was because, though they occupied exalted privilege, that privilege was not the product of their own making. It was a gift from God. Therefore, the worthy walk insists that the church be humble in its attitude concerning its privilege.

The number two aspect of the worthy walk has to do with its relationship with other people. Therefore we must **walk gently**, or **meekly**. The concept of meekness has to do with the way in which the church refuses to hurt any other person; it is a harmless way of life. The worthy walk insists that we have proper attitudes toward other people, that we be **patient** with them, that we be **forbearing**, and that we put up with the immaturity of one another until we have had time to grow in Christ Jesus.

The Unity of the Spirit

In the following verse, Ephesians 4:3, the apostle insisted that every effort be made to stay unified. The unity of the Spirit is the doctrinal qualities that God has built into the church; they are the pattern that has been laid down by the Holy Spirit. The church is required to keep that pattern unchanged—without alteration of any kind. These are qualities that are built into its constitution. They are qualities that have been established as the standard by which the church will forever be identified. These are the standards that become the platform for Christian unity. They have been given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and Paul insisted that the church always adopt these patterns and keep them as the Holy Spirit has delivered them to the church in the constitutional format that is contained in this context.

Paul was actually saying, “Keep on keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” In other words, we do not

have the privilege of changing in any way the characteristics, the standards, and the platform upon which the church is built. We do not negotiate with the Holy Spirit. We do not establish the standards. We simply keep those that have been granted to us by the Holy Spirit. We cannot negotiate for new patterns, and we do not have the privilege of establishing new rules. We just keep the rules that the Holy Spirit has already planted in the constitution of the church revealed in scripture.

Paul says that unity of the Spirit is attained through the *"bond of peace."* The word "bond" suggests that we are tied together. Peace, as has already been mentioned in Ephesians chapter two, is not only the absence of warfare, but it is the presence of a positive good will one toward another. This passage means that all Christians must see themselves as bound together in a deep sense of peaceful co-existence. Every Christian is, therefore, under a peace bond to every other Christian, and that is what unites us. We are at peace with God; we are at peace with one another, and we are at peace with ourselves. This creates the atmosphere out of which the church can maintain the unity the Holy Spirit has given to it.

The Foundation of Unity

In the following few verses, Paul presents the standard. There is a standard, a platform, and a pattern by which the church must be identified. Wherever these qualities exist, as Paul explains them, there is the church. Wherever any one of these qualities is missing, that is not the church of the Lord, because these are the standards that have been imposed by the Holy Spirit in the order in which they are listed. There are seven elements found in Ephesians 4:4-6. Each of these seven elements that the Holy Spirit has given to the church must be examined, as they are essential to the identity and existence as the church. Where these elements exist is the church, and where they are missing is not the church. That must be clearly understood.

There Is One Body

The apostle began this list of the seven qualities with “*one body*.” That term relates to the church. In Ephesians 1:22 Paul said that God gave to the exalted Christ the position of head over the body which is the church. In Ephesians 2:14 the apostle mentioned that God had united together both Jew and Gentile into one body. There are many Scriptures in the New Testament that talk about the one body and the oneness of the church. In Romans 12:4 there is one body. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 there is one body. In Colossians 3:15 Paul says, “*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.*” There are several Scriptures that mention the oneness of the church, not only in the teachings of Christ during His personal ministry, but also in the inspired writings of the apostles.

There can be only one body, because the apostle tells us that there is only one Lord, and He is the head of the body. There can be only one kingdom, because there is only one King; there can be only one flock, because there is only one Shepherd. There can be only one bride, because there is only one husband, or one groom (2 Corinthians 11:2). Therefore, the Holy Spirit has demanded that the church keep the unity that He built into its constitution. All of these passages of Scripture and many others relate to the fact that there is one body. It is of interest to note that these passages were given when there was only one body, and they were given with the intent of charging that one body with the responsibility of keeping it that way. In 1 Corinthians 1:10ff, the apostle demands that the church be united together, that it maintain its unity, that it be of the same mind and judgment, and that there be no divisions in it. In 1 Corinthians 12:24-25 the apostle said that God structured or combined the body together in such a way that there would be no divisions. The Lord intended that this one body be kept as one body.

There Is One Spirit

Paul then said in Ephesians 4:3 that there is “*one Spirit*,” the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit confirms the redemption of the body. He is the seal of redemption. He indwells the body, and it is He who animates it. It is the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63). This is the Holy Spirit that indwells the body of Christ in its collective sense (1 Corinthians 3:16). We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, as Paul addressed the church collectively. The Holy Spirit also indwells each individual within the body. Our body, as an individual, is the temple of the Holy Spirit whom we have from God (1 Corinthians 6:19). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit—indwelt by deity. That gives to the church a great sense of dignity.

The apostle tells us that the Holy Spirit is the gift that God grants to His people at the moment of their baptism. God does not give His Spirit to those who are outside of the body of Christ. In Acts 2:37-38, on the day of Pentecost, Peter responded to the Jews’ question about what they were to do, “*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” The gift of the Holy Spirit is what Paul calls the guarantee and seal of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14).

There Is One Hope of Your Calling

Paul then discusses the one hope (Ephesians 4:4). That hope has to do with our inheritance, our destiny. It has to do with the privilege of Christian people to know that God has built within them the confidence of salvation. We have one hope that motivates us to become a part of the one body through our obedient response to the commands of Christ.

There is One Lord and One Faith

In Ephesians 4:5 the apostle said, “. . . *one Lord, one faith, one baptism* . . .” In that verse he gave the next three elements of Christian unity. “*One Lord*” relates to Christ Himself, and

His title as Lord suggests His sovereign rule over the church. He is the one who establishes the standards by which the church lives, and it is He who gave the rules to the Holy Spirit, who in turn communicated them to the apostles. It is He who has the position of head over the body, which is the church.

“ . . . *one faith*, . . . ” Faith, in this context, has two possible intended aspects. One could possibly be that Paul was discussing the entirety of Christian doctrine—what we might call the patrimony of revelation or the entirety of the teaching. In Jude verse three, the church needed to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered. Therefore, faith could indicate all of the doctrines that are contained in the New Testament. Therefore, it is presented as the body of faith to which the church must subscribe. There is another way in which “*one faith*” may be interpreted, and that would be the trust that we have in Christ. It is our confidence in Him and our firm belief in everything that He is and everything that He has claimed to be. It is believing in Him, because faith is the essential ingredient that leads us to one hope. It conducts us, based on faith and hope, to gain eternal life through the remission of our sins, received in the “*one baptism*.”

There Is One Baptism

The “*one baptism*” puts us into “*one body*.” Biblical baptism is by immersion. There are absolutely no commentaries nor scholars who would deny that baptism in New Testament times was practiced as total immersion or submersion under water. It is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, being appropriated by the individual through the act of identification with His death, burial and resurrection. The candidate for baptism, dead in his sins, is buried in a tomb of water; and then, through the power of God, he is raised to new life (Romans 6:4-5; Colossians 2:12-13).

This one baptism is what adds us to the church (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13). How is an individual added to this one body that is the church? He is added to the church by being

baptized into it (cf. Galatians 3:26-27). It is through the act of baptism that we are added to the body, and it is through baptism that we enter into Him who is the head and the Lord.

There is no way in which an individual can have participation in Christ without participation in the body or participation in the body without participation in Christ. It is clear that the apostle established these principles by which the church becomes the church. It is through its “*one hope*” that is built out of that “*one faith*” that leads it to the “*one baptism*” that adds it to the “*one body*” that makes it participate with the “*one Spirit*” as a gift from God that seals our redemption and creates a relationship with the “*one Lord.*”

There Is One God and Father

In Ephesians 4:5-6 Paul presents the Father as being intimately united with His people. He uses four different prepositions in this context, and prepositions establish relationships. There is an intimate and complete relationship between God and His people, and in these four prepositions Paul defines the intimacy of their union.

He is the **God of all**. The Greek word for God “of” all is *ek*, and it has to do with our origin. It has to do with the source by which the church exists. He is the God of us, and He is the **God over all**. That indicates His rule. The Greek word for “over” is *epi*. It has to do with the rulership of God. He is the **God through all**. The word “through” comes from the Greek preposition *dia*, and that has to do with God functioning through His people. Then He is the **God in all**. The Greek word for “in” is *en*. This word has to do with God indwelling His people. He indwells us, and He is functioning through us. He is the God of us. He is the God over us. He is the God working through us. That creates a profound relationship between God and His people.

Paul said that these are the seven elements that the Holy Spirit has built into the constitution of the church. We are to keep them exactly as they have been delivered to us. Jude verse

three tells us to give diligence, to strive, and to maintain the faith that was once for all delivered. It is through our one faith, that is motivated by our one hope, that we receive the one baptism that adds us to the one body that thereby creates the relationship and possession of the Spirit, of the Lord and of the Father. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus told His apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations and baptize them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One hope, one faith, one baptism, and one body—these ingredients create a relationship with these three personalities. All of these are essential to create a relationship with the one Spirit, the one Lord, and the one God and Father.

Gods Gifts for Service

Paul mentions, in this context that there is one body. This probably relates to the universal body of Christ. He is talking about all Christians all over the face of the earth, for they form a unit regardless of where they are. They are a part of one family in Ephesians 3:14-15. There is one body and one family. However, God does not simply deal with the church on the universal level, and not even always on the local congregational level. He deals with the church on an individual level.

Paul says in Ephesians 4:7 that God endows His people. The grace and gifts that God gives to the church are those that are essential for it to carry out its mission. Paul confirmed the fact that Christ is the great gift-giver as he quoted Psalms 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8. These gifts are gifts of grace, which have to do with the assignments that God intends for the church to accomplish. When Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to men. Paul commented upon the fact of His ascension in Ephesians 4:10. Jesus left heaven to become a man. Paul mentioned the fact that Christ has ascended. Christ made a round trip from heaven to earth and from earth back to heaven. Therefore, Christ, having accomplished His mission when He descended to the lower parts of the earth where man lives, has

returned to assume His role over every thing in heaven and upon earth. There He occupies the position of King of kings and Lord of lords, and He exercises His reign over His people and even over those who are outside of His kingdom.

TEACHERS UNTO PERFECTION

Ephesians 4:11-16

Chapter nine presents a commentary of Ephesians 4:11-16. The aim of this chapter is to confirm that in the church the essential personnel are available for the explicit training, preparation, and perfecting of the believers. They must be equipped with the knowledge of the message they are to declare to the whole world, and equipped for their fruitful service to Jesus Christ, in their duty as role models of the message and in their loving work of evangelism. In this collective unity that creates beautiful inner relationship between members of the body of Christ, it is intended that the church increase and intensifies its effectiveness in its soul-saving mission toward the lost.

God's Special People

The Teaching Personnel Given by Christ

Paul began Ephesians 4:11 with these words, *"It was he who gave . . ."* Who is the giver of what the apostle calls "gifts"? He is the ascended Christ of Psalms 68:18 (cf. Ephesians 4:8). In this context, Paul lists four specific gifts—personnel that God has provided to the church to prepare it for its mission. *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers . . ."* (Ephesians 4:11). There are five words in this context: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors

and teachers. However, the word “*some*” appears only four times, therefore, it is evident that Paul was joining those last two terms, “. . . *pastors and teachers* . . .” together as a unit. In other words, they are teaching pastors or pastoring teachers. He gave some to be apostles and some to be prophets. It is the enthroned Christ who has given to the church these teaching offices. They all have the same functions. They all stand before the church with the same responsibility of instructing the church in God’s rules by which believers live and conduct their mission. These gifts have been granted to the church, and therefore, they must be explained and understood.

Apostles and prophets are New Testament apostles and prophets. In Ephesians 3:5 they, by the Holy Spirit, received the revelation of the mystery. These are New Testament prophets, and they belong to the universal church. It is their message that must be proclaimed unchanged throughout all the ages. The apostles and prophets that were given the New Testament church are the same apostles and prophets that are speaking the same message to us today through the same sacred pages by which they spoke to the New Testament church more than twenty centuries ago. Therefore, we have the same apostles and prophets today bearing the same message that carries the same authority. They belong to the universal church for all ages.

The apostle said that Christ gave some to be evangelists. Those are the preachers whom the apostles have trained and have taught in the Word of God. They belong to the local church. They have the task of planting new churches and of helping develop local personnel called teachers and pastors or pastoring teachers. It is their task not only to plant new churches but to help the local leaders to develop, to equip, and to prepare the church for service in the various ways in which God intended that the church function in the fulfillment of its mission. Therefore, He gave some to be apostles and prophets in the universal and eternal church, and they belong to the church forever as the same group of apostles. He gave to the

church evangelists, their work being temporary and local in nature.

He gave to the church teaching pastors who belong to the local church. There is absolutely no biblical evidence of pastors in one congregation, or what are otherwise called elders or bishops, having leadership responsibilities or obligations in other congregations. In New Testament times, these teaching pastors, these who are called elders, overseers, or bishops, have a responsibility to the local church in which the Holy Spirit has made them to be shepherds. These pastors are always plural in number in the congregations where they are found in New Testament times, and therefore they are presented in this context as teaching pastors or shepherds. The word “pastor” simply means a shepherd.

All four of these are gifts to the church. They are the trainers. The evangelists and the teaching pastors are to take the message of the apostles and the prophets and use that as the manual of instruction and rules by which they teach the church in the fulfillment of its mission. All four of these offices are teaching offices, and they are God’s gifts to the church so that they can prepare the church for its mission.

The Purpose of the Gifts

Paul said, *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . .”* (Ephesians 4:11-12). The words *“to prepare”* come out of the Greek concept *pros*, which is a preposition that defines relationship. In other words, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastoring teachers face the task of equipping and preparing the saints. That is their job description. That is the function that they are expected to accomplish in the church—to prepare and equip it.

The words “to equip” mean to provide, to outfit, to outfit, and to supply that which is lacking, so that the church will be able to accomplish its mission. What is lacking in the church?

Basically, it lacks knowledge of what needs to be done, where it needs to be done, and how it is to be done. When we enter into the church we are generally quite immature. We lack those skills. We lack the information to know how to really serve Christ. However, Christ has not left us as a helpless bunch of infants. He has given to the church all of the personnel that are necessary, personnel that are adequate to give us training and to raise us up as a generation of people who are able to accomplish the glorious mission that Christ has given to us.

God's Special Purpose – Equipped Saints

These personnel are to prepare us as the body of Christ in seven distinct areas. Specific preparation is required, as it is needed by the saints in each of these areas that are introduced with another Greek preposition, *eis*. In other words, Paul used the term *pros* to define the function and role assignment of apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds. Then he used the term *eis*, and that means “from without to within.” They are to prepare the saints who are without training into the realm of full training, so that they can accomplish their mission. There are seven of those prepositional introductions in the following verses. Those seven “*eis*” terms, “unto or into,” prepare the church for its service.

Into Works of Service

Number one, Paul says that the elders and the evangelists are to prepare the church “. . . *for works of service* . . .” (Ephesians 4:12). The word “service” in Greek is *diakonia*, and it suggests ministry. That word is used many times in the New Testament, but it does not necessarily mean that every Christian must become a deacon. It does mean, however, that every Christian is expected to serve. *Diakonian*, generally when it is used in the New Testament, relates to the communication of the gospel of Christ to others. That is the way it is used in Acts 6:2-4 as the apostles told the early

church.

The proclamation of the Word is what the term *diakonian* means. In Acts 20:24, Colossians 4:17, and 2 Timothy 4:5 this term is used in the same way—do the work of an evangelist, fulfill the ministry, and fulfill the *diakonian*.

There are many ministries that the church needs to accomplish. However, the Lord intends that these ministries be accomplished properly, so He has given to the church the apostolic and prophetic guidelines. Those who are called equippers are those who prepare the church and equip it for the accomplishment of these ministries. The statement, “. . . to prepare God’s people for works of service . . .” (Ephesians 4:12), seems to be the first half of the great commission, “. . . go and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matthew 28:19), because every Christian is under the great commission.

Into the Building Up of the Body of Christ

The next distinct area is to build up the body (Ephesians 4:12). This building up of the body is probably the second half of the great commission. In other words, those whom we baptize and those whom we have made disciples—we are to teach them to observe all things that He has commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). That builds up the body. There is a difference between teaching the disciples all things that Jesus commanded and teaching them to the point that they observe all things that Jesus commanded. Christ intended that these local evangelists and local bishops, pastors, or shepherds prepare the church to accomplish the great mission of making and perfecting disciples.

Paul mentioned to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 that Christ had committed the message to him. He then committed it to Timothy, and Timothy was then to commit it to faithful men who were able to teach others and commit the message to others also. That creates the chain reaction by which the church is forever to be built, always with the message that Paul initially communicated to Timothy. That prepares the saints for

the global work of carrying on this mission among those who have not yet heard

Into Unity in the Faith and in the Knowledge of the Son of God

Paul says that after the saint is prepared for the first two areas, work of ministry and building up the body, the following ingredients are in this verse, “. . . *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*” (Ephesians 4:13) There are three assignments in this context. The third one is “. . . *unity in the faith . . .*” That means that collective instruction must be given to all the saints in order for them to be unified in the understanding of all the doctrines of Jesus Christ. In this way they will have full knowledge of Jesus Himself. Jesus represents the same thing to all of the saints so that they can have a common unity in the message that they proclaim. It would be totally inappropriate for the saints to go out teaching different messages, doctrines, and standards. In the previous lessons it was seen that there is a standard that has been built into the church by which it is forever to be characterized. All of the saints need to be trained in a clear understanding of that standard, and all of them in unity and in unison must proclaim that message wherever they go. The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 that all of the saints need to be prepared to give an answer to any man who asks them a reason for their hope. The point that Paul is making in this context is that he wants us to be unified, so that if anyone were to ask a saint a reason for their hope, every saint would give the same reason. Every saint must give the same message, and therefore be unified in the message that they proclaim and in their common knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Into Becoming Mature

The fourth ingredient is for the church to become mature. That maturity has to do with the fruit-bearing level of Christian

activity. God does not intend for His people to be inactive. He intends for them to bear fruit. He intends that they reproduce themselves. Generally fruit-bearing in the New Testament has to do with the reproductive process. Just as a plant reproduces its fruit, so Christ intends that Christians reproduce themselves. In John 15:5, 8 Jesus established His relationship with the church in the beautiful figure of the vine and the branches. It is through the branches that Christ, the vine, bears fruit that glorifies the Father. It is fruit that will remain to eternal life (John 15:16). Jesus sent them on a fruit bearing mission. That is reproduction that the church needs to be prepared to accomplish under this apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and shepherd preparation.

Into the Attaining of the Whole Measure of the Fullness of Christ

Ingredient number five is that the church is to attain to the full measure of the perfection that is found in Christ. We might not understand what the perfection of Christ is, and we might not understand what the full measure of that perfection is. It has to do with the moral stature, the spiritual nature, and the qualities of spiritual life that were manifested in His life. The apostle says that he wants the church to be prepared for this kind of imitation of the life of Christ. That makes the church the spiritual model, the moral model, and the model of all value systems that Christ has revealed to the church. The saints are expected to role model the life of Jesus, as they role model their faith.

This role modeling is called “incarnational Christianity.” That word “incarnate” defines when He who is God became Man. He took on human flesh. He took on the physical body. When the church begins to take on the spiritual qualities of Christ, that is incarnational Christianity. That means that we become the living embodiment of all of the beautiful qualities that are seen in Jesus Christ.

The Urgency of Equipping the Saints

The apostle then paused in giving the seven qualities of identification of the church's mission in order to give a word of warning. Elders, bishops, shepherds, and evangelists are to prepare the church for all of these works: the work of service, the building up of the body of Christ, the unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus, the fruit bearing level, and the building of the church into the disposition to model their faith in Christ Jesus.

The Requirement Is Maturity

Paul then said that if the saints are not prepared, then they will still be at the infant level. They will be tossed about by the waves and be susceptible to the false teachings and schemes of men (Ephesians 4:14). What are the waves that toss these young, immature, and unequipped Christians to and fro, and that makes them vulnerable to all kinds of doctrinal error? They are the schemes of men. They are the doctrines of Satan that would pervert the standards by which the church is identified and that would negate and change the church's mission toward the world. Therefore, the apostle did not want the Christian to forever remain in the kindergarten level. He said, "*Then we will no longer be infants . . .*" In this verse, the Greek term for "*infants*" suggests the idea of babblers, those who cannot even carry on a coherent conversation about Jesus Christ.

Paul insists that the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastoring teachers equip the saints, so that they will get out of this kindergarten stage and will be able to grow up in Christ Jesus. He wants them to be educated and to advance in their schooling, so that, in their collective unity, they can carry on the glorious mission. However, without that preparation they will be infants that cannot carry on their work. They will be untaught and unskilled babblers. They will be tossed like the waves of the sea and blown by the changing winds of doctrinal error.

An interesting comparison was made in Ephesians chapter six. The apostle presents the church as an army of God, well equipped and well prepared to carry on its glorious mission of warfare against the satanic forces that are at work against the church. However, the soldiers who are equipped are men who have on the helmet of salvation. They have on the breastplate of righteousness. They have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In that context the soldier is ready to go. He has a shield of faith in one hand and the sword of the Spirit in the other. He is a veteran of many conflicts, and he is always victorious. He always stands and never gives ground to the enemy. That is a man who is ready to fight the battles that need to be fought for Christ.

The mature veteran soldier of King Jesus is contrasted with the infant in this context of Ephesians chapter four. This is the comparison: The unequipped saint, instead of the helmet he has on a beanie. Instead of the breastplate of righteousness, he has on a bib. Instead of his feet being shod with the preparation of peace, he has on his booties. In one hand he does not have the shield of faith. He has a rattle or some kind of a toy that he bangs merrily against the side of his crib trying to attract a little bit of attention. In the other hand he does not have the sword of the Spirit, but he has a piece of candy that he continues to lick to entertain himself. In other words, this infant is a very ineffective soldier in the army of Jesus Christ. That is why Paul says, “Evangelists and shepherds, prepare the saints! Equip the saints! Get them out of the infant stage, and move them into the arena of service with Christ Jesus where they have full knowledge of what they need to be doing, of the glory of the warfare, and of the righteousness of the conflict, so that they will be prepared.”

Instead, Speaking the Truth in Love and Grow Up Into Him

Therefore, the apostle tells us in Ephesians 4:15, “*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into*

him who is the Head, that is, Christ." By the process of speaking the truth in love we grow. The sixth quality that Paul grants to this assignment that the evangelists and shepherds need to prepare the saints to accomplish, is to speak the truth in love, and we will thereby grow up into Him who is the head, that is Christ. It is through the speaking of the truth that we begin to grow and develop our spiritual muscle. It is through speaking the truth and communicating the gospel to others that the saints learn to appreciate Christ and the church.

It has already been seen that the number one quality out of the list of seven qualities that need to be built into the church is to prepare the church for the work of the ministry. The second quality is to build up the body. The apostle says that we carry out that mission by speaking the truth and communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ out of an attitude of love. Instead of being a group of incoherent babblers, we are loving proclaimers of the truth of Christ Jesus.

From Him the Whole Body

In Ephesians 4:16 the apostle tells us that because we have learned how to speak that truth, every supporting ligament relates to each individual Christian as each part does its work and relates to each individual Christian. The apostle said in verse 15 that we grow up into Him who is the head. We grow deeper and deeper into the headship of Jesus, which means that we grow more united with His thinking. We grow in a deeper understanding of His passion for the souls of men. We yield more and more to His purposes, conform more to His lifestyle, and beautifully model more consistently the faith that we have in Him.

Paul said that it is from Him who is the head that this body gains its strength as it unites itself. This uniting in Greek is fitly framed and knit together, suggesting the idea of unity and of meshing the collective resources of each of the members of the body of Christ into one united activity of spreading the gospel. Paul said that makes the church grow numerically and

internally in spiritual edification, because that is what gives the church its strength and coordination as all of the members are fully equipped and prepared. They compact themselves together with Him who is the head. That builds a dynamic missionary force that God wants to unleash upon the world for its redemption.

THE CHRISTIAN'S NEW LIFE-STYLE

Ephesians 4:17-32

Chapter ten presents a commentary of Ephesians 4:17-32. In Ephesians 4:13 Paul challenges the church to live as Christ lived and to model His lifestyle. This chapter presents a contrast between a former pagan lifestyle and challenges believers in Christ to live His lifestyle through their new life. The new creation of Christ is the church, and therefore it has new thought processes, a new world view and a new moral standard. It has new attitudes out of which it serves, and it has a new solution to conflict between people. Most of the verbs in the rest of this chapter and all of chapter five are in the imperative mood.

The Worthy Walk Manifested

An Essential Part of the Worthy Walk

In Ephesians 4:17 Paul writes that the former way of life has to disappear. We must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk. A part of the worthy walk that Paul mentioned in Ephesians 4:1, that balanced walk, is to give up pagan ways and live as Christians live, even though we are in a pagan society. This is an urgent charge that Paul presents. We are to quit living like the Gentiles, because their moral condition is continuously degenerating. Note their descent from one level of spiritual condemnation to a worse level. They progressively descend from one level of degradation to a lower level.

Paul says that there is **futility in their thinking**. In Greek, he actually uses the word “mind” instead of “thinking.” That means that they are manipulated by their lusts and are no longer directed by intelligent thinking. They have a mind, but it is futile, for they are not using it. They seem to be manipulated by their passions and by their lusts. They seem to be driven by simple animal instincts as if they were mindless people. In other words, whatever the body craves, that is what they seem to be following. Therefore, the apostle tells these believers that they must no longer function out of those animal instincts that are manipulated simply by the appetites of the flesh. They have a mind, and they are to use it. Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17 that they may have the spirit of wisdom. In other words, he prayed that they might have the mind and attitude of a wise man.

Paul says in Ephesians 4:18 that not only are they (the Gentiles) futile in their mind set and thought processes, “*They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*” Paul mentions a number of things in this continued downward spiral in their spiritual status before God. Not only is there futility of thinking, but Paul discusses the ruin that is brought upon them by the degenerating influences of their pagan condition in sin. They are **darkened in their understanding**.

In Ephesians 3:3-4, Paul said that when we read what he wrote, we understand his understanding. The word “understanding” is *sunesis* in Greek. That refers to two rivers that begin to flow together in one channel. Therefore, by revelation Paul has his mind, his river of knowledge, flowing together with the river of knowledge of God. God has perfect understanding of the plan of the ages, and Paul’s mind, as he by revelation receives understanding, blends with the mind of God. When we read Paul’s message our mind begins to flow into that same channel with the mind of Paul and even with the mind of God. We are united in our understanding with heaven.

The problem with these Gentiles is that they are darkened in their understanding. There is absolutely no light. They are not directed by the revelation, and therefore their understanding is negated. They are unaware of where they came from. They do not know what they are supposed to accomplish while here on earth, and they are certainly oblivious to the doom that awaits them if they remain in that condition.

The next thing that Paul said about the pagan lifestyle of the Gentiles is that, because of the futility of their thinking processes and because of the darkness of their understanding, they are **separated from the life** of God. That means that they have no union with Him who is the source of life. In Ephesians 2:12 Paul described this same Gentile condition outside of Christ, and he said that they were without God. They were godless people and were, therefore, without God's gifts of life, grace, mercy, and peace.

The apostle adds another element as he further defines the Gentile's descent into the pits of condemnation, futility of mind, darkened understanding, and useless practice of pagan immorality. They are without God because of the **ignorance** that is in them. Paul was not saying that they were dumb, or stupid. He was just saying they did not have knowledge. The word "ignorance" is *agnoian* in Greek. It means that they were agnostics. They did not know whether or not God exists, and they were not particularly concerned one way or another. If God does not exist, they felt like it made no difference. If He does exist, they really didn't care. They were, therefore, agnostic. That was a selected and chosen attitude on the part of these people. They were not concerned about finding the ways of God, and they were certainly unconcerned about living according to those ways.

The apostle then added another ingredient. They were **hardened in their heart**, meaning that they had become calloused. The Greek word for hardened indicates a callousness in their mind set. That means that they were unfeeling in things that are moral, spiritual, right, and just. Paul continued to

discuss the desperate condition of these people.

In Ephesians 4:19 Paul says that they **lost all sensitivity**. They were **submerged in sensuality**. They were insatiable. They were driven by their appetites. The previous level of involvement in immorality no longer satisfied them. They had to go to a deeper level of immorality. They were always seeking with greedy attitudes a greater degree of sensuality. Sensuality is “giving in to the senses.” It is being manipulated and controlled by appetites, passions, lusts, and feelings.

Christianity does not function simply out of feeling. There are feelings, but feelings have to be dictated out of intellect. It is the mind that establishes what is right, and therefore when we understand what is right, we can bring our feelings into harmony with our understanding. A man is not saved by what he feels. He is saved by what he knows. It is the knowledge of the Word of God that establishes feelings. When a man has proper knowledge then he is able to function out of *proper* feelings. However, these people had so separated themselves from God and from the moral standards that God gave to them that they were no longer functioning with moral sensitivity. Their conscience was no longer functioning. They had given themselves over to sensuality. In Greek “*given themselves over*” is in the active voice. In other words, it was a guilty choice that they made, and God passed judgment upon it. It was a guilty choice on their part, and a judicial act on the part of God. They gave themselves over to immorality. Sensuality is wantonness and shamelessness, and it means that one is never satisfied with the level of sin they are currently living in but must go deeper and deeper into sin every day.

They **indulge in every kind of impurity**. There is no control and no limit, and they are bent on gratifying the appetite with what Paul calls **a continual lust for more**. The Greek uses the word greediness, insatiable, or covetous. They desired to go deeper and deeper into sin. That is the state of degradation of the pagan.

But This Is Not the Way of Christ

Paul then turned his attention to the Christian. He tells us in Ephesians 4:17 that we must no longer live that way. How must we walk? Ephesians 4:20 says, *"You, however, did not come to know Christ that way."* In other words, it is not through this kind of sinful degradation that we gain knowledge about Jesus. That is not the way we were taught to live in Christ Jesus.

The Truth That Is in Jesus

In Ephesians 4:21 Paul says that all truth about morality and life is centered in the person of Jesus. In verse twenty-two the apostle writes that the old self is being corrupted. Corruption is a process, not a one time activity. It is degenerative and accumulative. The corruption grows deeper and deeper. Therefore, the apostle tells us in this verse that we did not learn Christ in that way. We have been taught about Him, find all truth in Him, and as a result have to put off all the pagan lifestyle. We must cease giving in to sinful animal instincts. We must cease being controlled by those mindless appetites of the flesh that manipulate us to gratification through that which is unlawful.

The Putting Off of Your Old Self

In Ephesians 4:22 Paul tells us to put on a new self. "To put off" suggests the idea of undressing oneself from the former robes of a Gentile lifestyle. It has the idea of divorcing. In other words we have to divorce ourselves, making a total break with our past lifestyle that was being corrupted by deceitful desires. The deceitful desires are those that lead and entice an individual to engage in the desire, but they produce negative condemning fruits. Those desires are full of deceit because they look good, like they would bring pleasure. The sins and temptations that are presented to us convince us that they bring pleasure, but they are deceitful. This is because the end result is condemnation. There is also shame, but pagans have lost

their sense of shame. Therefore, the apostle says that we must divorce ourselves from that old way of life.

The putting off of the old man is in the active voice. That means that it is up to the individual to break the habit of giving in to those sins. Paul then said in Ephesians 4:23, “. . . *to be made new in the attitude of your minds . . .*” That is in the passive voice, which means that we must let God recycle us through the Word, through revelation, and through our thought processes. We must submit ourselves to re-education, and we must let God bring to us the proper kind of thinking. We must renew our mind so that we can begin to practice the moral standards of God. We must be renewed in the attitude of our minds. This passage in the Greek text says, “. . . *spirit of your mind . . .*” In other words, we must let God redirect our thinking. We have a mind, now we must use it. We must develop the proper attitude toward the Word of God. That comes about partially through those who equip, train, and educate, those whom God has built into the church (Ephesians 4:11 ff). That is the way we are re-educated.

In Ephesians 4:24 Paul says, “. . . *and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*” In Greek, it says to put on the “new man,” that lives “in truth, in righteousness, and in holiness.” Truth means being conformed to the revelation of God. Righteousness means being conformed to the moral standard, and holiness means being conformed to our specific belonging to God Himself. We have been set apart from the world. We belong to God, and so we need to practice in this new self the new lifestyle. Paul draws a beautiful picture to contrast with the unclothing of the soiled garments of pagan, Gentile living. We are re-clothed with a new mind and with a new attitude. It is almost impossible for us to understand the contrast that exists between these two ways of living without experiencing it in our personal life.

Five Explicit Ways in Which “Divorce and Remarriage” Manifests Itself

Divorced From Lying

The apostle, in Ephesians 4:25, began to explain how this new lifestyle contrasts with the old with some significant details and in a number of specific areas. It is an individual obligation, therefore, we have to **divorce the old way of speaking lies**. We must begin to speak truth one to another.

Divorced From Anger-Caused Sin

In Ephesians 4:26 Paul said, “*In your anger do not sin*’: *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry . . .*” In this verse the apostle is aware that Christians live in a pagan society and culture that is corrupt from every perspective, living in total immorality. Christians have relationships with people in the world that are harmful, and that creates a sense of frustration and even a sense of anger. However, Paul wants the church to process its anger and be **divorced from anger-caused sin**. As a Christian lives in a pagan culture, he is going to find himself under pagan hostility. He will find his lifestyle being unappreciated and even taken advantage of by the pagans, because the Christian is a peaceful man. He does not seek vengeance, therefore the pagan takes advantage of him and abuses him because of his new lifestyle. The Christian is even critical of that old lifestyle. However, Paul says, “Don’t let your anger take control,” or in other words, “. . . *do not let the sun go down on your wrath*,” (NKJV). He is telling us to process our anger as we encounter frustrating situations. We should remember how Christ handled frustrating situations, and we must not dwell on our anger. If we begin to dwell on anger, then it will not be long before we begin to respond in violence. The apostle tells us to make peace with ourselves before we go to bed.

This passage, “*In your anger do not sin*,” comes from Psalm 4:4, where David said, “. . . *when you are on your beds*,

search your hearts and be silent.” We are to commune with God. Therefore, he is saying “Be afraid and sin not.” He is not talking about being scared. The Hebrew version of this says, “Stand in awe.” Out of respect for God and out of respect for His way of handling the frustrations of daily living in a pagan culture, we must not give in to anger. Out of respect for God, we make peace with ourselves. Let God handle the punishment that is deserved by the individual who has done wrong. Let God handle it. The apostle Paul says in Romans 12:19 that vengeance belongs to the Lord, and God will repay. We do not have to worry about righting any wrongs. God will take care of it Himself. Therefore, we must divorce anger and put on peaceful attitudes.

In Ephesians 4:27 Paul said, “... *and do not give the devil a foothold.*” In other words, when anger is not properly processed and handled, it gives Satan an open door to take over our tempers. When we start having a temper tantrum and start responding in the same way to those who oppose us, we begin to respond with evil for evil. Paul tells us in Romans 12:17 not to do that. We must return good for evil. In that way, we heap coals of fire upon the head of the enemy. We bring to his attention just how wrong he is. Therefore, we must not let Satan take an advantage of us because of our anger (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Divorced From Thievery

In Ephesians 4:28 Paul said that the one who has been a thief must stop stealing. This is another part of the divorce. We must be **divorced from thievery**. We have to give up all false business practices. We have to give up any kind of advantage that we may take over another person at his expense. That is a form of stealing. We must give up all kinds of stealing. It is clear that Paul wants us to divorce stealing. He wants us to marry honest labor, good and useful toil. We must no longer take from other people, but we must labor with our hands so that we will be able to give to others. There is a world of

difference between the lifestyle of those who steal from others and those who give to others out of a deep sense of charity. We must be individuals who, instead of abusing others, help and give assistance to others so that we may be able to share with those who are in need.

Divorced From Harmful Speech

In Ephesians 4:29 Paul states that we have to take off the old garments of dirty, unwholesome talk. We have to **divorce harmful speech**. This relates to verbal conversation as we must guard our speech and keep it pure. Our speech needs to be beneficial and helpful to our hearers. It must be spoken in accordance with the need of the moment, so that it may give grace to those who hear.

We have to divorce lying and put on truth. We have to divorce unwholesome speech and put on good speech that confers grace to those who hear. Paul says in Ephesians 4:30 that we must not grieve the Holy Spirit. What if an individual has become a part of the family of Christ, and he does not divorce himself from lying, from stealing, from unwholesome talk, and from any activity that would pervert his lifestyle? That results in grieving the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit that has been given to us as a seal and confirmation of our redemption. Simply because we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), does not mean that we are irrevocably sealed for redemption. If we have not given up that pagan lifestyle, or if we give it up for a while and then revert to it, then the result is that we will grieve the Holy Spirit, and He will depart. Therefore, the seal of our redemption will have been compromised and will have been removed from us, and we will be lost.

Divorced From “Held On To” Anger

In Ephesians 4:31 Paul speaks about other outpourings of impassioned, uncontrolled elements of the human temper. We must be **divorced from “held on to” anger**. Bitterness, in

Greek, suggests the idea of critical condemnation of other people. Bitterness generally comes about through an accumulation of hurts that others have imposed upon us. However, Paul already told us not to let them accumulate. We are to make peace with ourselves upon our bed (cf. Ephesians 4:26). If we do not process our anger today, then tomorrow's anger will stack on top of it, and before long we will find ourselves embittered and given to rage.

The word "rage" suggests the idea of a temper tantrum. Anger in this context has to do with the Greek word *orge*, which is an uncontrolled outpouring of opposition and animosity or brawling. It is a Greek word that defines the kind of fighting that breaks out when people do not manage their anger. Slander, in Greek, suggests the idea of blasphemy or using ill language toward others. We are to get rid of those.

We have to divorce ourselves from all these things. What must we marry? We must marry kindness and compassion, (Ephesians 4:32). We must forgive one another as God has forgiven us. So all evil talk and all anger must give way to kindness and compassion. We must clothe ourselves with Christ's new lifestyle.

THE NEW LIFE-STYLE/SUBMISSION

Ephesians 5:1-33

Chapter eleven presents a commentary of Ephesians 5:1-33. The purpose of this chapter is to continue Paul's insistence on the necessity of the new lifestyle that a Christian must live after his conversion. Paul begins the first of three areas of social interaction that Christianity demands. Those areas relate to the mutual subjection of husbands to wives and wives to husbands. Then they relate to children and parents and to servants and masters. Paul then presents, as a model for the church to imitate in its family life, the relationship that exists between Christ as the head, or the groom, of the church which is His bride. Then he teaches us that in these relationships within the family, the husband can follow the role model of Christ, and the wife can follow the role model of the church in her submission to Christ who is the head.

The Christian's Imitation of Christ

The New Man Functions Out of Love

Ephesians 5:1 must not be separated from the immediately preceding verse. The area of imitation is clearly defined in the preceding verse, because Paul insisted in verse thirty-two that Christians be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave us. Therefore, the apostle was insisting in Ephesians 5:1 that we imitate Christ or God in the area of forgiveness, and in order to be able to imitate His forgiving disposition we must possess the quality of

compassion out of which all forgiveness arises. Paul said, “. . . *as dearly loved children* . . .” which means that we are expected to take on family qualities of Him who is our Father, even God. God is compassionate, and therefore, He expects that this family trait be identified also in the life of His children.

The urgency of this is insisted upon in the context. In the context of Ephesians 4:21-5:13, there is a series of imperatives contained in all of these commands, as Paul states that there are particular elements that must be eliminated from our lives. This other element must be embraced in our life, and he insists upon the urgency of it by instructing us through imperatives. In other words, “*Be imitators of God* . . .” is imperative; it is not an option. It is demanded of us.

In Ephesians 5:2 Paul says that not only must we be compassionate and forgiving, but we must also imitate God and Christ in love. This means that we must develop a career of love. This has to be the standard by which we live our daily lives, according to the love example that Jesus has given to us. He has modeled for us the kind of love that we are expected to demonstrate to one another. That is a sacrificial kind of love. Jesus said in John 13:34 that we must love one another even as He has loved us. Christ has established the standard of His love which is sacrificial devotion to the needs of others and selfless interest in the welfare of others. Therefore, Paul insists that we imitate the love of Christ, and that we imitate it in the sense that Christ gave Himself up for us. The word “for” in Greek is *huper*, and it means that He offered Himself in substitution. He offered Himself on our behalf. That means that we have to practice that kind of sacrificial devotion on behalf of other people.

Christ presented Himself as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. The term “*fragrant offering*” is from the pages of the book of Leviticus. Leviticus is the book in the Old Testament that explains the sacrifices of the law of Moses. Those sacrifices were broken down into two distinct categories. The first category was composed of worship sacrifices, and

since they were expressions of the praise, devotion, commitment, and consecration of the Hebrew worshiper to God, they were called sweet-smelling sacrifices or fragrant offerings to God. In other words, they smelled good to God, and therefore they were sacrifices of worship. There was another category of sacrifices that were not fragrant in nature, because they were for atonement. They spoke of sin and transgression. Therefore, the apostle wants us to magnify this principle of love in its limitless dimension as we offer our service to our fellow man, primarily as an expression of worship to God, because He is deserving and because the terminology of this context suggests the attitude of worship.

The New Man Functions in Purity

In Ephesians 5:3 Paul lists three other qualities that have to be eliminated from the life of a Christian. Sexual immorality indicates any kind of sexual activity outside of the realm of marriage. The Greek word for **sexual immorality** comes from the word *porneia*. The word “pornography” comes from that word. It indicates fornication, the perversion of any sexual activity, or the use of any sexual activity on the part of people outside of marriage. In the area of marriage, sex has its proper place. Outside of marriage, there is no proper use for sexual activity.

Paul then mentioned **impurity**. The Greek word for impurity is *akatharsia*, and it is more of a medical terminology. It is the activity of a doctor cleansing a wound of any impurity or anything that is dirty. Since Paul used it in the context of the moral qualities that a Christian must practice, he is insisting that we remove from our lives all uncleanness and dirt of a moral nature.

He then tells us that we must eliminate **greed**. Greed is a quality of human appetite in that it is never satisfied. Greed is insatiable. It is always lusting and desiring for something else. The apostle says that those three qualities must be eliminated from the life of a Christian because they are not proper for the

children of a holy God. He already insisted that we take on the family qualities, and since God Himself is holy, His holy people must show their relationship through their family traits when they take on the qualities of God Himself.

In Ephesians 5:4 Paul says that there is to be no **obscene or foolish talk**. The word “obscurity” relates to foolish talk. It is an indication of the improper use of the tongue. It is imperatively excluded from our conduct. Obscurity relates to dirty talk that is shameless indecency. This foolish talk that the apostle discussed comes from the Greek word *morologia*. The word “moronic” comes from this word. *Logos* has to do with words. Therefore, Paul is telling us to straighten up our language. When people begin to talk moronically, they talk as though they have a mental retardation. God’s people are not retarded in their understanding of the Word of God. They have ample explanations in the Scripture about the way they must talk and the way they must live. Therefore, they must not talk out of any kind of frivolity or in any evil sense.

Paul said that **coarse jesting** is the next thing that must be eliminated. It is base, unholy, and socially dirty conversation. Coarse jesting tends to make light of wrong doing. It tends to encourage impious talk. Paul tells us later that we are not to even mention the evil things that other people do in an indecent society. Therefore, all of that kind of talk must give way. It must be divested from the life of a Christian, because he is expected to clothe himself with expressions of thanksgiving—mostly to God but also in proper talk to other people. Thanksgiving to God has to do with our gratitude for our redemption.

Severe Warning Concerning Failure to Change

In Ephesians 5:5 Paul writes, *“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”* In other words, this man builds himself a god out of all of this unrighteous living. No such person has any inheritance

in the kingdom of Christ and God. Christians are heirs of God. Their inheritance is sealed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and Paul wants them to know that they are saved people, but not irrevocably so. They could lose their salvation. Paul told us in Ephesians 4:30 that we must not grieve the Holy Spirit. We have already been sealed by the Spirit who is our confirmation of redemption. However, by engaging or returning to our former state of living, we could jeopardize our redemption. Paul wants us to be assured that inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God is lost when an individual returns to that kind of evil living. The kingdom of Christ and God simply indicates their mutual relationship to the kingdom.

In Ephesians 5:6 Paul sounds the warning about those who deceive others with empty speech. It is evident from this statement that there were some people who were teaching empty words. They were teaching these Christians false doctrines. These false teachers were telling the Christians that what they did in their physical body did not have any relationship to their spiritual relationship with God. Paul told them not to let any man deceive them to that effect, because that is absolutely wrong. There is wrath and unconstrained outpouring of divine opposition against individuals who practice such things. They have no part in Christian living, and an individual, even a Christian, that would give himself to that faces the potential of losing his redemption before God.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:7 to not be partners with these individuals. A partner would be one who has fellowship. As a matter of fact, that is the Greek word in the context. *“Them”* possibly relates to those who were still practicing such immoralities. However, more than likely, Paul was discussing those who would deceive those individuals or who would deceive us with empty words about doctrines that say that the physical life of a Christian does not in any way contaminate his soul.

Light and Darkness Are Opposing Forces and Are Mutually Exclusive

Paul states in Ephesians 5:8 that in the past we belonged to darkness. Now we belong to light. Light and darkness are mutually opposing forces, and they are mutually exclusive. Wherever light exists, darkness has to flee. When the darkness enters, light is eliminated. Therefore, Paul is telling Christians that we must not live in the darkness that the Gentiles live in, they being darkened in their understanding (Ephesians 4:18). In other words, they do not understand the immorality of their practice, and they certainly do not understand the consequences of it. They have darkness, and they are not illuminated by the revelation of God. They do not have the light of His Word. Paul said that in times past we belonged to that darkness. We did not know the fruits of our activity. However, now we know that we must practice light.

Paul then states in the next verse, Ephesians 5:9 that the light of God's Word leads to goodness in life toward other people, to righteous activity in our relationship to God, and to obedience to the truth of God's Word that gives direction to life. Therefore, all contrary practices have to be discarded.

In Ephesians 5:10 Paul insists that we must not listen to any false teacher who may arise and tell us that our actions have no influence on our soul. He tells us not to listen to them, but to find out what God says about it. Before we act, we must be sure that we are acting in harmony with the teachings that God has given and with the light that He has shed in His Word.

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:11 that there are two ways in which a Christian can "reprove" (the word which is actually used in the Greek) darkness. One way is by denouncing it verbally. To refuse to denounce or to fail to admonish someone who is practicing evil is a passive tolerance of that evil. It seems to be a cooperation with the evil that they are engaging in. Therefore, Paul says that we must have nothing to do with that kind of living. Those are the fruitless deeds of darkness. There are fruitful deeds of light: goodness, righteousness, and

truth. However, there are fruitless results that come from that kind of living which is condemnation. Paul said, “. . . *expose them.*” Therefore, we expose them by verbal correction.

We can also expose them by the lifestyle that we live. It is important to Paul that someone tell the individual that his immoral action is wrong and that it bears consequences that are eternal in nature. The apostle insisted that we reprove them because in Ephesians 5:13-14 he says that a Christian, in following the teachings that God has given in His moral standards, is a standing reproof of every immoral way. We live according to the light, and this light exposes darkness. The apostle is impressing upon us the importance of this sense of mission, not only to abstain from participation but to not have any fellowship with those immoral activities. He wants us to expose them and at least lift our voice in protest against that kind of living. The apostle also wants us to extend an invitation to those people to come to Christ, so that they can enjoy life, because spiritually they are dead.

That is why Paul said in Ephesians 5:14, “*Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*” This was not a citation from the Old Testament or the New, however, it was a known phrase as Paul mentioned in this context, “*This is why it is said . . .*” It was most likely a part of a Christian hymn that was sung in praise and devotion to God. In Ephesians 5:18-19 the apostle mentioned that Christians do worship God in their psalms, hymns, and songs of praise. It is, therefore, an invitation to the pagan to wake up because someone needs to arouse him as to the eternal destiny of condemnation that is before him if he does not change his ways. He can rise from the dead, and Christ will give him light not only concerning the way to live but also the way to eternal salvation.

The Imperative of Carefulness

In Ephesians 5:15 Paul said, “*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise . . .*” In Greek the word

“walk” was used instead of “live.” We have illumination from God. We are to live accordingly “... *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*” (verse sixteen) There are always opportunities available for the Christian to expose darkness and manifest light. The days are evil, therefore the Christian should take advantage of every opportunity and occasion to display Christian virtues and oppose the moral wrongs in the surrounding society.

Paul then says in Ephesians 5:17 that we are not to be influenced by what others would like for us to do (cf. Ephesians 5:10). We are to simply do the will of the Lord. In Ephesians 5:18a he said, “*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.*” Debauchery is the uncontrolled practice of sin, because wine destroys the thinking processes and leads to all kinds of immorality.

Paul said, “*Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 5:18b) There are two possible interpretations for “*the Spirit*” in this context. One interpretation relates to the Holy Spirit. We are already filled with the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:23). Then we are filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). In this verse, it may well be that Paul was insisting that we be filled with the Holy Spirit, that is, following fully the guidance that the Holy Spirit gives to us through the Word. However, inasmuch as Paul says, “... *be filled with the Spirit,*” the Greek says, “in the Spirit.” It may be that Paul is speaking of the attitude and mood of a Christian as he offers his praise and worship to God. That would be speaking about worship that grows out of the spirit and the truth (John 4:24). Truth is the standard, the pattern of Christian worship. The spirit is the attitude with which a Christian worships the Almighty God.

Then Paul said in Ephesians 5:19 that Christianity is a religion of celebration of praise. “*Psalms*” were adaptations of the 150 psalms that are found in the Old Testament. They were mostly songs of praise to the almighty God, and they were well adaptable to Christian worship activity. Paul was insisting that we speak to one another. In Colossians 3:16-17 he insisted that

we instruct and educate through our singing to one another. We also admonish one another in our singing, making melody in our hearts to God.

In Ephesians 5:20 Paul wrote that our worship is composed of singing and prayer to God, and it is to be carried out in spirit and according to truth.

The Imperative of Submission

In Ephesians 5:21, Paul began the first of a series of three distinct areas of social interaction. The first is the relationship between a husband and his wife. The principle of submission is found in Ephesians 5:21. The word “*submit*” in Greek is *hupotasso*. It is a present participle, so we must continue submitting ourselves. This is a military term which means to line up behind one another. It is also a term that is used for a foundation, as a foundation stands under a building and assumes a supporting role of everything that is above it. Therefore, Paul is insisting on this principle of mutual submission, first of all husbands to wives, then wives to husbands, then children to parents, then parents to children, then servants to masters, and finally masters to servants.

The Command to Godly Wives

In the context, Paul said in Ephesians 5:22, “*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.*” This is the first area. “*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*” (verse twenty-three) Christ is not only head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22), but He is the Savior of the church. Therefore, the relationship of the church to Christ becomes the model of the wife’s relationship to her husband. Christ can no more be the head of the church without the voluntary submission of the church to His sovereignty, than the husband can be the head of the wife without her voluntary submission to him. The church must submit to Christ, so also the wife must submit to her husband in everything. That does not mean that she is less

important. It just means that she assumes a different role under the leadership of her husband.

The Command to Godly Husbands

Paul also insisted on the other side of this mutual process of submission one to another (Ephesians 5:25). Paul presented the purposes of the sacrifice of Christ. Just as the church's submission to Christ becomes the model for the wife in her submission to the husband, the other side of this model demands that the husband be submissive to the wife just as Christ submitted Himself to the church. He gave Himself for her. He sacrificed Himself completely and totally for her, so that He might present her first of all to Himself as a glorious bride, holy and pure. Paul said that Christ first of all made the church holy and separated her from the world. Then He cleansed her by the washing of water according to the Word. That came about in her baptism. In Ephesians 5:27 Paul says that He is able "*. . . to present her to himself as a radiant church . . .*" The Greek version of this verse says "glorious church," without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless before Him.

Christ has perfectly cleansed the church, and so the husband must have the same relationship to the wife. He must be forgiving and cleanse her of any animosity that he might have toward her. Christ has done these things for the church. He has made her holy. He has cleansed her of her sins. He has presented her to Himself as a bride. When the husband is as submissive to his wife as Christ was submissive to the needs of the church, he will have no problem in her submission to him as the husband. The apostle said that in the same way as Christ loved the church husbands ought to love their wives.

Illustration of Care for One's Own Body

Paul said in Ephesians 5:28 that the husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body, because the church is the body of Christ and the wife is one body with her husband. He who

loves his wife loves himself (Ephesians 5:29-30). Just as Christ has tender care and feeds His people, so the husband must care for and feed his wife. *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”* (Ephesians 5:31) In Christ we become one body. *“This is a profound mystery . . .”* Paul said in verse thirty-two. There is a hidden message that Paul wants us to learn from this context. That message is how it is possible for the church to be submissive to Christ and for the husband to be submissive to the needs of the bride.

SUBMISSION AND CONFLICT

Ephesians 6:1-24

Chapter twelve is the final chapter of this series, and it presents a commentary of Ephesians 6:1-24. The aim of this chapter is to present the remaining two areas of social life that characterize Christianity, the parents and their children, as well as the Christian slave and his master.

Then Paul begins a presentation of Christian warfare by giving a clear definition of the nature of the enemy force that is arrayed against the church. He does this because he wants the church to be able to survive in this pagan culture that is dominated by satanic forces. Paul gives instructions to the Christian about the kind of battle equipment that makes it possible for him to survive. He then defines both the offensive and defensive armament that are necessary for victorious living in the midst of an enemy culture. The intent of this warfare is not only the survival of the believer in Christ but also the liberation of as many other souls as possible from enemy held territory. Finally, as he completes the writing of this Ephesian letter, Paul gives his greetings to the church and gives prayers for their success.

Paul said in Ephesians 5:21 that the first area of mutual submission was that of a husband to his wife and a wife to her husband.

Mutual Submission in the Family

Children/Parent and Parent/Children Submission

Paul began this context in Ephesians 6:1 by saying that children were to obey their parents in the Lord, because it is the right thing to do. The word “*obey*” is simply a disposition to hear with a willingness and attitude of complying. The word for obey in Greek is *hupakouw*, which means “to hear under” with intent to do as commanded. The apostle Paul insists that children submit to their parents. There is a mutual submissive attitude of parents to children because the father and mother have submitted themselves in many ways to the needs of the children—in the first place, to give them life and then to provide everything that is essential for their existence. In many ways parents submit themselves to the needs of their children during their helpless years. Therefore, Paul was encouraging children to respond in submission to their parents, and he was encouraging them to have an obedient response to the guidelines that the father and the mother have given. Paul insists that this is right because it grows out of the obligation that children have to their parents, and it is right because God commands it.

Paul says to the child in Ephesians 6:2 that they are to give honor to their parents. This honoring of the parents is straight from the Ten Commandment. Paul cites the fifth of the Ten Commandments. God had insisted in that commandment that children be submissive by honoring and obeying their father and mother. This was the first commandment with a promise. Out of the Ten Commandments, this was the first one that gave two specific areas of benefit to the child for submitting to parental guidelines (Ephesians 6:3). Those are the two promises that God made when He gave the fifth commandment in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. “. . . *that it may go well with you . . .*” means that you will have a happy life. It also promises that you will live a longer life.

This passage commands and demands that children be

obedient, in other words to listen to parental guidelines with an attitude of positive response. They are to give honor, respect, and reverence to their parents, because their parents have submitted themselves in so many ways to their children's needs.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:4, as he returned to the other aspect of this mutually submissive assignment. The statement, "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children . . .*" is also made in Colossians 3:21. In this context, Paul says that fathers must not exasperate nor frustrate their children. Fathers are not to frustrate their children by giving unreasonable commands, by rejecting them without motivation, nor by rejecting their requests without proper explanation. Paul insists that kind of activity must be eliminated in the parent to child relationship. Paul placed this responsibility specifically upon the shoulders of the fathers, because the father is not only the head of the wife, he is the head of the family and should be considered as the spiritual mentor of the entire family. He sets up the guidelines for the spiritual life of the family.

Paul said, "*. . . instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*" This verse would be better translated from the Greek, "educate them in two specific areas of life, in training and in discipline." The word "instruction" comes from the Greek word *nouthesia*, and it simply means to admonish in the positives and negatives, in the do's and do not's of God. That establishes the responsibility of children to parents and parents to children.

Slave/Master and Master/Slave Submission

The next area of responsibility relates to slaves and their earthly masters (Ephesians 6:5). Paul insisted that children obey their parents "*. . . in the Lord . . .*" The phrase "*in the Lord*" is best explained by Paul's parallel teaching in Colossians 3:20. Paul uses that same principle for the servant toward his master. Servants are to obey their masters with respect and sincerity, just as they would obey Christ, doing

whatever is pleasing to Him.

The master may not be deserving of the kind of devotion and faithful service that the servant gives, but Paul does not even discuss that. He places the responsibility upon this servant to serve as though Christ were the one giving the command or making the assignment. The servant must serve his master with the attitude of a sincere heart, as though he were serving Christ. That simply means that he must be focused in fulfilling every desire of his master, because perhaps the master does not allow him to serve Christ as he would like to serve Him. This, therefore, enables Jesus to gauge the attitude with which that person would serve Christ if he had the opportunity.

Paul was telling slaves to serve as he would if he were serving Christ. That is mentioned three times in this context (Ephesians 6:6). Slaves are not to serve only when the master is looking over them, for that would indicate that they are not trustworthy. A slave is not to serve only when the master's eyes are upon him, but he is to fulfill the assignment given him/her. The master should not have to constantly stand guard over his servant. If servants would serve their masters with this attitude, then it would be a natural consequence for the master to say, "I have a very good servant, and I am very pleased with him." It would elevate the servant in the master's evaluation. Therefore, in this sense, the apostle encourages the servant to serve his earthly master as though he were Jesus.

In Ephesians 6:7 Paul focuses in on serving totally, just as if we were serving the Lord Himself. This is the third time that Paul mentions slaves serving as though they were serving Christ. A servant is to continue to serve as though Christ were his master (Ephesians 6:8).

In Ephesians 6:9, the apostle turned his attention to the other side of the mutually submissive attitude, that attitude which is to belong to those who are the masters. He said, "*And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.*" These

masters may be the master over a man, but there is a master over him in heaven. Paul was talking about Christian masters who possessed slaves in New Testament times. The practice of these principles of mutual subjection would, for all practical purposes, eliminate any form of slavery which in fact Christianity did. It eliminated this abusive practice in post New Testament times.

What did Paul intend for masters to do? They were to do what was right and fair, because they themselves have a Master who is in Heaven (Colossians 4:1). Paul was insisting that this was a Christian master, and he must do what is right for his slave. That means that he must feed him well. He must provide him with proper clothing and housing, not demanding too much. He must certainly not threaten him, because Jesus is the Master both of the slave and of him who is considered his master.

The Christian Warfare Against Evil Forces

An Imperative Assignment!

Paul then turned his attention to Christian warfare (Ephesians 6:10). Paul is insisting that the Christian be stalwart, that he have moral fiber in his lifestyle. He wants us to be strengthened in God's mighty power. In Ephesians 1:17-18 Paul insisted that Christians have a spirit of wisdom, a revelation in the knowledge of Jesus, and the eyes of our heart enlightened so that we might know these three great things: the hope of God's call, the glorious inheritance of God in His saints, and the awesome, unlimited power of God that has been unleashed on us in the church. God's power transforms our spiritual status, and it also makes it possible for us to resist the enemy force in his attempts to impose upon our relationship with God or destroy our fellowship with Him.

Paul said in Ephesians 6:11, *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."* Paul had the Christian standing in four ways in this context. He

stands “*against*.” That means that he declares his opposition to enemy patterns of living. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:13 that we must “withstand.” That means to resist any intrusions of Satan. We must stand our ground on the Christian principles that have been revealed to us. Then we must stand “victorious” (verse thirteen), and finally we must stand “fully equipped.” Paul insists that the Christian be well prepared for the battle in those four ways, and that means he is prepared by God.

Paul said in Ephesians 6:11 that we know what the devil is attempting to do. The term “*schemes*,” implies that the devil is subtle. He is trying to sneak up on us. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12, “*For our struggle (Greek word pale, suggesting a wrestling match) is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” The term “wrestling” does not indicate long range bombardment. Our warfare is not high altitude bombing or even intercontinental ballistic missiles. Wrestling suggests “hands on” conflict.

We are in the thick of the battle where we are fighting for the salvation and liberation of others. However, we are also fighting to maintain our salvation. We are fighting for survival. Paul wants us to know about the strength of the enemy force. We are not fighting against mere “*flesh and blood*.” That is a term that is usually used in the New Testament to define feeble humanity. We are not fighting against simple men. If we were, then man-made armaments would be adequate for the battle.

We are fighting against “*rulers*,” which suggests enthroned evil powers. We are fighting against “*authorities*.” Those are the authorities of a demonic source who are intent upon bringing about the downfall of the church. We are fighting against “*the powers of this dark world*.” This is a world-wide power; it is structured evil. The Greek version of this verse says, “against the world’s rulers of this darkness.” That means that they have dominion in many different nations, and they are organized for evil purposes.

Paul tells us that we are fighting against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Paul already identified the heavenly realms as the reign and the rule of Christ. He also defined it as the arena in which Christians share in the reign and the rule of Christ. Therefore, we are struggling against these spiritual forces that are arrayed against the church, attempting to destroy its members, attempting to pervert its doctrine, and attempting to negate the eternal destiny of God's people. They are attempting to eliminate the plan of the ages—the plan that was designed to bring God's people into consummate salvation with Him after this life is over. Paul wants us to be sure to not underestimate the power of the enemy, because he is vicious, subtle, scheming, and conniving. We are to be aware of his powers.

The Christian's Battle Gear

The Complete Christian Armor

Paul wants us to be strong in the powers of God. He prayed for this strength in Ephesians 3:16. The Christian gets strength by taking on the guidelines that are given to us in God's Word. We are strengthened in our resolve. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:13 to put on the full armor of God. The Greek word for armor is *panoplian*, and it is the full equipment or battle dress. Paul insisted that we put on the whole armor of God and take our stand. We are to resist and withstand. We are to stand victorious in the full dress.

Paul said, “. . . *when the evil day comes* . . .” That is probably the day of severe enemy attack against our moral standards. That is the day of severe temptation. Paul tells us to stand resolved, being determined not to give in to Satan, but to resist him. James told us to resist the devil, and he will flee from us (cf. James 4:7). Paul was insisting in this context that we can withstand the devil, and therefore be victorious against him. When that evil day comes, we will be able to stand with the full armament of God and resist the devil.

In Ephesians 6:14 Paul began a list of this armament. First of all, it is defensive, and it protects us. Then it becomes offensive as we attack the enemy strongholds, the world-wide rulers of darkness, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness that bring the battle against the people of God.

The first piece of equipment that God wants us to put on is the belt. It is a wide waistband that the warriors used in New Testament times—the **belt of truth**. That refers to the truth about Christian moral standards. It is truth about the enemy force and its evil purposes and designs. It is truth about the eternal destiny of God's people and of those who are not God's people. It is the truth about the righteousness of this warfare against Satan and about the possibility of victory. We are to take the truth of God's Word and gird our waist with it as the apostle tells us.

Then he tells us to take up the breastplate of righteousness and put it in its place—the **breastplate of righteousness**. This is not a righteousness that comes from our performance. It is evident from the book of Ephesians that God insists that Christian people live righteously. However, there is a fundamental righteousness that has been given to us by the gift of grace. We receive the righteousness that God has made available to us through Christ Jesus. We are to put on His righteousness. That is a defensive piece of equipment for the child of God.

In Ephesians 6:15 he says that our **feet are to be shod with the gospel of peace** in a firm footing. "Shod" is the Greek term for "*fitted*." He was talking about a readiness to engage in battle. When a soldier has on his combat boots, he is ready to march and advance toward the enemy strongholds. He is not afraid. He is a veteran, and he is well prepared for the battle. The Christian's feet are shod; they have been dressed with the combat boots that Christ prepares out of the gospel. This is a gospel of peaceful relationships, first of all with God, then with the fellow Christian, and finally with the world. This is not a peaceful coexistence with the enemy, and that lack of

coexistence is least peaceful when we begin to influence the lives of those who are outside of Christ.

In Ephesians 6:16 Paul says that our faith is our defensive weapon, as it protects us. Our faith is our conviction about Christ, our conviction that comes out of the Word of God about our eternal destiny, and our firm belief that Jesus can make us to be more than conquerors (Romans 8:31). Paul wants us to take the **shield of faith**. Then we will be able to use our faith to defend against the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Finally he said in Ephesians 6:17 to put on the helmet of salvation. The **helmet of salvation** tells us that we fight as saved people. We are not fighting for our salvation. Our salvation has already been fought for and won by Christ in His battle for personal innocence and in His battle for our redemption. He won that war, so we wear the helmet of salvation that He has granted to us through His work. Then we take up the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the Word of God. Then we are ready to march and attack.

Paul then said in Ephesians 6:18, “*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*” This is the final element of the Christian armament—to prepare in prayer calling upon the empowering God. Empowering comes through clear motivation and clear instruction about the nature of the warfare, the ethics of the war, the morality with which we fight, and the privileges that we enjoy as Christian people. However, we pray for all of the saints. We pray for our fellow soldiers; we do not attack them. We are patient in our inter-relationships with all of our fellow soldiers who are engaged in the thick of this battle.

Paul requests that we pray to the Father and that we be alert. That means that the enemy is lurking. He is always subtle in his attacks. He is always attempting to sneak up on us and lead us astray. He does this by getting us to fight each other, rather than against his forces. Therefore, Paul wants us to be alert and keep on praying for the saints.

Paul's Final Greeting to the Church

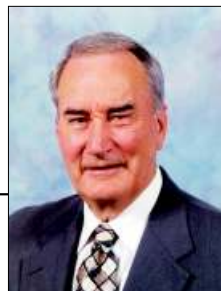
In Ephesians 6:19-20 Paul wanted the church to pray for him, because he was in prison suffering for preaching the gospel of Christ. Prison bars did not eliminate Paul's mission. They did not eliminate his need for prayerful intercession from the church on his behalf. The church was to pray to God that every time Paul had an opportunity to proclaim the unfolding of the plan of the ages to anybody who happened to be there, whether he was a soldier guard or one of the brethren who visited Paul in his Roman prison, that he would be able to speak with sobriety and boldness. Paul wanted to speak fearlessly. It was his proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles that caused him to be thrown into prison (Ephesians 3:1). Paul wanted the Ephesians to pray for him to not become timid, since he was being punished for the preaching of the gospel. He wanted the church to continue to pray for him, because he was willing to continue to suffer for Christ. He wanted them to pray for him to be fearless in the proclamation of the gospel for which he was an "... *ambassador in chains*."

Paul then began to close out his epistle with a few words of exhortation and salutation, mentioning Tychicus, who was his colleague (Ephesians 6:21). Paul was on trial, and he wanted the brethren in Ephesus to know how his trial was going. He then said in verses 22-24,

"I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love."

This is a beautiful way for the apostle Paul to close his epistle to this congregation of people. These prayers are as valid for us today as they were in New Testament times. Thank you for participating in this study of the glorious letter to the Ephesians.

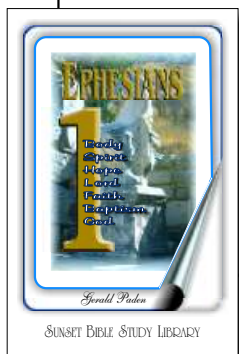
Gerald Paden



Gerald Paden was educated at Abilene Christian University (B.S.) and subsequently served as a missionary in Italy for 18 years and still has a great interest in the evangelization of that country. Gerald specializes in *Church Growth Studies*. He teaches *Sacrificial System*, *Hebrews* and *The Epistles of John* in the Sunset International Bible Institute. He teaches in the Missions School and is instrumental in motivating families to go the Mission field. Gerald has a lovely wife, Bobbie, and three children.

Gerald has rich contributions to your study of the book of Ephesians. He will constantly exalt Christ and the church and will emphasize the need of taking the Gospel to the lost. He will also emphasize the

necessity of living a holy life. You will see his long years of mission work in Italy, years of instructing preaching students and seminar work among churches in most of the United States and in many nations being reflected in this study guide and in the video tapes.



SUNSET
International Bible Institute
Institute Press

3728 34th Street • Lubbock, Texas 79410
1 (800) 687-2121 • Email: extschool@sibi.cc