

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Most likely written from Rome during Paul's incarceration there, approximately AD 60 - 62. Paul had worked with these saints in personal presence longer than he did with any other group. The epistle is so very rich in teaching and admonishing. Chapters 1 - 3 emphasize his great doctrines, while chapters 4 - 6 relate his practical challenges. This is often the pattern used in epistles to the churches. The letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon were also written at this time - the four books often dubbed "prison epistles." Here (and elsewhere) the apostle refers to the church as the "body of Christ," reminding us that it is a living thing! This city where the church was located was well-known for its worship of Diana, also called Artemis. One of the lucrative professions in Ephesus was the making of silver shrines that were representations of the temple of Diana. Acts 19 informs us of Paul's ministry there, and of the uproar that happened when people turned to Jesus and the market for these shrines shrank! Paul revisited the leaders of the church on the Island of Miletus when he was on his final journey to Rome (Acts 20:17 - 38). That scene recorded by Luke is full of passion and tears. Serious study of this letter will pay rich dividends to the believer.

Chapter 1

WHY WERE WE CHOSEN?

SERVANT'S GREETING

1), 2) According to Acts 20:31, Paul had spent 3 years in Ephesus in ministry, the longest single stay of his recorded ministry. Now he writes back to them from his incarceration in Rome. He identifies himself in his greeting as having been made an apostle by God's desire. Sovereign providence is seen from the start. He writes to those who have been made holy in Christ and have remained faithful to Him in service and in life. This Jewish Roman citizen, the Hebrew apostle to the Gentiles, mixes Gentile and Jewish greetings in his salutation. "Grace" is a wish for good things to come to them, while "peace" is wished for them as the crown of all blessings. The uniting of these greetings is symbolic of the uniting of Jew and Gentile in one body in Christ. The source of these good things is God the Father; the channel through which they come is the Lord Jesus Christ.

SOVEREIGN'S GRACE

3) Here begins one of Scripture's longest and most profound sentences. It clearly sets forth Trinitarian doctrine, as all three Persons of the Godhead are extolled. "Praise," "blessed," and "blessing" each translate words meaning "well-spoken-of." We get our word "eulogy" from them. God has made us well-spoken-of in the heavenly realms, and we should speak well of Him in the earthly realm. All God has given us, He has done so in Christ.

4), 5), 6), God chose us, and He predestined us. The first word has more to do with election unto salvation of the sinner - and this choosing is in our Lord Jesus Christ. The last (predestined) has more to do with God's plan for the believer to turn out a certain way. Greater students of the Word than I have stumbled in debate over the matters of God's election (divine sovereignty) and man's decision (human responsibility). Suffice it to say that Scripture teaches both that God chooses and that man must exercise faith in God through Christ if he is to be saved. Where I differ with some is when they assert that Christ only died for the "elect." It is clear to me from Scripture that His death is **sufficient** for all, but only **efficient** for those who believe. A problem so difficult as this is solved only in the infinite mind of God; our finite minds can only see that God set forth two truths that seem to conflict, but obviously cannot. What we can understand is that once we have become members of the family of God, we should be holy (separated to God from sin) and blameless (above reproach). God's good pleasure also provided that we should be "adopted," that is, placed as privileged adult sons, and that we should be accepted by God because we are in Christ, the One Who is heaven's Beloved.

SON'S GIFTS

7) We were once slaves to sin, but in Christ we have not only been purchased by His blood, but we have also been set free, never to be sold again! This redemption includes the setting aside of our trespasses which we had committed against God and His holy law. Set free, forgiven, these are treasures from the storehouse of God's grace.

8) The enlightenment that comes to the believer includes **wisdom** - the ability to see and understand things as they really are, and **understanding** - the common sense ability to know what to do in a given situation, and the will to do it. How much these abilities from God are needed in the life of the Body of Christ today. Exercise them!

9), 10) A "mystery" in the New Testament is something that was previously withheld from our knowledge, but is now made known in divine revelation. God told us a secret, something it pleased Him to purpose. Since Babel and the confusing of tongues, and since the establishment of Gentile nations, followed by the birth of the Jewish nation, Adam's race were divided into many groups. Even when God divided the nations, He had a plan of reuniting them. But He kept it to Himself until now. Now He is bringing men back together in a single united body - the Body of Christ. Here all distinctions are erased: Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, barbarian and nobleman, and all the rest. And, as all are gathered in Christ into one body today, so in His glorious kingdom, all will be gathered together under Him, our King. This will be the dispensation of the fulness of times, the millennium.

11), 12) These verses seem to address the inclusion of the Jew ("we") with the Gentile ("you") in the body of Christ. The

Jew was appointed by God, having been predestined by God's great plan for all creatures for all time, to this inclusion. While seeming interruptions and changes cause us confusion, they are simply steps in God fulfilling His plan. It was no surprise to Him that the Jew rejected and slew Christ, and it was no sudden adjustment that included Gentiles in the body. The gospel went to the Jew first, then the Gentile, and the Jew, first to hope in Christ, is now made brother with the Gentile in a body that knows no racial distinctions.

SPIRIT'S GUARANTEE

13), 14) The Jew eternally belongs to God; so does now the Gentile believer. As God made eternal promises to Israel, when a Gentile believer enters the body of Christ, He, too, is marked with a seal that guarantees his safety. That seal is the Holy Spirit, Whose presence in us is a surety of the fulfilling of the promises made for us and to us in Christ. Our future inheritance is great, and the Holy Spirit is like a down-payment on that inheritance. We belong to God, and He will take care of His own. Our inheritance in heaven is as good as ours even now. We Gentile believers, together with our Jewish brothers in Christ, will praise His glory!

Two of Scripture's longest sentences are found here in Ephesians, chapter one. Verses 3 - 14 are one, and this is the other, beginning at verse 15. Some see the sentence ending with verse 21, others think it carries on through verse 23.

PRAYER FOR THE SAINTS, AND PRAISE FOR THE SAVIOR

PRAYING FOR THE SAINTS

15) Two of the great Christian virtues are found here - **faith** and **love**. In this place, faith is directed toward the Lord Jesus. That is the way unto eternal life, as Paul told the jailer in Philippi: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* Luke's record in Acts 4:12 of Peter's speech to the opponents of the faith confirms this: *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* Also in this context, love is directed to the saints, a thing so often mentioned in the writings of John. Jesus said it was the distinguishing mark of disciples that we love each other: John 13:35 *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* O, my dear friends, let us strive to succeed here, for love is so important!

16) The older I become, the more I find myself engaged in intercessory prayer. There are so many needs, and prayer touches the heart of God to move to meet those needs. What a prayer warrior Paul must have been! He lifted so many saints to the throne of grace, as we see here about these Ephesian Christians. The word for "prayer" here describes "devotional prayer." In this communion with God, we cling to Him as a drowning man clings to a life raft. It is "the soul's sincere desire, unuttered or expressed." God loves that we would talk with Him, and yet we find so many other things to take the place of prayer. Shame on us when that is true! Dear ones, let us be a people of prayer!

17) Here and now Paul begins to record the substance of those prayers - what he asks God to do for them. He beseeches God to give them, through the Holy Spirit, God's wisdom and revelation and knowledge. "Revelation" is the unveiling of truth from heaven; without that we could not know God - He must reveal Himself to us. This "knowledge" is full knowledge, the acquisition of truth in abundance. Jesus said in John 17:3, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* Clearly knowledge of God is key to having eternal life! Finally, "wisdom" I like to define as "in any situation, finding the best solution, and pursuing it by the best means available." Some like to say that wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. I do not disagree.

18) Two medical terms find their origins here - Ophthalmology and Cardiology. The two Greek words yield in our text "eyes" and "hearts." When the eyes of our hearts are enlightened by the Spirit (see the previous verse), we are able to see our "hope" and our "riches." Biblical hope has no trace of doubt; it is a confident hope. It is the knowledge of a reality that just hasn't happened yet, and to it we are called. God **will** bring it to pass. The riches are about inheritance; that, too, is future and certain! But it is God's inheritance, not ours! After the resurrection, we not only belong to Him (as we do now), but we are in His presence! Imagine the God of heaven longing for us to be with Him!

PRAISE FOR THE SAVIOR

19) The word translated "immeasurable" (ESV) has an English derivative, "hyperbole" - an overstatement for emphasis. The word means literally to "throw beyond." The power of God exercised in redeeming us cannot be measured. As the old song said, "So high you can't get over it, so low, you can't get under it, so wide you can't get around it - you must go through the door." And guess Who is the door - yes indeed, Jesus Christ (John 10:7)!

20) You see, in order to save us, God had to raise Jesus from the dead! Man can do many things, but he cannot reverse death once God has put it in place. But God can raise the dead; He raised Jesus, and He will raise us! My precious wife, only recently at this writing gone to heaven, will be resurrected when Jesus returns at the Rapture. And so will all our loved ones who have died with faith in Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:22 and 23 relate that just as Jesus rose from the dead, when He returns, we shall rise also! What wonder - death is not the end! And death does not win - life is victorious through Jesus! Praise His holy name!

21) This Jesus, now seated in the place of honor at the Father's right hand, has the preeminence (Colossians 1:18). He is above anything you can name, and Paul names here several things that are under the feet of Jesus. No earthly throne exceeds Him, for He is "King of kings." No authority outranks His, for He is "Lord of lords." No power can vanquish Him, for He is the "Mighty God." One dear friend of mine often calls Jesus "the Master." The word "dominion" here means

"mastership." He is truly Lord of All! This name of His, "Lord Jesus Christ," is heaven's highest name. Philippians 2:9 says it is "*above every name.*" "What a lovely name, the name of Jesus!"

22), 23) Psalm 8:6 had spoken of all things being put under Messiah's feet. Paul here cites that in declaring the absolute supremacy of Jesus. This organism, this living thing we belong to called the "church," is His Body, and he is the Head of the body! Whatever the body (church) needs, the Head will see that it gets. Whatever the bride (church) needs, our heavenly Bridegroom will provide. He fills us with all good things. You need instruction, He gave us the Bible. You need teaching, He gave us the Holy Spirit. You need forgiveness, He gave us His blood. You need redemption, He bought you with a price. All in all is Jesus, and Jesus is Everything.

Chapter 2

*Acts 19 and 20 should be read as background, giving the record of Paul's ministry efforts in Ephesus. He began his teaching in the synagogue, but he later withdrew and set up shop in the "school of Tyrannus." A great spiritual awakening took place in the city, climaxed by the fiery destruction of scrolls related to sorcery, a thing associated with Satanic practices. Acts 19:20 gives a summary evaluation of the work in Ephesus, "**So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.**" After a narrow escape from some rioters, Paul left for Macedonia, then went into Greece, and then returned to Philippi in Macedonia. Sailing eastward across the Aegean, the troupe came to Troas, and then they sailed south to the port city of Miletus. From there he sent for the elders of the Ephesian church; Acts 20:17-28 is a passage that reveals Paul's heart for the Ephesian church. These dozen verses reveal to us that "elder" (17), "bishop" ("overseer" 28), and "pastor" ("shepherd" 28) are the same office. With that background, let's take a look at the first ten verses of this very special second chapter of the Ephesian epistle.*

FROM DEATH IN SIN TO LIFE IN CHRIST!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OUR NEED

1) Even with those whom he loved so dearly, Paul never minced words. He addresses them directly, using the second person personal pronoun in the plural - "**You!**" Again with characteristic Pauline directness, he tells them of their sin and its result. Sins, seen as false steps and missing the mark, brought them to spiritual death. In keeping with the words of Isaiah (59:1, 2), sin, the separator, slew them, and they were dead in those trespasses and sins. Again Paul uses the plural second person personal possessive pronoun ("**your**") to remind them whose sins these were that brought death.

2) The former lives of these Christians were characterized by walking under the influence of spirit-beings - Satanic in nature. This world is at enmity with God - James spoke of friendship with the world as spiritual adultery and enemy-status against God! Satan, the ruler of the authority of the air, is in mortal combat with God, and he uses men on the field of battle. Men who are not saved aren't just "un-Christian," they are "anti-Christian," led by Satan in a death struggle against God and all that is good. Because they are answerable to God, their actions against Him are called "disobedient" acts.

3) Lest he seem too harsh and condemnatory, Paul includes himself and all of Adam's race in his summation - "All of us..." Again the apostle is in concert with Isaiah (53:6) who said, "*All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way...*" And we all were satisfied to gratify the flesh's strong burning desires, following the wishes of the flesh (sinful nature) and our unregenerate minds, therefore being rightly the objects of God's righteous wrath. This is a universal human condition, with the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, being the lone exception to condemnation.

ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S SUPPLY

4), 5) Most versions begin verse 4 with the wonderful words, "But God..." Whenever Scripture writers describe the mournful condition of sinful man, it is good that they can follow it up by saying, "But God...!" The richly merciful God, is motivated by His abundant love. Just as He moved upon primal chaos to bring order and beauty, so He moved upon man's chaotic and sinful soul to bring order and righteousness. Motivated by love, He moved in mercy. He made those who were dead in sins (and that was all of us) to be alive in Christ. Did you see these three marvelous attributes of God here? Love, mercy, grace. In **love**, God fixed His heart on us, and at great cost to Himself, did us good. In **mercy**, He withheld from us the just deserts of our sin - separation from God and all that is good throughout eternity. In **grace** He heaped upon us the immeasurable riches of love in Christ Jesus. God "made us alive" when we were dead, and He "saved" (delivered from some impending danger or peril) us when we were bound for an unthinkable future.

6) There is no reason for Christian believers to be "earth-bound" in our lives. By God's grace, He has once-for-all raised us with Christ and once-for-all seated us with Christ in "heavenly places." How wonderful it would be if we would live in our **practice** up to the level of the **position** that God has given us! With great spiritual riches at our disposal, too many Christians live like spiritual paupers. Please, let us reach up, allow Him to lift us up to a walk that glorifies God!

7) God has purposed that in the eternal state, He will display His grace in us by meeting our needs in Christ. All of us have a glorious future that depends only on His faithfulness and His plan to magnify the riches of His grace in us. This is a plan that God will not allow to fail - His glory **will be displayed in us**, the redeemed, so that all creation can see it. We are now, and we will be even more-so in the ages to come, real live trophies of God's incomparable grace!

APPLICATION TO OUR HEARTS

8), 9) As best I can remember, when I first became a Christian in 1961, these are the first two verses I committed to memory. And what a blessing they have been to me for well over half a century! Any time something whispers to me that

I have not done enough or been good enough to get to heaven, I recall from here that God saved me without **any** merit or effort on my part - wholly by His grace! All I had to do was something a little child can do - trust Him. **“By grace though faith, plus nothing.”** The phrase “not by works” is also as easily rendered “not out of works,” suggesting that the source of our deliverance from sin is not our human efforts. Elsewhere (in the epistle to the Romans) Paul wrote that if salvation were by works, then it would be payment of a debt (by God). But since it is by faith, it is a free gift of God's grace when He makes us righteous (sanctification) and declares us righteous (justification). It is all from and by God!

10) Where then do faith and works synchronize, in what way do they fit together? **What we are** is His workmanship in us. **What we do**, on the other hand, is the result of what we are. God has created us in Jesus by His own power and grace, and He made us to do good works. They are the natural result of our being in Christ. They are the best evidence that we are redeemed! Paul and James are not in conflict, but in perfect harmony on this point - by grace and faith, unto works.

ENEMIES NOW AT PEACE AND TEMPLES OF GOD

THE RADICAL CHANGE CHRIST BRINGS

11), 12) The Apostle to the Gentiles reminds these Gentile Ephesians of their former estate. Of course a Gentile is any person who is a non-Jew by birth. As many Gentiles have been antisemitic, the Jews also knew how to deride the Gentiles - calling them “uncircumcision,” and even “dogs.” Each group derided the other at various times, using circumcision or the absence of circumcision as a catch-phrase to describe one another. There was, however, a much deeper difference between the groups than the physical sign of God's covenant. Gentiles had no Messianic hope, were not members of the chosen nation, had no relationship to God's covenants, and because spiritual hope is only found in God, they had no hope. What a sad future was theirs, and this is true of anyone without Christ!

13) BUT NOW... What blessed words are these! A sinner's circumstance and condition are not permanent and fixed until death comes. The circumstance changes! The **distant ones** are **brought near** in Christ, by His blood. We can now approach God, not by blood of animal sacrifice or by circumcision, but by Christ's blood! “Near so very near to God; nearer I could not be; for in the person of His Son, I am as near as He.” I am now an insider!

REAL PEACE CHRIST GIVES

14), 15), 16) The two ethnic groups, Jew and Gentile, were at odds with one another. There was a religious barrier between them. The vestiges of that enmity may be seen in contemporary news. Muslim terror groups around the world often cite a nation's friendship with Israel as a reason to target them. Things have changed little over the centuries. How easy it was for the Jew to look down his nose at the uncircumcised Gentile, the alien. How easy it was for the Gentile to feel animosity for the privileged Jew, who somehow almost always managed to be in a superior position in life - financially, educationally, and in other ways. The Jew tried to order his life after the ordinances of the law; the Gentile was indifferent to the law. This increased their hostility, but Jesus removed the cause of their adversity by satisfying the law's demands in two ways: 1, He lived perfectly according to its every precept; 2, He took man's sin in His body, and then He met the law's righteous demands by dying for that sin. When Jew and Gentile believe in Christ as their Savior, they are one in Him. The Church, Christ's Body, knows nothing of separation based on ethnicity or past religious connections. The once-separating wall is gone! And we are one in Him.

17), 18) The aged Simeon recognized Jesus as Israel's Messiah when He was brought as a Babe into the Temple. He also saw by the Spirit that Christ's ministry went beyond the boundaries of Israel's border and race to the lands and peoples of the Gentile nations. He spoke this way of the future ministry of Jesus in Luke 2:32, *“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”* Of course, this was also part of the prophetic word of the Hebrew Scriptures, in such places as Isaiah 11:10 and 42:6. Christ died not only for the Jew, but also for all of Adam's race. The commission to the church included our carrying His gospel to the ends of the earth. No race or nation is excluded from the provision. Not only can men have peace with God through Christ, but we can have peace with one another as well. Remember, peace in Scripture is not just the absence of conflict; it is the presence of harmony. Peace with God is to have a harmonized relationship with the Creator. Do you have that?

RESULTANT UNITY CHRIST PROVIDES

19), 20) Christ has changed the believing Gentile's position. Once he was a stranger, one who was “beside the house;” now he has been made a member of the same family as the believing Jew. We are members of God's household, citizens of heaven. The Jew is our brother and sits at the table with us. The Gentile is welcomed at the table of the Jew. What a difference Jesus makes! The household to which we belong is a new thing. It is built on the foundation that was preached by the prophets and the apostles - that of Jesus Christ. Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 3:11, *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* Jesus is not only the foundation of this building of God, He is also the Chief Cornerstone. The building solidly, eternally rests on His finished work. But it is not yet complete. God is still working on the edifice called the church. Early on it was said that *“the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”* He is still doing that all around the world. We read and hear reports from BBN, Word of Life, Friends of Israel, Rescue Mission ministries, and thousands of local churches that people are being snatched as brands from the burning. We need to be a part of the great ingathering of souls that God is reaping today. Every lost person who dies without Christ is lost forever. Let us do all that we can to bring in the sheaves. God's harvest will not end

until Christ's body is complete.

21) The Holy Spirit is busily working today to call men to Christ, making them "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5) to be used in the building of this spiritual house. The union of these stones is in Jesus, He being the Mortar that holds us together. This building is like a temple, the place where God dwells. And you are part of that building in Him!

22) The Holy Spirit is the builder, we are building blocks, and together we make up a building. Individually we are temples (1 Corinthians 6:19), yet here is a sense in which the family (the body, the building) is a habitation of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). So as individual believers and as corporate bodies, the Bible calls us temples of God - the place where He lives!

Chapter 3

For over 1500 Years, the way into the family of faith in the true God, Yahweh, had been proselytization into the Jewish faith. God was doing a new thing now that startled the Jews who had been the way of entrance to the Gentiles. He was not only taking Gentiles into the family of faith on equal footing with their Jewish counterparts, He was allowing them entrance directly, without becoming a Jew first. The word "mystery" is used here to describe this new thing - not something hard to figure out, but rather something heretofore kept hidden, but now revealed to men. The mission of Peter in Acts 10 and the council of the Jerusalem church in Acts 15 were preparatory for this "Gentile inclusion."

THE MEANING OF THE MYSTERY

THE IMPARTING OF THE MYSTERY

1) This prison epistle (written at about the same time as Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) came from Paul's pen in a time of incarceration. He was bound on account of his desire to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Along with his unswerving declaration of Jesus as the Messiah, it was this insistence on reaching out to non-Jews that aroused the anger of his Jewish opponents. Jesus for the Gentiles - a noble cause for the apostle's suffering.

2), 3) Other versions begin verse 2 with "if." Change that little word "if" to "since," and you will have Paul's meaning. It could be translated "in view of the fact that..." The Ephesians had indeed heard about what Paul was saying. Some very important words are mentioned here: "administration" (elsewhere translated "dispensation"); "mystery;" and "revelation." God had in grace entrusted Paul with the stewardship (the idea in "administration") of a new truth (therefore, a revelation), previously unrevealed (therefore, a mystery). In the following verses, he is going to unfold this mystery, and it will prove to enlarge the family of God by joining Jew and Gentile together. Most of us who trust in Jesus today are Gentiles, wild olive branches grafted into the tree of faith. God's unfolding drama of redemption had included the Jews from Abraham forward, even making them central to His plan. Now the Jewish priority is removed, and the family of the redeemed all come in through Jesus.

THE INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERY

4), 5) To our culture, a "mystery" is something puzzling, something that must be figured out. Here Paul gives a Biblical definition of the word. His words are: *"not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit."* So a Biblical mystery is a newly-revealed truth, not previously known to the people of God. The word "insight" suggests a coming together of things once separated, like two streams making a river. Here it is a growth of understanding. The expression "revealed" has in it the idea of an "unveiling," like a newly-finished sculpture. God had revealed new truth about this new thing called the "church" to the apostle.

6) Further explanation of the mystery comes here. By means of the gospel (defined in 1 Corinthians 15 as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus), Gentile believers in Christ become "co-heirs, co-body-members, and co-partakers of God's promises. For Jew and Gentile to have union with Christ means that they are on equal footing together.

7) Paul here uses the word "*diakonos*" to refer to himself. Clearly he was no more a deacon in a church than was the lady named "Phoebe," of whom the word "*diakonon*" was used in Romans 16. Being such a servant, Paul called salvation a gift of God's grace and a result of God's power working in him. We get our words "energy" and "dynamite" here.

8) What humility is seen here! Elsewhere Paul calls himself the "least of the apostles" and the "chief of sinners." He was always amazed by God's grace in allowing him the privilege of preaching the gospel. What grace is this! Not only saved and on the road to heaven, but called to represent the King of that land while still living here!

9) God created the Jew and the Gentile. He had kept hidden until now that they would be joined together in one body in Christ. Paul, a Jew, who loved to preach to Jews, was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. His job included casting light before all people (Jew and Gentile) on the inclusion of Gentiles into the family of God.

THE INTENT OF THE MYSTERY

10), 11) The "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" are clearly angels - probably good (elect) and bad angels. As Paul preached the gospel and people trusted Christ, God's wisdom was displayed in Jew and Gentile becoming one in Christ. Remember that the Jews were drawn out from among the Gentiles when God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the promised land. Now the two, separated in Abraham, are brought back together in Abraham's greatest Son, Jesus Christ. While this thing was new in its execution, it was old in its origin, for God planned it in eternity past, making it all a part of what He would do through Jesus.

12) Such important concepts are told here - **Freedom**: with plainness of face, and without fear, we move toward God.

Other versions call it **boldness**. **Approach** (elsewhere called **access**) - we may come and speak to the high and holy God. **Confidence** - I know He will receive me, unlike Esther's approach to the king in past times, when she said, **"and if I perish, I perish."**

13) Believers who got a letter from Paul postmarked "Caesar's Prison," could have lost heart over the apparent fate of their hero. The result of their knowing of his sufferings should be glory, not grief! He is not so self-absorbed as to think that he should live in comfort. God's permission to suffer will bring many open doors for Paul (and us).

Paul has already prayed for the Ephesians (1:15 - 23), and here he returns to that Christian privilege of interceding for them. Here he beseeches the Father of our Lord Jesus that the believers in Ephesus may be strengthened in their inner man, which will result in many good things, some of which he lists for us here. The apostle has written of such great truths about who the believer is and what is available to him for living the Christian life. This final section of the doctrinal portion of Ephesians is a prayer for enablement to live out these great truths, without which knowledge of them is useless.

ANOTHER PRECIOUS PAULINE PRAYER **GIFTING FOR THE CHURCH FROM GOD**

14) Paul speaks metaphorically of "bowing his knees," a literary figure here for prayer. **"Before"** the Father suggests an intimate drawing near to God in prayer. The writer to the Hebrews spoke of coming **"boldly before the throne of grace."** One cannot do that unless he is in an intimate family relationship with Him Who sits on that throne! The wonderful spiritual benefits enumerated in chapter two are likely the "reason" referred to here. We are the objects of God's love, and He has made us alive in Jesus. He saved us to do good works, and He brought us near to Jesus. Formerly strangers, we are now fellow citizens and living stones built into the body of Christ! On these bases, Paul prays for us believers.

15) This verse does not teach the universal brotherhood of man - it cannot. We become children of God only through faith in Jesus (Galatians 3:26). Every believer in every age is a member of the same family, whether they are from the pre-flood world, the time of Abraham's seed, the believers under the law of Moses, or, like us, church age saints. Notice our particular name - "Christians" - it has the name of God's Son right in it! As the gospel song says, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God; I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood. Joint heirs with Jesus..." Amen and Amen!

16) The measure of the storehouse from which Paul asks God to heap on us His store is this: "according to the riches of His glory." No meager storehouse, this! If the ocean is the warehouse of the seafood restaurant, the entire universe is God's from which to draw blessings for us! From His limitless storehouse, God can bring all He needs to make us "mighty in power" (for that is the meaning of the words). In the sanctification process the Spirit of God strengthens us, but not in our bodies like physical exercise - He makes us strong where it counts the most: our inner man (by the way, this is not about guys only; here we find the word for "mankind, people").

17) Paul prays that **"Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith."** **"Dwell"** renders a word that is literally "down home!" Is Jesus comfortably "down home" in your heart of hearts? Do the thoughts, words, and actions of your life make Him at ease within you? My oldest grandson related to me recently how two skeptics with whom he worked a few years ago said at his leaving the job that he was a consistent, genuine follower of Christ. What a great testimony that was! Our works can demonstrate our faith - in fact, I'm not sure how else it may be seen. The essence of the Christian life is **"love"** - love for God and love for others. Love is to us what roots are to a tree, or what a foundation is to a building. Are you rooted and grounded in love - the greatest Christian virtue?

18) The word rendered **"comprehend"** here is to "grasp firmly and hold down." All of us who are saints (people separated **to God** and **from the world**) should have a hold on the four dimensions of love. Here they are from Paul and from John:

1. Love's breadth - "For God so loved the world..."
2. Love's length - "that He gave His only begotten Son..."
3. Love's height - "that whosoever believeth in Him..."
4. Love's depth - "should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Again, "you must come in at the door!" And remember, Jesus is the Door!

GLORY FROM THE CHURCH FOR GOD

19) He now prays that we might "experientially know" (not just theoretically) Christ's love. And here is my definition for "love" - **"the decision, followed by action, to pursue the welfare of another, regardless of the cost, and without regard for what may be received in return."** This is God's calvary-love (John 3:16); it is the love required from husbands for wives (Ephesians 5:25). God's peace surpasses comprehension (Philippians 4:7), and Christ's love, though we strive to know it, ultimately surpasses knowledge. We cannot comprehend it, but we may apprehend it.

20), 21) This is a worthy **benediction** (a good word, or a word of blessing). Paul speaks of Jesus here as empowered (or having in Himself the power) to do far more than we can even ask or imagine. Hallelujah, What a Savior! That almighty power of His is working in us (present, middle participle). O, how we should long for clear evidence of that working in our

lives! *"While passing through this world of sin, and others your life may view, be clean and pure without, within, let others see Jesus in you."* Yet is it not for our glory that we labor in this vineyard; it is rather for His! Matthew 5:16 *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* The glory of God should and will be seen in the church and in the Savior throughout all eternity. Yes, we are here, saved and serving, and being sanctified that God might be glorified by all who see.

Chapter 4

GET TOGETHER AND GROW TOGETHER

THE REQUEST FOR UNITY

1) Recall that Paul is writing from incarceration in Rome, and note that part of the basis of his plea is that he is in bonds for Christ. That would make his request hard to deny. "Urge" is "exhort, call you alongside" me. He wants them to walk (there is some latitude for movement here - "walk around") in a manner that brings no shame to their high calling in Christ. There should be a likeness between our calling and our conduct; all else is hypocrisy.

2) Our culture of pride is here blasted by God. Jesus had taught us to be meek and lowly like He was. Pride causes us to be rough with others; humility produces gentleness. "Patience" here is "suffering long." We can take a lot for the sake of Christ and His body. The leading Christian virtue, love, will always enable us to get along better.

3) The great message of Philippians 2 is that corporate unity comes through individual humility. Here Paul asserts that again. The humility of verse 2 enables the unity of vers 3. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be used of God to preserve the peace that the Spirit has made between adversarial parties - i.e. Jew and Gentile.

THE REALITY OF UNITY

4), 5), 6) Here is a blessed statement of Divine Trinity and body (of Christ) unity. Seven **real, spiritual** unities are set forth as a basis for the **practice** of unity among believers. Each Person of the godhead is mentioned here. Christ only has one body, so let's get along in it! He only sent one Spirit, Who indwells us all, so let Him draw us together. There is a common hope for the future that is shared by all believers, so let us work together toward that goal. Jesus alone is our Lord; how can we be divided who all bow to Him? One faith, the body of truth called "Scripture," has been given to us all. It cannot send us in opposite directions. Holy Spirit baptism, which places us all into the body of Christ, and places the Spirit in all of us, is shared alike by us all; that in itself is a unity. There is one "Father God," Who is sovereign and transcendent, and at the same time is immanent, "near at hand," in that He works through us and lives and works in us. With all those unities, **how can we not get along in Christ's body?!**

7) In three New Testament passages, Paul sets forth lists of gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to members of Christ's body (here, Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians 12). The preface to **this list** is that each believer has a gift, and that it is a gift of grace (completely undeserved), and that Christ determined the measure of enabling grace each one has.

8) A victor in war received the spoil of the vanquished, and it was his privilege to disperse some of the spoils to those who warred with him. Christ is the great Victor, and when He conquered sin and death, He carried Old Testament Saints to heaven, and then He gave gifts to men. **He** won the war, and **we** share in His victory.

9), 10) These difficult words may be taken in several ways. 1- Christ descended to earth in His incarnation, and then He ascended to heaven forty days after the resurrection. 2 - The Lord Jesus died and was buried in the earth; He ascended from the grave on Sunday morning. 3 - While His body was in the grave, it appears that the spirit of Jesus went into the Paradise compartment of Hades, after which, when He rose and then ascended, He led the occupants of Paradise into the presence of God in heaven. While all of these are true, it seems that the third view best fits the language of Paul here. Let us avoid dogmatism where we cannot be absolutely certain.

THE RESULTS OF UNITY

11), 12), 13) Jesus gave several categories of gifted people to His newborn church. The first were the apostles, those **"sent with a message,"** those first-century witnesses of Christ who were appointed by Him. Paul was the last to be appointed; John was the last to die. **Prophets** were both fore-tellers and forth-tellers of God's Word. They helped give us the Word of God in the revelations they received and shared. **Evangelists** were and are people gifted with a special ability to reap a harvest of souls for the Lord. Finally, Paul mentions the gift of **"pastor-teacher."** Yes, it is one person, in whom are embodied the companion gifts of pastor (shepherd) and teacher (instructor). The original language makes it clear that this is true. A Pastor must also be a teacher of the Word of God if he is to feed the flock of God as Peter commanded (1 Peter 5:2). These gifted people are to build up the saints in the church to do the work of the ministry - they are not to be hirelings to do all the work themselves. Only when this is done will the body begin to unify in its faith, understanding, and maturity, reaching the measure of grace which Christ intended for us to reach.

14) A lake in a storm sees its water moved at will by the wind. Immature believers can have the same instability in life, tossed about by the winds of false doctrine and by the cunning, crafty schemes of men. A believer who stands on the Word will not be so shaken. Men cannot seduce the person who is rooted and established in Christ!

15) Instead of being the easily swayed infants, these maturing believers will be speaking the truth of God from hearts motivated and strengthened by the leading Christian virtue of love. Christ is our goal: we are to be moving toward Him,

becoming like Him, seeking to please Him, and such will demonstrate maturity in us as saints.

16) With Christ as our Head, we are joined together in all our parts. As the parts each serve as a means of supply for others in this "body life," the individual parts grow, and thus grows the body. Christ intended for us to depend upon Him, but also to have an interdependence on each other. Let us get together and grow together in Him.

IN THE DRESSING ROOM OF GOD

PUT OFF THE OLD RAGS OF SIN

*Dr. Hodge says that verses 17 - 24 convey a general call to holiness, while verses 25 - 32 relate admonitions to specific duties. The former way of life when they were outside the family of faith is how their neighbors still live; they are to be different, separated to God from the world - we call this "**holiness**." The concluding eight verses of the chapter deal with issues like falsehood, anger, thievery, and corrupt speech. In each of these and other areas of life we can show the unbelievers what those who are truly redeemed look like and live like.*

17) The Gentiles were a people without the Law of Moses, the Law of God. Their thinking was empty, to no lasting purpose, and so were the actions that grew out of that twisted way of thought. As new creations in Christ, the Ephesian believers were to abandon that walk - that way of life. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that those who are "in Christ Jesus" were new creations. They were to take off the old man and put on the new!

18) Four negative things Paul lists about the old life of unregenerate Gentiles. They were darkened, alienated, ignorant, and hard of heart. None of these things is irreparable; in Christ darkness is chased away by the light. Those who were far off are brought near in Jesus. Spiritual ignorance is replaced by knowledge of God, and hard hearts are softened by the work of the Spirit in those trusting Jesus. O, the blessedness that comes to those who come to Jesus!

19) Three more negative traits are observed here, along with the interesting ways they developed! "Became" here is to "grow or become" insensible, from which we get our English word "analgesic," which means "a drug that acts to remove pain." The callousness of heart produced an insensibility to dishonor or shame. Second, these Gentile unbelievers have yielded themselves to sensuality, a life driven not by spiritual pursuits but rather by the gratification of the senses. Finally, rather than the avid pursuit of righteousness, they chase after things that are unclean. One only has to look at the media for examples of this, and we see examples that grow more debased with the passing of time.

20) There is a way in Greek grammar to emphasize a word without raising your voice, or bolding, or italics, or exclamation mark on the printed page. Paul uses such a device here to emphasize the word "**YOU**." This is no doubt to emphasize the contrast between their unregenerate neighbors and themselves since they are now in Christ. The way they had "learned Christ" was very different from their past! As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*Old things have passed away, new things have come!*" Their knowledge of Christ had led them to live very different lives from those outside the family of faith. It is important to "know Christ," to "learn Christ," to "preach Christ" - not just know about Him, learn about Him, and preach about Him. This is a relationship with a Person! And only this relationship fits us for heaven.

21) One of my favorite speakers from Bible College days was the Canadian, Dr. Walter Hughes. He was often known to say that "you cannot think right in the rest unless you think right in Him (Jesus)." What a powerful statement! The Ephesians had been blessed to hear about Jesus and to be taught "in Him." The truth about life is in Jesus; He proclaimed Himself to be "**the Way, the Truth, and the Life...**" There is no life outside of Jesus; you must come through Him!

22) Two parts of the process of sanctification are "taking off" and "putting on." The old man in Adam is weak, dead, corrupt, and utterly sinful. While we are stuck with him until Jesus comes or until we die, we can reckon him dead, throw his old rags in the corner, and not give in to his desires.

23) Having thrown off the old clothes, denying their defiling claim on us, we must then get a good bath! "Be renewed" is a passive verb - it is the work of God to cleanse us. He cleanses us initially when we are saved, and we no longer face condemnation. He then cleanses us day by day as we confess our sins to him, avoiding a breach in fellowship. The relationship is by grace through faith and cannot change. The fellowship depends upon our daily walk, including the confession of our sins.

24) Having "*put off the old man*," and having been cleansed by the Spirit, we now are admonished to "*put on the new man*." This new man is a permanent possession, a gift from God given without repentance (God will not take back this gift). As the old man was corrupt and deceitful, the new man in Christ is righteous and holy. We are **declared righteous** in justification, and we are **made righteous** in sanctification. In the beginning, God made us after His image and likeness; in this new beginning, He does that again, making us over in the image of His Son, Jesus.

PUT ON THE NEW GARMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

25) When we have "put off" the old rags of falsehood, we are now commanded to "speak the truth" with those around us. Truth is that which agrees with reality, and we who are all parts of the same body (of Christ) should be authentic with one another. This first-mentioned article of clothing fits well the believer in Jesus, Who Himself was the Truth! The present tense of the imperative means that we are to "keep on speaking the truth," and we do it in love (Ephesians 4:15).

26) Two commands here are both in the progressive present tense. It is not wrong to be made to be angry by certain things we encounter - Jesus certainly displayed anger in the Temple, anger at what religious leaders had allowed to take

place there. While righteousness of heart can lead to anger at sin, we must not stoop to enter into sin ourselves and blame it on righteous indignation. We are commanded to “keep on not sinning,” and Paul even gives a third command - that we should settle matters of anger before bedtime, not letting the sun go down while we are still stirred in our spirits. There is a connection here with Psalm 4:4, “*Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.*” It may be that unresolved anger will impede a good night’s rest.

27) Neither are we to step aside and make room for Satan to work. “Anger, when cherished, gives the Tempter great power over us...” Charles Hodge). We must be alert to our weaknesses and not allow the devil (diabolos) to get a foothold. It is of no use to say, “I couldn’t help what I did; I was angry!” We must control our anger, not the reverse.

28) My father-in-law spent the bulk of his adult Christian life ministering to men in a homeless shelter. This verse challenged him to help them change their lives. There are two commands here: “Let the thief stop stealing,” and “Let him pursue honest labor.” The positive result can be that rather than taking from others what is theirs, he may share with others what is his, especially when they are in need. The word “thief” comes from a Greek word that gives us our English “clepto-” words, expressions having to do with taking unlawfully from others. This should not be so for us Christians.

29) Here is a command about our speech. He forbids “rotten speech” from exiting our mouths. Gossip is a prime example of such talking - it harms the one who speaks, the hearer, and the one spoken about. The idea of decay is found in the word “corrupt.” Putrid speech tears down, whereas good speech builds up; may our speech be edifying as it builds others up rather than tearing them down. O, that our words may be few and fitting, ministering grace to those who hear us. Proverbs 25:11, “*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*”

30) Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit in our lives to many purposes. One of those is to quicken our conscience to recognize (not rationalize) when we sin. He “convicts” us, and we can then confess and turn from our sins. If we do not, then we risk “grieving” Him Whose design is to make us holy. Here we are commanded to not grieve the Holy Spirit; which command is for our benefit. As the moneychangers profaned the Temple of Yahweh, so corrupt speech (and any other sins) will profane us as temples of the Spirit. By placing His Spirit within us, God set His seal upon us, and we are His, kept by the Spirit for the day when our sin nature drops off and we are glorified, made like Jesus physically.

31) Here Paul reverts to the earlier idea of “putting off” the old man. This passive command means that God does the work and that we must allow Him to so do. While He is the Sanctifier, He requires our participation for the process to work. Six more things he says we must allow to be put off from us, to be removed from our lives. **Bitterness** is a disposition that is ready to wound another, likely with a sharp word. **Anger** is the trigger that will release the dart to the hurt of another. **Wrath** is that burning in the heart, that settled indignation that may explode at any time. **Clamor** comes when we can be silent in our fury no longer, and we scream at those who are objects of our wrath. **Slander** translates the Greek word that yields our English expression “blaspheme.” It is to speak against another, when we should be blessing with our tongues (4:29 above). Finally, **malice** is to be put away. Malice is a perverse disposition that delights in injuring someone with our words - it is “badness, “wickedness.” And as one of six disposable behaviors, is to be put away.

32) As the Holy Spirit works in us, we can become all that God wants us to be, and He commands that here. He desires and designs that we be **kind**. Herein is the idea of disposition to do good, even (if not especially) to those who do us wrong (this makes us like our Master, Luke 6:35). **Tenderhearted** suggests compassion, our hearts “going out” to others less fortunate than are we. As God in Christ has forgiven us, we are to be **forgiving** to others. We, too, must put away wrongs done us and move forward, best done when the wrongdoer seeks our forgiveness.

Chapter 5

Becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus puts us under obligation to alter our walk from the unacceptable behaviors of the past to new patterns of life that suit our new position in Christ. And these changes must come not only in the overt and therefore obvious things we do, but they must also positively affect the less noticeable but no less damaging things we say and do - damaging to our testimony and thereby to Christ’s reputation. These changes wrought in us by the Spirit of God will affect every area of our living - in the home, in the workplace, and wherever else our paths lead.

SOCIETY, SPOUSES, & SONS

HIGHWAY TO HOLINESS

1), 2) A command from the apostle is to “mimic” God - to look like Him, to act like Him. This is necessary because we are children born into His family and we should bear His likeness. It is now possible to do that because His Spirit lives within us. Another imperative is to keep on walking around in love; Christ has set the example for us in willingly going to the cross to die for unlovely sinners. His death was an acceptable sacrifice to God, a great pattern for us.

3) Not only should our lives be characterized by love, but they must also show forth holiness. Some think a “little sin” is an acceptable measure; Paul forbids even a “hint” of sin for the believer. Three sins he singles out: sexual sins (which are selfish, not loving), uncleanness, and greed (which again contradicts love - “what’s in it for me, not you”).

4) Next Paul addresses the matter of our speech. Three types of speech are forbidden: shameful talk, foolish talk, and vulgar talk. One type of speech is encouraged: the giving of thanks - which honors God and blesses men. O, that we might earnestly pray the Psalmist’s prayer, Psalm 141:3, “*Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!*”

5) He goes back to the sins of verse 3, and he assures us that the person whose life is characterized by these things is not a believer, and therefore will not share in God's kingdom. He defines greed as idolatry, much like covetousness (Colossians 3:5). Sexual immorality, uncleanness (impurity), and covetousness are marks of the pagans in this world. These things should not be part of the life of one who is "called out" of this world unto Christ.

6) This command is to reject the deception of "empty words," words that lack truth and are void of content. The character and behavior of the pagans show that not only will one be excluded from the kingdom, but also that the unthinkable alternative is theirs - to experience the wrath of God! They are not children of God, but rather "sons of disobedience." Believers must by faith learn and practice obedience to the Master.

7) Paul commands a refusal to "become partners" with those sons of disobedience. This can entail many areas of life, and we must choose our close associates wisely, selecting those who will lift us up and not drag us down. As he wrote to the Corinthians, *"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?... Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you"* (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17).

8) For the believer in Jesus, the darkness is past, and we are now in the light; therefore he commands us to keep on walking in the light. Jesus said (John 8:12) that He was *"the Light of the world,"* and He called us (Matthew 5:14) *"the light of the world."* He can shine through us to this world better if we keep the globe of our lamp clean! The soot of sin will impede the shining that can change lives through the gospel.

9) Goodness, righteousness, and truth are fruits of the light. Light is necessary to life, and living things should bear fruit. So as we walk in the light, these virtues develop in our lives. We can therefore expect to see benevolence ("good will") flowing from us. We will find ourselves adhering to the rules of what is right (in God's eyes). Falsehood will fall away from us, and our lips will speak only truth, because our hearts are fixed on the truth of God.

10) What will become of utmost importance to us as we walk in the light is that we are pleasing to the Lord. We err greatly when we try to please the world; rather we should remember that *"When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him"* (Proverbs 16:7). A behavior is acceptable to the Lord when it reflects the values He has set forth in Scripture, as well as the pattern He lived before us as recorded in the gospels.

HEALING POWER OF LIGHT

11) Two imperative verbs yield two commands here. We are to have no fellowship with the works of darkness, because they are unfruitful! Are there things you feel you must do behind closed doors or in the darkness? Those things must go! If they cannot stand the test of light, they are not worthy of Him who called us from darkness into light! When the lights come on, the rats scurry for cover; they cannot stand being seen. So it is with the works of moral darkness; when we bring light into the room, our brothers in Christ can be convinced of wrong behaviors. Those sins, confessed, can be forgiven, and cleansing can come.

12) Works of darkness, sins, spring from the darkness of not knowing God, and they are so often done under the cover of darkness - thus twice the works of darkness. The vileness of some things mandates they be spoken of as little as possible. Exposure to wickedness can have the effect of normalizing it, making it more nearly acceptable to the weak minds. We do not well to hang out dirty laundry in public - the sphere of a sin's offense should determine the sphere of its confession. Let us not inadvertently educate the weak and young about things they need not know.

13) Light is necessary for sight; thus, in the dark things may remain hidden. God's Word brings light, and it helps us see when something is sinful. If you want to know the morality of something, compare it with Scripture, not with values of society or the ever-changing norms of the day. When a believer enters a social setting, their presence should lift the conversation to a new high, especially if that conversation was lowly or vulgar. We should be salt and light in the world.

14) Again, any issue should be examined in the light of Scripture to determine its rightness or wrongness. The light of God's Word will make things clear for all to see. Any one or all of several Isaiah passages may be referenced here. The prophet often called upon the lethargic nation to awaken to truth - Isaiah 51:17, 52:1, 60:1. For believers who have wandered into the darkness, turning away from the path of sin that leads to death is the only remedy. Otherwise, church discipline should and hopefully would be called for.

15), 16) Walking is often used in the Scriptures to speak of living for Christ. Whether these folks are commanded to "look carefully" or urged to look that they "walk carefully," in either case this matter deserves much care! Those who are careless about their Christian walk are "unwise" (some might say "foolish"), and we are to practice wisdom in our walk. "Redeeming" ("making the best use") of the time is critical because we live in evil days. That was true in the first century, and it is certainly true today! Paul thought the time was short to get God's work done then; it is certainly shorter now!

17) A negative command (do not be foolish) is followed by a positive one (understand the Lord's will). God's will is revealed in His Word, and the Bible-taught Christian is the one who best understands what that will is. I have spent the last 62 years of my life studying the Scriptures, and I find the well is deeper than my bucket has ever reached. The more I learn, the more I learn there is to learn. Let us keep on studying this blessed Book, learning more about our great Savior!

HELP FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

18), 19), 20) Believers are forbidden to be drunkards, getting high on artificial stimulants. These lead to waste, riot,

excess, dissolution, and incorrigibility. Rather be controlled by the Holy Spirit, which will lead to better behavior. Holy Spirit-control of a life has positive traits, some of which are mentioned here: our music is honorable to God and helpful to one another (quite unlike much of the world's music). We sing to each other and unto the Lord from our hearts. When the Holy Spirit controls us, we also have a spirit of uninterrupted gratitude to God for the things He brings into our lives. While difficult, this is made possible through our Lord Jesus Christ.

HOW TO HAVE A BLESSED HOME

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBMISSION IN THE HOME

21) It is unnatural (it goes against our old nature) to place ourselves under the authority of someone else. We each like to be in charge of our own lives. We need help from above to follow this precept (the participle "*submitting*" or "*being subject*" follows an imperative verb, and it carries the force of a command). Proper respect for Christ will help us submit to each other. While we learn below that the husband is the head of the wife, this is also a challenge for mutual submission.

22) The discussion about the Spirit-filled life moves into a very basic arena - the home! Here Christianity has its finest testing ground. A wife's submission to Christ is mirrored in her submission to her husband. Don't mistake this for weakness, and husbands, don't think it's your job to make her submit - it must be a willing submission. This is seen by some as chauvinistic, coming from a male-dominant mindset. The reality is that nowhere in the world is woman held in higher esteem or afforded a better life than where the Christian gospel has gone. Submission does not imply or admit inferiority; it is necessary in any relationship to have a divinely given order.

23) Paul likens the marriage relationship to that of Christ and His church. A relationship can have only one head, and God decreed it would be the man (He made man first, and then the woman for him). Man does not have superiority, but rather positional priority. This is the divine order, established by God; it is in no way demeaning to woman. Any Spirit-controlled wife will willingly submit to the spiritual leadership of her God-given marriage partner.

24) He takes the comparison a step further: as the church submits to Christ, so wives should to their husbands, in all things. This is a middle voice verb - she does it for herself. She benefits as she submits joyfully and voluntarily. This will not be difficult for the wife of a man who treats her after the pattern of Christ caring for the church. When a wife usurps the God-given authority of her husband, she violates Scripture, demonstrating carnality.

THE POWER OF LOVE IN THE HOME

25) The husband is commanded to seek the highest good for his wife - following the pattern of Christ's cross-love. The husband is no "boss, master, tyrant, or despot." He is rather a sacrificial lover. The "submit-love" relationship is a key to a harmonious marriage. The man chooses to love; the woman chooses to submit. Yet she is no doormat. Righteous love from a godly man cultivates submission in the life of a Spirit-led, godly woman.

26), 27) These two verses are less about the man-woman relationship, and more about the relationship between Christ and His church. Two purposes of Calvary are related: (1) to make the church holy - cleansing His bride by His Word makes her ready to be wed. The washing of regeneration is by faith; the Word is a tool for life-cleansing. See Psalm 119:9, 11, where the Psalmist speaks of "cleansing his way" and "not sinning against God" because of the Word in his life. The second purpose is that He might present her to himself radiant, holy, and unblemished. My father-in-law presented his daughter to me on our wedding day as a chaste and pure bride and wife. When this bride (the church) comes to her Groom (Christ), it will be in radiant glory, without stain of world or wrinkles of the flesh. She shall indeed be dressed in white, speaking of the purity He has imparted to her, His beloved one - the church - us!

28) Scripture declares that in marriage, man and woman become one flesh. He is part of her, and she is part of him. Whatever a man therefore does to his wife, he does to himself. If he loves her, he loves himself; if he harms her, he harms himself. To grasp this principle will forever change how a couple behave toward each other. To receive our mate as a gift from God, Who never gives bad gifts, radically affects how we deal with them in life.

29), 30) Man should treat his wife as he would his own body - feeding, giving care, as Christ does for the church. The pastoral care of the church by Christ is a pattern for the Christian husband's care for his wife. Why does Christ care for church? Because we are part of Him, we are His body, of which He is the Head. He first acted in condescension, loving us while we were yet sinners. Now He loves us as a part of him, members of his body, the Church! In the words of a song my wife and I used to occasionally sing, "O, what love; O, what love! Evermore I'll sing it, O, what love!" Husbands, let us take a page from Christ's book and love our wives with sacrificial, selfless love. This is God's will for us husbands, and the response of our wives in the Spirit will be to obey God's Word and submit to our spiritual headship. God's design in the home makes us each the better.

PROPRIETY OF LEAVING OUR HOMES (WHEN WE MARRY)

31) Marital union makes separation from the home of one's nativity necessary. Quoting Moses in Genesis 2:24, and Jesus in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7, 8, the apostle requires that a married couple become independent of their former homes. Those homes were God's plan for our temporary completion until He brought our "other half" to complete us permanently. Many marriages struggle, or fail, because there is not the necessary separation.

32) Paul explains the mysterious, mystic union of Christ (the Head) and the church (His body). It is vital that we leave,

cleave, submit to, love, and protect our mates. This will reflect well on the marital picture of the Christ-church union. To fail here is to “break the picture” that God has painted in the home of Christ and His Church.

33) He reaches this conclusion about marriage: the husband must keep on loving his wife; and the wife must reverence her husband. These are mutually important responsibilities of mates to each other. He must love her. She must reverence him. This is not a fear of intimidation, but rather, “I’m afraid I won’t please him who loves me so!” Blessed is the home where the husband shows “Christ-love” and the wife shows “church-submission.”

Chapter 6

The opening nine verses of chapter 6 are of similar subject matter as chapter 5. The break seem unnatural. In these verses Paul continues to discuss societal relations, first in the home (children and parents), and then in the workplace (masters and servants), the two places where we spend so much of our lives. He then summarizes by reminding us we are in spiritual warfare (wrestling, armor, weapons), and telling us how to be best equipped to win in the fray.

SOCIETAL RELATIONS

REQUIREMENTS IN THE HOME

1) Good parent-child relations require Spirit-controlled lives. Submission of children to the will of their parents is the clear command of God. This is what God wants, and for this reason it is right. The idea of children not respecting and obeying their parents is foreign to Scripture, but it is prevalent in our increasingly godless society. Children who do not obey their parents will likely disrespect other authority as life unfolds.

2), 3) Paul quotes from Exodus 20, the fifth commandment, which serves as a transitional bridge from man’s responsibility to God to his duty to other men. For children this is a priority commandment. If children learn to honor their parents, they will be more likely to submit to God’s claims on their lives when the time comes. This command carries with it a promise of longevity: a good and long life to those who are obedient. This could be (1) the blessing of God, (2) such self-discipline bringing an ordered, stable life, (3) obedient children were not stoned for being incorrigible. Eli’s sons mocked God’s promise and died. David’s son, Absalom, was undisciplined, and he perished.

4) The family’s governmental head is charged with the responsibility of proper discipline. Dad, don’t exasperate, provoke to anger, your children by (1) favoritism, (2) petty rules, (3) unreasonable demands, etc. Rather nourish their lives by proper, loving discipline and instruction. Obedience in the Lord best follows instruction in the Lord.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

It was not apparently God’s design that Scripture should address and correct all societal ills. Principles that believers follow from the Word will lead them to work for a better society where they live. The prime movers in ending the slave trade were God’s people - like Harriet Beecher Stowe in the U.S. and William Wilberforce in England. Their efforts were prompted by their Scriptural understanding of what was right! Slavery is a wicked human institution that sadly still exists in some places. This passage will guide those in that system to live well in their respective roles. It can also apply to those who are in the labor force, aiding them in demonstrating Christ well in their roles as employer and employee.

5) One who belongs to another, or that person who sells a portion of their time in employment to another, are addressed here. The slave or employee is to obey their “earthly master.” “Obey” is a compound word that suggests “hearing” and submission (“placing ourselves ‘under’ another”). This is a matter of submission of one’s will to the authority of another who is over them. Notice that Paul does not stop with the function, but he goes on to address the matter of the heart in exercising our responsibility. Obedience is to be done with fear (respect for negative results of disobedience) and trembling. Authority is to be respected by the believer. Our hearts cannot be at their best with God when we are “chafing at the bit” of fleshly authority. As we are to Christ in the spiritual realm, so should we be to those in authority in the earthly realm. The idea in the last phrase is well-rendered in the KJV as “singleness of heart.” We should serve our earthly leaders without hypocrisy or deceit. When they pay for it, our time is theirs, and we must respect that as unto the Lord.

6) Our labor should not be designed to and directed by an effort to “catch the eye” of our employer (or master, for the slave). As discussed earlier in this work (at 5:10), our primary goal is to please Christ. In so doing, our “earthly overlords” cannot be displeased with us. Our labor “on the job” should be as diligent away from the master’s eye as when he is watching, for our heavenly “Master” always sees our actions (and our hearts!). My Savior entered this realm as a Servant (Philippians 2:5 - 8), acted as a Servant (John 13), and He said that He came “not to be served, but to serve...” (Mark 10:45). Surely it is right then for me to be a servant as well. The better I serve, the more I am like Jesus. Moreover, this is “the will of God” for me, which should be done “from the heart.”

7) It should not be a grievous burden for us to render service to those to whom we owe it. Rather, with a “good mind” we should serve. Charles Hodge wrote, “Those invested with lawful authority are the representatives of God.” Our service to them should be as our service to the Lord - this is the character of our obedience. We are first children of and servants of the Lord, then our relationships with and service to people will be in their proper order, from a “good mind.” It is the fear of the Lord that drives our service, not the fear of negative consequences imposed by man.

8) In the Lord there is no “bond or free.” We are only His children, born into His family, through faith in Jesus. So the one who is free on the earth has the same obligation to obey their heavenly Father as does the one who is an earthly servant. The smile of God on our lives, the prospect of heavenly reward from Him, these are the things that drive us more than a

paycheck for an employee or fear of a beating for poor performance by a slave. When we arrive at heaven, all these earthly distinctions will have disappeared, and the issue will be our obedience to the will of our heavenly Master.

9) For a believing master of slaves or employer of workers, there is no place for highhanded, authoritarian managing of people. It is not just slaves and employees who have duties; masters/employers who believe are also responsible for right behavior in the workplace relationships. Earthly masters have a heavenly Master, too, and He must be obeyed by them. The treatment of underlings by believing masters is to please the Lord, just as is the service of those underlings. Threats are intended to be negative inducements to a desired behavior. Positive encouragements are much more to be desired and displayed by those in charge. The master has a Monitor, and the servant has Defender. The Lord will not give preference to the earthly master because of his "position," nor to the servant because of his "obligation." God is absolutely impartial in His dealings with people, as Scripture so frequently asserts (Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Colossians 3:25).

WE ARE ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE, THEREFORE WE MUST GET DRESSED FOR BATTLE!

The apostle Paul sits chained to a Roman guard 24 hours a day. The soldier is from the elite Roman troops known as the Praetorian Guard. As he writes to his dear friends in Ephesus, he pauses to contemplate the spiritual battles of the Christian life. He looks beside him at this well-armed and armed guard, and begins to see parallels between his battle gear and the spiritual armor of the believer. The Holy Spirit stirs him to bless us with the following comparisons

PREPARE FOR ADVERSITY

10) "Finally" means he is about to close the letter. He commands the Ephesians to receive their power for the conflict from God. How vital it is that we go not against our considerable foes (world, flesh, and devil) in our own strength! Even our Lord spent 40 days in prayer to God before He took on Satan in the wilderness.

11) Taking to ourselves the full armor of God, the *panoply*, as it is in Greek, will equip us to firmly, safely, victoriously stand against the schemes (here we get our word, "methods") of the Devil. Do some fall in the fray because they do not properly prepare themselves for battle? An adversary like Satan calls for armor such as this.

12) There is a covert army of spiritual adversaries that operates in this present age. We are literally at war, but not with things tangible or even always visible. But they are real nonetheless. "Rulers, authorities, powers, forces of darkness" describe things that oppose God and us. This is a battleground, not a playground we are in.

13) This is urgent business we find ourselves engaged in. We must prepare the defenses! Put on the armor quickly, completely! In our pursuit of souls, in executing the will of God, we are on a collision course with Satan. Armor will allow us to stand, and be standing in the end! The day and the enemy are evil; but we will win.

PUT ON THE ARMOR

14) Truth and righteousness are the first pieces of armor mentioned. Truth is seen as a belt, gathering up the loose flowing robes for ease of movement. Righteousness forms a protective covering for the thoracic (Greek) area, housing the heart and lungs - vital organs indeed. God's Word is truth; and righteousness is imputed to us from Christ.

15) Our feet should be shod with preparedness, readiness, which comes from the gospel of peace - a Christian soldier's movement in advance and firmness in defense depends upon footwear derived from the Gospel that brings peace. Satan has declared war, but we are sharing Christ to advance peace - peace with God and the peace of God.

16) Essential in combat is the shield of faith - it wards off the burning missiles of Satan called temptation. When we trust God, we will not follow Satan's seductions. This is not a coward's cover, but a protective barrier of confidence in God. Exercising faith in conflict takes the fire out of Satan's torches. This is a defensive implement of war.

17) Two very welcome helps in battle are the helmet and the sword. Salvation places a protective barrier "around the head," where death blows could fall. God's Word is our offensive weapon, our two-edged sword. With it we may cut through lies, temptations, and other attempts of Satan to seduce us. The Book will keep us from sin.

PRAY FOR ALL

18) One very important factor in warfare is communication. If the lines are cut, location is lost, supplies are held up, and reinforcements are delayed, perhaps at crucial times. The Christian soldier must be watchful (staying awake) in prayer, making request for his own needs and interceding with God for the needs of other saints.

19), 20) Paul asks, in addition to general prayer for all saints, specific prayer for himself. He is in Rome as a prisoner because of the gospel. The Romans saw Christianity as a sect of Judaism; the Jews felt it was a heretical teaching. It was neither, but rather a new revelation from God, a new relationship between two formerly separate groups, who at times were even adversarial toward one another. If he must defend before Caesar this new thing of Jew and Gentile joined in one body, or if God gave him opportunities to preach the gospel to sinners, he wanted to have the plainness of speech that comes from confidence in God and in the gospel.

PEACE FOR THE ANXIOUS

21), 22) For Paul to deprive himself (while in the custody of Rome) of the company and aid of a beloved brother and fellow-minister like Tychicus meant that he saw a great need in Ephesus. What confidence Paul must have had in the pastoral ability of Tychicus to help the Ephesians by allaying their fears for the circumstances in which they knew the apostle to be. The hearts of the Ephesians were no doubt troubled concerning Paul (Ephesians 3:13 makes this clear),

and he wished for Tychicus to go and tell them all about how he was doing so that they might be encouraged. Always thinking about others, even when he himself was in Jail! Paul was so very Christlike.

23), 24) This benediction contains mention of four great Christian words. Paul mentions them often, and always in connection with God and Christ. They are: “**grace**,” the unmerited favor of God that is the source of all good things; “**peace**,” a harmonized relationship with God and life's circumstances that comes because we are right with God; “**faith**,” the reliance upon God that His Word is true and His promises will be kept; and “**love**,” the decision to seek the welfare of another, regardless of cost, and whether we get anything in return or not. He then speaks of turning our love toward the Lord Jesus Christ with an undying fervor. Now we are dressed for battle!