

## EPHESIANS - Introduction

October 12, 2002

The book of Acts tells us that the Apostle Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey. See Acts 18:19-21. He returned there on his third missionary journey. For this read Acts 20:17-38. But he wrote to the Ephesian church later from his imprisonment in Rome. This was one of the so-called *Prison Epistles* which were Philippians, Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians. This was very likely in the early 60's A.D., probably 62 or 63.

It is very similar to the Colossian epistle, but not as polemical (argumentative and defensive) as Colossians which was concerned with the Gnostic heresies.

Ephesus was a very important center, and became the capital of the Roman province of Asia, headed by a governor. This is the territory that is occupied today by Turkey.

During Paul's days the work in Ephesus was thriving, but it was the center of worship for the goddess Diana. But when we come to our Lord's letter to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:1-7, the decline and ultimate end of the church in Ephesus did not come primarily from doctrinal error (although that was involved), but through a growing lack of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. This ought to be a solemn warning to us because it undoubtedly has been the cause of the destruction of many churches throughout the history of the church. It is possible for churches to be doctrinal sound, but spiritually dying.

A lot has been written about Ephesus in the commentaries, but I am going to leave in introduction at this point to go on to the exposition of the epistle.

The first point in the outline is:

I. The Apostle Paul's greeting (Eph. 1:1-2).

1:1 The Apostle Paul's name originally was Saul, Saul of Tarsus. See Acts 13:19 for the last time in Scripture he was referred to as Saul. See also Acts 9:11. We don't really know what his name was change, or who changed it – just that it was changed. Saul was a Jewish name; Paul, a Roman. Paul means "little." It was not uncommon for men to change their names in those days, but why it was changed with Paul remains unknown. One thing we can say is that it marked a real change in his life.

"An apostle of Jesus Christ" – Although he had not been with the original twelve, yet he was an apostle, one of the qualifications being that he had to be a man who had seen the Lord. After the Lord returned to Jerusalem after he had been in Damascus, the believers in Jerusalem knew about him and were suspicious of him. But it was Barnabas who assured them about the change that had taken place in Saul's life. And we read this in Acts 9:27:

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Later when Paul was writing to the Corinthians where his apostleship had been questioned, we read that the Paul Lord said this which we find in 1 Corinthians 9:1-2:

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Now when Paul claimed to be an apostle, he was boasting about it. He was expressing the authority that he had received from the Lord to write what he had written in his letter to them in Ephesus, and which was to be circulated among the neighboring churches which explains why the words “at Ephesus” are not found in some of the MSS of this epistle. It contained a special revelation given to Paul which needed divine authority for it to be received. And his authority was twofold:

1) “Of Jesus Christ” through Whom he had been chosen and called.

2) “By the will of God.”

He had been commissioned by God to be a personal representative of “Jesus Christ.” There can be no higher credentials than these.

But to whom was Paul called to be “an apostle.” It was “to the saints which are at Ephesus.” Now we know that the emphasis here is not upon Ephesus. If that were the case, then the epistle would only be of historic value to us, and not for our personal attention as to what we are to believe, and how we are to live. Generally the people of God today are called Christians. And that is a good name. But “Christian” or “Christians” are mentioned only three times in the NT, *but according to the concordance in my computer, the people of God are called “saints” sixty-two times in the NT.* What are saints? First of all, they are people. Secondly, they are special people especially to God. That are holy people. The word “holy” basically means a separated people. They are people who have been set apart for God, people who have experienced the transforming power of the God in their lives, people who have been saved from the penalty of their sins by faith in the death of Jesus Christ, and people who have been saved from the power and dominion of sin. Are they perfect? No, but by the grace of God they are headed for perfection. And this epistle is one of sixty-six documents in the Bible which have been given to us by the Holy Spirit to tell us what we need to know and to believe, and how we are to live, if we are to be saints not only in name, but in fact. And we are called saints in the Bible because that is what we are now, but God’s work in us, while it is guaranteed, will not be completed until we see the Lord. See 1 John 3:1-3; Romans 8:28-30. *And we have the same wonderful truth right here in Ephesians 1 – in verses 3 through 14.*

But the Apostle Paul not only called the people of God “saints,” but he called them “faithful in Christ Jesus.” Well, faithful people are people who believe what they are supposed to believe, and who do what they are supposed to do. Where do we learn what we are supposed to believe? We learn it in the Bible. Where do we learn what we are supposed to do, or, to put it another way, where do we learn how we are supposed to learn? We find these instructions, actually, commandments, in the same place – in the Bible. Then the Bible becomes a very, very important book to us, doesn’t it? It certainly is! But those of us who know the Lord have to confess that we are not always faithful. We want to be, but we often fail. But here the Apostle Paul states a truth which brings holiness and faithfulness into the realm of possibility for us. And they are the words “in Christ Jesus.” What do they mean?

They mean that when we were saved, when we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, the Lord Jesus came to live in us. And this is the way God the Father sees us; we are “in Christ Jesus,” and Jesus Christ is in us! We can believe that we can be holy here on earth, and that we can be faithful to God here on earth, because the Lord is our life. Now I don’t want to be mistaken on these points. We are never going to be perfect in this life, but by trusting the Lord Who has not only come to live with us, but in us, as we grow in our knowledge of the Word of God, and in our knowledge of the Son of God, even though we often fail, yet the Lord Jesus is going to see to it that day by day we are becoming more holy and more faithful.

Now God saved Saul of Tarsus, and made him Paul the Apostle, not only to give us this good news that we have in verse 1, but the Lord Jesus gave this same good news to Paul for himself, as well as for us. Isn’t wonderful to see how much the Spirit of God has packed into this one verse! We need to talk about these things, and make sure that other Christians know about all of this too. But before I go on with you to verse 2 of

Ephesians 1, I want to ask you to turn with me to another letter that Paul wrote from prison at the same time that he wrote Ephesians. You will find it in your Bible just after Ephesians; it is the book of Philippians. It, too, was written while Paul was in prison in Rome. It is a very happy letter. Even though Paul was under arrest and didn't know how all of that was going to turn out, he wrote to the church in Philippi telling them that they ought to be rejoicing all of the time.

But before I show you what I want to read to you, I want to tell you a little bit about Paul before he became a Christian. He was a Jew and he knew a lot about what was written in the OT, but he had the idea that if you were a Jew, that gave you a better chance with God than you would if you were a Gentile. And he also had the idea that most Jewish people had, that getting right with God depended not upon what God would do for him, but what he needed to do for God. And so he had devoted his life to punishing Gentile Christians as well as any Jews who had become Christians. But as he was going from Jerusalem up north to Damascus, he had papers from Jewish leaders making it legal for him to bring Christians back to Jerusalem in chains for no other crime than that they were trusting in Jesus Christ.

But then the Lord appeared to him in a very miraculous way, and his heart was completely changed! He saw that he had been on the wrong track all of his life. He had even watched coats of a group of Jews while they stoned Stephen to death. But the Lord Jesus Christ showed him that a right relationship with God is not based upon we do for Him, but what God and Jesus Christ do for us. And right away his OT came to life to him, and he began to preach what he had previously tried to destroy. He suddenly realized that the Jesus he had hated was actually the Messiah that the Jews were looking for, and he began to preach the faith which he once hoped to destroy completely.

Now I want you to see what he wrote to the church at Philippi about his change. Turn to the third chapter of Philippians. In verse 3 we read how the Lord had changed him. Then in verse 4 he begins to tell how he used to glory in who he was, and what he had done UNTIL Jesus Christ met him on the road to Damascus and changed him completely. (Read down through verse 14 if time permits.)

But now let us look at the last part of his greeting in verse 2 of Ephesians 1.

1:2 What did Paul need, and what do you and I need, in order to become more saintly, more holy, and more faithful? We need "grace," and we need "peace." Where do we find them? They are gifts, daily gifts, "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Now when Paul said, "our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, he was saying that you are going to find "grace . . . peace" from the same Persons that I find them. "From God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." If holiness and faithfulness were to come from us, we would never make it! But they don't come from us; they come from God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and may I add, from the Holy Spirit.

We are saved by grace. Paul is going to remind us of this when we get to chapter 2, verses 8 and 9. (Quote.) This means that instead of giving us what we deserve, the Members of the Godhead give us what we don't deserve. We deserve death, eternal death. We deserve hell. But instead by grace we through faith in Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross, get life, eternal life. But after we are saved we continue to need the grace of God and the peace of God. Grace not only means undeserved favor, but it means power, the power to transform a hopeless sinner into a holy saint. After Paul became a child of God through faith in Christ, he realized how weak and helpless he was in himself. But he also realized that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. You and I need the grace of God today as much as we ever have. And the wonderful thing about God's grace and God's peace is that they are both inexhaustible!

Now the verses that immediately follow, show us that the riches we have in Christ, make it absolutely certain

that the work God started for us before the foundation of the world, before creation, is most certainly going to be fulfilled because, while we have responsibilities in the Christ life, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are united in assuring us that our salvation will be completed, and to them belongs all of the glory.

October 18, 2010

Bishop Moule of England, whose name you may hear many times as we go through this epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, imagined that when the reading this epistle for the first time to the saints at Ephesus, paused after he completed reading the first two verses (or what to us are the first two verses), so amazed was he at the amazing truth contained in those verses. Maybe they had heard them before, or words like them, but as we saw last week they contain words of truth which go far beyond what those “saints” (as Paul called them) could possibly have imagined when they heard the truth of the Gospel for the first time. In these two short verses God is mentioned twice, the Lord Jesus is mentioned twice, and they were referred to by two words which they would know that they could only claim by the grace of God, “saints” and “faithful.” And they knew that Paul’s words were true because they had come to him from “Paul” who was “an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps we need to take a fresh look at these words because they all apply to those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. They are worth our meditation until something of the majesty and glory of such words, fill our hearts with amazement as well. They all knew too well that they had not deserved such words, nor even then did they deserve such words. They knew what they were before they had heard and believed the Gospel. It all seemed too good to be true, and yet every word of it was true, and for us as the people of God, they are true words today. The only difference for us is Ephesus has to be changed to Portland (or wherever it is that we live), and the language and date are different, too. But the “saints” of God from that day to this have been blessed by these very same words.

But now we want to go on to verse three, and this introduces the first major section of Paul’s letter. I have called it in my outline:

## II. God glorified in our salvation (Eph. 1:3-14).

1:3 As we go on to verse 3 we find even more reasons why it begins with the word, “Blessed.” This is a word not only of thanksgiving, but also of worship. It is a word which recognizes the grace of God because as Paul continued, in speaking of our salvation, he does not say one word about what we have done for it, or what we need to do. It all has to do with what God has done for us in Christ. In the second chapter of Ephesians, verses 8 and 9, Paul in speaking of our salvation says that it is “not of yourselves,” meaning we are totally without merit (but according to the first three verses of chapter two, we have much demerit). So God alone is to be thanked, God alone is to be worshiped, God alone is to be glorified. But Christ is to be glorified also because the blessing have come to us from God through Christ. This same Greek word (**Εὐλογητός**) is found in 2 Corinthians 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:3. In Ephesians it is for past blessings. In 2 Corinthians for present blessings. In 1 Peter for future blessings. We need not only to preach the Gospel every day to ourselves, but also, and I am sure that Dr. Jerry Bridges will agree with me with I repeat him in that, if I go on to say that every time we preach to ourselves, or even think of it, we need to thank the Lord in a loving attitude of worship for saving us in such an abundant way. Most of us get behind in thanking people for what they do for us, but we are far behind usually in praising God for our salvation.

Dr. Chafer in his excellent little commentary on Ephesians said in connection with the verse that here the Apostle Paul gave us God’s full name. God’s full name is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And, of course, the full name of our Savior is “the Lord Jesus Christ.” And it is truly amazing, isn’t it, that in

verse 2 Paul spoke of God as “our Father, and here in verse 3, of the Lord Jesus as “our Lord Jesus Christ. We shouldn’t let these expression go without our special attention. People can glibly say, “God bless America,” but we know in many cases that they are not talking about “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But why was Paul worshiping and praising God here? It was because He has blessed us with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Actually if your Bible uses italics to show words that are not actually in the Greek or Hebrews texts, but have been added by the translators to make the meaning clearer. So “heavenly places” really should read, in the heavenlies, or in heavenly realms. God blesses every one with earthly or physical blessings. We couldn’t live without those blessing, could we? But heavenly blessings or spiritual blessings are only for those of us who are “saints.” And please note that we *all* have *all* of them!!! The Christian life does not consist in seeking more blessings, but it is a life in which we are learning what we have, what God has done for us and continues to do for us, and then how to use them.

In recent years I have heard much about the second blessing. Some Christian people used to ask other Christians if they have the second blessing. We ought always to answer, “Yes.” But why stop with two? Go on to two, and three, and four, and as high as you want to go, because you have them all. They are not numbered, and you and I may get to heaven and find out then that we had blessings that we never knew that we had. That is why we all need to be reading our Bibles. That is where we find out what we have as the saints of God.

I think I have told some of you about a young man who came over to live in Canada, and he attended the church that I was pastor of in Vancouver, B.C. back in the late 40's and early 50's. He hadn't been a Christian until he came over to Canada, and that is where he was saved. He came over to our house one time that I will never forget. He rang our doorbell, and when I went to the door, there he stood with an open Bible in his hand. And the first thing that he said was to tell me something that he had learned from his Bible very recently. And after telling me what it was, he asked me, “Pastor, did you know that?” I wish I could remember what it was, but what was happening to him? He was starting to learn about some of the blessings that he had as a Christian, but no one had ever told him what he had. But he was really excited.

I remember the time in my life when I started to pay attention to the blessings I have, and always have had, since the day I was saved. Look upon your Bible as you would a treasure chest which someone delivered to your house with many costly jewels in it, and you are going through it day after day to find out what you have.

This expression appears four other times in Ephesians. Look with me at Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; and 6:12 as I read them. (Read.)

One of the greatest blessing that we have as “saints” is mentioned here in the last two words of Ephesians 1:3. And this a bundle of blessings. I am referring to the words, “in Christ.” These are two of the most important words that you and I will set our eyes on in the NT - “in Christ.” That is where our blessings are. That is where the heavenlies are, “in Christ.” The Lord spoke of this to His disciples while He was here on earth, and just shortly before He was crucified. In John 14:19 and 20 we read these words:

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

What this means is that the Lord Jesus is in the Father, and we are in the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is in us. This is one of those profound spiritual truths which we must believe, and yet which we have difficulty in explaining. One major difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the Christian has Christ living in him, but a non-Christian does not. The Apostle John described a Christian, a saint, in these words:

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:10-12).

Let me give you another verse: Galatians 2:20:

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Then just another familiar passage: Colossians 3:1-4:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

If you really know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, He lives in you. On the other hand, you may call yourself a Christian, but if Christ is not in you, you are not a child of God.

“In Christ,” or, “in Him” – look for it in Ephesians, and look for it also in 1 John.

In the KJV, verses 3-14 are one long sentence. This shows, and I believe rightly, that this is one continuous, closely related subject. Verse 3 tells us that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. And what a precious truth this is. But how did this come about? Was it originally your idea and mine? Did we approach God and ask Him for all of these spiritual blessings? Did we take the first step toward God, or did He take the first step toward us? Look at verse 4.

1:4 “According as He (the Father) hath chosen us.” So all of the blessings mentioned in verses 3 through 14 were not your idea, nor were they mine, but they were God’s! We didn’t choose Him; He chose us! And when did He do this? Was it when I first heard the Gospel, or when I decided that I wanted to be saved? Neither! Now most people struggle with this great truth, but here it is, as we sometimes express it, *in black and white*. You can read this for yourself, and I can read it for myself. Now don’t be like a lot of true Christians, they decide what they are going to believe in the Bible, and what they are not going to believe. So they decide to reject this.

Now I think that we all agreed from verse 3 that the blessings that the saints have in Christ were not given because they deserved such blessings, not because they worked for them. And I can add that we didn’t buy them. They are not for sale. And if they were, you and I couldn’t afford them even if we were the richest people in the world. Isaiah said long ago that they were not for money or price. But according to God’s Word God gave the gift of salvation, freely, all by grace. Remember Ephesians 2:8 and 9. And Ephesians 2:5 tells us that we were “dead in sins,” dead in our relationship with God, unable to do anything about it, and, more than that, we wouldn’t have done anything about it if we could. God was not in all of our thoughts. So God planned salvation, but, more than that, He sovereignly decided who He was going to save. And when did He do that? Our verse here tells us that God made His choices “before the foundation of the world.” When was that? That was before creation. Yes, the Bible teaches us that the world came into existence by the creative power of God. And let me add that He did it in six twenty-four hour days. The Bible tells us that in the very beginning of the Bible.

Now God wasn’t obligated to save any of us. He had the sovereign right to save man from the penalty and power of his sin, but He also had the right not to save anyone, OR He had the right to save those whom He chose to save. And that is exactly what He did.

Let me give you some other passages that deal with this subject of election. I love it because I know that if the Lord had not chosen me, I would never have chosen Him, and I wouldn't be standing before you today teaching the Bible. Neither would I have any hope that when I die, or when the Lord comes, that I would go to heaven.

Please turn with me to 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, and follow in your Bible as I read:

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, there was a time when you were concerned about your relationship with the Lord, and you thought that it was on your own that you were seeking the Lord. But then you learned from the Bible that the Lord had been seeking you before you sought Him, and that you came to the Lord because He called you by the Gospel, and you came! If it had been otherwise, then you would have had something to brag about. But Ephesians 2:8 and 9 was ordered in a way "lest any man should boast." God gets all of the glory. You and I don't get any of the glory.

Then turn with me to Romans 8 before. Most Christians know Romans 8:28 by heart. I never memorized it by myself; I learned Romans 8:28 just by hearing so many other Christians quote it. John 3:16 is another verse which most Christians know, and they learned it by hearing others quote it. It wasn't that way with me. My parents kind of adopted an older lady and we called her Grandma. She told me when I was just learning to read that if I memorized John 3:16, she would give me a New Testament. I got to work right away learning it, said it to her, and got my New Testament. Well, let's get back Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28 tells us that the "good" that God works out has to do with our salvation. You follow in your Bible and let's see how Romans 8:28 has to do with our salvation, not just when we come to the Lord, but all through the rest of our lives. Notice what Paul wrote out in these verses. We can always get a better idea of the meaning of any verse if we read the verses around it – either what led up to the verse, or the verses that follow – or both!

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:28-34).

Just look at all of the blessings in this passage that we have, not the least of which is the wonderful assurance that the Lord Jesus is praying for us. And Hebrews 7:25 says that this is one of several reasons why, if we are truly saved, we can never be lost again.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

But now one thing remains in Eph. 1:4 which we cannot overlook without missing another blessing.

Why did the Lord choose us, and why did He save us? "That we should be holy and without blame before

Him. Now to be “holy” is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is to be like God. To be “without blame” is to be free from the possibility that any charges can be laid against us. God chose us in eternity past. He called us to Himself, and saved us. All through our lives He is making us holy, not perfectly holy in this life, but growing daily more and more in the holiness of Christ. This is when we will be glorified. The Apostle John was anticipating this when he wrote the first three verses of 1 John 3:

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons (τέκνα) of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons (τέκνα) of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

My Greek teacher in seminary told us that τέκνον means *born ones*, i.e., children with the same father and mother.

October 25, 2010

1:5 The word that the Apostle Paul used here is different from what we had in verse three, but they are very close in meaning. God has “chosen . . . before . . .” Here Paul said that we, the saints of God, were “predestinated us,” the “pre-“ meaning *before*, attached to the Greek verb *ὀρίζω*, which means to determine, to decide, to ordain, to destine, having the idea of settling something, ahead of time. And the “before the foundation of the world” in verse 4, would put this also before creation!

Now the people who have trouble with election and predestination have trouble with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. They may say that they believe that God is sovereign in everything, but they want to bring man’s will into salvation. And so they don’t believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation.

But why should that be a problem. Salvation was not man’s idea. It was not some man, or even an angel, who suggested that God plan to save sinners from their condemnation. The whole idea of salvation was God’s, and He had it all planned before He had creation anything. Not only did not did not man plan salvation, but there is not record that God called man into council to ask him how men should be saved. As I have said many times before, God would have been perfectly righteous if He had done nothing about man’s salvation. After all, after man sinned, why did God not wipe out all of creation, and start all over again. But here is another idea. If God had wanted to, He could have decided to saved everyone. But it is clear from everyday life, and from history, that He has not done that. But the fact that God determined to save some people, but not all, many well-thinking people want to bring man into the counsels of God to save God’s reputation for being a righteous God.

We need to ask ourselves the question, “If God had not chosen us, and predesinated us, to salvation, how many of us do you think would be saved this morning?” None, absolutely none! The Lord Jesus Himself said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). And then a little later in that same chapter our Lord said this, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). In John 17 as the Lord prayed to the Father, He said, “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word” (John 17:6). On what basis could the Lord Jesus have said to the Father, “Thine they were” before He said, “And Thou gavest them Me.” It was because the Father had given them to His Son “before the foundation of the world.” I am not surprised, but I am always grieved, when professing Christians go away mad when we talk about election and predestination. The disciples who first heard the Lord say those words that we find in John 6, along with what He said again in John 6 beginning with verse 63 where we read, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” But then He said unto that group of disciples: “But there are some of you that believe not.” Then the Apostle John added these words: “For Jesus knew from



the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him (John 6:64).

But then we read these ominous words in John 6:66: “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” They went away, and they never came back. Could disciples lose their salvation? Certainly not ! But they could be disciples without being saved. Can church members be lost? Not if they are really saved. But they can be church members, even pastors, without being saved. A Christian can be disturbed when he hears this teaching because they church today does not do much teaching. But if you are really saved, a true Christian will say, a saint will say, “I never heard this before, but it is in the Bible, and even the Lord Jesus talked about it, so I am going to stand by the Word of God until the Lord makes it all clear to me.”

Notice these words are all introduced in verse 3 of our chapter with the words, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.” That is the response that we will all have in our hearts when the Lord makes it clear to us that *our salvation is all of God*. “We love Him; because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This is why Paul wrote Ephesians 2:8-10.

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound— that saved a wretch like me!

I was once lost, but now am found— was blind but now I see.

This same verb that the Apostle Paul used here is also found in the foollowing verses:

1) Acts 4:28 – reading verse 27 with it:

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:27-28).

2) Romans 8:29-30:

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

3) And after Ephesians 1:5, then on down in Ephesians 1:11, and reading verse 12 with it:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

If any of you have questions about this, I hope you will come and talk to me about them. But now back to Ephesians 1:5.

Now for what was it that God predestinated us? He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself.” Here we have a very interesting, and a very wonderful word. It was a favorite word of the Apostle Paul. He used it in Romans 8:15 and 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; and here in Ephesians 1:5.

Now often when you read about adoption in the Bible, it is interpreted as being our kind of adoption. That is, by nature we are not the children of God, so through we are adopted by God into His family, just like a man and his wife find out that they are not able to have children, and so they look to adopt a child. And they do! Now that child is not related to that couple by blood, but through the adoption process that child is taken into the home of that couple, given the couple’s name, and grows up calling the husband, Daddy, and the wife, Mother. They are adoptive parents. And that is a wonderful thing when it takes place. Tragically we have so many illegitimate children in our day that adoption is far more common that it should be. But if a mother for any reason cannot keep her child, she will put him or her up for adoption. We have an adopted granddaughter in our family, and we all love her like she was born into our family. It is often a critical time in a child’s life when

she learns that he or she is adopted.

Now the question that we face in Scripture as we come to this word is, are we the children of God by adoption? Am I, are you, in that sense, the adopted children of God? And the answer to that question is, No! Turn with me to John 1:11 through 13. (Read.) Now when you take the “not” and “nor” phrases out of this verse, you can see that what the Apostle John tells us is that we are “born , , , of God.”

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, a visit we read about in John 3, he was probably one of the best men morally that the Lord had contact with while he was here on earth. He was not only a Jew, but he was a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Pharisees. God had opened his eyes to see that there was something very special about Jesus. He told the Lord that he knew at least that God was with Him, because he said, “No man can do the miracles that Thou doest except God be with him. The Lord Jesus obviously knew that God was working in Nicodemus’ heart, and so right away the Lord said to him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And later in the conversation the Lord said to him with “verily, verily” again, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus must have been a man with a lot of knowledge of Scripture, but the Lord was telling him that he needed a second birth before he could understand the truth that he needed to know about a living relationship with God.

Six times in 1 John (twice in one verse) the Apostle John tells us how we can tell we are “born of God.” See 1 John 3:9 (2x); 4:7; 5:1, 14, 18. So we who have been born again, have been born of God, and we are in the family of God by this new birth, this birth from above, this birth of God. We were given physical life by our parents. We are given spiritual life from God. It is a struggle in the flesh to live the Christian life, but it is totally impossible without this new birth. The Apostle Peter knew this truth very well. In his first epistle he wrote in 1 Peter 1:23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” And then along the same line he wrote in the following chapter, in 1 Peter 2:2-3,

- 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
- 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

So we are the children of God by a new birth. What did Paul mean, then, by “the adoption of children.” Actually a better translation would be “the adoption of sons.” And a still better translation would be “a placing of sons. This is difficult for us to understand but God has brought us into His family with all of the rights of sonship.

Now all of us have to grow as babes in Christ when we are saved. But the difference since the Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again, is that we have resources in Christ that were not available to the people of God before the work of Christ was completed. As we learned in verse 3, now we have been “blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.” It is the difference between living under the Law, and now living under grace. Galatians 4:1-7 give the explanation of what sonship means. Verse 7 probably should read at the end of the verse, “an heir of God,,” or as the NASB renders it, “an heir through God.”

October 26, 2010

Now all of this is “by Jesus Christ to Himself.” John Eadie explained it this way:

Not simply for Christ’s sake, but by means of His mediation, since but for Him the family had never been constituted. God’s Son was the “firstborn” of the vast household, and fraternal relation to Him is filial relation to God (p. 32).

This is completely in harmony with Romans 8:28-30:

- 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the

called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

And to add to the certainty of these glorious truths, the Apostle Paul added, “according to the good pleasure of His will.” This means that what God did in salvation, He did according to His sovereign will, and it is always His will which gives Him the greatest pleasure or He would not have ordained salvation as He did. In Romans 12:1 and 2 the Apostle Paul called the will of God “good, and acceptable, and perfect.” And this is primarily what it is to God, or He would never have done it, never have ordained it. And we prove it by doing what God tells us what to do. There is no instance in which we can improve upon the will of God, whatever the circumstances might be.

But the Apostle is not finished speaking of our salvation. He continued in verse 6.

**1:6** In verses 5 and 6 we have the Greek preposition, “unto” (εἰς), used three times, but it is only translated that way the first time. So verses 5 and 6 could be translated like this:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 Unto the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

The first points out the object of our predestination – to be brought into the family of God as sons. The second shows the connection between our predestination and God. And the third shows the ultimate purpose of our redemption – that it all should be “to the praise of the glory of His grace.”

So the ultimate purpose of our salvation is praise for God’s glory, because of the exercise of His grace. There is absolutely no reason why God should save us. Salvation is all of grace, the undeserved favor of God. And, as Jerry Bridges has reminded us, grace means that instead of giving us what we deserve, He gives us what we could never deserve. It is by grace that we have been rendered gracious in God’s sight. And this is through “the Beloved.” And who is this? It is God’s Name for His Son: “This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), the One in Whom God finds all of His delight. God has ordained our salvation so that His Son will not only be glorified, exalted, and praised, but that all of the glory will go to Him. And so I can add that none of the glory comes to us. It was not because we were worthy of such a gift, nor even more worthy than anyone else, saved or unsaved. It was because we were completely unworthy that it was necessary for God to send His Son in the world, to die for our sins, that we can rejoice in this wonderful salvation that we have. “To God be the glory, great things He hath done.” And the Apostle Paul’s description of our salvation continues in verse 7.

**1:7** “In Whom,” *i.e.*, in Christ, “we have redemption.” It is not primarily “through Him” that we have redemption (although that is also true), but “in Him,” in union with Him that we have this marvelous redemption. Christ not only died for us on the Cross, *but we died in Him*. This subject of our union with Christ is basic to our understanding of the Gospel, and it is certainly one of the major emphases of this epistle, if not *the major emphasis*. It surely is unmistakably strongly evident.

We have had it already in Ephesians. In verse 1 the Apostle Paul addressed them as “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” And in verse 3 we are told that God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” In verse 4 God “hath chosen us in Him.” In verse 6 we are “accepted in the Beloved.” And here in verse 7 we are told that “in Whom, *i.e.*, in Christ we have our acceptance with God. It is also on account of

Him, or because of Him, but those expressions are not the same as saying that we are in Him, in Christ. We were placed in Christ at the Cross, and that is where we are now, and always will be. We now are in Him. And now we “have redemption.”

This word “redemption” always speaks of the payment of a price, a ransom. To whom is this ransom paid. It was paid to God. We read this in Hebrews 9:13-14:

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

November 1, 2010

Being redeemed, “we have redemption.” But not through any work we have done, and not because of any merit we have with God – because we have none! We “have redemption through His blood,” the blood of Christ, which, in turn, means *by the death of Christ*. This was the price of our redemption because it had to be a redemption that satisfied the righteousness of God. “The wages of sin is death,” and so it was only through One Who paid that price that sinners could be redeemed and declared justified before God. God set the penalty for sin, and it was by the grace of God that He Himself laid that penalty upon His Son that we might be forgiven.

I have heard it illustrated by the case of a Judge who one day had his son brought before him for having broken some law of the land in some way. The Judge announced the penalty that his son had to pay. But after declaring what the penalty was, the Judge left his bench, went down to the clerk of the court, paid the penalty for his son, so that his son could go free. But even this is an insufficient illustration because it was when we were enemies of God, that Christ died for us.

Apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no hope for the forgiveness of any sinner, whether great or small, whether our sins are many, or few.

When God saves sinners who deserve eternal judgment, but instead are redeemed, and forgiven, that is not only grace, but “the riches of His grace,” God’s grace. It is no wonder that the Apostle Paul began this part of the epistle like he did in verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” The “riches” of God’s grace in our salvation is seen in the fact that God gave none other than *His Son* to be our Redeemer.

“Riches” was a favorite word of the Apostle Paul in speaking of salvation. In Romans 2:4 we read of “the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering.” In Romans 9:23, “the riches of His glory.” In Romans 11:33, “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” Here in Ephesians 1:18, in his prayer, Paul spoke of “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” In Ephesians 2:7, “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” In Ephesians 3:8, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” In Ephesians 3:16, again, “the riches of His glory.” And so on in Philippians 4:19; Colossians 1:27; 2:2. “Riches” mean valuable, fulness and abundance, inexhaustible.

**1:8** This verse continues the thought of verse 7. Still speaking of “the riches of His grace,” which He either lavished upon us, or cause to be lavished upon us (by Christ). This verse could be translated either way. “In all wisdom and prudence” means, as Bishop Moule said, that God “enabled us to understand His redeeming purpose, to feel His heart of mercy, to approve and to concur with His redeeming plan” (p. 32). And then the Apostle’s thought continues on into verse 9.

**1:9** One very important thing that the Apostle Paul was doing here in Ephesians, was to get the Ephesian believers acquainted with some of the great words of the Bible, and, in some cases, words which apply especially to the NT. (Review what they are.)

Here we come to the first of six times that the Apostle Paul uses the very important word, “mystery,” in Ephesians. See also 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19. The definition of a mystery in the NT is given to us in Ephesians 3:5. See another definition in Romans 16:25-27. It is a word akin to a revelation, which is true of all the Bible, but a revelation which God revealed at a later time than the Old Testament. A revelation is truth that we could never have discovered for ourselves. It is completely beyond the realm of scientific research. It is a category all by itself. The whole Bible is a revelation from God. Many of the events of the Bible are history, but the meaning of it all is a closed book except to believers who have the Holy Spirit to teach them.

However, when God gave the revelation of the OT, He did not reveal all that He intended to reveal. He kept some back for later revelations to complete the revelation of God. Basically “the mystery” has to do with the full revelation of the Gospel (which we are here studying in Ephesians, *and* what Paul will also get to as we move on in reading this epistle). And that has to do with two great truths: first, the full revelation of the Gospel, and, second, the revelation of the Church, the Body of Christ. Regarding the latter, Israel does not become the Church, neither does the Church replace Israel. They are two parts of the eternal purposes of God. And it was the Apostle Paul who was saved and appointed to deal specifically with both of these truths. Much of the Gospel is in the OT, but not in the fulness that we have it in the NT epistles. It seems that God waited until after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ which was the major turning point in the history of the whole world.

“The mystery of His (God’s) will” was hitherto unrevealed aspects of God’s purpose. And you can see that the coming of Christ was essential to both of these revelations. It was in Christ that both of these were to be fulfilled. It was according to God’s good pleasure which He (God) had purposed, not “in Himself,” as rendered by the KJV, but “in Him,” that is, *in Christ*. “The mystery of His will” is Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, that everything was to be “in Him.” And this is why God waited until after Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, before giving the fullest revelation of the Gospel. That is why the little preposition “in” is so important and so unique showing the full relationship between Christ and the Gospel. The people who were saved in the OT, were saved in the coming Redeemer; we today who are saved are saved in the Redeemer Who has come. There has never been but one Savior. But now Paul was saying that believers are “in Him,” *in Christ*, united to Christ in an eternal union.

**1:10** Now in dealing with this verse let me say that one of our problems in interpreting Scripture is that we often try to make it say too much. I have often wished that some place in Scripture the Lord had given us what some have called, the plan of the ages. By that I mean, that He would have listed some place in the Word all that is going to happen from the time that the Lord Jesus was here on earth until the establishing of the new heaven and the new earth, which is most fully described in the last two chapters of the book the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Even a lot of controversy has arisen over that book. Some say most of it is history, but it is my belief that most of it is yet to come since the world has never yet experienced the kind of terrible judgments that are predicted in that book.

And then there is another point that we need to make in any passage of Scripture. It is this: to whom was any part of Scripture that we are reading or studying, written? All Scripture is *for* us (we can be sure of that), but not all of Scripture was written *to* us.

Now how would we answer the question regarding Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, To whom was it primarily

written. And, as we come to this word *mystery* Paul was telling the believers in the early Church about the Church. It was a part of God's plan which He had not revealed before. The Ephesians were a part of that plan, and so it applied to them and to all who would live until the Lord had completed His work in the Church.

Perhaps you remember from your study of 1 Thessalonians that those believers in that part of the Church, the body of Christ, had wondered, apparently like most believers who were saved immediately after the ascension of the Lord, what had happened to those believers who were dying. They thought that the Lord Jesus was going to return immediately, during their lifetime. And it was in 1 Thessalonians that Paul gave the Church those wonderful words which are in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. They fit right in with what the Lord had told His disciples in the Upper Room in the first few verses of John 14, but he had not said anything at that time as to when He was coming back, just that He was coming back *to receive them unto Himself so that they could be where He was!* But He did not say that it would be as long as it has been. Here it is 2010 and thousands upon thousands of believers have died, and the Lord has not come yet. So in 1 Thessalonians the Spirit of God revealed through Paul about what would happen to believers who died before the Lord returned, as well as what would happen to believers who were living at that time. But Paul himself did not know when that would be.

Now 1 Thessalonians was the first epistle written by Paul, and so we can assume, I think, that the Ephesian believers knew what Paul had written to the believers in Thessalonica. Perhaps this may not have been true of all of them. But the Church had that information in 1 Thessalonians.

It is clear as we read the epistles of the NT that the NT Church was to always be in a state of readiness for the return of the Lord. This was to be their hope, their comfort (which means encouragement as well). As time went on, those unbelievers who were skeptical that such an event would ever take place, tried to torment the Church with the idea that such a hope was a false hope. Today after more than two thousand years believers are still looking for the Lord, expecting Him to come at any moment which I believe we have to recognize is added proof that our hope is not in vain in the Lord. But I would remind you that more than looking for an event, we are looking for a Person. We are looking for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to be with Him forever after He comes, and we are going to be where He is, in heaven where our citizenship is according to Philippians 3:20 and 21. This is what we can call, and do call, the rapture of the Church. And it seems clear from the NT epistles that this is the next major prophetic event that is to take place. When He does return, all who are in the Church will be changed to be like the Lord. And this is to be one of our greatest incentives to be like the Lord. See 1 John 3:1-3. The Great Tribulation will follow, and as we learn from the book of the Revelation, our Lord will return, and we with Him to reign for a thousand years on the earth during which time Satan will be bound. Afterwards he will be released for a time, will stir up the nations against the Lord, and then cast forever into the lake of fire which has especially been prepared for the Devil and his angels. And then the earth will be destroyed, and there will then be "a new heaven and a new earth" for the saints of all ages.

Now not every child of God believes what I have just related to you. The Church today is greatly divided over what is going to take place in the future. Many believe that God is finished with Israel and that the Church is going through half of the Tribulation, or all of it. And that when Christ comes, He will set up His kingdom on earth, and the eternal state, the new heaven and the new earth, will begin. Many of the details that we would like to know have not been revealed. But what is very clear in Scripture is that we all need to be looking for the Lord. And we all need to recognize that God has not revealed everything to us. And what He has revealed we tend to see "through a glass darkly." Even the Apostle Paul said this about himself as we learn from 1 Corinthians 13:9-13:

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I believe that the next major event to take place in the plan of God is the rapture of the Church. I do not believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation, for one reason, because the Tribulation is called in Jeremiah 30:7, “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is to bring Israel as a nation back to the Lord before the Lord comes back to the earth to reign as is predicted in many OT Scriptures. We in the Church, the body of Christ, may experience sufferings before the Lord comes, but not any part of the Great Tribulation.

Now let us go back to verse 10 in Ephesians 1.

We learned from verse 9 that Paul was talking about a mystery, truth which had not been revealed before, and yet a part of God’s plan from before the foundation of the world. But here the Apostle Paul brought in the expression, “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” The word “dispensation” is a word formed from the Greek word for *a steward*. A steward in Bible times was most often a slave (but not always) to whom the head of a house or the owner of a business would entrust his affairs usually when the head of the house or the owner of a business was going to be away. The steward was responsible to take care of the home or business until the master returned, and he was responsible to carry on in a way that was pleasing to his master. Paul used this term, “dispensation,” with respect to his own ministry. Let me read to you what he said about himself in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17:

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

Although he did not mention “dispensation” or “stewardship” in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, yet this is what he was speaking about:

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

In Paul’s case he was under divine orders not only to preach the Gospel, but not to charge for his preaching.

But perhaps one of the best passages regarding Paul is in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2:

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

And when Paul wrote his last letter to be included in the Bible, he said,

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul was about to complete his stewardship. And in the beginning of that chapter the Apostle Paul gave a charge to Timothy which essentially was Timothy’s stewardship, his dispensation. In Titus 1:7, the Apostle in giving the qualification for bishops, or elders, said, “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ...”

Now usually a steward was appointed for a particular time, so it is proper to refer to a dispensation as a period of time. The steward was in charge of the family or business while the husband or owner of the business was away. But this is a very important point: the steward was primarily responsible to the master in either case to

run the home or business exactly as the master had directed him. And the master would reward, or judge, the steward as to how well his instructions had been carried out. So it is not going beyond the idea of a dispensation being *a period of time*.

Now the Apostle Paul tells us here in verse 10 of Ephesians 1 about “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” This means that the time is coming when the times of God’s purposes will come to an end. “The fulness of times” surely points to when the times of human history will come to an end. There had to be a change in God’s dealing with man as he was created as compared with after he sinned. There was a big change when God called Abraham, promised to make him a nation, and to give him a land, and to bless the whole human race through him. Another change took place when God gave the Law to Moses with the Tabernacle plans, and later gave the plans for the Temple to David, which was built by Solomon. And then we come to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was on earth as a Man until He was arrested, crucified, raised from the dead, ascended back to the Father where He has been seated ever since at the Father’s right hand. What I am saying is that one period has been followed by another, each one introducing certain condition which had not prevailed before, and all finally coming to “the dispensation of the fulness of times (pl.) and the outworking of God’s plan from the very beginning of time, and all of it foreordained before the foundation of the world. Some-where in the past someone made the quaint, but true remark, that “history is His story.” That is what it is, the working out of the eternal purposes of God. And there is hope throughout all of it, while at the same time we see the repeated failure of men, and many, many times, opposition to the plans and purposes of God. So every believer is in some way a dispensationalist. The Bible does not teach many ways of salvation. There is no way for anyone to be saved except through Christ, and only through Him. It is alarming to hear professing Christ-ians who should know better say that there might be some other way. There could not be a worst heresy. God has never relinquished His control on His world. It may seem like He has at times, but everything is on His schedule, and the next event will be the sound of the trumpet when “the dead in Christ shall arise, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. And when Paul spoke of this glorious event in 1 Corinthians 15, he began by talking about the Lord’s coming with the words, “Behold I show you a mystery.” What a glorious stewardship was committed to the Apostle Paul to be the one who was the first to tell the Church and the whole world that Jesus is coming back for us, and we need to be in a constant state of readiness for our departure into heaven. And those who have died before us waiting for Him are going to take the lead before us going into heaven.

When did the Lord Jesus Christ come the first time, this is how the Apostle Paul described it to the Galatians churches. You will find this in Galatians 4. Please turn and follow as I read the first seven verses when he, speaking as a Jew, was telling the Galatians that they were not to go back under the Law since the times had changed since Christ had come:

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Gal. 4:1-7).

Make not mistake about it, God is working out His purposes in the world, and that some day that purpose, which obviously has many phases to it, will be completed. But speaking to the church, the local church, in



Ephesus, and probably the surrounding churches where the Gospel had gone and people had been saved, Paul speaking to the church about the Church, says that all who are “in Christ,” will be gathered together in one, both those who are in heaven, that is, those believers who have died, and those who are on earth, that is, those who will leave until the Lord’s return, will be “gathered together” – ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι (a very long word in the Greek, and used only one other time in the NT – see Romans 13:9 where it has to do with condensing the various commandments of the Law into one commandment) – that is, concerning the various ways in which true believers have been divided, all of us will be brought together in perfect agreement, total oneness. And this was on our Lord’s heart as He prayed the prayer that is recorded for us in John 17. See John 17:11-23.

Our divisions in the professing church, grieve our Lord (and we can be sure that they grieve the Father too). And they confuse the world, too. The hymn, *Onward, Christian Soldiers*, is partly right, and partly wrong. When it says, “we are not divided, all one body we,” practically it is wrong, because we are divided with many different divisions. But actually we are not divided. And when the Lord has completed His work in us, then it will be apparent that we are all one in Christ, “one in doctrine,” and “one in purity,” one in holiness of life. This will be a great reality which will make heaven, heaven. Many in the professing church, but certainly not those who are truly saved, seek to establish oneness in the church by agreeing to dismiss those truths on which we disagree. The end of that road is dismissing truth altogether. That is the ultimate of heresy. Oneness in Christ is doctrinal unity (the truth of Scripture), and practical unity in seeking by God’s grace the holiness of Christ. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

November 8, 2010 (I also revised much on verse 10 on this day.)

**1:11** Now, in addition to everything else, every other blessing that we have in Christ, we learn that in Christ we also have an inheritance. What is it? Are you going to get more than I do? Or are we all going to get the same? Does it have anything to do with the places that the Lord has gone to prepare for us? Can we know ahead of time what our inheritance is, or will be?

What is an inheritance? It is, first of all, a gift, usually money, which is given by a parent to his children upon his decease. But actually a person can appoint anyone he wants to, to receive an inheritance. In Hebrews 9:15-17 we are told about and inheritance:

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

But there evidently was a variation from this in NT times because you remember what the prodigal son said to his father according to Luke 15:11-12 according to one of our Lord’s parables:

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

So we should not be surprised at Paul’s words in verse 11 where he said, “We have received an inheritance.” Our inheritance comes to us from God but it is in Christ because it was by the death of Christ that our inheritance from God was secured for us. And since the Apostle Paul is reviewing in our chapter the blessings that we have in Christ, this is one of the blessings. We have our inheritance. But as we are going to learn, it is secured for us, but we do not have full possession of it yet. Before I point out what it is, let us notice the times that the Apostle Paul spoke of riches in Ephesians, spiritual riches that belong to every child of God. See

Ephesians 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16. And you all probably remember the riches referred to in Philippians 4:19.

So what is our inheritance? It is our salvation with the emphasis primarily on God's purpose in saving us. What is that purpose? It is to make us like Christ. That transformation begins the moment we are saved, and it will be completed when we see the Lord. It seems to me after looking over the remaining verses of Paul's introduction (down through verse 14) that they all are speaking of our inheritance.

The Apostle Peter spoke of our salvation in a passage that begins just like Paul began this passage in Ephesians. I am referring to the word in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed . . ." Here are Peter's words found in 1 Peter 1:3-5:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,  
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,  
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

As we go on to verse 12 the Apostle can't keep the secret from us any longer. There he tells us what our inheritance is.

**1:12** It is "that we should be to the praise of His glory." And I want you to look back to see the purpose God has in electing us, in choosing us for salvation. Notice in Ephesians 3 we are told that God's purpose in our election to salvation was "that we should be holy and without blame before Him," that is before God. So our inheritance has to do with God's primary purpose in salvation – not to save us from hell (although that is a major part), nor just to take us to heaven (although that is a major part of our hope). But our inheritance is that we are predestinated to be conformed to Christ.

In Romans 8:30 Paul tells us a little more about our predestination than he does here, or at least it is consistent with what we are told here in verse 12. Listen and I will read it to you:

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

But let me give you another passage which tells us the same thing. Listen to Romans 8:16-17:

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:  
17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

What does it mean that we will be glorified? It means that we will be like our Lord. This is also what we learn from Philippians 3:20-21:

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:  
21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

When will He do this? Let's ask the Apostle John the answer to that question. We find it in 1 John 3:2-3:

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

But let me add:

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

While we are here on earth we are to be growing in the Lord. When we see Him when He comes, suddenly the work of salvation will be finished, and we will be like the Lord, glorified, make like Him.

"Who first trusted in Christ" – It seems clear as we read on into verse 13 that Paul was speaking of himself, and probably Tychicus (see 6:21-22) and possibly other co-workers who were with him, but then in verse 13 he

said, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.” That seems to clear up the difficulty perfectly.

But let us go on to verse 13.

**1:13** It helps us to understand why we can’t lose the glorification that is our inheritance in Christ. We were saved and secured in our salvation the very moment we believed the truth the Gospel. At that very moment we were sealed by the Holy Spirit. The sealing is the mark of ownership and of security. And more on this is given in verse 14.

**1:14** The sealing of the Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance.” If you are buying a home, or a car, or anything that costs more than you have money to pay for it all at once, you make a down payment on your purchase. This is called earnest money. If you default on your purchase, you lose your earnest money. So no one who knows what he is doing would put money down on the purpose, would give the seller the earnest money if he did not intend to go ahead with the purchase. In the case of the Holy Spirit, He not only secures the deal, but it a part of our salvation – one of the blessings of Ephesians 1:3.

For God to seal our salvation by giving us the Holy Spirit the moment we are saved, is God’s assurance to us that he will not default on our salvation. I feel sure that you have noticed in your reading of Ephesians that the sealing of the Spirit, is referred to again in Ephesians. See Ephesians 4:30. And see also 2 Cor 1:21-22

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Notice how the Apostle Paul closed verse 14 and this first major section of the epistle: “. . . until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His (God’s) glory.” What is the purchased possession? You are. I am. Here, the Church is. But eventually all believers will be show eternally the glorious evidences of salvation.

Before we go on to the prayer at the end of the chapter 1, I want to follow and expand the suggestions of Dr. Sidlow Baxter in summarizing the main points of Paul’s praise:

- 1) Adoration in v. 3.
- 2) Election in v. 4.
- 3) Predestination in vv. 5-6
- 4) Redemption in v. 7.
- 5) Revelation in vv. 8-10.
- 6) Inheritance in vv. 11-12.
- 7) Sealed by the Spirit in vv. 13-14.

In vv.15-23 the prayer is for Illumination. This is the third part of chapter 1, and III. in the outline.

November 22, 2010

III. Prayer #1 – Paul’s prayer for their understanding of salvation (Eph. 1:15-23).

The Bible is a revelation from God. Much of it is history. Nevertheless what God has included in His Word, although it can be confirmed by history, yet it requires the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit for us to understand its place in the Word of God. Much that we find in Scripture is not found any place else in all of human literature, and it is clear that that requires the illuminating, enlightening, teaching of the Holy Spirit. From

passages which are the most familiar to us, the Holy Spirit will often open our hearts to aspects of divine truth that we have never understood. That is one reason why we all should reading and re-reading what we have read before, and studying and re-studying what we have studied before. That is one reason I never teach any portion of Scripture using only those notes which I have used before. To do that assumes that I have already gotten out of the Scripture I am teaching, all that is possible to get out of it. I may look at what I have taught before, but I always hope and pray that any passage of Scripture will become clearer and dearer the more we go over it. When I taught at Multnomah quite often we faculty members used to discuss how we could maintain our delight in the Word of God so that it would not become cold and so the students would sense from our teaching how delighted we were with the Word of God. It used to be said of some teaching that it was to pass information from the teacher's notes to the student notebook without going through the brain of either one of them. That can be true of any teaching, but it is especially tragic when that happens to Bible teaching. Sometimes words which just seem to be preparing the way for other words, are passed over without our giving them the thought and prayer that would yield to us rich truths which could have a real effect on the way we live. Such are the words we find in verses 15 and 16. Actually the two verses belong to each other as making one statement which. In turn, lead to the rest of the words which we find in this prayer. Let us look at them now.

**1:15** The word "wherefore" ties what we are about to read with what we have just read. We have just been through some wonderful teaching in the first fourteen verses of this epistle. But it has been deep teaching, much deeper than you will hear in many churches today. It did something to the Apostle Paul to be able to teach what we find in the verses which we have just covered. You can be sure that he didn't do this kind of teaching when he was a Pharisee. He wasn't capable to teaching those great truths of salvation because he didn't know the Lord in those days, and so he didn't have the capacity to understand such truth. But even after he met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he didn't learned them overnight. Paul's case was a little different from our because he had not only been called to salvation, but he had also been called to be an apostle (as he mentioned in verse 1). As such, he was one of several men whom God used to give us the New Testament. Paul had to learn for himself what the Spirit of God directed him to write. And he knew that this learning for him came in direct answer to prayer. So, when he wrote it out for the Ephesian Christians, and others who would read it too, he was moved in his heart to pray for them.

There were two things that the Apostle Paul had heard about them that encouraged him to write to them. He heard about their "faith in the Lord Jesus." And he had also heard about their "love unto all the saints." These are two evidences to look for when anyone professes to be a Christian. We have been learning this in 1 John, haven't we. The Apostle John said that if you profess to be a Christian, but you don't love the people of God, you simply are not telling the truth. He stated it this way in 1John 5:1,

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

The first without the second is not complete. If we truly have trusted in Christ and love him, then we are going to love others who have also trusted in the Savior.

But going back to Ephesians, how did Paul complete in verse 16 what he started to say in verse 15?

**1:16** He said two things, and they both have to do with prayer.

First, he did not congratulate them for being so wise in trusting Christ. He did not say, "I give thanks to you," but I "give thanks for you" – and there is a lot of difference between those two statements. I am going to be speaking about this, the Lord willing, on Thursday. We are certainly to be thankful to people, Christian or non-Christian, when they say nice things about us, or do nice things for us. We might even thank the person who told us about Christ, *but when we give thanks for our salvation, the thanks always and only belongs to the*

*Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.* Anybody can tell us about salvation, but only God can save us! This is the second time in this chapter that the Apostle Paul has spoken of true Christians as “saints.” Remember that this means that true Christians are a people *set apart exclusively for the Lord*, and so *from the world, which results in a holy character and holy living.* To be “set apart” *speaks of our election unto salvation.* This does not mean that we are going to love all of the people of God in the same way, but it means that we are going to love them. And the more we seek to love those we find not so lovely, the greater our love for them will become. This is also what the Apostle John was speaking about when he wrote in 1 John 4:12, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” Remember that the phrase, “the love of God,” generally refers in the NT to God’s love for us. It is that which is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). The more we love each other in the Lord, the greater will be our love for each other.

Now if you and I love each other, we are going to do what? We are going to pray for each other. We all need the Lord’s blessing in answer to prayer. But what are we going to pray about as we pray for each other? Should we pray about material needs? Absolutely. Those cares abound in these days, don’t they? Should we pray about physical needs? I certainly hope so, because we all have them, and we hear about more physical problems all of the time, don’t we? Yes, the epistles of James and John teach us to pray for the sick. Do you think that the Apostle Paul prayed about material needs? Of course he did. His epistle to the Philippians was actually a thank you letter to the church for a gift that they had sent to him for his own material needs. He prayed for all of these things like we do. But he also prayed for things that we may seldom pray for. *Paul prayed for the spiritual needs of the believers at Ephesus (and elsewhere).* *Actually he was praying that they would be able to understand what he had just written to them.* His prayer really begins in verse 17, doesn’t it?

**1:17** In prayer we are talking to God, and we need always to remember this. Even when we pray in a prayer meeting, we are not to pray to be “seen of men”(Matt. 6:5), but we are to pray to be heard by God. In Psalm 4:1 we read that this is how David prayed on that occasion:

1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

I believe that the best way to learn to pray is by noticing the prayers that are recorded for us in the Bible, and then pray like the people of God prayed in the past. The prayers of Paul in his epistles are rich in the lessons they teach us about prayer.

To whom did Paul pray? He prayed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.” There are many gods (spelled with a small “g”), but it would clear the air if we really identified the true God as He is, “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the full title of Jesus of Nazareth because it combines both His Deity and His humanity. We pray to the same God that the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to when He was here on earth. In fact, it is His Name in which we are to come to God in prayer. The access we have to God is only through the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many things that I admire about Dr. Paul Felix, but two things especially. Usually when he leads in prayer, he says, “Let’s pray together.” And the other thing is the way he repeat over and over the full name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not just when he is praying, but when he is preaching. I would imagine if we asked him where he learned to use the full name and title of our Lord, I know that he would say, “From the Apostle Paul, because that is what the Apostle Paul did. The Apostle didn’t do it all of the time, but he did it many, many times.

But what did Paul mean by calling God, “the Father of glory”? I don’t know all that the Apostle meant, but I am convinced that a part of what He meant was the source of all true glory is God. Many of you have heard me say more than once probably that “the glory of God, is God.” He is the Source, the Origin, and, I would add, the Dispenser of all true glory. God’s glory consists of His attributes and works – His holiness, His wisdom,

His power, His righteousness, His mercy and His grace, His love, His will, His faithfulness, His eternity, and so on and on. Creation itself displays the glory of God in the marvelous works of the Almighty God..

So the Apostle Paul was addressing Himself to the God of the universe, the God of salvation, the God to Whom nothing is impossible, but as we learn from here in Ephesians, the One Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. And his request has to do with another Member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Paul's words, "May give unto you," do not mean that they did not possess the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit would carry out His ministry to them in teaching them not only what the Lord said, but what He meant.

When the Lord spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room, and then on the way to the Garden of Gethseman, He had many things to say to them about the Holy Spirit. One of them which applies here is found in John 14:26:

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

What the Spirit teach us is "wisdom," the wisdom of God which is not given to the world, but to the Lord's people, and it is given by revelation. God reveals what man could never attain in any other way. It is "too high" for the natural mind. God revealed it to the writers of Scripture, but what they wrote has to be revealed to those who read it. And the Spirit does both of these works. But it is not for the world. And it is all centered in and focused upon "Him," a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Again speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus said this, found in John 16:14-15:

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

There is nothing that the Holy Spirit loves to do more than to show us Christ, and the things of Christ, in the Word. And there is no other way that the written Word can be understood. The word that the Apostle John used here for knowledge, is not just basic, or simple, knowledge, but it is a full knowledge. And it must mean since we cannot fully know all thing until we are with the Lord, that the Holy Spirit will teach and teach us all are lives, but we are not prepared in this life to full know truth that is in exhaustible. So we are to keep learning and learning about Christ all of our lives here on earth. We will never know all that can be known about our Lord until we see Him face to face. "Now we know in part," but how indescribably the "part" is because it has to do with Christ.

But how does the Holy Spirit prepare us to receive the truth concerning Christ, and what is He concerned that we should know about Christ? The answers to these questions are in verse 18.

**1:18** What does this mean? "The eyes of your mind being enlightened . . ." The Greek actually says, "The eyes of your heart being enlightened." The KJ translators evidently thought that the Apostle Paul was speaking of the mind. But what men attribute to the mind, the Bible attributes to the heart. Paul meant that the Holy Spirit sheds light upon the truth, enabling us to understand the things of God. "Being enlightened" means that something has been done for us in the past, and the effect of it continues into the present and beyond. God has cause the light to shine into our hearts so that our blindness has been turned to sight! And only the Holy Spirit can do that. And as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit Paul was praying that the Ephesian saints (and the same truth applies to us today who are saints. What does the Holy Spirit want us to know in our hearts where the knowledge of Christ will have a transforming effect upon our live – always for the better! Three truths:

1) "What is the hope of His calling.

2) "What (are) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

And the third point takes on down to the end of chapter 1, beginning with verse 19.

3) "What is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward (toward us) who believe . . . (vv. 19-23).

Let us begin with “the hope of His calling” in verse 18. Now let us keep in mind that we are talking here about the work of the Holy Spirit.

Basically what the word “hope” mean? The dictionary defines “hope” as the desire of something that we want to obtain, or even expect to obtain. Or it could be the desire of some event we want to see take place. Since we are not omnipotent, we can’t guarantee most of our hopes. Dwight and Nancy called us several weeks ago and told us that they would like to visit us on Thanksgiving week. That immediately aroused in our hearts the hope that they would be able to do that. It was made stronger because we knew that Dwight and Nancy did not make their plans on the spur of the moment. So on the Monday before Thanksgiving they arrived, and we were all very happy that our hope became a reality.

Sometimes in the Bible the word “hope” is used this way. For example in Philippians 2 beginning with verse 19, Paul mentioned his plan to send Timothy to them in Philippi. But in verses 23 and 24 he said this:

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Paul *hoped* to send Timothy to Philippi, but he wasn’t certain yet because he didn’t know what was going to happen to him. In verse 24 he could have used the word *hope* again because he was trusting the Lord that he would be able to go to Philippi also. Most things that we would like to do, or places we would like to go, or people we want to see, are *our* hopes which may or may not take place. But the hopes that God has, and which He gives to us are totally different from what we express as our hopes, unless we are speaking about God’s hopes for us.

Now God has scattered throughout His Word many promises. And we know that God has never failed to keep any promise that He has ever made. He is in absolute control over all things, and so we can confidently hope in whatever He promises to do. His promise becomes the basis of our hope. And the fact that it is a promise from God, or even a statement of anything that He intends to do, gives certainty to that hope. And remember, one of the characteristics of a hope is that it is something that we want, or something that the Lord want us to look upon as being desirable to us. And then, when our hope is realized, when it becomes a reality, we don’t hope for it anymore. When Dwight and Nancy arrived, we didn’t hope any more that they would come. Our hope was realized.

There is an interesting passage in the book of Romans which deals with this word *hope*. It is in chapter 8, and it goes down to verse 30. Please turn to that passage and follow in your Bibles as I read what the Apostle Paul wrote. (Read Romans 8:18-30, commenting on it as I read.)

What, primarily, did God have in mind when He called us to Christ?

The word “hope” in the Bible often means what we usually mean when we use the word hope. When we say that we hope it won’t rain, we mean that that is our desire, but we have no way of being sure that either it won’t rain, or that we can keep it from raining – especially in Washington or Oregon! But in the passage before us it has just the opposite meaning. It means a purpose which is not presently fulfilled, but that we know that it will without any doubt be fulfilled at some future time. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is called a “blessed hope,” a happy prospect that is just as certain to take place as anything that has already happened.

Now the hope that we are talking about here in Ephesians 1:18 is a hope that God has, but it is also is what He wants us to make as our hope. “The hope of his calling” means the purpose that God had in mind when He called us to Christ for salvation. And so it is a purpose which He is going to make sure that it does happen. From your reading of Ephesians you have probably seen that the word “hope” is used two other times in this Epistle. The first one has to do with people who do not know the Lord, and who go out of this life without ever

trusting Christ as their Savior. Look with me at Ephesians 2:11 and 12. (Read). Remember our definition of the word “hope.” It is something that is future, something desirable, and something certain. Now “no hope” means that the unsaved have absolutely nothing desirable which is to come, and that that which no one would ever want, is absolutely certain to what they will experience. The future for the unsaved is hell, eternal hell, and there is no question but that it is ahead for them. The only way that any person can escape the eternal sufferings of hell, is by turning in faith to the crucified and risen Savior Who died to change the destiny of those who trust the Savior. To have “no hope,” and to die “without God in this world” means that nothing pleasurable lies ahead for them *ever!*

The third time that Paul used this word in Ephesians is in chapter 4, verse 4. (Read.) And here Paul said, speaking of the saints, that “ye are called in one hope of your calling.” This means that every true believer in Christ is going to experience the same “hope.” God does not have one hope for men, and another hope for women. He does not have one hope for a Jew and another for a Gentile. He does not have one hope for a Baptist and another hope for a Presbyterian. He does not have one hope for an American who turns to Christ, and another for a Muslim who turns to Christ. All who are “called” by God to faith in Christ have the same glorious hope. There is only one hope. It starts with justification, moves on to sanctification, and ends with glorification! But what specifically does this mean.

Now God has several reasons for saving us. One is so that He can take us to heaven. We might think that this is what our hope is. We are going to heaven, but that is not the main purpose. Another purpose is to keep us from going to hell. How thankful we can be for that! We are not going to go to hell. We can be sure of that. Another purpose that the Lord has in saving us is to give us happiness and peace right now here on earth. Now there is a lot of unhappiness in this world. There are troubles of all kinds. And many things get worse, not better. But we would all agree that salvation has brought us joys and blessing which we could not have had if the Lord had not saved us. All of these may be related to our hope, but in and of themselves they are not our hope. Let me be more specific about our hope, and what it actually is.

I hope you remember two times in chapter 1 where the Apostle Paul used the phrase, “that we should be.” You find it in verse 4, and you find it again in verse 12. (Read both of these verses.) It is apparent from these two verses that salvation has something, in fact, very much, to do with what God wants us to be! He wants us to be holy according to verse 4, and He wants us to be to the praise of His glory in verse 12. Now to be both of these mean the same. God has saved us to change us from what we have been into what He wants us to be. What could that be?

We have already seen in Romans 8:29, haven’t we, that we have been “predestined to be conformed to image of His Son,” the Lord Jesus Christ. And God works all things together for good because He uses all of the experiences of our lives – the trials and testings, the godly people that we meet, the knowledge of Christ that we learn from the Word – everything, to make us gradually, but most certainly, to be like Christ.

But if we still need further proof of our calling (and I don’t see how we could), let us go to 1 John, chapter 3, and look at the first three verses. What do they teach us? Let us see.

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (some MSS read, “and such we are”): therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Notice the words, “this hope.” Is it uncertain in the case of any child of God? The words of John in verse 2 are very positive, very certain: “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” This is our hope, a hope



that is guaranteed by the work of Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and by the declared purpose of God as revealed in His Word. To God alone be the glory. As I have said before, and it cannot be said too often, none of us would ever have thought of designing salvation like this – that every true child of God should by the hope given to us by God, some day, when we see the Lord, be made like Him.

Well, what does this mean? Well, the Apostle John said in verse 2 that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” So I am not going to claim that I know something that the Apostle John did not know. But in these verses he has given us some idea of what it will be like to be like the Lord John. It means that we will have a body like His glorious body. See Philippians 3:20-21. It means that from that moment on we will be sinless. It means that we will be able to live lives of perfect obedience to God. It means that death will be a thing of the past forever. We live eternally. We will never be Deity, but we will be like Him. And I am sure that we will learn much, much more when we get to glory.

Let me remind you of something you all know, and that is that this truth was a part of Paul’s prayer for the people of God in Ephesus, and from there to believers everywhere and for all time. It is appropriate for us to pray this prayer for ourselves, as well as for other believers we pray for. And in verse 18 where Paul was praying that God would give them “a spirit,” as it is translated in the KJV, and all but the NIV of the translations that I have, if spirit is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, what follows in verse 18 and on into verse 19 surely describes the work of the Holy Spirit. He is our divinely appointed Teacher, and His greatest delight, as these verses show, is to teach us of Christ.

Yesterday in our church Bible reading calendar, the NT reading was 2 Peter 1. And I had forgotten how often Peter mentioned “knowledge.” And he made it clear that he was referring to the knowledge of God and of Christ. Peter ended that epistle by telling the people to whom he was writing to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Spiritual growth comes through our growing in the knowledge of Christ. The Bible tells us many, many things, but basic to all the knowledge of Scripture, is the reality and depth to which we know God and Christ, and even the Holy Spirit. And this prayer is to that point.

But let us go on with the prayer. What is the second thing that we are to know? “What (*are*, understood) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18b). Now this is not our inheritance in God, but God’s inheritance in us. Here again is another aspect of our salvation which we would never have considered. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that God has appointed His Son to be “heir of all things.” This goes back to God’s purpose in creation, not only for His Son, but for Himself. As we see very briefly the universe in which the glory of God was reflected as it never has been since the fall of the human race into sin, and such as we see just the human family today, if there is a single human leader on earth who is concerned about God’s glory on and in the earth, I haven’t heard about him, but God’s purposes, while being universally ignored by men because the natural man has no conception that God has any interest in the earth, or that God has purposes which He intends to fulfill. And God’s purposes are centered in His people, the people He has chosen for Himself, and which will finally be displayed forever in the new heaven and new earth, which is the eternal state.

This is what the Apostle Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 15. Please turn to that chapter, and follow me as I begin reading at verse 20 and reading on down to verse 28:

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

This is God's inheritance, when all of His original purpose will find their fulfillment which was determined by God before creation, and which have been secured by the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness will be everywhere. The glory of God will be seen everywhere, but especially in the bodies and lives of those who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be a fulness ("riches") and glory (the presence of all the Members of the God) such as never has been seen before even by the eyes of the redeemed.

This is a request for the people of God to keep their eyes upon what God is doing in the world even when things seem to be going just like the Devil and the forces of evil intend to take us all. Instead, the truth is that God is going to claim His inheritance in His people as the basis of the regeneration of the world. So the glory does not go to the saints, but to the God Who has made them saints.

Now on to verse 19 where we come to the third "what" of Paul's prayer.

**1:19** Every child of God, if he is to accept by faith the burden of Paul's first two requests, must be focused upon the power of God, not upon the power of the people of God. What did Paul say was the greatest display of the power of God? It was not when He created the heavens and the earth (although the power of God in creation went beyond the greatest conception of God's power that the mind of man is able to take in.

Nor was God's power amply displayed in the days of Noah when God destroyed all but eight people living on the earth because of God was judging the greatness of all men upon the face of the whole earth. Nor was God power fully displayed when He humbled the nation Israel by His judgments, and finally drowning Pharaoh and his whole army in the Red Sea. And coupled with that was the destruction of the Canaanite nations, people more numerous than the Israelites, and more power. But they were no match for the Lord God of Israel. And then remember Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Or think of the power of God displayed in the miracles performed by our Lord Jesus Christ – the blind were given sight, the deaf were made to hear, the crippled walked, the lepers were cleansed, and the dead were raised – all testimonies to the incredible power of God.

All of these were great far beyond the ability of men. But the greatest display of the power of God, called , "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." When was it, the greatest demonstration of the power of God? Verse 20 tells us.

**1:20** It was that mighty power "which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," or simply, *in the heavenlies*. It had to be the greatest display of divine power when we consider the reason for His death, the burden that was placed upon Him by the Father, and what it means that He tasted death to the full providing full salvation for all of the saints in all generations from the beginning of time, to the end of time. Others were raised from the dead before our Lord Jesus Christ, but He was raised so completely that death no longer has dominion over Him. No wonder we sing of "God, the Omnipotent." The Devil was soundly defeated at the Cross, and the eternal judgment of all of the wicked was sealed when our Lord was raised from the dead. But He was not only raised never to be touched by death again, but He ascended back to the Father, and ever since has been seated at the Father's right hand where He ever lives to pray for His own.

The Ephesians needed to know how Paul prayed for them, and how they could pray for Him, and how they could pray for themselves, and how they could pray for each other. And not only needed to pray, but must pray.

But we see in detail how the resurrection affected all powers among men and angels.

**1:21** In my teaching of some of Paul's epistles, I have had the privilege of of quoting Dr. John Eadie, who was a leader and great Bible teacher in Scotland. He was born in 1810, and died 1872 when he was just 62 years old. He did not write on all of Paul's epistles, but he did write on Ephesians. And I want to read to you what he had to say about the last three verses of Ephesians. He felt that it did not serve much of a purpose to try to define the terms that Paul used in this verse because it would be impossible to distinguish in a meaning way the one from the other. But this is what he did say which is very, very valuable: This is what he wrote:

The clauses to the end of the chapter (from verse 21) explain and illustrate . . . the session at the right hand of God. These various (titles) are used as the abstract for the concrete, as if for sweeping significance (that is, to include every authority among men and angels). *The highest position in creation is (far) beneath Christ* (italics mine). Some of the beings that occupy those stations have specific and appropriate names, but not only above these, but above every conceivable office and being, Jesus is immeasurably exalted. There is no exception. He has no equal and no superior, not simply among those whose titles we are so far acquainted, but in the wide universe there is no name so high as His, among all its spheres, there is no renown that matches His. These principalities stand around and beneath the throne, but Jesus sits at (the right hand of the Father) (Eadie, John, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 100).

This includes not only all leaders from the past, but those in various places of authority in the present, and all that will ever take any office in the future, "not only in this age, but also in that which is to come." It includes all world leaders, all national leaders, all state leaders, all county leaders, all city leaders. All leaders of whatever may be independent of all of these groups. We could also say of political parties and politicians. Men revel in their authority, but in comparison with the Lord Jesus Christ, they are nothing, powerless, here today and gone tomorrow. Some of our Lord's last words on earth were, "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Who gave it to Him? The Father did, and He said this as our resurrected Lord.

These verses ought to remind us of Paul's words in his letter to the church at Philippi when he wrote of the humiliation and glory of Christ in Phil 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**1:22** The Lord is not yet reigning, but He has absolute sovereignty. God has "put all things under His feet," and now in this verse, and speaking directly to the Ephesian believers who as a local church were a part of the larger body of Christ, the Church, the Lord Jesus was "the head." Just as our heads exercise control over

our physical bodies, so Christ in living union with His people, who make up the Church, the body of Christ, is the Head of the Church. He, His will, and His Word, has the sole and absolute authority over the Church.

**1:23** The Church finds its fulness, reaches its greatest usefulness, and brings the greatest glory to Christ and to God, by living in union with Christ, drawing all its wisdom, power, and usefulness from its relationship to Christ. And so what Christ is to the world, He also is to His Church. Apart from Christ, the Church is totally without power, and without power it is useless. In Christ is resurrection power which operates in the Church, and through the Church out into the world.

## Ephesians 2

In our outline of Ephesians, we come to the fourth main heading which includes all of chapter 2:

### IV. The extension of salvation to the Gentiles (Eph. 2:1-22).

This chapter is divided into four parts. In it the Apostle Paul began by tracing their spiritual history from the past, in verses 1-6. Then to the future, in verses 7-10. He returned to the past in verses 11 and 12. And the chapter ends with their present, in verses 13-22.

So we begin with:

- A. "In time past" (22:1-6).
  - 1. For them, the Gentiles (2:1-3).
  - 2. For God (2:4-6).

There is a great change in the Apostle's letter as we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2. In the first fourteen verses Paul had been dealing with the blessing of all the people of God "in heavenly places," or, better, *in the heavenlies*. He had touched upon some of the major blessings that every believer now has in Christ, the Savior. Then he followed that great section by telling the Ephesian believers how he was praying for them concerning the blessings that they now had in Christ. It is clear from what he said in the first part of chapter 1 that salvation is a sovereign work of God in which He is carrying out His will. His prayer is certainly a part of that will, not something that is independent of it. It teaches us how important it is for us to pray for each other in connection with the will of God.

But now in chapter two we see how unworthy every believer was of salvation, when we see especially in verses 1-3 (which in the KJV is another one, long sentence), how totally undeserving and unworthy we all were of salvation, and, at the same time, how hopeless we were. And he came back to this again in verses 11 and 12. But we come to a great contrast in verse 4 where Paul mentioned God Who is "rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us." In 7 Paul spoke of "the exceeding riches" of God's grace, meaning that it is inexhaustible, and that God's grace is not limited by the number of sinners to be saved, nor is it limited by the extent to which any person has fallen into sin. Paul emphasized this when in 1 Timothy 1:14 and 15, he said,  
14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.  
15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

There would have been no hope for any of us apart from the grace of God. Notice that Paul had mentioned "grace" in verse 6 of chapter 1 also. In chapter 2 notice Paul's use of "grace" in verses 5, 7, and 8. (Read.) As Jerry Bridges has reminded us many times, "grace" is both negative and positive: negative, because God does not give us what we deserve, which is total condemnation; positive, because He does give us what we never could deserve. We might be inclined to think that the Apostle Paul was an exception. But let him speak for himself, as he did in 1 Corinthians 15:10:

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.  
We all are saved by grace. We grow in grace. And we live by the grace of God.

But let us begin our study of Ephesians 2.

**2:1** Verse 1 gives us our condition by nature. The words "hath he quickened" are not in the original, but were added by the translators to give us a complete statement. They probably, and rightly so, were anticipating what Paul said in verse 5 about the quickening of believers.

But it could be translated, as it is in the NASB, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” A marginal reading suggests, “And you being dead . . .” By nature and by birth we were “dead in trespasses and sins.” The word “being” in the Greek is a present, active participle, meaning that this continued to be in their present condition as Paul went on to explain. Before they were saved this was always and only their condition. Many explanations have been given for Paul’s use of these two words, but one thing is certain: they must include, as Eadie has said, “sin of every species, form, and manifestation, of intent as well as act, of resolve as well as execution, of inner meditation as well as outer result” (p. 119). And the fact that Paul used both words in the plural means that our guilt included many such offences.

A transgression is a violation of something that is known to be sin. It comes down to the very fact that God has written into every person’s heart the realization that there is a God, and that He has written on our consciences basic facts about pleasing Him or displeasing Him. The Law of God is written in men’s hearts. One thing that the epistles of the New Testament do for us is to spell out in great deal the names of sins. Millions of people are sinning against God just by just ignoring Him. And it goes from that to outright and intentional violations of what men do in opposition to God’s will. A transgression is such a violation in any way of God’s will. Man by nature is a rebel against God. A sin basically is missing the mark. Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned, and some short of the glory of God.” Man was created to glorify God. Sin causes us to miss that mark. Furthermore, to be “dead in trespasses and sins” is to be lifeless as far as God, and the things of God, are concerned. “Dead” means totally unable to help ourselves, separated from God, hopeless, locked in, dominated by sin, unable to escape, and yet it often is expressed in people’s lives that they are content with life that way. Only by the convicting and regenerating power of the Spirit can the hearts of people be changed.

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**2:2** Here Paul continued to speak of their past condition - “in time past.” “Walked” suggests that their sins were not just occasional, but they were their way of life, a life with which they were satisfied and which they were increasingly involved. It did not occur to us that we were headed in the wrong direction. We can see this now as we look back upon our lives before we were saved. Everybody has a God-given desire to be happy, but as long as we are walking, living, as we are by our sinful nature, we look for happiness in the wrong places and in the wrong things with the wrong people. Paul spoke of this again in verses 17 through 19 of chapter 4.

“The course of this world” is literally, *the age of this world*. It is, as we sometimes say, speaking of the world, *the spirit of the age*. It is “the world as fallen away from God” (p. 122) – a Godless, wicked, fallen world. Paul said that they lived like they would be expected to live, in the ways of the world, not to please God, but to live according to the ruling principle of the world, according to Charles Hodge. And this was “according to the prince of the power of the air.” Here Paul was speaking of the Devil. This statement seems to indicate that, although, Satan is called in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “the god of this world,” he does not belong to this world. He and his forces have no physical bodies like we do. He is a usurper. He appeared to Eve as a serpent who was a beautiful creature at that time. When Paul in Ephesians 6 spoke of our warfare, he said in Ephesians 6:12, that it was not against “flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, or as we have learned, “in the heavenlies.” One thing that makes him so dangerous to us is that we cannot see him. He rules over heavenly, spiritual, unseen forces, who rebelled against God when Lucifer did. And by tempting Eve to sin against God, who, in turn, persuaded her husband to do what God had told them not to do, the human race was brought into bondage to the Devil. And Paul had prayed in chapter 1, verse 19, that the believers in Ephesus, and the believers of all time, would know that it was only by “the exceeding greatness of His power,” God’s power, can anyone be set free. It is the same power by which the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead.

The Devil is clearly an intruder. And he has filled the world with His evil forces to lead as many others as he can into the same, eternal judgment which he faces. And he continuously and vigorously pursues his objective.

And then as Paul continued in Ephesians 2:2 he said that this spirit, this fallen angelic being, is the same “spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” All people are by nature the children of disobedience, which in the Greek text is *sons of disobedience*, sons of Adam’s disobedience, and whose lives until and unless God intervenes, live lives that are characterized by disobedience to God. So to this very day in which we live, this verse describes the nature of the all people who are without Christ. And people are not only dead, but as Paul went on to explain in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan has “blinded the minds of hem which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God (Deity), should shine unto them.” That is why it is so important for us, when seeking to win people to Christ, to give them the Gospel. We cannot argue people into the kingdom of God. The transformation of the human heart can only come about through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Gospel is what the Holy Spirit to bring us to God. This is what the Apostle Paul went on to say in 2 Corinthians 4:5-7,

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

**2:3** Notice that in this verse Paul changed his “ye” of verse 2 into “we.” It is good for us in speaking about salvation to people who are not saved, that we previously had the same problem that they have, and that we have been delivered, not because any goodness that God saw in us, but solely because of the grace of God. All people born since Adam sinned have had the same problem. And the proof of it is to be seen in our “conversation.” This is the word that we have considered before which in English has been changed from our talk to our walk. It speaks of the way we live, our conduct. The words “in time past” suggest that a great change had taken place in Paul’s life. “The lusts of the flesh” is one of the three expressions that the Apostle John used to describe the world in 1 John 2:15-17. The Apostle Paul and every other person who has become a child of God, used to live to seek to fulfill “the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.” “Flesh” can mean our old nature as well as our bodies. “Mind” speaks of how corrupted our thinking had become because of our sinful nature. People in their unregenerate state don’t think correctly about themselves, or how they should live, nor do they think correctly, if at all, about God. Here Paul was describing total depravity. It is not that every person is as bad as he can be, but that sin has affected every part of us, inwardly and outwardly. And all of this is not what we have *become*; it is what we *are* by nature. Consequently all people are “children of wrath,” which is related to *the sons of disobedience*. But according to Alford, suggests an even closer relationship. And “wrath” speaks not only of the judgment sinners are under, but the indignation of God which leads to judgment if some way is not found to satisfy the wrath of God. And we know that that is what the Lord Jesus Christ did when He died upon the Cross. He has delivered us from “the wrath to come” This is what the Apostle Paul said in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 when he had just written about how widespread the testimony of the church at Thessalonica had become:

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

So much at this point for the bad news. But if the Lord impresses the truth of these first three verses of Ephesians 2 on our hearts, it is actually good news because it opens our hearts to the remedy. There is the greatest possible contrast between verses 1, 2, and 3, at the verses which follow, beginning with the two words, “But

God . . .” The only hope that any person has is in God and what God has done to meet our needs. Verses 1-3 describe for us what theologians have rightly called, original sin. It is not something that happens to us the first time that we sin, but is our condition at our conception, and it becomes immediately evident after we are born. That precious baby that you hold in your arms will break your heart unless God sees fit to intervene with him or her to turn that little sinner into a saint. And that is what we need to pray for. How thankful we all should be for those two words, “But God . . .”

**2:4** Here, as I have tried to bring out in the outline I have given you is what is also true “in time past” *for God!* Our hope is not in something that needs to happen, but in something that has happened! And it is not something that other people have done for us, nor in what we can do for ourselves. But it is in *what God has done for us!* And what God has done is not because we deserve it. We deserve nothing but the outpouring of the wrath of God. But our hope is in the very nature of God. He is “rich in mercy.” He was moved to help us because of “His great love wherewith He loved us.” And Paul reminds us again in verse 5 that it is “by grace ye are saved.” And then in verse 7 we jump into the future, “That in the ages to come He come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Man in his unregenerate state had neither the wisdom nor the desire to ask God to do something to help, and so it was God Who took the initiative in saving us. And when did He do this? Was it after we had constantly experienced the disappointment and devastating effect of sin? No! It was “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), before creation itself. This is why Jeremiah could write even to ancient Israel in words we find in Jeremiah 31:3:

3 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

This why so many have said that the greatest word in John 3:16, is the little word “so.” And so the Apostle Paul said that God in the past, not in time, but in eternity, had set His love upon those whom He had chosen, that they would be saved.

This is truth that we can rejoice in, and rest in, and believe, not because we can explain it how it could possibly be, but because it stands written here in our Bibles. The thought here in verse 4 is continued in verse 5.

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**2:5** It is hard for us to conceive of God loving us, and loving us while we were in our sins, but in addition to this amazing truth is the further teaching God has quickened us together with Christ. What is the meaning of the word “quickened”? It is a compound word, made up of three Greek words, and found only here and in Colossians 2:13. It means “to make one alive together with another” (Thayer, p. 594). Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ.” And here we learn that we were made alive, raised from the dead, when Christ as raised. There is no free will for us in all of this. It was done, finished, for all who ever would believe in Christ, when Christ died on the Cross, and then when He was raised from the dead. In fact, God determined this in eternity past. In Revelation 13:8 our Lord is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” So our salvation was secured not only before we were born, but before there was any creation at all! It is inevitable that all of the elect will be saved. It sound ridiculous to talk about “free will,” doesn’t it? We exercise our will when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is only because God works in us “to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). That not only applies to our lives after we are saved, but it applies to our salvation.

Is it any wonder that, after making the amazing statement here in Ephesians 2, verse 4 and 5, Paul added, “for by grace are ye saved”? There is no other explanation for such revealed truth. So our mission in the world is to



bring to people the good news of the Gospel, not to try to argue them into salvation. It is “the Gospel” which “is the power of God unto salvation.” Cf. Rom. 1:16. Actually this statement, “for by grace are ye saved “ is not in the present tense, but in the perfect tense, and should be translated, “ye have been saved.” And the perfect tense expresses something that took place in the past, but continues into the present. Let me add that is is a perfect passive participle, indicating, not that we saved ourselves, but that someone else saved us, pointing to the work of all Three Members of the Godhead.

But Paul did not stop just with getting us saved. Look at what he added in verse 6.

**2:6** This is just as amazing as what we have already read. Not only were we chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world, as we learned in chapter 1, verse 4. But we were crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised up with Christ, but we have been made to sit with Him in the heavenlies with Christ. And where is He seated? At the Father’s right hand, the place of honor and full acceptance. And what is our Lord doing there? That is where He “ever lives to make intercession for us.” See Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34.

Physically we are still here on earth. Some day the Lord is going to come to take the whole Church to heaven. But in the sight of God *we are already there* in the Person of our Savior. All that we have been learning in these verses have to do with our union, a living union, with our Savior. God always sees us in Him. Spiritually we are in heaven, and bodily we will be there forever.

But the Apostle Paul is not even finished yet.

**2:7** What the Apostle Paul has been writing has had to do with what God has done in Christ which has been done in the past, leading up into the present. Now he takes us into the future.

“In the ages to come” speaks of eternity. You would think from what we have been reading that the whole story has been told. But that is not the case. Unfortunately for us, at least for now, the Lord has not revealed to us what He meant when He said that when we get to heaven, and all through eternity He is going to “show us the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. But look, even then it all will be channeled to us” through Christ Jesus.” Geoffrey Wilson, a British pastor, commented “that only eternity will suffice for the complete display of the surpassing riches of God’s grace in that kindness which He has shown us ‘in Christ Jesus’” (p. 49). The word “show” is in the middle voice, and it means *to show in Himself*. Regardless of how well we have learned of Him in this life, we will learn more and more about our blessed Savior throughout eternity. Only eternity will give us adequate “time” to learn about Him and to know and love Him!

And then Paul went back in verse 8 to elaborate on what he had just mentioned in verse 5, “by grace ye are saved.”

**2:8** Quoting Geoffrey Wilson again, he said that “Paul exultantly attributes the Ephesians’ salvation to the solitary achievement of the grace of God” (p. 49). All about salvation is a gift. Even the Lord Jesus is God’s gift to us. Even our faith is a gift from God. Our pardon and the forgiveness of every sin that we have ever committed, is a gift from God. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.. No part of it has come from us except for the need. And God’s grace also is exercised upon us by not giving us what we truly deserve – eternal judgment.

**2:9** “Not of works” - by which the Apostle Paul meant, not of our works. It is solely due to the work of Christ on the Cross. God designed salvation for His glory. Although everybody needs to be saved, it is

not a reward for works. It cannot be purchased. Long ago the prophet Isaiah told people to come “without money and without price. Pride is such a major part of our human nature that it is not unusual for us to think that there must have been something good in us, that caused God to save us. But that is never true, either before or after we are saved. Only the realization that salvation is all of grace, will keep us from boasting. As the Apostle Paul said, “But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14). And then Paul added, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (v. 15). A Jew without Christ and a Gentile without Christ, stand on exactly the same ground. Both alike are hopeless apart from the grace of God.

**2:10** Now, although we are not saved by our works, we are saved “unto good works.” “We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Man originated by divine creation. Because of sin man needs a new creation. That is what salvation is, a work of God. True children of God are not self-made, but God-made. And the strongest evidence that we have been saved are the good works that we do. This speaks of a complete transformation of a person’s life, and it is the strongest evidence that we have really been saved. The expression “that we should walk in them,” at the end of this verse means our walk is our work. And the details of our walk, a life that is pleasing to God, and which bears fruit to God, is given to us in the Word of God. A child of God has eternal life, and the evidence will be seen in a transformed life style. Before we finish Ephesians we are going to find a lot of instruction as to how we are to live. This is when God can be pleased with what we are and how we live. It is impossible for an unregenerate person to please God. We need life, and the works will follow. Our works include the way we think, the way we talk, the way we live. These include everything about us. We are never going to be perfect in this life, but we are going to be different, and different in God’s way. By our works we pursue holiness of life because our great objective in all that we are and do, is to please God. And the Bible tells us all about these works, this life. The Apostle James makes it very clear that without works we cannot rightly claim to know the Lord. As we all are learning in our Sunday morning studies, the first epistle of John was given to us that we might know that we have eternal life. And John mentioned our attitude toward sin, toward the people of God, toward the Word of God as to what we believe and how we are live. It talks to us about prayer. As Christians, true Christians, we walk by faith in God, and we are continually growing in all of the works that show that we are truly saved.

There is no more important truth anywhere in the Word of God than what we find here in the first two chapters of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

January 10, 2011

The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was written almost thirty years following the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. But a most important change took place among the people of God at that time. The Lord spoke of it primarily after His resurrection and before His ascension.. It had to do with the ministry of the Gospel to the Gentile world. While there was some evidence that Gentiles could be saved in OT times, for example, in the salvation of Naaman the Syrian, yet from the days of Abraham on through the OT and throughout the ministry of our Lord in the Gospels, there is abundant evidence that it was the purpose of God for the Gospel to go “to the Jew first,” as we read, for example in Romans 1:16. So that verse does not mean, as some have explained it, that when missionaries go into any area, they should go “to the Jew first,” but it does mean that that is exactly what happened. We see that clearly in our Lord’s ministry in the four Gospels. Again there were exceptions. For example, some Roman centurions came under the influence of the Gospel.

But when the Lord gave what we call the Great Commission which is recorded for us in Matthew 28:19, and 20, we notice a new emphasis. Let me read it to you. I am going to begin reading with verse 16. Here is what

Matthew wrote:

- 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.
- 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.
- 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
- 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
- 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:16-20).

Although there is some question about the last part of the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark, whether Mark wrote it, or it was added later, yet in Mark 16:14 and 15 we read these words:

- 14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
- 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

But then, when we come to the first chapter of the book of Acts we read these familiar words in verse 8, spoken by the Lord immediately before His ascension. Most of you know these words very well:

- 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

When we go on into Acts 2 we find the same emphasis. I want to take the time today to read a large portion of that chapter to point out that what took place on that particular Day of Pentecost was to lead to the very work we see being done in the book of Acts itself. A very important thing took place that day which had everything to do with the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles. (Read Acts 2:1-40, pointing out how Peter concluded in verses 38-40.)

What was it that actually happened in Jerusalem on that day in Acts 2? Well, the answer is given to us in our Lord's words in Acts 1, leading up to verse 8.

Now what special work of the Holy Spirit took place on the day that was immediately before them? The Lord said in Acts 1:5, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." What is the baptism with the Holy Spirit? We are told in 1 Corinthians 12:13. This is what that verse tells us: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

What is this "one body"? Paul told us in Ephesians 1, the last two verses. It is the Church. The Church is the body of Christ. We who have trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior, have been joined, united to Christ, like the members of our bodies make up our bodies. In the epistle to the Colossians, which we all know parallels the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul said, speaking of Christ in Colossians 1:18,

- 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Let me raise a very important question: Are the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Spirit the same work? All believers in Christ since the Day of Pentecost have been baptized by the Spirit. It is a once-for-all work for every child of God. It is by the baptism of the Spirit that we are made a part of the body of Christ. The filling of the Spirit enables us to live the Christian life, and to serve the Lord with power. It is not a permanent work, but is based upon our personal relationship with Christ and with the Spirit. It was manifested in the early days of the Church by speaking in tongues, but that gift was temporary, and now no longer exists.

Let me say another word or two about the church. As time went on, the Gospel was spread out to more and more people, and there was raised up a church in Ephesus, and in Philippi, and in Corinth, and in Rome, to name a few. In our study of the Revelation on Sunday mornings we learn more about the church in Ephesus at a later date. Then we learn about the church in Smyrna, and the church in Pergamos, and the church in Thyatira, and several others. Churches sprang up all over the Empire. And most of them were predominantly Gentile. Today there are thousands of churches, individual groups of believers who meet together for fellowship, to receive the teaching of the Word, and to pray. People will join churches who are not really saved. We read about some of them in 1 John 2:19. So individual churches can go bad. But only those who know the Lord are in the true Church, the Body of Christ.

Some day the Lord is going to return for His Church. That will not be the end of the world, but it will mean that the Church, the Body of Christ, is completed, and according to John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 will be removed from earth to heaven. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

But that day has not come yet. The Church is still on earth. All of this is called a mystery because God's work in the Church was a secret which God did not reveal until after the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ. And for several years after the Church began, God revealed primarily through His servant, the Apostle Paul, the amazing truths which have to do with the character of the Church, its mission in the world, its ministry to its own members, and its ultimate glory. And Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is an important part of the total revelation that God has given us concerning His people today – what we are to believe, how we are to live, and what our hope is. This is why the NT epistles were written.

January 11, 2011

Since it has been three weeks since we had our last class, I want to take a little time just to refresh our minds over the truth that we have considered in coming to the middle of chapter two.

After his customary salutation in the first two verses of chapter 1, Paul launched into what Bishop Westcott called, "A HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD" (p. 4). And, in the light that he used the little pronouns "us" and "we" and "our" again and again in this hymn of praise, he was indicating that the Gentile believers to whom he was writing already had the same blessings in salvation that he had! The expanded ministry of the Gospel to Gentiles had already begun, and had been going on for approximately thirty years. But it was the case with the Gentiles in those days, as it always is with anyone who is saved, we learn more about salvation after we are saved than we knew at the time we are saved.

Then in the latter part of chapter 1, beginning with 1:15, Paul told them how he had been praying that they would understand what God intended for them to know concerning their salvation. The teaching of the Word of God always needs to be preceded by prayer, carried out by prayer, and followed up with prayer. And this was not just a prayer that he had prayed for them in the past, but in verse 16 of chapter 1 he said that he had never stopped for them in this same way. And then it is, at the end of his prayer, that he mentioned the Church, the body of Christ, which had Christ as their head. And this turns out to be one of the main reasons that he had written to them.

Beginning with chapter 2 the Apostle reminded them of their condition before they were saved, admitting that it was not different from the Jews, as he did in 2:3. And then in verses 4 through 7 he used the word 'us' again.

So it was not because the Gentiles were more in need than the Jews, but God's dealings with both Jews and Gentiles was to meet the same spiritual needs of both groups. It just was His plan that it would go to the Jews first. The only basis upon which the Jews could be saved was by the mercy and grace of God. And the same

was true of the Gentiles. This takes us down through chapter 2 and verse 10.

But then in verse 11 he reminded them again that there was nothing in them that caused God to save them. But it was because of Christ Jesus (see 2:13).

January 17, 2011

Last week, because it had been three weeks since our Christmas break, I sought to emphasize with you the contrast between the plan and purpose of God for the Jews, beginning with Abraham in the OT and even continuing through the ministry of Christ on earth in the NT. But while during His mission on earth He had told His apostles not to go to the Gentiles, yet as the ministry drew to a close He began to speak about the spread of the Gospel to the whole world. For example, this is what we read in Matthew 10:5-6 as the Lord sent His apostles out to minister.

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

They were not even to go to the Samaritans, even as the Lord did in John 4 with the woman of Samaria. The Roman centurions among the Gentiles were also exceptions. But as a general rule, the Lord came specifically to minister to the Jews.

And then there was the story of the Syrophenician woman who came to the Lord seeking help for her child. The account is given in Mark 7:25-30:

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

That was the situation in the OT which carried over into the Gospels. The ministry that we read about through all of the OT was a ministry of the Jews to the Jews. But as the days of the Lord's ministry on earth we note that He began to issue a larger ministry to His disciples. And that was especially clear in Acts 1:8. (Quote.) And we see in the book of Acts how the Gospel was spread among the Gentiles, and it was all tied in with the beginning of what was called, the Church. This change was certainly in the mind of the Apostle John as late in the first century, he wrote concerning our Lord in John 1,

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

So the turning of the Lord to the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Lord by the Jews, took place in the same period, but all was in accordance the overall plan of God.

Yesterday, as I was reading through Ephesians, I was particularly struck with Paul's words in chapter 1, verse 9, where he said that God had made known to us, "the mystery of His will." God does not have a Plan B just in case Plan A does not work. What appears to us as a change was obviously a part of the whole outworking of the will of God. Remember that "mystery," does not mean *mysterious*. It means that God chose not to reveal this part of His will until toward the end of our Lord's time on earth and the events of our Lord's ministry on earth were coming to an end. In other words it was His secret revealed in His time for those who are truly His people. This word appears five more times in Ephesians. See 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19.

**2:11** This, and verse 12, tell us what the relationship of the Gentiles was in the dominant plan of God "in time past." They really had none except in the those instances where God was pleased to show His mercy. The Gentiles, as a group, were treated with disdain by the Jews. As Paul mentioned here, the Jews called them "the Uncircumcision" by those who called themselves "The Circumcision." The Lord never intended for circumcision to be a way of salvation, but as late (and later) we learn that some Jews will still preaching that "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). And even more is said regarding the Gentiles in the next verse here in Ephesians 2.

**2:12** Here was are told about all of the promises and blessings that had been given to the Jews, but not to the Gentiles.

**2:13** But it was clearly the death of the Lord Jesus Christ which brought about the great change. But it was not an afterthought with God as though He had been taken by surprise by our Lord's rejection by the Jews, but it was the next step in the outworking of God's foreordained plan. And it was marked by the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ.

It apparently was common to speak of the Jews as being near to God because the Law had been given to them. The prophets were Jews. The Gentiles had no access whatever to the Tabernacle, nor to the Temple, where God had been please to reveal His presence to the Jews. So the Gentiles were considered to be far off, and the Jews nigh. But what the Gentiles had always been, "far off," had been changed "by the blood of Christ." The Gentiles "are made nigh by the blood of Christ." And this is what the Apostle Peter had preached on the Day of Pentecost. We read this about the response of the Jews when Peter had concluded his message. In Acts 2:36 we read of Peter's concluding words to the Jews, followed by their response, and then an amazing statement from Peter, reading down in Acts 2 through verse 39:

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now notice this verse.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Clearly the door of salvation was opened to the Gentile world. Remember that Gentiles had been saved before. What took place in Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah, was an example, but now the Gospel was to go "to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Going back to verse 12 again, Dr. Chafer makes these helpful comments in helping us to understand the plight of the Jews before the Cross. He wrote:

Six disqualifying charges are here preferred. The Gentiles we "without Christ," not only personally

Christless, but having no national Messianic hope; they were outside Israel's one divinely recognized commonwealth; they were strangers from the covenants of promise." This does not deny but what God had predicted great earthly blessings for the Gentiles in the coming Kingdom Age (Dan. 7:13, 14; Micah 4:2); it asserts that He had entered into no covenant with them as He had with Israel; the Gentiles had "no hope" since no covenant promise had been accorded them; and they were without God in the world. They could make no claim to His purpose or favor, and they formed that portion of humanity which was under the curse and doomed to destruction. The world today knows little of the godless and hopeless condition of human life among the Gentiles in the days to which reference is made. We are told that, at the highest state of Greek culture under Alexander the Great, it was commonly held that the best thing was not to be born at all, and next to that was to die; so fully did the experience of the heart reflect the actual relation which is unknowingly sustained to God (Chafer, L. S., *The Ephesian Letter*, pp. 83, 84).

So now through the work of Christ on the Cross, is there hope for the hopeless, a different relationship to God and to Christ through the Gospel to be proclaimed to all the world, but "in Christ Jesus" there is a totally new, blessed, and eternal relationship for Jews and Gentiles with each other "in one body," which the Apostle Paul has already made clear, is the Church. And it was the Church that we born on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when those who believe in Christ were first baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ.

**2:14** It is interesting that the Apostle Paul puts the effect of the Gospel upon saved Jews and Gentiles in their relationship with each other before he mentioned their reconciliation with God in verse 16, when it is clear that the cause for the change between Jews and Gentiles is their reconciliation with God. Although under the Law, Gentiles could become Jewish proselytes, yet the Gentiles were never as fully accepted as those who had Jewish blood in their veins. The middle wall of partition was a wall in Herod's temple beyond which no Gentile could pass. Paul had been charged with taking Trophimus into the Temple, and the Jews would have killed him for it, if the soldiers had not intervened. See Acts 21:29 ff. There was not even such a thought among those who were in the body of Christ, the Church. Jews and Gentiles both share equally in the work of Christ on the Cross. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the churches of Galatia, had this to say in Galatians 3:26-28:

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

**2:15** That which divided the Jews from the Gentiles was the Law with all that it contained, but the Lord abolished it in His flesh," that is, by His death He met and satisfied all of the demands of the Law to bring together Jews and Gentiles as one man, so that one did not have more than another, but all benefitted equally.

**2:16** Here we come to reconciliation with God which was the major result of the work of Christ on the Cross. Again it is the Cross by which all believers have been reconciled to God, to the Jew as much as to the Gentile, and for the Gentile as much as for the Jew. There is no basis for enmity between the Jewish and Gentile believers because what one has, they all have. As Paul told the Galatians, "ye are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). Our reconciliation with God is not the result of anything that we have done. It is wholly a work of the Lord Jesus Christ Who was sent into this world to accomplish this work for us.

**2:17** Through this passage in the latter part of Ephesians 2 much emphasis has been placed upon the death of our Lord, and rightly so. The Jew would have still be in his sin, and the Gentile afar off if it had not

been for the work of Christ on the Cross. But now the words, “and He came,” speak of His resurrection. Though He died, and died such a horrible death, suffering the penalty for you and me and for all who had ever been saved, or whoever will be saved, “He came.” His tomb became an empty tomb. The angel who was in the tomb told those who had come to anoint the Lord’s dead body, told them, “He is not here; He is risen.” This angelic message was of such supreme importance that it is carried by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Cf. Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6; and Luke 24:6. These references are easy to remember because they are all in the last chapter of each Gospel, and the sixth verse of each chapter. The angel did not say, “He has gone away,” because that would not have been true. He could have gone right back to heaven, but He didn’t. He had promised some of them that He would meet them in Galilee, but at this point it was important that those who believed in Him would know that He was not in the tomb. Our text here in Ephesians 2:17 says that “He came.” He was alive, and He had come back to them although none of them had yet seen Him.

But why did He come, and to whom did He come? We know that after His resurrection no unbeliever ever saw Him. If most of us had been arranging His appearance after His resurrection, we probably would have made sure that every man of the Sanhedrin saw Him, as well as every member of the Roman hierarchy. But He came to the apostles, He came to His own. And what did He do? He preached peace “to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” A passage in the Gospel of John confirms that this was literally true. (Read John 20:19-26, paying special attention to verses 19, 21, and 26.) Our verse here in Ephesians 2 says that He preached “to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” This verse must not only speak of what the Lord did Himself between the time of His resurrection and His ascension, but how He has continued to preach through those whom He has sent from that day until this. The emphasis regarding the Lord’s ministry was always on preaching, not just behind a pulpit in some church, but wherever even one person would be willing to listen to the message. The Lord did not want people to wait until they discovered the message for themselves because if He did, He knew that no one would ever be looking for the message. It has to be preached. People need to be told. And so our Lord set the pattern, and the basic message is one of Peace – peace with God for man, and peace for men with men.

January 18, 2011

The basic message of the Gospel is that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). But the verse that tells us this, begins with, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God . . .” Sin alienated Adam and Eve from God, and made them afraid of God. The whole human race was alienated from God by Adam’s sin. When the Apostle Paul was describing the moral depravity of man, one of the things that he said was, “and the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17). Twice in Jeremiah’s prophecy he spoke of those who were saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Twice in Isaiah’s prophecy he said, “There is no peace, saith the Lord,” or, “saith my God, unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

What is peace? It is quietness of heart. It is rest of soul. It is a state of contentment. It can be partial and transitory, or it can be perfect. Only for the Christian can it be perfect, but it has to be learned. It depends upon keeping our minds stayed upon the Lord. See Isaiah 26:3 and 4, “Thou wilt keep him . . .” So it is a work of God in the soul. Circumstances can be far from what we would like for them to be, but still there can be peace.

I have told you often how Dr. Chafer, my main theology teacher when I was a student at Dallas Seminary, was also a great musician. He took chapel time at the Seminary probably every two or three weeks to teach us the great hymns of the Church. He not only taught us the words and the music, but he taught us to sing hymns with understanding.

One of the hymns that he taught us was known, like so many of the hymns, by the first few words of the first stanza. But this hymn had at least seven stanzas, and each stanza began with the same three words, “Peace,



perfect peace. Each stanza had only two lines. The first line was a question; the second line was an answer. Dr. Chafer had us sing the first line softly, thoughtfully, soberly. But He had us raise the volume on the second line and to sing with a note of triumph in our voice. Our children were able to get the podium that he used for many years, and it is now standing where you can see it as you come into our home. But I want to read the verses of that hymn because it speaks of so many circumstances where we can only have peace through keeping our minds focused on the Lord. Listen as I read the verses:

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?  
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?  
To do the will of Jesus, this is best.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?  
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, our loved ones far away?  
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

Peace, perfect peace our future all unknown?  
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?  
Jesus hath vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough; earth's troubles soon shall cease,  
And Jesus calls us to heaven's perfect peace.

But we not only have peace with God, which is ours by salvation, but we also can enjoy "the peace of God." Cf. Philippians 4:6-7, "Be careful for nothing, but . . ." This we all are learning through the daily experiences of our lives. We naturally have many fears. And we have a living, unseen enemy who loves to aggravate those fears. So we are constantly in a battle with ourselves, and with our circumstances, and with the Devil, to keep our hearts at peace. The Word of God plays a large part in our enjoyment of the peace of God. Cf. Psalms 119:165, "Great peace have they which love Thy law . . ." The Jews are on the right track when they have as their most-used greeting, Shalom, peace. In the epistles of the NT we are constantly reminded of our need for "grace and peace" every day of our lives. See Ephesians 1:2.

But Paul's chief emphasis in the passage before us at the end of Ephesians, chapter 2, appears to be the peace that we have with one another as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 18. (Read.) This has been Paul's emphasis from verse 14 on.

**2:18** This verse means that through the saving grace that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ we both have the same access to the Father by the Spirit of God. It is all "through Him," that is, through the suffering and death of Christ on our behalf. Note that all Three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned in this one verse.

**2:19** So what used to apply to us according to verse 14, is no longer true. We Gentiles who believe are no longer "strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens" with all of the people of God. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in "the household of God," which is the family of God. So with the Jews the

Gentiles became brothers and sisters in the family of God.

**2:20** The Apostle Paul in these verses mixes his metaphors, doesn't he? But it is because the work of our Lord is so abundant that we are citizens of heaven (v. 19). We are in the family, "the household of God," and here in verse 20 we are the temple of God. "The foundation of the apostles and prophets" has to be a reference to NT prophets, showing that the Church does not become a part of Israel, but that it is uniquely different, combining from Pentecost on until the rapture of the Church, what God is doing with His people in this present age.

**2:21** In OT times God dwelt among His people, first, in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. Now we, His people, are the temple in which God dwells. It is a "holy temple," a growing temple, as others are added to it. And it is still growing. Now we are not talking about any local church; we are speaking of the mystical body of Christ, made up of all today who are true believers in Christ.

**2:22** But Paul is presenting the true Church here in the last three verses of chapter 2 as a building in which God dwells "through the Spirit." And it is made up of all true believers in this present age which began in Acts 2, and it will be completed when the Lord comes in the air, and we all are caught up to meet Him, and taken to heaven.

Remember that the Church began on the Day of Pentecost when there was a baptism of the Spirit, the first one ever mentioned in Scripture. And it will be completed at the rapture of the Church.

## Ephesians 3

January 24, 2011

In the outline I gave you at the beginning of this study of Ephesians, the first part of chapter 3 comes under this heading:

V. The calling of the Apostle Paul (Eph. 3:1-12).

**3:1** Some expositors see in what Paul wrote in chapter 2, nothing more than the expansion of the Gospel to the Gentile world. It is certainly that, but Paul's main purpose as he stated it in the beginning of this chapter was to show that in expanding the Gospel ministry to the Gentile world, the church had had its beginning, and the Apostle Paul had been specifically chosen of God to carry this message to the infant church. It had been probably some thirty years since the ascension of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was began by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "For this cause" takes us back to chapter 2 (especially to the last four verses) to get the connection with what Paul was about to right in chapter 3.

Although Paul was actually a prisoner of Rome when he took his pen to write to the church at Ephesus, he called himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" because he had realized that the reason for His imprisonment was his ministry to the Gentiles. Anybody who was a friend of the Gentiles was not a friend of the Jews (that is what the Jews thought), and so it was really the opposition which Paul faced from his own countrymen that led to his imprisonment, and his trip to Rome. So in writing to the Gentiles in the church at Ephesus (which was mainly Gentile), Paul told them that his ministry to the Gentiles had resulted in his confinement. The ministry that God had called Paul to do had brought about his arrest, but he could see the sovereign hand of God in where he was. When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, which was at about the same time, he actually told the Gentiles in Philippi that what had happened to him had "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

**3:2** He knew that they would understand if they had heard that "the dispensation of the grace of God" had been given to him for them. Now a dispensation is really an assignment, an appointment, a calling from God to proclaim this further manifestation of the grace of God. Paul had been appointed an apostle to the Gentiles to tell them about the Church, this building, of which Christ was the foundation stone and all believers were as stones in the building.

When Paul written to the church at Corinth a few years before, he had told them what we read in 1 Corinthians 12:13:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

So, while Paul had been called especially to the Gentiles, his ministry included the Jews as well. And we are thinking of believers in both groups.

**3:3** Where did Paul get his message, and how did he get it? He got it from God, and it was given to him by direct revelation. And it had to do with "the mystery" which Paul had first mentioned in this letter back in 1:9. And I hope you remember that a "mystery" is a secret, something that God had planned to do back in eternity before creation. But now the time had come for believers to know this secret. Dr. Chafer mentioned in his commentary on Ephesians that the cults in ancient Babylon and Rome had their "secrets" to, but to make them known to outsiders could have been punished by physical death. Lodges today have their secrets, their mysteries, also that outsiders are not supposed to know. But the difference with God's mysteries or secrets was, and is, that all believers today are to know what they are. That is why we are studying Ephesians.

The way Paul learned about this mystery, the Church, is the same way that the writers of Scripture received the truth of God. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .” (2 Tim. 3:16). “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9-10). The writers of Scripture wrote what God revealed to them, and what they wrote has to be revealed to us by the Spirit. Paul was well acquainted with this work of the Spirit because he wrote thirteen epistles in the NT, and possibly fourteen.

Paul had just mentioned it before, but now he wanted to give the mystery more in detail.

**3:4** This verse ought to be an encouragement to us in reading our Bibles. Notice the words, “when ye read,” “ye may understand.” And to assure that we understand what we read, the Holy Spirit has been given to us.

**3:5** In this verse we have *a definition of a NT mystery*.

Notice that it is not just anybody who can come up with a mystery. They were men especially chose by God for this purpose: “Apostles and prophets.” There were no apostles in the OT. And here the prophets must be NT prophets. Some wrote, primarily the apostles; others only spoke. Often, as in this passage, those who wrote also explained what they wrote. The Lord has always been very concerned that people, especially the Lord’s people, understand what is written.

**3:6** In verse 5 we have a mystery defined; in this verse we have the mystery revealed. Up to the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the emphasis had been on getting the Gospel “to the Jew first.” Gentiles has been saved before, but not on the large scale that they were sought and brought to Christ after Pentecost. The Lord had promised Abraham that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). This was an OT hint of the coming NT mystery. But it was not until the Lord came that any mention was made of a Church. But Paul said it here in Ephesians 3:6. (Read the verse.)

**3:7** The word that Paul used for “a servant,” is the word from which we get our word, deacon. Paul was not saying that he held the office of a deacon in the any church. The word has as its primarily meaning one who serves others on behalf of the one who has sent him. He can be one who carries out orders or delivers a message.

So Paul felt a God-given responsibility to see that his message was written down, and also that it got to those for whom it was intended. Paul said that he “was made a minister.” God had made him a servant not only to see that they got the message, but that they understood it. Both in this verse and in the next verse Paul indicated how humbled he was to have this calling, and how unworthy of such a privilege. There is probably no higher honor that is bestowed upon us as the people of God than to be one of those who is called to give the Word of God to others. And I see no reason why this could not be a lady as well as a man. It was not a call to preach, as such, but to carry the good news that in the Church Jews and Gentiles enjoyed the same blessings, and stood on the same ground with each other.

When we think of the Apostle Paul, we think of one who was a powerful servant of the Lord. But you see here how he gave all of the glory to God. The “grace given” is *enabling grace*. Paul indicated that it was a great honor to serve the Lord, and that he could only be effective by “His power,” God’s power. When we get to chapter 6, we are going to see that the Apostle Paul exhorted all of the people to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10). If we go in our own strength, we will fail. But there is no limit to the

possibility for blessing if we go empowered by the Lord.

**3:8** Here Paul continued to talk about his ministry. What humility and grace characterized this dear man of God. To be “less than the least of all saints” is to be at the bottom of the pile. Remember that Paul was writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so this had to be his true feeling about himself. Probably the reason that we don’t see more blessing ourselves is because we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It was because he considered himself to be “less than the least of all saints” that he enjoyed a fuller measure of the grace of God and that he was given the special ministry that he had. Preaching the Gospel and the doctrine of the Church he called “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” This word “unsearchable” is only used in one other place in the NT in Romans 11:33 where Paul wrote about God, “how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.” We just can’t fully understand them because they are just too wonderful. It is about which we might say, “Where did they come from, and how did they get to me?” They leave us speechless! This means that many have tried to understand the Gospel, and what God is doing in the Church, as well as the judgments and ways of the Lord, and have gotten into more than they could comprehend.

But then Paul went on in the same vein in verse 9.

**3:9** Though it is impossible to make men fully see, fully perceive, the glory of the Gospel and the Church, yet Paul felt that it was His ministry to get people to see, to understand, as much as they could, until they felt as he felt that they also were “less than the least of all saints.”

Nevertheless the object in Paul’s ministry was “to make all men see.” The word that Paul used here for “see” is a word which means *to turn the lights on, to shed light upon, to illuminate*. The churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are lampstands, aren’t they? True preaching sheds light upon the text, doesn’t it? Actually we are the light of the world as the Lord was when He was here on earth. When we pray for anyone who does not know the Lord, we pray that the Lord will open their eyes so that they will see the truth of God’s Word. And Paul felt that this was his objective with everyone – men, women, young people, children.

What do we want them to see? Some texts read, “the fellowship of the mystery.” Others read, the stewardship, or the economy of the mystery. We want the light to shine upon the truth so that those who hear will have some understanding of the glory of the Gospel, as well as the glory of Christ’s Church, uniting all believers together in one body.

Again in the middle of this verse we have a definition of a mystery – truth which from before creation has been hidden in God “who created all thing by Jesus Christ.” Both the Gospel and the truth of the Church have to do with a greater understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**3:10** But then in verse 10 we come to one of the many revelations that we would never know if God had not revealed it here in His Word. What is it? Notice the word “now.” It was “now” when Paul wrote this, and it is “now,” for today – still going on. Who are the “principalities and powers in heavenly places”? They are angels. And what are they learning? They are watching the Church on earth, and learning from what God is doing in all of our lives, “the manifold wisdom of God.”

This is what we all need to learn. The wisdom of God is one of His greatest attributes. It is manifold which means that it is diverse. It has many different aspects. We see it in Christ. We see it in the Word. We see it in salvation. We see it in His love, and in His sovereignty. We see it in the Gospel. We see it in His judgments. We see it in His promises. We see it in the display of His power. We see it in creation. Learning to know God in the display of His wisdom, is an excellent place to start, continue and end. Verse 11 helps us to, to know the

wisdom of God.

**3:11** God's wisdom is eternal. It never grows. It never changes. It never fails, nor does it cease to be. If we lack wisdom, and we always do, we are to "ask of God" (Jas. 1:5). And God gives wisdom and is no respecter of persons.

**3:12** "Christ [is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). In Christ we have boldness and we have access with confidence through faith in Him, Christ. Thus the wisdom of God gives us strength and confidence that we are in the right way.

**3:13** Paul, knowing that he, too, was under the constant watchfulness and care, of an all-wise God, encouraged the believers in the church at Ephesus, not to faint, to be discouraged because of the trials he was experiencing in getting the Gospel and the truth of the Church to them, because it was all for their eternal and spiritual good.

And then we learn how Paul was praying for them.

January 31, 2011

VI. Paul's Second Prayer (Eph. 3:13-21).

There are many interesting things that we learn in the epistles of Paul about the place that prayer had in his life. Prayer was a major part of his daily life. One of the first things that is recorded about Paul after the Lord changed his life as he was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians and to bring them back in chains to Jerusalem, was when Ananias, one of believers in Damascus, to where to go to find Saul (as his name was then), and how he could be identified. And it was with these three words, "Behold, he prayeth." Paul had been blinded by the light when the Lord struck him down as he was nearing Damascus on his evil mission, and I suppose that would have made pray-ers out of any of us if that had happened to us. Anyway, from that time on Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul, was known for his prayers. He was very outspoken about them, not only that he prayed, but about the specific requests that he was presenting to the Lord. We have two such examples here in his epistle to the Ephesians. One at the end of chapter 1, and this prayer here at the end of chapter 2.

Paul prayed regularly throughout his life as a Christian for many believers in many places. Many were people he had led to the Lord; many were people he had heard about from others. Paul firmly believed that the preaching and teaching of the Word must always be preceded and followed by prayer. He believed very strongly in the power of the Word of God, but he believed that in answer to prayer, God made His Word even more fruitful.

God uses many things to move us to pray. We ought to pray because we are conscious of how much we need the Lord's blessing every day and in every way. But we also pray because it is God's will that we pray, not only for ourselves and our loved ones, but for believers whom God somehow brings into our lives. We also pray for people who don't know the Lord, that they will be saved.

In these two prayers in Ephesians we see that Paul was burdened to pray for two different reasons. In the prayer in chapter 1 we see that Paul prayed that the Ephesians would come to a greater and clearer understanding of the truth, particularly as it related to the Gospel. But here in chapter 3 he told them that he was praying for them because they were worried about him! Look at 3:13. And so why was he so moved to pray for them?

And so Paul's prayer, followed by his glorious doxology, prepares our hearts for all that Paul is going to tell us about how we are to live in the light of the glorious faithfulness of God.

What the Apostle Paul has prayed, and the consequent blessing of the Lord that follows, is not just for Paul, nor just for the Ephesian church two thousand years ago. But is for all of the body of Christ, the Church, "throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" – so be it! In the margin of my Bible I have this reading of the Greek: "Unto all generations of the age of the ages." So there is no time limit, nor need limit, on the love and faithfulness of God. So let us show our love for Him, by doing His will and living in obedience to His holy Word. All of this leads us to the practical instructions of Ephesians 4, 5, and 6.

## Ephesians 4 and 5

February 7, 2011

Characteristically the epistles of Paul fall into two divisions:

- 1) The doctrinal section.
- 2) The practical section, which is the application of the doctrine to daily living.

The division is true of Ephesians:

- 1) In chapters 1-3 we have the doctrine.
- 2) In chapters 4-6 we have the practical application of the doctrine.

This does not mean that there are no exhortations for living in the doctrinal section. Nor does it mean that there is no doctrine in the practical section. But it does mean that the emphasis in the first part is on doctrine (1-3), and on the second part is practical living (4-6).

Many make 6:10-20 a third part of the epistle. It deal with the spiritual warfare in which we are all engaged in our conflict with our relentless enemy, the Devil, and all of his Satanic forces, and the only way that they can be overcome.

The epistle to the Ephesians was very likely to be a circular letter for all of the churches which were in towns that were in the vicinity of Ephesus. This probably included the towns mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3.

There are two main doctrines which Paul discussed in the first three chapters: the Gospel, and the doctrine of the Church, the Body of Christ. But, at the same time, no one can read the first three chapters of this epistle without recognizing how important prayer was to the Apostle Paul. From the time he was saved, prayer occupied a major place in Paul's life and teaching. But when he was arrested and kept from his usual work, prayer became even more important to him. We see this in the prayer in chapter 1, and again in the prayer in chapter 3.

The Christian life is discussed in the practical section as a "walk." It came to him (and to us) out of the OT. For that reason it is called a Hebraism, a figure of speech used by godly Hebrews. For example, we read in Genesis 5:22 and 24 we read that "Enoch walked with God." In Genesis 6:9 we read that "Noah walked with God." And in Genesis 17:1 that the Lord said to Abram when he was ninety-nine years old, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." ***It speaks of conducting one's life in fellowship with God, progressively and increasingly, step by step.*** It is a very picturesque statement. In Hebrews 11:5 Enoch's life is described as one that was pleasing to God, which needs to be added in describing what it means to walk with God.

In Ephesians 4 through 6 the Apostle Paul used this expression five times:

- 1) In 4:1 "that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."
- 2) In 4:17 "that ye henceforth not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind."
- 3) In 5:2 we are told to "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us."
- 4) In 5:8 we are to "walk as children of light."
- 5) In 5:15 we are told, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."

**4:1** The "therefore" immediately follows the first three chapters, but especially the prayer that he had just spelled out to them in chapter 3. He did not write to them as an apostle (although he had every right to do so, and to command them as to what they should do). But his entreaty as a prisoner of the Lord could have had even a greater influence upon them than his command as an apostle. It was not his calling that was the basis of his appeal, but their calling. They knew that their calling had been in grace, in the grace of God, and that



they were totally unworthy of the blessings that they had in Christ. You and I are in the same position, aren't we? There was nothing in us, nor in any good thing that we might have done, to obligate God to call us to Himself and to His salvation. Their lives as believers were to reflect their total unworthiness for all that they had in Christ. By the way, the word church speaks of a called-out people, called out of the world, separated from the world, called to Christ.

Lenski says that the idea of being worthy is that of being of equal weight. Take the old balance scales as an illustration. We have our salvation on one side, and our conduct is on the other. This obviously is a challenge for which none of us is qualified. How could our conduct possibly balance the scales with our glorious salvation? Verse 2 gives us the answer.

**4:2** Paul mentioned four things in verse 2, and then he added another one in verse 3.

What is the first? Not just "lowliness," but "all lowliness." Westcott said in his commentary, "The test of our true apprehension of the Gospel is our sense of the majesty of God" (p. 56). 'Lowliness' is humility, and the word "all" before it seems to indicate not only our attitude toward God, but our attitude toward men, toward all men, believers and unbelievers alike. All of the words in verse 2 add to one another to contribute each of our lives toward what Paul will mention in verse 3, "the unity of the Spirit." We are not saved, and then set off by ourselves to have fellowship with the Lord, but we are saved and made a part of the body of Christ so that the characteristics that we seek to manifest before God, need to be obvious to each other in the Church.

What is "meekness"? While "lowliness" may have an application to both God and man, the emphasis has to do with God, but "meekness" shows our consideration of others and submission to them instead of standing up for "our rights" which we hear so much about today. Remember that the Lord said He was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:28-30). So Paul was exhorting us here to be like our Lord.

Next comes "with longsuffering." These three words all appear in Colossians 3:12-13. Conflicts have often appeared among the children of God. We must be prepared for them, and long for grace to behave while they are going on however long that may be. "Longsuffering" means *suffering long*.

And related to "longsuffering" is "forbearing one another in love." While we are faced with some difficult situation we are careful not to say the wrong thing, or to do the wrong thing. We must never forget commandments #1 and #2. And here it has to do with #2, loving one another as we love ourselves, or taking it higher as the Lord did, loving one another as the Lord has loved us.

And what is the purpose of all of this? Verse 3 tells us. See how the first three verses of this chapter are tied together toward the goal mentioned in verse 3.

**4:3** At this point we all need to remember 1 Corinthians 12:13. At Pentecost in Acts 2 the Church, the body of Christ, was born. And 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us that from that moment on all believers have been baptized by one Spirit into one body. That body is the body of Christ, so we can say that we are not only joined to each other, but what is most important is that we are joined to Christ.

I had a Greek teacher whom I greatly respected, tell all of us who were in the class that there is one meaning of baptism, or to baptize, which means to put in *and leave there*. We are so accustomed to think of water baptism as going under, and raising up. That is the picture that we have of our salvation. It pictures our union with Christ in His death, followed by His glorious resurrection. It does not picture our being with Christ, and then taken out. It pictures our salvation. But in connection with the baptism of the Spirit, we are baptized into the

body of Christ, and that is where we are! Paul was not using the figure of water baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13, he was speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit by which we are placed into the body of Christ, *and that is where we will always be!* It is not like water baptism. In fact, it is distinctly different. Water baptism and Spirit baptism really have no connection with each other. One is symbolic, as is water baptism; the other is spiritual, a definite work of the Holy Spirit upon all believers from Pentecost until the Rapture, when the Church will be completed and removed from the earth. "Endeavoring to keep" is an assignment that has been give to each one of us by God. It means that we have a precious treasure, the unity of the Spirit among all believers, which needs to be guarded, and for which we need to put forth every possible effort to see that is constantly exercised, to make sure that it is maintained. And from the first verses of this chapter this is a work which we constantly need to be attending to in our own hearts. We are to firmly stand for the truth, but to stand against those personality traits and extra Biblical points that tend to divide us. And having said all of this, the Apostle Paul then gave the Ephesians and all of us in the Body of Christ a check list to keep constantly before us. These, and only these, will enable us to keep the unity of the Spirit.

When you look at the Lord's work today, the multiplicity of churches, the great variety of doctrines many of which you can look in vain for in the Scriptures. The divisions had already started in the first century, and they have grown and grown until most people in churches today take all of this as the way God intended for His Church to be. One of the commentaries I have been using with real blessing and spiritual profit for myself, made a comment that I strongly disagree with. Speaking of the days when Paul was in prison and churches were largely on their own, this writer said, "As yet there was no outward organization binding together local churches." That is true. But those organizations as they have come about through the history of the Church, have done more to divide Christians. Then this writer made a statement which I wish would describe where we are today. He added, "Their unity lay in their common vital relation to Christ, maintained by the spiritual sympathy which held together the members of each church" (Westcott, B. F., p. 57). That is exactly where we ought to be today. It is not organizations that we need, it is the Spirit of God Whom we need. There are going to be countless numbers of people in hell who are depending on membership in some church to get them to heaven, instead of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "The unity of the Spirit," that is, the unity which the Holy Spirit has established among all believers, is a unity which calls for the constant attention of every true believer in Christ. It needs to be guarded with the greatest oversight.

Let's look at the check list, and you decide if these are where your hope is.

**4:4** The King James begins with "there is one body." The "there is" has been added to make the translation clearer, but what we should read here is just, "one Body." I think that the Apostle Paul wanted to jolt his readers. There is just one true Church. It is not an organization, but an organism, a living body. It is made up of people who in reality know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into that Body. Hopefully local churches intend to spread that truth. But I am afraid that is not the case with every church.

Next comes "one Spirit." There is only one Holy Spirit. He is a Member of the Godhead, and equal with the Father and with Christ in their Deity. The Apostle John tells us that there are many spirits that have gone out into the world, but they are evil spirits. There is just one Holy Spirit.

And third we are told that we are "called in one hope of your calling." The word "hope" is used in the Bible to describe why we have been saved and where we are eventually going to be. Most of you know all of this. We have been saved to be like Christ, and we are looking for Him to come back to take all of us to heaven. And at that time those who died in Christ will come with Him, be reunited with their glorified bodies, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." Life will go on on the earth, but the Church will be in heaven. All of this makes up

“one hope.”

**4:5** “One Lord,” and his full name is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only Savior of sinners. It was through His incarnation that He was crucified for our sins that we might have eternal forgiveness and be declared righteous before God. “Neither is there salvation in any other . . .” Never believe anyone who tells you that there is another Lord, another Savior. Either He saves us, or we will not be saved.

“One faith.” This word is rich in meaning, but I believe that it speaks of the Bible because “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” God has given us just one book with two parts, an Old Testament, and a New Testament. It is a living and powerful Word, infallible and eternal. It is truth. It reveals God to us, and it shows us our own need for God and His salvation. There is only one Word of God.

“One baptism.” I hope none of you will be disappointed when I tell you that this is not water baptism. This is the baptism of the Spirit, that work of the Holy Spirit by Whom we have been made members of the Body of Christ. There is only one true Church. We have many churches today – so many it has to be confusing to people. As I have said, it is not an organization, but an organism. The Lord’s people gather in local churches, and the best churches are those which follow the pattern laid out in the NT, and which most closely reflect the glory of the one body of Christ.

**4:6** “One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Remember that when the Apostle Paul wrote these words, he was writing to the believers in Ephesus and to all other believers wherever the original letter went, and to those of us today, who are in Christ.

In the three prepositions, above, through, and in, we have the complete story of our salvation. He is “above” us in that He is absolutely sovereign over us. None is greater than He is. His power is absolute and constant, stretching from eternity to eternity.

He is “through us.” It is by the working of His sovereign power that He can guarantee the fulfillment of all of His promises, and will fulfill His purposes for us. He works all things together for good for us who know Him and belong to Him, the good being our ultimate conformity to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And He is “in us.” He dwells in us in all of His fulness. Our hearts are His home. We are never separated from Him. He will never leave us, nor forsake us. He has promised His abiding presence. Fellowship with Him can be, and He wants it to be, a constant experience, the most blessed fellowship that any person could possibly experience. In the prayer which we studied last week in chapter 3, remember that the Apostle Paul prayed that the believers of Ephesus might know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19).

Let me call your attention to the fact that in verse 6, speaking of the one God and Father, this applies to all of us, and that He is above all of us, and He is through all of us, and He is in all of us. Oh, that we could really take all of this marvelous truth in, and rest on it, and partake of it, and experience the peace and joy that it can and will bring to all of us, from the strongest to the weakest. This ought to make us most diligent in what we are told to be in the opening verses of this chapter so that every member of the Church, the Body of Christ, can live in the enjoyment of what it really means to be a child of God. With all of the strength that God gives to us, we need to be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This is our salvation.

February 14, 2011

**4:7** As we move from verse 6 to verse 7 here in Ephesians 4, let me read to you what Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote about how the first six verses of Ephesians are tied in with what immediately follows.

This is Dr. Chafer's comment:

The preceding portion of this Chapter has given particular emphasis to those great fundamental facts of the Christian faith which are at once its unifying features. The Apostle now turns to the consideration of that diversity of gifts which characterizes the fellowship of the saints in the prosecution of the ministry committed unto them; which ministry is, by divine intent, unto the building up and completion of the Church – the body of Christ. The unity is not forgotten; it is rather that which binds together in one incomparable organism all those who, under God, may serve in the exercise of diversified gifts (*The Ephesian Letter*, pp. 126,127).

Everyone who is saved from that Day of Pentecost until the rapture of the Church, is in the Church, the Body of Christ. Everyone one of us is a part of that body of which Christ is the Head. And the Apostle Paul who was chosen by God to reveal this mystery, has, under the direction of the Holy Spirit shown how our human bodies illustrate our relationship to each other in the body of Christ. So I am going to ask you to turn to 1 Corinthians 12:13 again, I want you to follow in your Bible as I read from verse 12 down through verse 27. You can see that in verse 28 the teaching of the Apostle continues as it does in Ephesians 4 when we get down to verse 11. (By the way, let me point out to you that even though we are in the practical section of the book, Paul digressed temporarily to give us some very important *doctrine*.

(Read and comment on 1 Corinthians 12:13-27.)

(Romans 12:1-8 is also another passage that sheds light on the subject of our gifts in the body of Christ.)

The Apostle Paul assured each believer that Christ has given each member of the body of Christ, the "grace," the gift by grace, to minister to the other members of the body of Christ, to enable the body to grow and to function as one body for the glory of God. The best way for us to determine what our gift, or gifts, may be is just to pay attention to how the Lord leads in our lives and the opportunities He gives us for ministry to others. Undoubtedly a part of recognizing our gift will be to pay attention to what we enjoy doing, what we are capable of doing, and the opportunities we have which the Lord places before us. Our first responsibility is to the Lord, then to others who are the Lord's people, and then together in our united ministry in the body of Christ toward the world.

**4:8** This verse is at least in part a quotation of Psalm 68:18. There are several problems connected with it, but we have to recognize that the Spirit of God has a privilege that we as the Lord's people. He can quote from a passage which really does not say in its entirety what, in this case, the Apostle Paul was led to say, but it deals with the same subject. Paul here was showing that Christ had won by His victory on earth the right to confer gifts on His people as He chose to do. Psalm 68:18 speaks of the Lord's ascension which was preceded by His descent to the earth. So it speaks of His triumph over death, over sin, over Satan and all of the demons, which pictured Him as the mighty Conqueror, who had conquered as a note in my Bible renders it, "a multitude of captives." We are not told who the captives were, nor what happened to them. The point of the quotation is simply to show the position that the Lord held by virtue of His many victories on earth.

**4:9** Here the Apostle Paul sought to solve part of the problem by mentioning that He Who was in heaven had to descend into the earth before He could ascend into heaven. So these two verses contain the whole earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, and His victorious return to heaven where He now is in the place of

power at the right hand of the Father, and where He ever lives to intercede for the members of His body, the Church, who are on the earth. He is the mighty Conqueror, and He is prepared to lead His Church to victory on earth.

**4:10** What we have here had been the burden of Paul's prayer in chapter 1, his third request – which let us read from verse 19 to the end of chapter 1. (Read Eph. 1:19-23.)

Our ultimate assurance of the triumph of the Church is not to be seen in the Church herself, but in the Head of the Body, our Lord Jesus Christ. What looked like the greatest possible tragedy that could ever happen, was suddenly turned into the most glorious victories, and which was announced to those who came first to the tomb on the first day of that week, as they were greeted by the words of the angel, "He is not here; He is risen!"

We all need to remember these truths when the testimony of the Church on earth seems to be almost extinguished and its presence ignored. God's purposes for the Church will prevail because of the multiplied victories of the Head of the Church, the risen, glorified, and exalted Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**4:11** Now we come to those who were given to the Church at its beginning, as leaders of the Church.

The first to be mentioned are *the apostles*.

The Apostles had a unique place in the ministry of our Lord. By definition an apostle is one sent forth from another on a special mission. There originally were twelve. One of them, Judas Iscariot, proved to be an impostor, and was finally guilty of betraying the Lord into the hands of His enemies. Our Lord Himself is called an Apostle in Hebrews 3:1. Here He is called the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

In addition to Matthias who was elected to take the place of Judas, Barnabas is also called an apostle (Acts 14:14), but not in any official sense. It can be said that the authority of the NT rests upon the authority of the apostles and the commission that they had from our Lord. In the coming kingdom of God on earth the apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. See Matthew 19:28.

The apostles were all men who had seen the Lord in His resurrection glory. As the apostles died, they were not replaced.

Second in line were *prophets*. In Acts 15:32 Silas and Judas (not Iscariot) are spoken of as prophets. The word of the prophet is described in 1 Corinthians 14:3: "And he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." In the OT prophets were foretellers and forthtellers, but in the NT it seems that they were mainly forthtellers, special teacher of the Word for the purposes stated above in 1 Corinthians 14:3. But this office seems to have ceased early in the history of the Church like the apostles. And neither group was replaced.

Third we come to *evangelists*. As their title suggests, they were men whose main mission was the preaching of the Gospel. Westcott, Chafer and others believe that they were missionaries, possibly even pioneer missionaries who went out to preach the Gospel where it had not been preached before. This is one of the passions of the Apostle Paul. See Romans 15:20.

The fourth group were *both pastors and teachers*. Many speak of this office today as pastor-teacher. As the Gospel spread through the Roman world, local churches were located where believers could have fellowship together, where they could be taught, and where they could receive personal instruction concerning how to live

for the Lord, and encouragement to tell others about the Savior. Specifically verse 12 gave the responsibility of men occupying all of these position, but it was especially the work of the pastor-teacher.

**4:12** As some of you may have heard me say before, this verse should have been translated without any commas so it would be one simple statement of the work of the pastor-teacher in the local church. It is a sort of three in one definition of the work of the pastor-teachers. Often in churches more than one man may be supported by the church to give his full time to this ministry. But you see that it was to prepare others to share in the ministry that the body of Christ might be built up in the faith.

This verse states what is the primary purpose of the local church. It is not the evangelization of the world, but the edification of believers. The ministry of the pastor-teacher is primarily to the people of God. Evangelism will follow as well-taught believers go out from the church into the world to bear testimony to the Gospel of Christ. Pastors themselves need to be taught. In the past young men thought to be qualified for the ministry of the Word went and lived in the homes of older pastors, and were trained that way. Many have been self-taught. Seminaries have been used by the Lord, but as many seminaries drifted away from the Scripture, Bible institutes came into existence. It seems that there has been throughout the history of the Church, the body of Christ, a constant change in how men have been trained for the ministry in the local church. And there has always been the need that pastors continue to study, continue to grow, continue to apply the Word to their own lives in order to continue to be useful instruments that the Spirit of God blesses to the spiritual growth of people in local churches.

The ultimate goal is stated in verse 13.

**4:13** The thought here is not of the individual growth of each Christian, but the growth of the whole Church, the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul here speaks of the ultimate goal in the ministry to believers, a goal which will only be reached when the Church is in heaven. Notice that the Apostle Paul said here, “the unity of the faith.” This is doctrinal unity. “The faith” is Biblical doctrine. The Church on earth is far from that today, but in the purpose of God doctrinal unity will be experienced finally in heaven. It appears from this verse that one of the evidences that the Church is approaching the time of the Lord’s return, will be a Spirit-led move on the part of the Holy Spirit for greater agreement on the part of individual believers toward “the unity of the faith.”

But we see now too much of what Paul mentioned in verse 14.

**4:14** Here, in verses 14, 15, and 16 Paul emphasizes how that goal is to be reached, before he returned to the practical emphasis of this part of the epistle.

The problem in the local church, and so in the greater body of Christ, is that too many of the Lord’s people remain as *children in the faith*. They are saved, but they are not growing. And so they are tossed this way and that by “every wind of doctrine” which comes along. And those winds of doctrine keep coming which expose how greatly the Church is in need of Biblical instruction. What is “the sleight of men”? It is the trickery which false teachers use to turn believers away from the plain teaching of Scripture. The believers that are most susceptible to false teaching are those who do not know the truth of God’s Word. So they are wide open to deceit. The Apostle Peter gave a solemn warning which the people of God in every age need to pay attention to. It is found in 1 Peter 5:8-9:

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren

that are in the world.

February 21, 2011

It is no disgrace to be a child of God, that is, as one recently born into the family. But it is shameful for any of us to remain as children. John Eadie says that “ceasing to be children is . . . our duty” (p. 315). And the Lord has established the ministry to the Church, and to churches, that we might no longer be children in the faith. Any professed servant of the Lord who has any other purpose than to see the people of the Lord grow, is not a true servant of Christ.

Paul mentioned two characteristics of spiritual childhood. One, its tendency to be open to every doctrine that comes along, and two, the possibility of being influenced by them. We see this in Paul’s words, “tossed to and fro,” in the first place, and then “carried about with every wind of doctrine.” “Every wind of doctrine” indicates that false teaching does not just come from one or two places, but from all directions. People who are not established in the truth are prone to accept anything that comes along, especially where the Bible is used in some way. Get newborn babes in Christ started by reading the Word with prayer, and then to find a place where the Word of God is taught and applied for daily living.

The words at the end of this verse picture the false teacher as something like a gambler “winning by dishonesty without being suspected of it” (p. 316).

**4:15** There is a question here as to whether the words “in love” go with ‘speaking the truth,’ or with the following words, “may grow up into Him.” And it seems to me that the context would favor, “in love may grow up into him in all things.” One expositor translates it, “in love to Him.”

Now we all know that no Christian can grow without the Word. The Apostle Peter wrote about the same time as the Apostle Paul did these words, “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby, if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2-3). Thus he linked the Word with Christ. Christ is the key to Scripture, and seeing Christ in the Word is how we come to an understanding of Scripture. In the last verse of Peter’s second epistle he emphasized this relationship between Christ and the Word when he wrote, “But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

So it does now change the meaning of Ephesians 4:15 just to move the comma which was placed there by the translators and not as the Apostle Paul originally wrote it. The original has no punctuation. So without changing the text, we can read verse 15,

But speaking the truth, in love may grow upon unto Him (Christ) in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.

This ties in well with verse 13.

So I repeat, there can be no growth apart from the Word of God, reading it and understanding it. But we cannot understand it unless we see its connection with Christ. And our verse here indicates that it not only means seeing Christ in the Word, but learning to love Him through the Word. I refer again to what the Lord did with two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, the account of which is given to us in Luke 24.

“In all things” Bishop Moule translates, “with an ever deepening and more vivifying contact **into Him, in all respects, as to your whole being and your whole life**” (italics mine) (p. 194). The more our knowledge of the truth of God’s Word is related to Christ, the greater will be our faith, our hope, and our love for Him, and for each other. So often in our Bible reading and teaching this relationship between Christ and the Word is sadly

lacking, and so are the fruits that we should be getting from the Word. The Lord told the Jews in His day, “Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

**4:16** This brings out the effect of such teaching as the Apostle Paul had been speaking about, will have upon the whole Body of Christ, and even upon individual churches.

This teaching which relates the Word not only to Christ, but to a growing love for Christ, not only joins together the various parts of the Body, but causes them to function in the place that each part has in the body, and ultimately results in the increase of the body, but of the edifying of the body, and of the love which the members of the body are to have for each other, and for Christ, the Head of the Body.

So the Word must be taught and learned, but it must be taught in its relation to Christ, Who came as a revelation of God the Father. And the teaching of Christ will always produce a love for Christ. This is the Holy Spirit’s picture of what the Church should be, and can be under the blessing of the Holy Spirit Who loves to take the things of Christ, and show them to us. We can never exhaust the teaching of Scripture. With all of us, regardless of how long or how well we have studied the Word, there is always more to learn. And the same is true of Christ. There is always more to learn of Him, and the more we learn, the more we will love Him.

There has always been a scarcity of this kind of teaching. Too often teaching is divisive instead of edifying and uniting. And that is because there is often so little of Christ in our teaching, and often when we speak of Him, it is not because of our love for Him. Remember that the Apostle John in writing to the Ephesian church toward the end of the first century could commend them for their orthodoxy, and for their service, and even for their loyalty to the name of the Lord, but he rebuked them because they had left their first love, meaning that all that they did, was not done out of love for the Lord Himself. It is possible to preach and teach Christ, without really loving Christ. And the Lord knows the difference, and so should we! Let us all take a good look at our fellowship with the Lord. Is it better, or worse, than it used to be? It can hardly be the same because it either increases or decreases. If you think it is the same, it is probably not what it used to be.

Now we come to the next point in our outline:

### **VIII. “Walk not as other Gentiles walk (Eph. 4:17-32).**

As we begin this section let us contrast verse 17 through 19 with the first three verses of chapter 4. In the first verses of chapter 4 we are told how believers are to walk; in verses 17 through 19 we are told how unbelievers walk. Paul had been speaking in the first sixteen verses about how saved Gentiles are to live. Now he warned them how unsaved Gentiles live with orders from the Lord that they were not to live that way.

Now you would never have a passage like this in the Bible if it were not possible for believers to live the way they used to live. A true believer cannot continue to live the way he used to live, but he can depart from a godly walk temporarily, or occasionally, and this was a warning from the Lord not even to do that. We still have our old nature, the flesh. We live in a world that is fallen in sin, and captive to sin. And the Devil is still alive and is still our Enemy. When the Lord Jesus died on the Cross, He died not only to save us from the penalty of our sin, but He died to deliver us from this *trilogy of evil*.

This whole passage deals with the flesh. The world is represented by the “other Gentiles” mentioned in verse 17. And the Devil is mentioned in verse 27. But it is clear from this passage that our main problem in living for the Lord has to do with our old nature, the flesh.



The Apostle Paul taught us that “the carnal mind,” the mind of the flesh, “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). And in Romans 12:21 he told us, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” So it is not enough for us to seek to stay away from doing what is sinful in God’s sight, there has to be a positive replacements of that which is “good” in God’s sight. In the passage before us here at the end of Ephesians 2 the Apostle Paul spoke of *putting off the old man, and putting on the new man*. So again let me emphasize that our victory over sin is not just a matter of not doing the wrong thing, but we must oppose the evil by doing what is right in the sight of the Lord.

But let us first look at the negative side.

**4:17** Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to know that he was speaking for himself. He really believed what he was about to say. But he also wanted them to know that he was speaking for the Lord, on behalf of the Lord. He was speaking by divine inspiration!

The “therefore” that Paul used here shows that he had not forgotten what he had just written, but that he was building upon it, and showing the need for what he had just written. But it also gives unity to what he had just written to what he was about to write. And it would emphasize the importance of what he was continuing to say. So with reference to verses 1-16 and 17-32, it was not either-or, but both-and. The ultimate perfection of the Church always must be considered along with its present advancement. So writes John Eadie, pp.326, 327.

Here the Apostle Paul was insisting on what the Apostle James wrote in chapter 2 of his epistle, that a living faith is always followed by godly living. And yet it is important that we be reminded of this, and that we take measures in our lives to see that those changes are evident in our lives. If there are no changes, then we are not saved.

February 22, 2011

The word “henceforth” means *no longer*. The Apostle Paul was addressing a church that was at least made up of Gentiles. The course of their lives had been one way before, but now it was to be a different way. See 2:1-3. How had they, and all unbelievers walked, before they were saved. It was “in the vanity of their mind.”

Bishop Moule describes this expression in the following words. They lived under an *illusion* . . . beclouding their reason; for the principles of it can only seem good to man’s mind when the eternal facts are hidden from it, and sin, the great failure of all failures, seems to bring freedom and gain (p. 211).

In man’s unregenerate state, it seems to him that that which he hopes will bring life, actually ends in death. So the thought here is that man lives under a great deception. He is deluded. And this was the approach that the Devil took with Eve in the Garden of Eden. He told her that that which God had warned her would bring death, would actually make them like God, and that God did not want them to be like He was. That was a major lie when we now know that the whole purpose of our redemption is that we will be made like the Lord.

Moule said, “They mistake lie for truth, and sin for happiness” (p. 211, footnote 2). The natural man lives with that deception, and only the Holy Spirit can show him that what he believes is a lie!

A further description of the natural man is given in verse 18.

**4:18** The natural man cannot think straight about God or himself. He is ignorant of the truth, but thinks that he knows what is right. And he is locked in to his ignorance by a hard heart. And so with these words

the Apostle Paul shows the utter hopelessness and helplessness of all people who are without Christ. Eadie says in his commentary that a child in the youngest class in Sunday School “will answer questions that the greatest minds of the old heathen world grappled (with) in vain” (p. 330). The people with the greatest minds in the world have, if they do not know Christ, are ignorant of the simple statement in Scripture that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

For the Apostle Paul to say that man has been “alienated from the life of God,” implies what we know about Adam and Eve, that they were created in the likeness of God and in fellowship with God, or they could not be said to have been “alienated from the life of God.” Adam’s sin affected the whole human race, and it is only by the grace of God that anybody can be awakened to the sinfulness of his heart and his total alienation from God and a life of godliness. How thankful all of us should be that God in His grace has brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

But this is not all that the Apostle Paul had to say about people without Christ. See verse 19.

**4:19** Man, in his sinful condition, has made a bad situation worse. Eadie says that for man to be “past feeling” means that he is “beyond shame, or the sensation of regret” (p. 332). Oh, he may have a sense of guilt in some cases, and try to hide his sin, but such feelings are not sufficient to make him look for the remedy. Romans 1 tells how man has gone deeper and deeper into sin. And this in itself is evidence that God judges sin with more sin. Men give themselves over to greater sin which Paul described as “lasciviousness.” What is this? Greek scholars have not been able to learn the etymology, the origin, of this word, but by its use in Scripture most scholars take it to mean *unrestrained lust*. And it usually points to sexual immorality which has become so prevalent in our day. The longer people refuse to have anything to do with the truth of God, the deeper they go into sin. And sins never seem to travel alone. The Apostle Paul explains “lasciviousness” here as working “all uncleanness with greediness.” Without God, man is governed by his sinful nature, and he is led deeper and deeper into sin. Man does not know it, but even his self-righteousness is described in Scripture as “filthy rags.” See Isaiah 64:6-7:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

What a dark, dark picture Scripture gives us of man in his sin, and without God! And man’s destiny, apart from divine intervention, is horrible beyond all human imagination. In one word it is hell, eternal judgment and suffering with no hope that it will ever change.

But Paul changes the picture for us beginning with verse 20.

**4:20** The word “but” suggests a complete change. And “you” is given the place of emphasis in this verse. It means that the world is still the world, and sin is still the slave master that it has always been. But things are different now. “Ye have not so learned Christ.” It is important to understand that the Apostle Paul did not say, “Ye have not so learned *about* Christ,” but, “ye have not so learned Christ”!

The emphasis is upon Christ in this verse like it is in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know Him . . .” And like it is in Colossians 2:6, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.”

The Christian life begins when we know Christ, and it continues as we increase in our knowledge of Christ, not just as a doctrine, but in a living relationship with Christ, the Person, and in daily fellowship with Him as we

grow in Christ. So Paul was not speaking here of an accomplished fact, but of a growing knowledge through daily fellowship with Him. The only way such knowledge can increase for us is through the Word. And our knowledge of Christ teaches us immediately that we are no longer to live like other Gentiles who do not know the Lord, the way in which we walked before we knew Him. Knowing Christ is transforming in its effect upon our lives. It may begin with doctrine, but it results in a life of personal and living relationship with Christ. Only true believers know what this is.

Verse 21 gives further clarification of what Paul's words in verse 20 mean.

**4:21** There is a difference in hearing the Lord, as compared with just hearing about Him. Many hear about Him who never hear Him. The same can be true of the difference between being taught "by Him," or just learning about Him from others. The Lord Himself deals with those whom He calls to Himself. The disciples on the road to Emmaus knew a lot about the Lord, but what a difference it made when the Lord taught them Himself. Their hearts burned within them while He spoke to them and opened their eyes to know Him.

February 28, 2011

As we continue in this the second part of the practical section of this epistle, it is important that we remember that in the first section, which begins in verse 1 of chapter 4, the Apostle Paul said, that we are to walk worthy of the calling which we, as the people of God, have received. He meant that our lives are to show God's purpose in calling us to salvation. If we go back to chapter 1, while Paul did not speak of it particularly as our calling, yet that is what he was talking about in 1:4. (Read.) In 1 Thessalonians 4:7 he did say that we are "called unto holiness." Here in Ephesians, as Paul told the Ephesian believers how he was praying for them, his first request was "that ye may know the hope of his (God's) calling" (1:18), and earlier here in chapter 4, verse 4, Paul said that "ye are called in one hope of your calling." And to be holy is to be like the Lord Jesus.

Now when you consider who God is, as compared with who we are, you know and I know that in no way do we even begin to be worthy of such a calling. Therefore, as Paul said in 4:2 our lives are to be characterized with humility and longsuffering toward God, and patience toward each other. This harmonizes with the emphasis that the Apostle John made in 1 John. We are to have a humble heart toward God, and toward each other.

In this second part of the practical section, beginning with 4:17, we are told that we are not to live like unsaved Gentiles live, which is how we used to live. Paul mentioned Gentiles because the Ephesians church must have been predominantly Gentile.

Well, this means that they are no longer to be or do the way they used to be and do, but the old way of living was to be replaced by a new way of living. And so as we come now to verse 22 Paul describes the old way of living as what they were to "put off," and the new way of living as to what they were to "put on." It is like taking off our old clothes, and putting on the new. And, of course, all of this applies today to us as well.

**4:22** The way the Apostle Paul states this would allow us to translate the putting off and the putting on as infinitives, which they are in the original language. So relating this verse to verses 21 and 22, and what they had learned from Christ, it was that they were to put off the old man (v. 22) and to put on the new man. So these would be exhortations.

When we turn to the parallel passage in Colossians 3:9 and 10, this is what we read:

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created

him (Col. 3:9-10).

So in Ephesians the putting off and putting on seem to be what they needed to do, while in Colossians it is spoken of as something that they had done. And so we can say that it was both – when they were saved, this change was made in them, but in actual experience it was still what they needed to do. And this seems to be Paul's emphasis here in Ephesians.

“The former conversation” is their former conduct. “The old man” was the way they lived before they knew the Lord, and had been taught by Him. Their old life was lived by “deceitful lusts.” They were led to believe that they were on the right track when actually they were deceived and living on the wrong track.

The transition between the old life is stated in verse 23.

**4:23** This renewal is stated here as something that is continually taking place. As true Christians we learn to think differently about life. God is in our thoughts. We are learning more and more about Christ. We are a new creation. The Spirit of God continues to teach us and to transform us. It is an inner change that results in a change in behavior. Before God was not in our thoughts as anyone about Whom we needed to be concerned; now He is the One for Whom we are to live. It is a change, but never a perfect change. It is a growing change that results in less and less of sin and more and more of holiness. The change is never complete in this life. It will be completed when we see the Lord at His coming.

Romans 8:16 tells us that “the Spirit itself (or better, Himself) beareth witness with our spirit (human spirit) that we are the children (τέκνα) of God.” There is a renewal that is instantaneous when we are saved, but it increases as we grow in our understanding of the Word of God.

**4:24** The object of the renewal is an increase in outward evidence in the way we live that we are new creatures in Christ. And this new life is aware of the deceitfulness of the old life, and is concerned about a new life “in righteousness and true holiness.” Righteousness when mentioned with holiness means *being and doing right*; holiness means free from any defilement by sin. A better translation regarding the word “true,” would be *of the truth*, and probably applies as much to the word “righteousness” as it does to the word “holiness.” Both “righteousness” and “holiness” are ours through the Gospel, but are produced in us by the Holy Spirit using the Word. The NASB renders this clause, “And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God which has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

At this point, beginning with verse 25, the Apostle began to speak about particular sins which need to be put off, and what has to be put on in their place.

**4:25** It seems that it is significant that the Apostle Paul began this list with the sin of lying, not telling the truth. The fall of the human race into sin came about through the Devil's lie. God had told Adam and Eve that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that, if they did, they would die! The Devil told Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” On one occasion when the Lord was speaking to the Jews, He made this charge against them, and against the Devil. You will find our Lord's words in John 8:44:

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

It is significant that the Apostle Paul began with this sin. It is a sin that every person who has ever lived, has been guilty of. Cf. Psalm 58:3:

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. We have been learning a lot about the tongue from the epistle of James, haven't we? James stated a very signi-

ficant truth when he wrote, “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (Jas. 2:2b).

But note the special application that the Apostle Paul made of the need to be truthful. In the last part of verse 25 we read, “speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.” We need to be truthful with everyone, but we need to be especially truthful with our fellow-believers. Evidently if we are truthful there, then we will be more inclined to be truthful with everyone else.

**4:26** There are times when it is wrong and sinful not to be angry. There were times when the Lord was angry while He was here on earth. There are numerous illustrations of God being angry in OT times. He is going to be angry with the wicked eternally. But we must not be the kind of a person who cannot be reconciled to another person with whom he has had trouble. We are probably not wrong in saying that Paul’s chief emphasis here, consistent with the context in verse 25, that Paul’s main emphasis here is that we are to make our differences with our fellow-believers, short-lived. It certainly would apply to a husband and wife, and even to parents in disciplining their children, or two Christian friends. Even when believers may differ over doctrine, we are not to let that mar our fellowship. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:18-19:

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

**4:27** To “give place to the Devil,” is to put ourselves in the place of temptation – like David did when he saw Bathsheba bathing. Or it is to be unforgiving, or to seek some place for revenge when offended by someone. The Devil and his demons are quick to take advantage of any sinful situation. We need to be careful about what we read, or about what we watch on TV. Pornography on TV has become a major problem for a lot of professing Christians. A refusal to forgive is a situation that the Devil loves to take advantage of.

**4:28** Often we find in Scripture that the correction of some sin is by getting involved in that which is just the opposite. So the cure of stealing, is working. But not just working by itself, but in order that the former thief may be able to give to others who are in need. In addition, one commentator has written:

The Christian philosophy of labor is thus lifted far above the thought of what is right or fair in the economic field; it is lifted to the place where there is no room for selfishness or the motive of personal profit at all. *Giving becomes the motive for getting* (italics mine, Wilson, Geoffrey, *Ephesians*, p.100).

Cf. Acts 20:33-35 where the Apostle Paul was saying “good bye” to the Ephesian elders. Listen carefully as I read what he said to them:

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Charles Hodge, an honored expositor of Scripture, wrote in his commentary on Ephesians:

No one lives for himself, and no one should work for himself alone, but with the definite aim of helping others (p.162).

The same principle about how it is possible for us to be a blessing to others if we are careful about doing the right thing ourselves. Here in verse 29 it has to do with our speech.

**4:29** We are reminded here again that the tongue can be used as an instrument of blessing for others, or it can cause corruption. We are reminded again that the tongue can be an instrument of great blessing and great

good, or it can be an instrument of evil.

My former teacher in Seminary, Dr. Harry Ironside, told about an experience he had when a group of Christian husbands and wives got together for an evening of fellowship. As the hour started to get late, the ladies excused themselves to prepare refreshments. As soon as the ladies left the room, one of the men said, “Now that the ladies are gone, I’ve got a story I want to tell you men.” Dr. Ironside interrupted him immediately, and calling him by name, said, “Wait a minute. If your story is not fit for the ladies to hear, I wonder if it is suitable for the Holy Spirit to hear.” The man immediately was rebuked, and he said, “I’m sorry, Dr. Ironside, I forgot all about the Holy Spirit.”

I think that we are often more interested in making people laugh than we are to benefit them by what we talk about. This verse is a verse that I memorized years ago, and it always rebukes me when I read it or even quote it to myself. All of us need to remember that when we talk to anyone, we need to leave them a little better than they were when we met them.

When we get into chapter 5 we are going to come to a passage which touches on this same theme, and it is in connection with the third characteristic of our walk with the Lord, our walk in love. And in connection with what we have been learning in 1 John about loving one another in the family of God, this is a very appropriate Scripture. Perhaps these words have ministered to your heart as you have read through Ephesians. Let me read the first four verses of chapter 5 while you look at them, and listen. **(Read Eph. 5:1-4.)**

Notice that the Apostle Paul linked together sins of the whole body (“fornication”) with sins of the tongue (filthiness, foolish talking, jesting). Sometimes we need to help people by giving them money. But how often do we realize that we need to help people by the words that we say to them.

The other day Katie, my sweet granddaughter, sent me a picture which she had drawn of their new dog, Payton, And written below the picture were the words of Isaiah 40:29-31. I was having one of those “down days” that all of us have, and reading those verses was just like the Lord was speaking them to me. Katie really ministered to her Granddaddy that day, and I was very, very thankful. We never know what people we meet are going through. How important it is that we have a word of encouragement for them! I’m not talking about preaching to them, just something that the Lord might use to bless their souls. Some things we should never talk about. Others, words of encouragement, ought always to be in our hearts so they can easily slip out of our mouths.

Do you remember that good verse, Isaiah 50, verse 4?

4 The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

So let us remember Ephesians 4:29. Put it on your list of verses to memorize. And then be sure to do what it says. You can be a blessing to someone, and that will always bring blessings to you too.

To do otherwise is to . . .

**4:30** Grieve the Holy Spirit – and that is what we are *not* to do. You know, the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is a Member of the Trinity. And He lives in your heart all day long, day after day, and night after night! What does it mean to grieve Him? It means, as you might guess, to make Him sad. You and I can by our walk make Him sad, or we can make Him glad. But what is important for us to know about grieving the Holy Spirit is that when we do, He never leaves us, but He withdraws from us those blessings which otherwise would be poured out upon if we were living to please Him.

I take it from the word “and” at the beginning of verse 30 that Paul is not referring to what he has just said, but he was adding what he was about to say. We can grieve Him by saying bad things when we could be saying good things, but we can grieve Him by what follows in verses 31 and 32. But before we go on to those verses, notice the Paul reminds us here that all of us, without exception (if we know the Lord) “are sealed unto the day of redemption.” What does that mean, and what day is that?

The fact that we are “sealed,” is evidence that we belong to Him. That is permanent. In that we are totally secure. See 1:13. “The day of redemption” is the day when we and all of the Church will see Him, and then we will be *where we want to be and where we need to be, and what we have been saved to be* – “like Him” – our Lord Jesus Christ – “for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Verse 31 is negative; verse 32 is positive.

**4:31** Six things are to be “put away.” These characteristics do not belong to the child of God:

- 1) “Bitterness” – harsh, resentful, sharp and disagreeable.
- 2) “Wrath” – an outburst of anger, but which goes as fast as it came. Rage is a good translation.
- 3) “Anger” – a more settled form than wrath, which waits for an opportunity to get revenge.
- 4) “Clamor” -- outspoken complaint, like the children of Israel often opposed Moses and Aaron.
- 5) “Evil speaking” – blasphemy against God and man, slander, designed to hurt people, unrestrained denunciation.
- 6) “All malice” – what Eadie calls the root of all vices, bad-heartedness, desire to harm others.

All of these are to be put away by the people of God. They are expressions of the natural man, not the man of God.

**4:32** The characteristics in verse 31 are characteristics of the natural man. The characteristics in this verse are of the people of God. But these are the results of spiritual growth. The verb “be” could be translated “become.” The Apostle Paul mentioned three characteristics here:

- 1) “Kind” – courteous, earnest desire to help in any way possible.
- 2) “Tenderhearted” – full of deep and mellow affection (Eadie), sympathetic. Just the opposite of the traits mentioned in the previous verse.
- 3) “Forgiving” – and forgetting, even before forgiveness is sought and asked for, Eadie says “full and free and irretrievable.”

This section of the practical section concludes with a reference to the Gospel. In dealing with others the unsaved are inclined only to think of themselves. The believer is to remember Calvary, and the grace that has been extended to all believers as more and more they reveal by their lives that they have been saved to be made like our Lord.

March 7, 2011

As we move into Ephesians 5 we come to the third “walk” in this practical section of this epistle. The first was at the beginning of chapter 4: “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” The second was in 5:17: “that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.” The “other Gentiles” are Gentiles who are not Christians.

Now we come to the third “walk,” in 5:1-2. We are to “walk in love.” Now when some people come to a statement like this in the Bible, they will ask themselves, “Now what does this mean?” That is a good question

if you begin looking at the context of a statement like this instead of just trying to figure out on your own what the Apostle (in this case) meant. So let us begin with 5:1 to see how Paul continued writing, possibly by reading again what led up to this statement, and what followed.

**5:1** Obviously verses 1 and 2 of this chapter form one sentence. The word “therefore, as we have seen before, is *there* for a reason. The Apostle was drawing what he was about to write, with what he had just written. So let us read verse 32 of chapter 4, and then read on into chapter 5. Now we are in a position to see that verse 32 of chapter 4 is the beginning, or led the way for the exhortations that follow in chapter 5. The first exhortation of chapter 5 is that we are to “be followers of God, as dear children.” And the “therefore” now means that in verse 32 the Apostle Paul was talking about what it means to “be followers of God.” Nobody has ever been kinder than God has been to us, His people. Nobody has been more “tenderhearted” to us than He has. Nor has anyone been more forgiving to us that God has been. So if we are going to be “followers of God,” we are going to be kind, and tenderhearted toward others, and be forgiving of others just like the Lord has forgiven us. That is a big order, isn’t it? But if we are going to be following God in our daily living, these are some of the things that we are going to need to do.

But before we leave this verse, let us notice Paul’s words, “as dear children.” Whose “dear children” were the Ephesian believers? They were God’s “dear children,” and so are we. Now this speaks of how God feels about us. We are His “dear children.” He saved us because He loved us, and He continues to love us. His love never changes, nor does it ever cease. But there is a real suggestion here that just has been motivated by His love for us, we should be motivated by His love for us to follow Him and to live like our Lord did while He was here on earth. But as I started reading Deuteronomy this week, and saw how Moses reviewed God’s dealings with the children of Israel while they were in Egypt, and then from Egypt to Canaan, although there were times when God judged them for their disobedience, I just had to recognize that the Jews would never have gotten into the promised land if God had not loved them, and loved them dearly.

So, bring this all down to us today, and knowing how much God loves us, always has loved us, and always will love us, we are to be motivated to follow Him, to obey Him, not by our love for Him (which is so imperfect), but by His love for us!

The word “be” is the same word that Paul used for “be” in 4:32, and really would be better translated (as I said last week), *become*. Sad to say, none of us follows the Lord as we should, but we are to spend our live here on earth becoming more and more obedient, and becoming more motivated to obey God because of His love for us.

Now we are ready for verse 2.

**5:2** Now we are ready for our side of our relationship with God. Our “walk,” our daily living, is to be motivated by our love for the Lord. Now Paul does not add to verse 32 of chapter 4 yet, but he gives us the greatest illustration of God’s love for us, as the pattern, and as the illustration, of how we are we are to love each other, and what it means to “walk in love.”

There is no greater example of love than that which is to be seen at Calvary. It was the expression of God’s love for us in sending His only Son to die for us that we might be saved, but it was an expression of our Lord’s love for us in coming to give Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Notice that Paul said that Christ gave Himself “for us,” but as “an offering and a sacrifice to God.” Charles Hodge said that our Lord’s sacrifice “for a sweet-smelling savor,” could be called “a savor of rest,” – “that is, that which composes, pacifies, or pleases” (p. 166). God laid on His Son the penalty for our sins, and brought eternal benefits to us, His elect, who were just as



deserving of total judgment as any sinner who is sentenced to eternal judgment in hell.

From verse 3 of chapter 5 down through verse 7 Paul emphasized primarily what walking in love *is not!* And at that point we get to the fourth characteristic of the way we are to live which is stated in verse 8: “walk as children of light,” which is closely related to walking in love.

But before the Apostle proceeded to speak of what it was to walk in love, he spoke very strongly about what it was not!

**5:3** The world’s idea of love, as compared with the love of God, is as far apart as two things could possibly be. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 we have a passage which is very similar to what we have here in the beginning of Ephesians 5. (“Concupiscence” in 1 Thess. 4:5 is *lustful passion*.)

“Fornication” includes all kinds of sexual immorality – including adultery and incest. Geoffrey Wilson said in his commentary on Ephesians that this course of living, including “all uncleanness and covetousness” were “all but universal in the ancient Gentile world” (p. 105). And I am afraid that we have to say the same thing about American culture today. The more an individual or a nation turns against the Lord, the deeper that person falls into all kinds of sin, but especially so with sexual immorality.

“All uncleanness” is anything that can lead to sexual immorality – reading suggestive literature, looking at sexual pictures, pornography. Today TV is a major source of “uncleanness.” “Covetousness” is greed. See 4:19. Some commentators link this to man’s passion for sex, but the general consensus is that it “avaricious greed” (Eadie, p. 370). It is a sin which leads to other things, such as, stealing and lying. See Col. 3:5; Luke 12:15; Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 9:5.

These sins are so abominable in the sight of God that they are never to be mentioned as consistent with the life of a child of God. The Apostle here called believers “saints” to emphasize that we have been called to holiness, and that there is never to be any compromise with sin, no excuse for a child of God to be involved in sin. “Saints” are not a special, a higher class of believers, but all believers are “saints,” and so there is not excuse for any child of God to be involved in sin in any form.

But then the Apostle went on to speak again of sins of the tongue as he had in 4:29. And it is because sins of the tongue can often lead to the grosser sin. Sins in our talk can often be the first step in a sinful walk.

**5:4** “Neither filthiness” – Eadie says of this word “denotes indecency, obscenity, or wantonness, whatever, not merely in speech but in anything, is opposed to purity” (p. 371). There seems to be a tendency in everyone to grade sins from those that we feel are not so bad to those who are gross. But the word of God warns us against all sin. When the Devil tempted Eve, there was no possibility that she could have committed adultery, but he tempted her with food that was good to look at, pleasant to eat, and desirable to make Eve wise. But this led to Adam’s sin, and to the judgment of God upon the whole human race. There is *never* anything good about sin, and yet the corruption of our nature always makes it appear to be good.

“Foolish talking” is the talk of fools. Proverbs 14 and 15 have a lot to say about fools. King David said, The fool hath said in his heart, no God for me” (Psalm 14:1), and his speech demonstrates what he believes. Foolish talk often leads to sinful talk. God warns us in his word not only to avoid sin in every form, but to avoid those things that can lead us easily into sin.

What is “jesting”? This is to make light of sin, a story that can be taken two ways, either good or bad, and the

hearer who takes it in a bad way is the one who is accuse of having an evil mind.

The Apostle says that none of these things is ever proper for the child of God.

But how are we to guard against it? It is by giving thanks to God. This is always proper for the child of God, but unfortunately it is often the most neglected of what we say. Psalm 113:3 tells us that “from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord’s Name is to be praised.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18 tells us, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” We overcome the wrong use of the tongue by using it God’s way as Paul stated it in Romans 12:21, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

At this point it is a good exercise for all of us to stop and to think of the many blessings God has given to us each day for which we have failed to give Him thanks. We all will be surprised at how often we have failed to thank God for the blessings He daily “loadeth” upon us as we are told in Psalm 68:19: “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.

**5:5** Often in Scripture we are reminded of truth that we already know, but have been inclined to forget.

With regard to salvation, many people are prone to treat as a Christian any person who has ever made a profession of faith in Christ. But the Scripture puts the emphasis on what is going on in our lives now, at the present time. For example, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). “We know” now “because we love” now “the brethren.

So we know that whatever claims a person may make for himself, if he continues to be a whoremonger, or an unclean person, or covetous, which is idolatry, he has no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Such a person is unsaved regardless of what he professes to be true of himself. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, any person who is in Christ, is a new creature, a new creation. Old things, the old life has passed away, and all things have become new. So the supreme test of a person’s profession, is not in what he says about himself, but in how he lives. He will not be perfect, but he will be changed. This we know, or should know if we don’t.

Covetousness is so common in the world that we fail to understand, apart from the Word of God, what it is. It is idolatry. The desire for things holds the place in our lives that God should have. Advertisements are specifically designed to make idolaters out of all of us. Covetousness is a violation of the tenth commandment, and so it has always been condemned along with having other gods before the Lord, in place of the Lord.

But what we may not know is mentioned in verse 6. And this is a point on which many people are deceived – both the false professor, and the person who believes what that person claims for himself when there is no evidence of a change.

**5:6** The person who claims to be saved, but whose life contradicts what he says about himself, is speaking “vain words.” They are words which mean nothing. He is just as unsaved as he ever was, as unsaved as any other person who has never made such a profession. He is telling a lie, which is anything that is not true! He may be sincerely deceived, but when he stands before the Lord he is going to be judged by the truth.

And because his profession is false, he is in just as much danger of the wrath of God as every person is who has never professed to be a Christian. He belongs to “the children of disobedience.” See what Paul said about “the children of disobedience in 2:2.

March 14, 2011

**5:7** I think that we are all inclined to give a person the benefit of the doubt, but herein lies a danger for all of us, but particularly for those who are young in the faith. Again here the word “be” means “become.” It suggests that the person who is not really a Christian, but claims to be, may try to use persuasive words to lure the Christian into sin. We all have friends who are not Christians, but they must not become *close* friends!

For many years there has been a growing tendency for Christians to compromise with the world. I can remember days in which movie attendance was frowned upon by spiritual leaders, as was dancing, drinking alcoholic beverages. But today movies are brought into our homes, and you can be sure that being such a secret place has caused many Christians to get hooked on pornography just by beginning to look at movies which supposedly are harmless. Lucille and I were dinner guests with a Christian couple not long ago, and I have no doubt about their faith, but they offered us a glass of wine before dinner. I could tell by their reaction when we refused as graciously as we could, that they were surprised and perhaps a little bit offended. And this was not the first time that this had happened to us.

Another relationship that we had with a Christian couple came to an end when we expressed surprise that they were going to have dancing at their daughter’s wedding. Their daughter, as far as I remember, never came to church with them.

Lucille had a roommate in college who was a pastor’s daughter, but she differed with Lucille about certain standards that Lucille had with the comment that Lucille was more serious about being a Christian than she was. She was not an immoral girl at all, but she left room in her life for some things that were not consistent with Scripture. The problem is, that little compromises lead to taking greater liberties that can dampen our relationship with the Lord.

I have told many of you that my Dad was not raised in a Christian home. He never had much to say about his childhood and early adult years. But he did let us know that he got addicted to gambling. That became a real snare to him, and probably led to other things. But as I was born my Dad had been a Christian for several years, and said repeatedly that he did not want his boys to be raised like he was. So one restriction in our home was that we were never to bring a deck of playing cards into our home. And I heard him say many times, “If you don’t learn to play cards, you will never learn to gamble.” That is the way my Dad lived as a Christian about drinking and many other things.

Now the Bible is very clear about what it teaches concerning “the world” and worldly living. Among our memory verses in James that we have this week is James 4:4 which says:

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

I can assure you that there are plenty of preachers in Portland that would never chose that verse as a text for a sermon. We are even taught to be friendly with the world. Many churches deliberately plan their services to make non-Christians feel comfortable, feel “at home,” when they come to church. So the pastor tries to be a “stand up comedian,” and the services are designed to make people “feel good.” Where do they find these ideas in the Word? They don’t!!! They get it from the world. It works in the world, so why shouldn’t it work in our churches? It brings people in by the hundreds and thousands, but the message of the church has to be watered down in order to keep them. And then most of them only go to church once in the week.

The Bible is very clear about what the world is, and what our relationship with the world should be. And Ephesians 5:7 is a good illustration of what it should be. The verse suggests that the world is constantly putting

pressure upon us to be like they are. But that is just the opposite of what the word of God tells us about how we should live. And the verse I read to you from James 4:4 is another verse. And I have called your attention before to verses like Romans 12:1-2 (read), and 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1 (read), and 1 John 2:15-17 (read).

Actually the world *hates* what we as Christians stand for, and by hate I means *rejects*, and would gladly do away with it if they could. Have you noticed in hearing reports about what is going on in our world today? We are hearing more and more about the persecution of Jews and Christians. The world hates our God, our Savior, our Bible, and those churches that are true to the faith. The Lord Jesus spoke of many important things to His disciples the night before He was crucified. And among this were His words about the world found in John 15:18-19:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

But at the same time that we realize that we are no longer a part of the world as such, let us beware of giving the people of the world the impression that a Christian is a person who doesn't attend the movies, doesn't drink, doesn't gamble, doesn't commit adultery, doesn't lie, and so on. Let us be strong in showing the world that we believe just as much in Romans 12:2 as we believe in Romans 12:1; that we believe just as much in 2 Corinthians 7:1 as much as we do the last verses of chapter 6; that we believe just as much in 1 John 2:15-17a, as we do the last part of verse 17.

What the Apostle John is telling us in Ephesians 5:7 is, as I have reminded you before, just what we find in Romans 12:21: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil of good." The Bible gives us two kinds of commandments – position commandments, and negative commandments, things we are to do, and things that we are not to do. So to have the complete picture, we need to do what God commands us to do, and to stay as far away as we possibly can from what He commands us not to do.

Even though we are not living under the Law today like the Jews did in OT times, yet I find it very profitable every year to read Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Over and over again the Lord warned the children of Israel not to live like the Egyptians from whom God had delivered them, but neither were they to live like the Canaanite nations whose land God was giving to them. And the Lord warned them that the reason God judged Egypt, and the reason that He was ordering the complete destruction of the Canaanite nations, was because those nations were guilty of doing what was sinful in God's sight. And although the politicians and dictators of the world are not paying any attention to God today, God is the One Who is sovereign over all nations, and He is going to show it some day, and it may be very soon, by bringing judgments upon the world such as the world has never seen. And, as we should be the saddest to say, God is going to judge in an eternal HELL all who go out of this life not knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin and its penalty and power.

So how tremendously powerful are Paul's few words in Ephesians 5:7, speaking of the world, "Become not ye therefore partakers with them." You don't want to go their way; you want them to come your way.

But why is it always going to be easy to go their way? Verse 8 gives us the answer, and also bring us to our next "walk."

**5:8** It is because we used to be like they are, but now we are changed. By the use of the word "for" the Apostle indicates the reason why he could give the exhortation that he gave in verse 7. As I have said many times, no one can truly be saved and still continue to live like he did before.

Notice that Paul did not say that we used to be in darkness, and now we are in the light. But he made it much stronger. He said “ye were once darkness; but now . . . light in the Lord.” And so we are to “walk as children of light.” We are to show by the way we live, what we really are. We don’t become light by what we do, but we show that we are light by the way we live, the way we walk.

Geoffrey Wilson made a great statement on this verse which I want to read to you:

This exhortation teaches us that light is never given for mere intellectual illumination, but always to promote practical obedience. Our daily conduct must make credible our confession of faith in Christ. For though man cannot look into the heart, he does closely observe the outward appearance we present to the world (*Op. cit.*, p. 108).

**5:9** There is a textual problem here. The KJV reads, “the fruit of the Spirit.” More recent translations read, “the fruit of the light.” Whichever way is the original, we cannot say, but taken either way, the meaning of the verse remains essentially the same.

Everything in us that has to do with our salvation is “the fruit of the Spirit.” And all that the Spirit gives us is “light,” divine light, dispelling the darkness of our original state. The word “light” may have found its way into this verse out of verse 8. So in one way, the two expressions, the fruit of the Spirit,” and “the fruit of the light” mean the same thing. And they speak of three fundamental characteristics which are implanted in our hearts at salvation – “all goodness and righteousness and truth.” And it seems that the word “all” applies to all three words, “goodness and righteousness and truth,” three characteristics of the Christian life.

It seems to me that the word “goodness” has to do with the character of God.

All three of the Synoptic Gospel give us the story of the man who is identified in various ways in the three Gospels, but he was a wealthy man who came to the Lord asking the Lord what he could do to inherit eternal life. You will find the account in Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18. Now my only interest in that story at this point is in the way in which the man addressed the Lord, and how the Lord responded to him. He called the Lord, “Good master.” And the Lord picked up on that greeting by saying to that rich man, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good, but one, that is, God.”

Now as I thought about that expression, I wondered if the Apostle Paul in writing about salvation, was thinking about goodness as the character of God, which would mean His godliness. And we know that God’s purpose in saving us is to make us like Christ, which, in turn, means that we are being made like God. Charles Hodge said in his commentary on this word in verse 9 that “goodness is that quality which adapts a thing to the end for which it was designed and makes it serviceable” (p. 171). Now it is easy for us to read that we are “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,” that is, to the image of Christ. But how is such a complete transformation possible? It is only possible through the indwelling presence of Christ Himself. And the evidence that Christ is in us will be the growing fruit of godliness in our lives.

Now the second word that Paul used here was “righteousness.” Now a righteousness person is a person who measures up to a certain standard. It can be said that a person who obeys the laws of our country is a righteous person. That is, on the human level. Now a person who is righteous in God’s sight is a person who conforms to the will of God. We find it in the Word of God.

So I wonder if what the Apostle Paul was saying here is that the Christian life is a life that is to be judged in the light of Scripture. The portrait of a Christian is found in the Bible. And it is there for each of us to judge the progress we are making, but it is there also for the Church and even the world, to have some basis of judging

the reality, or lack of reality, of a person's claim to be a child of God.

The third word is "truth." This also can refer to Christ. He is "the Truth." But it can also refer to the Bible. The Lord Jesus told the Father in prayer, "Thy Word is truth." But the expression, "the truth," is often used in the Psalms to speak of *faithfulness*. A faithful person is a person who is always the same, unchanging. Now if we relate this to what the Spirit of God is doing in our hearts, He is doing the same thing in all of us. We can go back into the OT to study the lives of the people of God, and we can learn from them how we need to walk with the Lord, how we need to trust the Lord, what we need to believe, and so on, because the lives of faithful, godly people is always the same. We may be different as to where we are in our growth, but the standard of life is always the same. What it meant for Enoch to walk with God, is what it still means for us to walk with God.

So putting these three words together which speak of the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruit of the life which we have actually become, it is always godly, like God, always in agreement with the Bible, and always the same, faithful in all generations.

**5:10** This verse seems to summarize the purpose behind what God has done in making us light in the Lord (v. 8), and the object of the work of the Spirit in v. 9.

Charles Hodge said it very well:

And so in this passage believers are required to walk as children of light, examining and determining what is acceptable to the Lord. They are to regulated their conduct by thinking of what pleases Him. That is the ultimate standard of judging whether anything is right or wrong, worthy or unworthy of those who have been lightened from above (p. 172).

And then Hodge continued:

This, therefore, is one of the numerous passages in the New Testament in which Christ is recognized as the Lord of the conscience; his will is our ultimate standard of right and wrong, and we are responsible to him for all our inner and outward actions. It is in this way that the sacred writers show that Christ was their God, in who presence they constantly lived, whose favor they constantly sought, and on whom all their religious affections terminated. He was not merely the God of their theology but of their religion (*Ibid.*).

"Proving what is acceptable to the Lord" is, according to John Eadie, what God has commanded and therefore approves. See p. 381. What the Christian life is, is no mystery, but it is all carefully and lovingly and truthfully laid out in Scripture, written by those who had learned it, lived it, and unhesitatingly encouraged others to do as they were doing.

March 28, 2011

This is the primary goal of everything that has to do with the lives of all of us as Christians. "Proving" is to determine and approve and do. We do this by the Word and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. "Acceptable unto the Lord" is that which is fully acceptable to the Lord. This is what makes the life of a Christian completely different from the non-Christian – and infinitely better! The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:21, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This is how the Lord Jesus lived on earth as He said in John 8:29, speaking of His relationship with His Father, "I do always those things that please Him." Andrew Murray, in his book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, said that the key to answered prayer is to pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." And he went on to point out that we cannot really pray that the Father will be glorified in our prayers unless we are living that way, that is, that God may be glorified in all that we do. There is probably no more important

matter that we need to give our attention to than that we are living to please God, which is what it means to live to the glory of God.

This is essentially what Romans 12:1 and 2 mean. (Quote.) We can't staddle the fence. There is a positive side to Christian living, and there is a negative side. The person who tries to do both inevitably winds up doing what he is not supposed to do if he knows the Lord. It is extremely important that in all that we are, all that we do, all that we say, and even in all that we think, that we are doing that which is pleasing to God, which, in turn, will be that which glorifies God.

Before we leave verse 11, let me give you a statement from Charles Hodge which is well worth noting. It has to do with the use of the title "Lord" in the NT. This is what he said:

The use of the word **Lord** is so predominantly used in the New Testament to designate the Lord Jesus Christ that it should always be used to refer to Him unless the context forbids it (p. 172).

We are saved to be made like our Lord. There is no greater example that we have of one who always lived to please and glorify God the Father than did our Lord Jesus Christ. So, because of the oneness between God the Father and God the Son, if we live to please the Lord Jesus, we can be sure that we are also pleasing God.

**5:11** Here the Apostle stated the negative side of the Christian's life: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

We all know, or should know, that as Christians we can sin. And we know also that we will never, in this life, become sinless. But it is true that the longer we know the Lord, and the more we seek to glorify the Lord, the less we will sin. To "have . . . fellowship the unfruitful works of darkness" speaks of a close relationship with the people whose lives are characterized by sin. Solomon has given us an example of what the Apostle Paul was talking about here. I am referring to his word in Proverbs 22:24-25 where he said,

24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Such a principle applies to many sins. We become like the people we associate with. That is the reason that we need to have fellowship with the Lord's people. So the Apostle Paul firmly shuts a door here.

But then he adds, "But rather reprove them." Now the Apostle did not mean that we are to go around criticizing other people for the way they live, whether Christians or not, or that we try to show that we are better than they are, but that we are to live lives that are pleasing to God so that our lives will reprove them. And we will see this in verse 13. But this meaning is also confirmed by what Paul said in verse 12.

**5:12** I don't remember the exact years when what I am about to say was so prevalent, but it was especially bad back in the fifties or sixties when many Hollywood stars were claiming to be Christians. Some of them may have been saved, but others obviously were not. But these people became very popular speakers at youth rallies. And they would speak specifically of things that they had done, of sins they had committed. And so there was a feeling among many young people, even Christian young people, that if they had done what those movie stars had done, maybe they could draw crowds like the celebrities did when they talked about their sins. Ephesians 5:12 is a specific condemnation of this very thing. To talk about sin is to be tempted to sin. Just like reading the wrong kind of literature can lead to sin, or looking at the wrong kind of pictures, pornography. It is a trap that many people have fallen into.

About that same time in the years when this was going on, I heard a godly servant of the Lord say this. He said you don't learn about sin by talking about sin, or reading sinful literature, or by experiencing sin. The only place you can learn the truth about sin is from the Bible. The people who live in sin are blinded to its real

nature, blinded to what it does to us, and most certainly blinded to God's judgment upon it. True Christians don't brag about the sins they have committed. They are ashamed to talk about them. But you will find that they weep over their sins, and marvel at the grace of God in saving them from sinning more than they have sinned.

Now in verse 13 we come to that word *reprove* again. Notice what the Apostle Paul had to say.

**5:13** Let us be clear on one point. Paul was not saying that we are to parade ourselves as being better than other people, or that we have become Christians because we are better than other people. What has been called *a-holier-than-thou attitude* is never acceptable. What he is talking about is a simple life in which a child of God is seeking to obey God by living according to the Word of God. The Apostle Peter said it very clearly in 1 Peter 3:15-16:

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Another important passage along this line is found in the same epistle and the same chapter. See 1 Peter 3:1-6:

1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Now going back to verse 13, the word for *reprove* here is the same verb that Paul used in verse 11. The main differences are that in verse 11 the verb is singular and active; in verse 13 it is plural and passive.

The reason that people live in sin and go on doing things that are sinful in God's sight, is because they live in spiritual darkness. They are blinded so that they cannot see the real nature of what they are doing. A Christian is a person who by God's grace has seen the light, and lives in the light of the Word of God, and actually becomes light in the world of people who are in darkness.

The margin of the Bible I use in my study suggests the word "discovered" as a translation of "reproved." The concordance in my computer suggests the words "convict" and "convince." This is the same word that our Lord used in John 16:8 when He spoke of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world and said, "When he is come he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." So we are the instruments which God uses to awaken people to their error and their need, but the One Who actually does the work, is the Holy Spirit. And He does it by causing spiritual light to shine forth from the lives of those people who give forth the light of the Gospel.

E. M. Bounds, a believer of past days says that we are always looking for better methods, but God is looking for better men. In our concern to spread the Gospel, we are inclined to try to come up with better methods, but God is concerned about those of us who know the Lord, that we will be letting the light shine forth from our lives.



There is no method as powerful as the light that shines forth from a transformed life.

Notice the word “manifest” which the Apostle Paul used twice in this verse. It is a word which speaks of a revelation, something which makes clear what had not been known before. It is light that dispels the darkness. Verse 13 contains a self-evident truth, but it finds no greater illustration than in what the Gospel does to a human being, and the place that that human being forever afterwards has in this world of darkness.

March 29, 2011

**5:14** Much has been written about this verse, mainly because we can find no such quotation in the OT. Some have said that it must be the quotation of some hymn with which the Ephesian believers were familiar. And yet there is no evidence to support that idea.

The idea that seems most likely to me is that the Apostle Paul did not intend to say that this was a quotation, but that he was summarizing what God had been actually saying to the human race by virtue of the fact that He had sent His Son through whose death we have the Gospel, and in this we see the grace and mercy of God in which, by the very proclamation of the Gospel, the Lord was speaking to all men saying that if they would give heed to the Gospel, they would arise from the dead, from spiritual death, and Christ would give them light.

I think we have an illustration of the meaning of this verse in John 11 where we have the account of the Lord raising Lazarus from the dead even after he had been dead for four days. Please turn with me to John 11. The key verse in understanding the fact that the Lord did not immediately come when He first had been told that Lazarus was seriously ill, is given to us in John 11:4. And our Lord reminded Martha of this when she in verse 39 resisted Him when He told those who were with Him and Martha at the tomb, and she reminded the Lord in so many words, that it would do no good to remove the stone. But notice what the Lord said to her in verse 40. See verse 40, and then the verses which follow down to verse 46.

Contrast this with what Lazarus said when he was first told by the other disciples that they had seen the Lord. I am referring to his words in John 20:24 and 25. They read on down in chapter 20 to the time when the Lord appeared to the disciples when Lazarus was present to what Lazarus said to the Lord then, and how the Lord responded to him in verse 29.

Man's way is, “If I can see, I will believe.” God's way is, “Believe, and then you will see.” What came first when Noah built the ark? Had it even started raining. No, by faith he built the ark, and later he saw the rain. What about Abraham? Did God give him the land, and then he believed. No, he believed God, left his home, and then saw the land. What did the Apostle Paul tell the Philippians jailor when he was asked what he should do to be saved. “Believe . . .” What happened? He believed and so did all of his family, and then they were saved. God gives the promise. We believe. And then we see. I think that this is what the Apostle John was saying to any unbelievers who were to read his epistle by his words here in Ephesians 5:14. God was speaking, but here he was speaking through the Apostle Paul. And it was a Gospel appeal. Believe first, “and Christ shall give thee light.”

When we come to verses in the Bible which we may not understand, begin by recognizing that what is given is the Word of God, and then the Lord will give us the light.

April 4, 2011

**5:15** If the Apostle Paul were inclined to say that we need to be prepared to compromise with what we

believe in order to win people to Christ, this would be one place where you would expect him to say so. But he didn't! You will never read that the Apostle Paul, or any other writer of Scripture, recommends compromising with the world about what we believe, or how we are to live. In fact, his emphasis is just the opposite. The word "then" is the translation of the Greek word for *therefore*. So it refers us back to the last command that the apostle gave in verse 8 concerning our walk. If you read the entire fifteenth verse of chapter 5, you will see that to "walk circumspectly" is to walk wisely.

If you compare this verse in Ephesians with the parallel passage in Colossians, this is what you will read in Colossians 4:5 and 6 these words:

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Ephesians 5:17 also emphasizes the importance of wisdom. (Read.) What wisdom was the apostle talking about. He was talking about the wisdom of God. And where do we find that? We find it in the Word of God. The Apostle Peter has given us a very important statement regarding the resources that we have to live for the Lord, and to serve the Lord. You will find it in 2 Peter 1:3:

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness in Himself, God, and in Christ. But it is all spelled out for us in Scripture. We need to quit looking for new ways and new methods, and get back to the old ways, the ways that are spelled out for us in Scripture. Solomon tells us in the book of Proverbs that the wisdom of God is more precious than silver and gold. It was so in his day, and it still is today!

Going back to Ephesians 5:15, the word Paul used for see is the common Greek word to seeing. But the Apostle is using it here for us to take a good look at the way we live to make sure that we measure up to what he was saying. It is easy for us to think of someone else when we are reading the Bible, but the place where we need to look first is at ourselves. Paul wanted each of his readers to apply what he was saying to themselves. And each of us ought to do that this morning. I need to ask, "Am I doing what the Apostle Paul said in this passage that I ought to do."

What does it mean to "walk circumspectly"? It means to walk carefully, not departing in any way from how we are taught to live in the Bible. I remember when I used to travel back and forth from Tacoma to Texas when I was in school down there, traveling by train, that when you boarded a train, right on the step in front of me were three words: "Watch your step." When you were a child walking with one of your parents, and you stumbled and maybe fell, didn't you hear these words, "You've got to watch where you are walking. Soldiers in time of war are taught to be careful where they walk. The Devil is always trying to get us to fall. If you walk the way the world walks, you are going to live to regret it. If you walk like the Bible teaches you to walk, you are never going to regret it. When the Devil tempted Eve, he was trying to trip her, and he succeeded. God has given all of us consciences to help us live the right way, but sin is such a powerful factor in every person's heart that we often do the wrong thing anyway. Such sinful living is even greater when we have the Word of God and the Spirit of God working in us. When you are a pedestrian and crossing a street, you had better look both ways before stepping off of the curb. But in our lives as Christians we need to be even more careful. In this verse not to be careful how and where you walk, is to be a fool.

**5:16** This is a continuation of verse 15.

"Redeeming the time" is a very important word for all of us. The three words in English are the translation of one Greek verb. Time is something that we all have, and Paul said here that we are to rescue it from loss. We

are all guilty of wasting time, and when time is gone we can never get it back. This is actually an exhortation for us not to waste our time. We are to make the best use of our time that we possibly can, and in this passage Paul was thinking about the time we have with people who do not know the Lord.. We can't always be talking to people we would like to see come to Christ, but one way to redeem our time for them, is by prayer. None of us have as much time left in our lives now as we did when we came in here this morning. We never know when life will end.

But I don't think that the Apostle Paul was thinking just about the uncertainty of life, but he was thinking about those opportunities we have to be with people, whether they are saved, or unsaved. If we just let nature take its course, "the days are evil," and opportunities are lost forever. It doesn't mean that we are always talking about the Lord, but it does mean that we are always thinking about Him and what He wants us to do in a given situation. I had a wonderful mother, and the Lord took her to heaven when she was only fifty-eight years of age. I didn't realize until after she was gone how much truth she had planted in my life as I was growing up. When I would go out with any of my friends, one thing she would say to me as I left was, "Remember whose you are!" I can still hear her saying it.

We are called upon to walk with the Lord in an evil, fallen world. And if we are not walking circumspectly, seeking to please the Lord in all things, the world is going to pull down. The only way to walk circumspectly is by living in obedience to the Word for one main reason, because we love the Lord and want to please Him first and always!

John Eadie said concerning this verse:

If these days so evil afforded any opportunities of doing good, it was all the more incumbent on Christians to win them and seize them. The very abundance of the evil was a powerful argument to redeem the time, and the apostle writing that letter in a prison was a living example of his own counsel (p. 394).

**5:17** Now if we are to live as the Apostle Paul has instructed us, we need to know the will of God. And the only way to know the will of God is through reading and studying and being taught the Bible. How foolish even many pastors can be by speaking on political subjects, or encouraging the world's Godless psychology, or concentrating on the social problems of the day, rather than week by week expounding the unsearchable riches of truth which God has given us in His Word. Any substitute for Scripture produces people who are "unwise" regardless of how trained they may be in understanding the wisdom of men. Those who have no place for God or His Word are, in the eyes of God, the greatest of fools.

**5:18** Dr. Chafer mentioned in his commentary on Ephesians that this is one of three passages in the NT which contrast drunkenness with the Spirit-filled life. The first is Luke 1:15 where we read of the angel who appeared to Zacharias telling him that he and his wife, Elisabeth, were going to have a child when they were actually too old to have children. But these are the words spoken by the angel to Zacharias when he was serving as the priest in the temple. Here are the angel's words which are recorded in Luke 1:16:

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

The second is in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, and they were enabled to speak foreign languages which they had never studied, but which the people who spoke those languages clearly understood. The explanation of some who heard was, "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13). But Peter stood up and said that it was too early for them to be drunk. Earlier in the chapter it is said that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2:4. And then the third instance is what we have here in Ephesians 5:18.

**5:18** We might be surprised at the way the Apostle Paul addressed the people of God here, warning them against drunkenness, but he wanted the Ephesians to know that the person who gets drunk is a fool and unwise. That is not what the Ephesian believers needed. Rather they needed to be filled with the Spirit. To be drunk with wine is to be under the influence of overindulgence which, in turn, leads to debauchery, shame, and a wasted life.. To be filled with the Spirit is to be under the control of the Spirit, Who produces fruit in the believer's life (see Gal. 5:22-23) which enables us to live for the glory of God. The Apostle indicates that in verses 19 through 21 how we can identify a Spirit-filled life. But for now let us make sure that we understand verse 18.

This same verb, "be filled," was used by Paul in his prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 3, verse 19. The ultimate blessing that the Apostle Paul sought for them was "that ye might be filled with all of the fulness of God." No believer ever reaches that, but that is the goal. In the same way, and expressing the same truth concerning their relationship with the Holy Spirit, no one, except our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, ever attains to the ultimate fulness of the Holy Spirit, but that is to be our goal – greater and greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and greater and greater submission to His authority in our lives.

In Bible time wine was used for medicinal purposes (1 Tim. 5:23), but there are warnings in both the OT and the NT against the excessive use of wine. For example, in Proverbs 20:1 we read, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." One of the strongest passages against drinking is in Proverbs 23:29-35, and the context links it with immorality. Listen to Solomon's words in that passage:

- 29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?
- 30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.
- 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.
- 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.
- 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.
- 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
- 35 They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

In our day when drinking has become such a major problem, it seems the part of wisdom to stay away from it altogether. My Dad had two good recommendations for his sons (and he had six of them). One was, "If you don't take your first drink, you will never get drunk." And a second was, "If you don't learn to play cards, you will never gamble." Those two statements are good warnings for everyone to be aware of

Remember that the Holy Spirit is God. Cf. 2 Cor. 13:14. He is totally equal in Deity to the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle Paul said, "And be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit," in the first part of this verse he was putting his finger on that which was of epidemic proportions in that day and in that city. And it was well-known that drunkenness led to sexual immorality which threatened marriages in those days as it does today. That probably explains why the Apostle Paul went on after emphasizing the need that each of them to be filled with the Spirit, to speak of wives, husbands, etc. And one interesting point about the grammar of the two verbs in this verse is that they are both in the same tense, voice, mood, etc., showing that the effects of these two widely different ways of life had some of the same characteristics

Our text here in Ephesians 5:18 absolutely forbids drunkenness, but it also positively commands all believers to

be filled with the Spirit. And this is not just a single experience, or something that is to happen now and then, but it is to be a way of life. Nothing is said here about speaking in tongues. It is evident from the NT that the speaking in tongues was a temporary gift. Today evidence of a Spirit-filled life is stated in what Paul mentioned in verses 19-21, and similar evidences of a godly character and life.

I want to spend some time on the verb, “be filled. Let me give you a brief lesson in the Greek of the word that Paul used, but the same is true of the English translation. But first let us think about what the Apostle Paul meant by the verb, “be filled.”

But first, let me point out to you that we have already had this verb in Paul’s prayer recorded for us in Ephesians, chapter 3, and verse 19, where he prayed that the believers in Ephesus might be filled with all the fulness of God.” Both “filled” and “fulness” have the same root, even as “filled” and “fulness” do in English.

And then we have the same basic word in Ephesians 4:13 where the Apostle Paul was discussing the work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers, which God has given to the Church. What was it? It was “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” – the same related word.

In all of these three texts, what did the Apostle Paul mean by being “filled with all the fulness of God” as well as by being “filled with the Holy Spirit,” or “the fulness of Christ”?

But there is one other text that we need to keep in mind to have the whole picture. In Colossians 2 the Apostle Paul was warning the Colossian believers not to be led astray by false teachers, and he used our word “fulness” to explain the reason why. See Colossians 2:8-9 where the Apostle Paul said the following:

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

I am indebted to my friend and trusted Bible expositor, John Eadie, for the best explanation I have found of these very important verses. It might sound like, if all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in our Lord in His humanity, and that we are to be filled with all the fulness of God, that we are to strive to attain Deity in this life. Now let me clear on this point. We have been saved to be “like” the Lord, but we will never be Deity. Well, how then are we to deal with these verses in which even the Apostle Paul prayed that we “might be filled with all the fulness of God?”

We have a key to what we are seeking to understand right in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:19 where he prayed that they “might be filled with all the fulness of God.” In the first part of that verse he prayed that they might know the Lord of Christ which passeth knowledge.” What did he mean? He meant that believers can know the love of Christ, *but that we can never, at least on this side of heaven, know it completely, exhaustively, so that there is nothing else to learn about the love of God. We are always learning more and more, but never learning it all!*

Listen to John Eadie’s commentary:

As a fact manifested in time and embodied in the incarnation, life, teaching, and death of the Son of God, it may be understood, for it assumed a nature of clay, bled on the cross, and lay prostrate in the tomb; *but in its unbeginning existence as an eternal passion, antedating alike the Creation and its Fall, it “passeth knowledge.”* In the blessings which it confers—the pardon, grace, and glory which it provides—it may be seen in palpable [easily perceived] exhibition, and experienced in happy consciousness; *but in its limitless power and endless resources it baffles thought and description.* In the terrible sufferings

and death to which it led, and in the self-denial and sacrifices which it involved, it may be known so far by the application of human instincts and analogies; *but the fathomless fervor of a Divine affection surpasses the measurements of created intellect.* As the attachment of a man, it may be gauged; *but as the love of a God, who can by searching find it out?* Uncaused itself, it originated salvation; *unresponded to amidst the "contradiction of sinners, it neither pined nor collapsed.* It led from Divine immortality to human agonies and dissolution, for the victim was bound to the cross not by the nails of the military executioner, but by the "cords of love. It loved repulsive unloveliness, and, unnourished by reciprocated attachment, its ardor was unquenched, nay, is unquenchable, for it is as changeless as the bosom in which it dwells. Thus it may be known, while yet it "passeth knowledge"; yet it may be experimentally known, while still in its origin and glory it surpasses comprehension, and presents new and newer phases to the loving and inquiring spirit. For one may drink of the spring and be refreshed, and his eye may take in at one view its extent and circuit, while he may be able neither to fathom the depth nor mete out the volume of the ocean whence it has its origin (pp. 257-258, italics mine).

Now to return to our text in Ephesians 5:18. When the Apostle Paul said, "And be not drunk with wine," he was speaking of one major problem that those early believers had. Drunkenness was more often than not a part of those early believers' lives before they were saved. The effect of drunkenness is both progressive and overwhelming. But when a person was saved, Paul indicated in this verse that the drinking had to be stopped, and that the way they stopped was by being filled with the Spirit. Now, as we shall see in looking into the text, Paul was not talking about some sudden, ecstatic experience where they spoke in tongues and suddenly, as some people claim, entered into a sinless way of life. Two mistakes have been made in the Church today about the Holy Spirit. One is that there has been a lot of false teaching about the Holy Spirit, and so, as a result, many Christians feel that it is best not to get involved in learning about the Spirit of God. But here Paul was just as strong about saying, "Be filled with the Spirit," as he was in saying, "Be not drunk with wine." Christians have been delivered from the penalty of sin, and by our Lord's death on the Cross He delivered us from the power which sin has always had in our lives. But this is related to our growth in the Lord, and that is where we need to learn about the Holy Spirit.

Now when the Lord Jesus was here on earth, although He was not a sinner, and not even capable to sin, yet we are told that, at the beginning of His ministry, He was filled with the Spirit. And He lived and carried on His miraculous ministry in the power of the Spirit. Now as it was true of our Lord that the fulness of God was in Him, yet there was a distinct difference for us to be filled with the fulness of God, as I have explained. So our filling is progressive, linked with our growth in grace and the manner of our daily fellowship with the Lord. A young believer can be filled with the Spirit as well as a more mature believer, but their capacity for the fulness of the Spirit will be very different. As we grow, the Spirit of God has a greater influence and a larger part in our lives. And that is brought out in the way that the Apostle Paul expressed to the Ephesians as a command, their need to be filled with the Spirit.

"Be filled" is in the present tense, in the passive voice, in the imperative mood, and is in the second person plural, "ye," meaning *all of you*.

- 1) The present tense means that it is to be continuous. Some have translated it, *be being filled*.
- 2) The passive voice indicates that the subject does not do what is required, but that it is acted upon by some other person or power. Paul did not say, "Fill yourselves with the Holy Spirit," but "be filled with the Spirit."
- 3) The imperative mood means that it is a command to be obeyed.
- 4) The second person plural means that it is addressed directly to all to whom the instruction is given.

Now we do not have any passage in the Bible, as far as I know, that tells us how to be filled with the Spirit, that is, what must we do to be filled with the Spirit. But I will tell you what I believe, and I am reasonably sure that I am right in what I am about to say to you.

- 1) I believe that it speaks of a way of living in which we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit.
- 2) I believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer, that He has been given to us to teach us the Word, and especially to take the things of Christ and show them to us.
- 3) I believe that the Holy Spirit has been given to us to enable us to do that the Word of God commands us to do.
- 4) I believe that the Holy Spirit is concerned first about my character, and secondly about my conduct. The blessing of the Spirit will follow in our work when our character and conduct are pleasing to the Lord.
- 5) I believe that the filling of the Spirit is related to my growth in the Lord, that the more I grow, the greater is my filling. So a person recently saved can be filled to his capacity, but that as he matures, his capacity for the fullness of the Spirit increases.
- 6) Along with the passive command to be filled with the Spirit, there are two active commands regarding the Holy Spirit about which I need to be concerned, negative commands:
  - a) "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). We quench the Spirit when we suppress, or stifle, what He is seeking to do in our lives.
  - b) "Grieve not the Spirit" (Eph. 4:30). See the context. We grieve Him with our sin.

These are both addressed to us, and are very important for us to remember and obey as the Spirit of God deals with us day by day throughout our lives. And three examples of the result of the Spirit's work in our lives, is given to us in the following three verses: 19, 20, and 21. I would say that they speak of worship, thanksgiving, and fellowship.

In your Bible reading, especially in the NT, notice carefully the references to the Holy Spirit. Let me point out to you the statements that you will find in the epistle of Ephesians:

- 1) In Eph. 1:13-14 we are sealed with the Spirit.
- 2) In Eph. 1:17 He is called the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.
- 3) In Eph. 2:18 we are told that through Christ we have access by the Spirit to the Father.
- 4) In Eph. 2:22 we are told that we are built together as an habitation of God through the Spirit.
- 5) In Eph. 3:5 we read about the mystery which was revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit.
- 6) In Eph. 3:16 we are strengthened by the Spirit.
- 7) Eph. 3:20 is probably a reference to the Spirit although He is not mentioned by name.
- 8) In Eph. 4:3 speaks of the unity of the Spirit.
- 9) In Eph. 4:4 tells us that there is one Spirit.
- 10) In Eph. 4:30 tells us not to grieve the Spirit.
- 11) In Eph. 5:9 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit.
- 12) In Eph. 5:18 we are told to be filled with the Spirit.
- 13) In Eph. 6:17 tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.
- 14) In Eph. 6:18 says that we are to pray in the Spirit.

One book I would recommend for all of you to read on this subject of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer's book, *He That Is Spiritual*.

April 18, 2011

Now before we go on to verse 19 of Ephesians 5, I want to go back to verse 18 to make sure that we all understand those words, "but be filled with the Spirit."

I have mentioned that the verb, "be filled," is in the present tense which indicates that the Apostle Paul was not speaking of an isolated incident, but a continuous way of living. Paul says nothing here about speaking in tongues, because speaking in tongues was a temporary gift given to some in the early days of the Church, but it no longer exists today. The evidence that we are being filled with the Spirit is to be seen in our character as

Christians, and in godly living such as Paul encouraged in verses 19 through 21 of the chapter, and in our relationships to each other in our homes as Paul went on to indicate from Ephesians 5:22 on.

It is an imperative, meaning that to fail to do this is being disobedient to God and to His Word.

It is in the second person plural, and that means it is not just for pastors, or Bible school teachers, or missionaries, but it is for all believers – from the youngest to the oldest, for boys and girls, for men and women, for all believers from the first century on to the end of time.

And, although this is addressed to us, it is in the passive mood, meaning, in this case that it is the Holy Spirit Who fills us with Himself. And since we are all at different stages in our lives as Christians, and our capacity for being filled with the Spirit differs, we need to realize that if we are being filled with the Spirit, the Spirit's fulness in our lives will increase as we grow in the Lord.

We all need to get these points firmly fixed in our mind if we are to understand what "be filled with the Spirit" means.

But if it is the Spirit Who fills us with Himself, what is our responsibility in such a relationship? What are we to be doing in response to this command?

The answer to that question is not as difficult to find as you might think. None of us has ever seen either God, or Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Neither have we met any of the Apostles of our Lord, nor have we seen and talked to anyone who saw the Lord while He was here on earth. But God has given us a book, and that Book is the Bible. How did we get it? The Apostle Peter has told us in his second letter, which is found in the Bible. And remember that Peter was one of the apostles who was intimately acquainted with the Lord Jesus. He heard our Lord teach many times. He saw our Lord perform miracle after miracle. More than that he was with the Lord on at least two occasions when the Lord spoke from heaven declaring that Jesus was His Son. But let me are to you what Peter wrote some thirty years after the Lord Jesus went back to heaven after His resurrection from the dead. Let me read to you what he said about our Lord and about the Word of God. You will find it in 2 Peter 1:16-21. This is what Peter wrote:

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Now it is the twentieth verse of that chapter which is not as clear as it should be. Let me give it to you as it is translated in the New International Version, I will read the twenty-first verse with it:

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Now what does this mean?

It means that although God used some forty different writers over a period from Moses to the end of the first



century A.D., the Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture. Many of the writers of Scripture did not know each other, and so they could not have gotten together to decide what each was to write, and to do it so that there are no contradictions in Scripture, someone had to be in charge of what was written, and that Someone was the Holy Spirit! The Apostle Paul said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), and he was speaking of the Third Member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

Among the verses I pointed out to you in this epistle to the Ephesians, one of them told us that in our warfare with the forces of the Devil, that our weapon is, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

When the Lord Jesus was with His disciples for the last time before His death by crucifixion, they met in an upper room. His ministry to them began there, and then continued as they left the Upper Room and walked toward Gethsemane. As they were walking along together, this is one of the things that He said to them. You will find these words in John 16:12-15:

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

There is a wonderful passage in Acts 4 which tells us that, in those early days of the Church, the apostles, Peter and John, were told by the Jewish authorities that they were not to speak or preach anymore in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And then they released them, and Peter and John went back to the believers. After rehearsing to the saints what had happened to them, they prayed together, and then we read this in Acts 4:31:

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Basically, to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word of God.

Years ago at Central Bible Church we had a lady come to the church whose baby son had a brain tumor. She wanted us to pray for her son, which we did more than once. But she claimed to have been baptized with the Spirit and had spoken in tongues. She was sure that her son was going to be healed by the Lord, and so she refused to seek medical help. I tried to reason with her to seek medical help, but she refused. She was so convinced that the experience she had had of speaking in tongues was right that she said this to me, "Now that I have spoken in tongues, you could not convince me *even from the Bible* that I am wrong." The result was that the baby died, and I really don't know what happened to her. What was she doing? She was claiming that the Holy Spirit and the Bible will contradict each other. I doubt very much that she knew the Lord.

So I would say that if we are going to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the starting point is going to be that we will fill our minds and hearts with the Word. And this calls for reading the Word.

But it also means getting into a ministry, into a church, where you will be taught the Bible. It is in the Bible that we are taught the truth about God (the Trinity), and that is where we are taught the truth about ourselves. The Bible gives us the Gospel, and it teaches us what salvation is. *But two very important points that the Bible teaches us is not only what we are to believe, but how we are to live. To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word.*

The more we know of the Word, and the more we live according to the Word, the more we will be filled with

the Spirit, and the more we will be able to do as the Apostle Paul told the Galatians, and that is to “walk in the Spirit.”

Please turn to Galatians 5:16.

What does it mean to “walk in the Spirit? It means to walk in union with the Holy Spirit. It means to walk in dependence upon the Spirit, and so to walk in the power of the Spirit. It means to walk in submission to the Spirit. It means to walk in obedience to the Spirit. It is to walk confidently in the Spirit, by faith.

The unbelieving world walks in the flesh. Only believers in Christ are capable of walking in the Spirit. Only by walking in the Spirit can we have victory over the flesh. By walking in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is being produced in our lives, from some, to more, to most. All of this is in Galatians 5. We live in the Spirit because we have been born of the Spirit.

April 25, 2011

Now let us go on to Ephesians 5:19. Verses 19, 20, and 21 give us three of the main evidences that a person is filled with the Spirit.

Dr. Chafer made a key point for us to remember, as we come to these verses, in that “it is only by a supernatural power that one may always be singing and giving thanks *always* for *all* things” (p. 152), as well as in submitting ourselves to one another in the fear of God. And that supernatural power is the Holy Spirit filling the child of God.

**5:19** The main verb in the long sentence is “be filled.” The rest of the verbs in the sentence are participles, present participles showing “the blessed consequences of the Holy Spirit’s filling – speaking . . . singing . . . making melody . . . giving thanks . . . submitting . . .” (Wilson, Geoffrey, pp. 113, 114).

Notice in our singing we are “speaking” to each other, and at the same time we are “singing and making melody “to the Lord.” But with both, to each other, and to the Lord, it must come *from our hearts*. What a difference this will make in our singing if we keep this in mind. Music in the church is not for entertainment, but for ministry – ministry to each other and to the Lord! It seems that the words which the Apostle Paul used here indicates that he was speaking about music with words, not just the music itself. A piano or organ played without any singing can be a blessing, but only as the music reminds us of the world.

The “psalms” here means the singing of the Psalms that we find in the book of Psalms. “Hymns” are so-called because they are addressed to God. “Spiritual songs” are those that minister by the Holy Spirit to the spirits of believers, not to their flesh. Much church music from the hymnals qualifies for all three of these categories.

So there is to be a very close relationship between what is sung by believers and what is proclaimed from the Word. Many Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are prayers, and so this emphasizes the importance of prayers in the fellowship of believers. Worship is designed to minister to believers and to worship God. It is not to make unbelievers feel at home by adapting our music and the instruments that are used in the world. It is only in the last hundred years or so that musical instruments were used at all in churches. Spurgeon’s great congregations sang *accapella*! Most churches today have wandered far from the Scriptural pattern. Everything must be designed for the blessing of the people and for the glory of God. And it is only the Holy Spirit Who can make our worship meaningful for us as believers, and acceptable to the Members of the Godhead Whom we worship. But let us remember that worship is not to be limited to the meetings of the church. We are to

worship individually in our homes, and together as families. And it is only as personally we learn to worship the Lord, that our times together in our churches can be the blessing to us all that it should be. In fact, often believers come to church without having been faithful in their personal fellowship with the Lord, and the work of the Holy Spirit as we gather together is designed to send us back to our homes with our hearts revived and looking forward to our personal times of fellowship with the Lord by ourselves.

**5:20** Not only are we as believers in Christ deficient when it comes to worship, but we are also very deficient in our thanksgiving, and this verse reminds us that the One to Whom we are to be thankful is *God!* He is our Father, our heavenly Father, the God to Whom we only have access through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as being our Father. He is the only true God. He is the One who provides for us, protects us, guides us, teaches us, and helps us in thousands of ways every day and night that we live.

Several years ago I began to notice that even Christians would say, “I am thankful I got home today without an accident; the traffic was terrible.” Or, “Shouldn’t we be thankful for this beautiful day?” The second Sunday in May will be Mother’s Day. I hope you can say like I can that I am more thankful in every year that passes, that I had the Mother I had – “had,” not “have,” because she has been in heaven for many, many years. But what is missing in all of these statements. *It is that we need to be identifying the One to Whom we are thankful. We need to be saying that we are thankful to God who protects us when we drive, who gives us beautiful, sun -shiny days, and who gave us the mothers that we have. It is good to be thankful, but it is so much better to be thankful to God – and to say so.*

But this is only half of what the Holy Spirit prompts us to say. We are to give thanks for all things – the good and the bad, the things we like, and the things that we don’t like – the rainy days as well as the sunny, the accidents as well as the safe trips home, and perhaps uncaring parents as well as those who loved us far more than we deserve.

Now to give thanks for “all things” doesn’t mean that we are happy about our trials and difficulties that come our way. But we as the people of God because we know that He works ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD, for our good. We know that He is always in control of our lives, even when we do stupid things. And the Holy Spirit is the only One Who can enable us to give the Lord thanks because He knows that our God does all things well. Every Sunday is for us a remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. And *every day is Thanksgiving Day for those of us who know the Lord. But we are not going to be thankful to the Lord apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit.* I think that most of us would have to say that we are learning to be thankful for all things. Every trial that comes our way gives us a fresh opportunity to thank the Lord for all things, but we are also learning that only the Holy Spirit can put that thanksgiving for God and to God in our hearts.

I believe that there is a divine order to be seen in these three verses, 19, 20, and 21. Let us learn to worship the Lord first. Then we will be better prepared to thank Him for all things. And that, in turn, as we shall see in verse 21, will be what the Holy Spirit will use to make us submissive. So let us go on to verse 21.

**5:21** Taking these three verses as ways to identify a Spirit-filled Christian, this one could hardly come first. It has to be the last of these three.

I think most of us who have given any thought to what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, have felt that a Spirit-filled Christian is the one who comes out on top. But that is not the case. It may lead to great usefulness in the work of the Lord, but not necessarily so. I am sure that when we get to heaven we are going to be surprised to find out who those are who enter into the joy of their Lord.

The verb *submit* in Greek is a very interesting word. Actually it is just as interesting in English. “Submit” is a good translation. In the Greek it is the verb τάσσω, which means *to put*, or *place*. And the Greeks attached the preposition ὑπό, which means *under*, on the front of it, and formed the word ὑποτάσσω, which then means *to put under*, or *to put under the authority of another*. Our English word *submit*, is similar. It is from the Latin. *Sub* mean under, and the *mit* is from the Latin verb *mittere* which actually means *to send*. A synonym for *submit* is *to yield*. This is the Lord’s command to all of us.

Perhaps you remember the time when the disciples were with the Lord, and some of them got into a lively discussion with each other. When they got to the city the Lord asked them what they had been talking about. And they responded that they had been discussing who among them would be the chiefest, or greatest. And the Lord called all twelve of them together and told them, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

On another occasion Matthew says that the mother of James and John came requesting that their sons sit with the Lord on His right hand and left hand when He came into His kingdom. Mark says that James and John made the request for themselves. Obviously this was what all three of them wanted. After telling that those places were not for Him to give, we are told what the Lord did and what He said:

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:24-28).

The Lord’s way and man’s ways are different, and we all have to learn the Lord’s ways. In our passage in Ephesians 5, we learn that the believers who are living under the direction of the Spirit of God, filled with the Spirit, will be identified by a willingness to be submissive one to another.

Well, this raises the question, if they are all to be submissive, who is in charge? And the answer to that is, the Lord is in charge. After all, it is the Lord’s will that is to be done, not our’s. When we are all submissive to the Lord’s will, then there will be blessing and the work of the Lord will prosper. It is when some insist on telling the others what to do that we get into trouble. The disciples would be apostles, and the apostles would be leaders in the Church, the body of Christ, but they were to show their submission to the Lord by their willingness to be submissive to each other.

When we think of submission, we need to think of humility, of meekness, which is a fruit of the Spirit. Sin has made all of us naturally proud. We have to learn to be submissive to the Lord, and to each other, just like we have to learn to worship the Lord, and to learn to be thankful. All that the Lord said to His disciples while He was here on earth, was important, very important, not only for them, but much of the instruction that He gave them, was for us too. One very important command He gave to the apostles, is for us too. I am thinking of what the Lord said in Matthew 11:28-30:

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Reverence for the Lord as we learn to express it in worship (v. 19), and a heart that is learning to give thanks to the Lord for all things, will experience great joy in showing submission to the Lord by showing submission to

others who are in the body of Christ.

But the Apostle's final word in verse 21 is one we need to give our special attention. It applies in particular to verse 21, but it has to do also with all of these three last verses we have been considering. It is an expression that we don't hear very often these days even among believers, and you never hear it from people in the world. I am referring to the phrase, "in the fear of God."

It has one meaning for the people of the world; it has another for those who believe in Christ. Christians used to be known as *God-fearing* people. Solomon said this about the fear of the Lord, and it is a word that ought to be on every billboard in the country, and on every channel on TV. This is the verse: Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." A similar statement about the fear of the Lord is given in Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

The Bible thus makes it clear that all true wisdom and knowledge has its beginning with the wisdom of the Lord. To fear the Lord is to recognize that He is God, and to know that we are to give Him the honor, the reverence that is rightfully due to Him as God. It is to love and honor God in the deepest sense of the words. It is to recognize that He is supreme above all others to Whom we owe complete obedience. But it also means that we love Him so much that we show the greatest concern not to displease Him or grieve Him in any way. We fear God when we recognize that there is none greater than He, and that we stand in awe of Him.

These words, and many more just like them, describe the place that God is to have among all men and angels.

But the people who ignore God and live their lives any way that they choose, have reason to fear God as a God of judgment. Anyone who ignores God, or who thinks that there is no God, is a fool, the greatest of fools. And they will learn some day that ignoring God was the greatest mistake that a person can be made. On the other hand, the person who fears the Lord, is the person who knows true happiness, is on the way to heaven. To fear the Lord is their greatest joy and security.

So we who believe are to be submissive to one another because we know that this is most pleasing to Him, and most glorifying to Him.

Remember how the Lord demonstrated His submission to His disciples when He washed the disciples' feet when they were together in Upper Room. See John 13:1-17.

See what the Apostle Peter wrote in the first eleven of 1 Peter 5, which showed where he put his emphasis as he brought his first epistle to a close. And see how much Peter had learned when compared with his reaction to having the Lord wash his feet when they were all together in the upper room.

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In the outline that I gave you at the beginning of our study, I just gave you what I believe were the major points of the message of the Apostle Paul.— emphasizing what he had to say about the application of the doctrine of the epistle (chs. 1-3) to the ways in which the doctrine was to affect their daily "walk." Five times the Apostle used this important word in this section, giving five different characteristics of the Christ life – four positive, and one negative. They are as follows:

- 1) "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are call" (4:1).
- 2) *Negatively*, "walk not as other Gentiles walk" (4:17).
- 3) "Walk in love" (5:2).
- 4) "Walk as children of light (5:8).

And now we are discussing the fifth and last time the Apostle used the word in this practical part:

5) “Walk circumspectly” (5:15).

The English definition of “circumspectly” is “being attentive to all circumstances,” like soldiers would be who were going through an area that was thought to have been planted with land mines. Literally it circumspectly comes from two Latin words which combined means *to look around*, or we could paraphrase it as meaning, *Watch your step*. Perhaps your parents told you when you stumbled over something that you needed to watch where you are going.

There is all of this in the Greek word that the Apostle Paul used, but his word included the idea of walking *accurately*. That is, there are right ways for a Christian to walk, but there are also ways that are not quite right, or altogether wrong! He had already told the Ephesian believers in 4:17 that they were not to walk as other Gentiles walk. And we have just seen in starting through this fifth time where the Apostle spoke of how they were to walk, that they were not to be drunk with wine, “but be filled with the Spirit.” So to “walk circumspectly” means that to be able to walk *accurately* we need to be filled with the Spirit. It is not possible for any of us to walk circumspectly, or *accurately*, apart from the divine enabling power of the Holy Spirit. And what we are about to learn in the verses that we come to now in 5:22 is that the first place where all of this applies after we make the application to ourselves, is in our families, and after that, where we work.

Now it ought to be apparent to us that if we are to walk accurately and carefully, and it is not like we have been walking, or living, before coming to Christ, where are we going to learn what such a life is? *And most* of you know the answer to that question. We learn it from the Bible, which is God’s Word. And there, too, we find out that an accurate Christian life is a life that is pleasing to God. Now if a person is not a Christian, he, or she, is not going to be concerned about pleasing God. But for us who know the Lord, pleasing God has to be the greatest priority that we have. And it comes down to the word that we have just been talking about in verse 21. It is the word, submitting.

Now let us look at:

**5:22** If you have a Bible that uses italics, or if you consult a Greek NT, you will find that there is no verb in this verse. But the translators are right in using the verb *submit* because it carries over into this verse.

R. C. H. Lenski, a very godly, Lutheran commentator suggests this for verse 22: “The wives to their husbands a unto the Lord.” If we do that, then we should move the period at the end of verse 21, replace it with a comma, so that the two verses would then read, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord, the wives to their husbands in the fear of Christ.”

Now verse 22 applies to all of us. We are all to be submissive to the Lord, but we are all also to be submissive “one to another in the fear of Christ.” If a person is a Christian, truly a Christian, he is going to be marked by an attitude of submission to others. A Christian should never be the kind of a person who is hard to get along with, or who cannot be happy unless things are going his way. Being submissive does not mean that a person has no convictions. He does. He always speaks the truth, and he always takes his stand upon the Word of God, but to borrow a statement from the Apostle Paul which he gave us in 4:15, we speak the truth in love.

At the very beginning of the practical section of the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the believers in Rome, we find his exhortation for submission – submission to God, and to the will of God. That is the first lesson we all need to learn when we are brought into the Family of God. We are to submit, to present, our bodies to God as belonging to Him. We are not our own; “we are bought with a price.” Let us all be reminded of the Apostle Paul’s

words in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Do our lives manifest that this is what we believe, and that this is a basic principle by which we live from day to day? Those of us who have just completed memorizing the Epistle of James, will remember that we had these words which apply to our lesson for today. I am thinking of James 4:6b-7:

6b . . . God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

And then a few verses later James added in verse 10:

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Nowhere is the need for submission and humility more strongly taught than in Philippians 2:5-11 where we are exhorted to have the mind of Christ who was the greatest Example of submission and humility that there ever has been, or ever will be.

But now as we look at our passage in Ephesians which begins 5:22 and goes down through 6:9, we find three groups of two each where the Apostle applies the need for humility:

1) Husbands and wives.

2) Fathers and children.

3) Masters and slaves, or applying it to our situation today, Employers and employees.

But you will notice that they are not listed in the order that I have just given to you. The Apostle, speaking, remember, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in this order:

1) First wives, then husbands.

2) Children, then fathers.

3) Finally, servants, and then masters.

So how is this different from the way we would list them? The answer: In each case God put the one with the lesser responsibility first. The wife is to be submissive to her husband. The children are to be obedient to their parents. The servants are to be obedient to their masters.

And notice another point of special importance. Paul told the wife what she is to do; he did not tell the husband what the wife was to do. In the same way he did not tell the wife what the husband was to do. And this pattern follows right down to the masters in 6:9. In counseling husband and wives who have been having difficulties with each other, more than once the husband has said, "Well, if my wife is submissive to me, then I will love her as Christ loved the Church." (I don't think I have ever said to me that she would submit herself to her husband if he would love her as Christ loved the Church.) I usually pushed my Bible across my desk, and asked the husband if what he had just told me was what the Bible said.

When it comes to obeying God, each one of us is primarily responsible for ourselves. That is always true in any problem that we might have with someone else. Another person's disobedience to God, does not give me the right to be disobedient in return. There is a proverb of Solomon that helps us to understand that. It is found in Proverbs 16:7. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

But why is the one with the lesser responsibility mentioned first? I don't know that I know the full answer, but I can tell you what I think. I think that it is because the willingness of the one with the less responsibility is often the key to the solution. We are all to be subject to each other, but there is special grace given to obedient wives, obedient children, and obedient slaves. When a wife is submissive to her husband, it is hard for a

husband not to love her – and on down the line. See James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5. I had one exception to all of this years ago with a couple who were graduates of MSB. That is where they met. But I think that there was something mentally wrong with the husband. His wife was more than willing to be submissive to him even after years of both verbal and physical abuse. Their marriage finally ended in divorce.

But now let us look at God's plan.

(Read Eph. 5:22-24.)

In reading a passage like this (down to 6:9) it is most beneficial for us to deal with God's primary will in each of these relationships, and not with the exceptions. A girl who is contemplating marriage should meditate a great deal on these verses. These are verses the Lord is asking her to live why with the man she marries. She needs to examine her own heart very thoroughly to determine the degree of her own submission to the Lord. How complete is it? And what about the man she is thinking about marrying? Does he act like a man should who really loves the Lord, and is devoted to the will of the Lord? Obviously she not even consider at all being married to a man who does not know the Lord. It is not enough for him to promise that he will consider his relationship to Christ later. He must have given evidence that he knew the Lord before they met for her to be on secure ground regarding his salvation.

**5:23** “For the husband is the head of the wife.” This was made clear by God at creation, even in the order in which Adam and Eve were created, and why, especially, Eve was created.

The marriage relationship has been honored by the relationship which Christ has to His Church, and especially again in His work of saving His Church. Although here the Apostle was speaking to the wife, he brought in the fact that her husband was one who stood in the place of a savior to her, supporting and providing for her, protecting her, and that just as the Lord continues His saving work in our lives after we are saved, so a godly husband must always be concerned about the spiritual blessing and growth of his wife.

**5:24** Just as the Church is subject to Christ in order to please Christ, so she is to seek to be pleasing to her husband in everything. She is not subject to all men, but to her husband alone. There is no one else who is to have the place in her life that her husband has. She grew up under the authority of her father. That authority is changed to her husband the moment she is married.

From verse 25 to the end of the chapter the Apostle Paul was addressing husbands.

**5:25** The standard for a Christian husband's love for his wife, is the love that the Lord showed for the Church at the Cross, and when He continues to show for the Church until they are with the Lord. Just as the wife is to give herself completely to her husband, so the husband is to give himself completely to his wife. He gives his life for her, even unto death if necessary.

**5:26** This and verse 27 are very interesting points to make regarding the marriage of a Christian man and a Christian woman. Christ not only gave Himself to save us from our sins, but He continues to give Himself to us for our sanctification and (see the next verse)

**5:27** The Lord's ultimate purpose is our ultimate glorification.

Now when the Lord saved us, He knew that there was nothing about us that attracted Him to us. As Moses explained to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, the Lord did not set His love upon Israel for anything



that He saw in them, but simply because He loved them, and wanted to be faithful to the promise that He had made to their fathers. The same is true of us who have believed in Christ. God loved us while we were in our sins, and Christ died for us while we were still sinners, alienated from Him. Now it is different in the marriage of a husband and wife. They are attracted to each other, and they feel that they cannot live without each other. Nevertheless, all of us who are married have learned things about each other that we were not aware of before. They may not be major things, but some things are different. There is a special responsibility that a husband has toward his wife's sanctification, and the same is true of the husband's sanctification and how the wife can contribute to her husband's godliness by prayer, and by the godly example of her life. But here because Paul was writing to the husband in this section, and comparing him to the relationship that Christ has to the Church, just as the Lord is concerned about our sanctification, so a husband is to be concerned not only for the physical and material needs of his wife, but he is to be concerned about her spiritual needs. And this means that the Word of God must have a major place in their marriage. She is to grow in her sanctification because of the place that the Word of God has in their lives. The husband has a great responsibility before the Lord for the sanctification of his wife. She ought to become a more godly person because she is married to him than she ever would have been without him. They need to read the Word together. They need to pray together. They need to go to Church together. They need to encourage each other in the reading of good Christian books, doctrinal books and Christian biographies. The husband may be a pastor of a church, but he must remember that primarily he is the pastor of his wife, and their children as they come along.

But let us learn more from verse 27.

**5:27** The Lord's purpose in His ministry to us, is to change us completely from what we were when He saved us. We all have spot and wrinkles which cosmetics cannot correct because they are spiritual. So the husband grows, and it is his responsibility to see that his wife continues to grow so that the longer they live together, the more glorious she becomes to him. In the same way, the longer we know the Lord, and have His ministry to us, although we are not aware of it now, yet we become more glorious to Him as we approach that day and become perfectly holy when we finally see Him, and all of the blemishes that sin has produced on us and in us, and gone – gone forever.

Can we see from this what a glorious thing a Christian marriage which produces a Christian home, can be? Obviously husbands need to grow, or they will not be able to help their wives and their children to grow. What the Church is, the home is to be, and what God intends for our homes to be, means that all of our homes will be like little churches. Our homes need to be places where the love of God dominates – not only the love of God for us, but the love of God in us and through us toward each other. We are to love each in the body of Christ, and that must originate in our homes where in love we are walking with the Lord and with each other so that our homes can be a foretaste of heaven upon earth.

Now as we come to the remaining verses of the chapter we come to a further emphasis upon the depth of love that a Christian husband should have for his wife. And this may sound a little strange to us.

**5:28** In verse 25 we are told that we as husbands are to love our wives as Christ loves the Church. Here, and in verse 29 we are told that we are to love our wives "as their own bodies." Now we often comment about a proud person that he is in love with himself. That is not a good thing. Pride is always bad, and usually ugly. But did you know that there is a legitimate love that we all have for ourselves, that is, for our bodies? Originally the second commandment was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We all have a God-given love for ourselves. If we didn't have that as a basic part of our nature, it is unlikely that any of us would survive. Pain is a life saver for us sometimes. Even animals, birds, and even insects have self-preservation written into their nature. Birds will fly away as you and your car come down the road where they are. Even a

spider will run away if you hit him with a rolled up newspaper, but don't kill him. When a normal person gets sick, he wants to do something about it. I don't put my hand in a burning furnace because I love myself too much to cause myself that much pain and harm. Some people don't like to fly in planes, or get in a boat on the ocean, or drive along a narrow road on a steep cliff. Why? Self love.

Now if I love Lucille like I love my own body, I am experiencing true marriage love. I don't like for her to be sick. I don't like for her to be in danger of anything. Her welfare is just as important to me as my own welfare is. You would say the same thing about people you love.

**5:29** Here Paul makes a general statement about every person who has ever lived. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh." That is an amazing statement, isn't it? Regardless of the generation that you are talking about, regardless of the nation, man or woman, body or girl – "No man ever yet hated his own flesh."

And then Paul added a very important point. This is how the Lord feels about us in the Church, His body. We are united to Him like the members of our bodies are a part of us.

**5:30** We are so united to Christ. "We are members of members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." We are in union with Christ. But read on.

**5:31** Until I married Lucille, I was under the authority of my father and mother. But when I married Lucille, I still was responsible to love them and honor them, and yet the relationship was different from then on because I was joined to Lucille, and we became one flesh. We were joined together in a living union by God Himself. And so my care for her since then has been equal to my care for myself, and at times even greater. This is God's picture of marriage. And He ought to know because He made the first man, and saw that Adam could not get along with a wife. And so He made Eve, and He performed the first marriage, making them one.

**5:32** God has taken the marriage relationship which predated all other human relationships, and said that the marriage relationship is a picture of what is now the relationship between Christ and His Church. So understanding marriage, we are in a wonderful position to understand how great Christ's love is for us, and how with constant care He takes care of us, working our spots and wrinkles, making us like Himself.

So . . .

**5:32** The marriage relationship helps us also to understand our relationship to Christ as His Bride, united with Him in a relationship that will never be broken. So the husband has one main responsibility to his wife, and that is to love her. The wife is to "reverence" her husband. What does that mean? It means to respect. It is the word commonly used for fearing the Lord. She does not worship her husband, but she is to live to please him in submission to him.

## Ephesians 6

May 9, 2011

The first nine verses of Ephesians 6 are a continuation of 5:22-33. Beginning with 5:22 this passage has to do, first of all, with family relationships, first, in 5:22-24, wives; then in 5:25-33, husbands. Now in 6:1-3, children; then fathers, in 6:4, fathers.

None of us can be reminded too often that the predominant characteristic for Christians and their families, is submission, and that this submission is to be “in the fear of God” (6:21), or as some translations have it, “of Christ.” As Calvin said, “Either way will suit the passage well enough” (*Sermons on Ephesians*, p. 560). Submission to God first, and then to each other in the body of Christ, is one of the first evidences of the filling of the Spirit. And again we notice that the group with the lesser responsibility is mentioned first – first children, then fathers; then servants, then masters.

**6:1** John Eadie in his commentary on Ephesians reminds us that there were not enough copies of this letter for every person to have his own. That would not have been possible even for every family. There was only one copy of the letter, and it probably would have been read when the believers in Ephesus gathered for their Sunday meeting. And so children would have been present as one of the elders read the letter from Paul. And as we noticed about wives and husbands in the preceding chapter, that each group was addressed directly, so Paul addressed the children. It was not an adult meeting where the children were not present, and so Paul would have just talked about them. Neither did Paul tell the fathers what was expected of the children. But Paul spoke directly to the children! They needed to hear directly for themselves the message that the Apostle Paul was bringing to them from the Lord: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

Now when a married couple began to have a family (and that is the only condition under which it was God’s will for children to be born), what was going to give special influence to a father’s attempts to guide his children in the right way? It was that that child (and children afterwards) could see that the father was living with the mother just like the Lord wanted him to live. Not always, but many times the failure of a father with his child, or children, is due to disobedience in the father’s life, and especially in his relationship with the mother. It is always the way that we live that affects the results of what we say. And children are usually quick to see if their parents are being obedient to the Lord, or at least seeking to be.

Concerning the statement that “this is right,” Eadie said that “it has its foundation in the very essence of that relation which subsists between parents and children. Nature claims it, while Scripture enjoins it, and the Son of God exemplified it” (p. 438). We are told that when our Lord was twelve years old, He went with His parents to Jerusalem for the Passover. When the group from Nazareth left to return home, the Lord stayed behind and was talking with Jewish teachers when they found Him. When Joseph and Mary wanted Him to return with them, we read in Luke 2:51 tells us that our Lord went back with them to Nazareth, “and was subject to them.” And that means, not just that He went back with them, but that that was the way our Lord lived as a teenager. That proves that what He did was “right” then, and such obedience to parents is “right” now.

Since August of 1986 I have been reading the book of Proverbs. This is an excellent book for us to read to our children. It is full of teaching that is “right,” “right” for children and teenagers, and “right” for adults.

**6:2** When we get married, we are no longer under their authority, but we are never out from under the fifth commandment. “Honor thy father and thy mother . . .” (Ex. 20:12). To honor our parents means that we are to let their lives and their words carry weight with us, even a lot of weight. This means that we are to listen to what they say, to believe them, and to do as they say. Let the advice of our parents far outweigh any advice that we might get from anyone else, unless they agree with our parents. I remember of hearing a man

who said that he was surprised how much smarter his parents got as he got older. Our parents don't say "no" to us to keep us from being happy. They say "no" to keep us from being unhappy. God has given each one of us two parents who are often the best counselors that we will ever have.

**6:3** To emphasize how important this command is, the Lord made it the first commandment with a promise attached. It is given here. (Read it.) Parents have had to face problems and to make decisions that their children have not yet had to make. How wonderful it is if, because we are listening to our parents, we don't make some of the mistakes that they have made!

**6:4** This verse is addressed to fathers.

Fathers may have a tendency to be impatient and severe. The only time they discipline their children may be when they have done something wrong. Fathers need to be especially of provoking their children because that usually produces the wrong results. And children, if they are not already rebellious, become rebellious.

What does "provoke" mean? "Provoke to wrath" is the translation of one Greek verb. It means that this is the response that the father gets when he confronts his child to prevent him from doing something that the father knows will not produce the good results that the child thinks it will. Now it is hard for a parent to avoid this if he only confronts his child when he is about to do the wrong thing. But it can be avoided if by example, and by teaching, the parent has anticipated problems before they actually come.

But what is "the nurture and admonition of the Lord"? The NASB translates it "discipline and instruction. The NIV, "training and instruction." But since the word translated "nurture" is formed from the Greek word a young child, it would seem to me that the Apostle Paul was talking about training children from their earliest years. The word "admonition" has as its root the Greek word for the mind, so "admonition," it seems to me, would mean that in our teaching we need to make as sure as we can that our children are understanding what we are teaching them so that they can put the teaching to use in their lives. This would include exhortation. It would include warnings. It seems that these two words bring together what we usually recognize in the writings of the Apostle Paul – first the doctrine, or teaching of the truth, and then the application of the truth in every day life.

Charles Hodge, however, brings out a very important point in the teaching that fathers (assisted by mothers) must make clear constantly to the child, or children. We need to make clear to them that this is "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And the father needs to make sure, not only that this is what he is giving to his child, but that the child understand also that he, or she, is being taught the Word of God. This is a part of the education of children that is being entirely neglected by many families, and, if the children are being taught at all, it is only humanistic psychology in many cases. Our generation of Americans is suffering from the lack of Bible teaching, and Bible teaching that starts in early childhood, Bible teaching which our children know is the teaching of the Lord! Let us make it clear to our children and grandchildren that they can't start teaching their children to know the Bible, and to live it, because it is the Word of God. A generation of godly fathers and mothers who would raise their children on the Word of God, could practically eliminate juvenile delinquency. And what a difference such teaching would make in the lives of our fathers and mothers. Even today too many parents depend upon Christian schools and churches to teach their children. But there are no better teachers than fathers and mothers who prepare themselves to make sure that their children know the Lord and His Word.

Charles Hodge wrote,

It is only by making God—God in Christ—the teacher . . . on whose authority everything is to be believed and in obedience to Whose will everything is to be done, that the goal of education can possibly be

attained. It is infinite folly for men to assume that they are wiser than God or to attempt to accomplish a goal through any means other than those which He has appointed (Hodge, Charles, *Ephesians*, p. 204). Think of all of this in connection with what the Apostle Paul taught Timothy about the Word of God. I am thinking of his words in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

We all need constant guidance and encouragement in the reading and study of the Word of God. Fathers need to guide, help, encourage, and sometimes correct their children, but the benefits are eternal. Churches that overlook a ministry to children, are making one of the greatest mistakes that a church can make.

Next we come to servants and masters in verses 5 through 9.

**6:5** In Bible times, both OT and NT, there were masters who had human slaves. The word translated “servants” here lit. means a bondsman, one who is owned by his master in the same way the master owns horses and mules, even property. He is different from a household servant who was paid. He had no rights. Sometimes his situation was good. At other times it was very bad. Everything depended upon the character of the master.

Probably the most famous slave in the NT was Onesimus, who belonged to a Christian master. The Greek word for “master” is the word for a lord. Onesimus had run away (which slaves often did). He had gone to Rome and somehow had crossed paths with Paul who was a prisoner in Rome at the same time. Paul led him to the Lord, and then encouraged him to go back to Colosse and to submit himself to Philemon. A slave could have been killed by his master for doing what Onesimus had done, but Paul wrote a letter to Philemon which we have in our Bible encouraging Philemon to take him back, and to forgive him. Slaves sometimes could obtain their freedom. Paul addressed Christian slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21-22 which really expressed his attitude toward slaves who were believers. He said,

21 Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

Paul did not belong to any movement to free slaves (if there was one), but this, basically, was his position as expressed in 1 Corinthians, to get slaves who knew the Lord to focus upon themselves as slaves of Christ. In Paul's letter to the church at Rome, he called himself *a slave of Jesus Christ*, and he used this emphasis in his teaching of the Christian life. He expected that knowing the Lord would make a great difference in the way a slave who was a Christian served his master, his lord.

And so he encouraged Christian slaves to be obedient to their masters, and to do it “with fear and trembling.” This does not mean that they were to live in constant fear of what their masters might do to them (which was always a problem), but that they should fear and tremble before their masters as they served the Lord “with fear and trembling” – but Paul meant with fear lest they would in any way fall short of what the masters wanted them to do. Paul really believed that if you were a Christian and a slave, that you ought to strive to be the best slave that any master could have. And to show them how this could be done, he added the phrase, “as unto Christ.” They were to serve their masters, regardless of whether they were good or bad, or sometimes good and sometimes bad – they were to serve “as unto Christ.” Reading through these instructions which Paul gave various groups in the church, it is very important to notice how he kept bringing the Lord into what he was telling them to do.

Paul spoke of his own ministry using these two words, “fear” and “trembling” in 1 Corinthians 2:3 where he said, “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” He had come to them with every desire to be faithful to the Lord, but not to trust himself in any way. He had an intense desire to glorify the Lord and feared that he might fail to do that in any way. See also 2 Corinthians 7:15 and Philippians 2:12 where Paul exhorted the Philippians to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.”

**6:6** Many slaves would work faithfully when their master or someone representing him was watching them, but instead they were to remember that they were also slaves of Christ, and so they were to serve their human masters as they wanted to serve Christ, “doing the will of God from the heart.” It is very important to notice how the Apostle was continuously bringing the Lord into their difficult situations.

And so he added in verse 7:

**6:7** “With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Again quoting Eadie, “It is no goodwill which the slave often bears to his master, his common feeling being the torment of his master’s presence and the terror of his lash” (p. 461). But the Christian slave knew that in reality he was serving a loving and faithful Lord.

And Charles Hodge drew a further lesson from the teaching of the Apostle Paul in this verse:

This, as the Scriptures teach, is not peculiar to the obedience of the slave to his master, but applies to all other cases in which obedience is required from one person to another. It applies to children in relation to their parents, wives to husbands, people to magistrates. . . Foreign as all this is to the proud and rebellious human heart, which spurns all superiority and authority, it is daily illustrated by the cheerful and patient submission of the people of God, even to the capricious and unreasonable exercise of the authority of those God has placed them under (p. 207).

**6:8** The Lord is keeping the records. And this applies to every part of our lives. The Lord will judge the wicked, regardless of who they are, how high in society or how low. Sometimes rewards are experienced at the present time. But they are certain to be given when the Lord returns. And this is another great reason for looking for the Lord’s coming. When He comes for His Church, all injustices will be a thing of the past. Then, even more than now, shall we as believers be thankful that the Lord has led us, and given us the grace to obey Him.

What the Apostle Paul was teaching in this passage is what King David wrote about in Psalm 16:8-9:

8 I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

As we learn throughout the Word of God, it is in our trials that God is producing godly character in us, and in showing His sufficient grace and power in our lives and for His glory now and in eternity to come. Eadie said, “The Christian doctrine of rewards is too often lost sight of or kept in abeyance, as if it were not perfectly consistent with the freest bestowment of heavenly glory” (p. 452).

**6:9** Here we have just one verse directed to masters, lords. Power has a tendency to corrupt. We see that especially in the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. But we saw it in King Saul.

The word “and” at the beginning of verse 9 shows that there is an immediate connection between God’s words to slaves, and His word to master’s. The Apostle Paul did not hesitate to speak to slaves, nor to masters. Some commentators believe that Paul had in mind kings and their subjects. “Forbearing” means *to let up*. Many

masters rule by giving one warning after another. The Apostle told them to let up on issuing threatenings. The verse suggests that they leave threatenings off altogether. A statement that the Lord gave in His Sermon on the Mount, applies to the masters here. I am thinking of Matthew 7:12 where the Lord said, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." There will only be one Lord when we get to heaven, and He is no respecter of persons. When the Lord said, "This is the law and the prophets," He was saying that as far as our relationships with others, regardless of who we are, or who they are, we always need to treat others the way we want them to treat us. To the masters the Apostle was saying on behalf of the Lord, "You had better treat slaves the way you want to be treated when you stand before the Lord as His slave. We all need to keep eternity in our sights.

There is a lot of truth for all of us to digest from Ephesians 5:21 through 6:9. There is truth in these verses for all of us. One reason our country is in the condition that it is in today, is because we have skimmed over these verses, or it may be that some, even some Christians, are inclined to say that these verses belong to past generations, but not to us. I hope none of us is making that mistake. The Bible is unique in the doctrine that it teaches. It is unique also in the living that it instructs for the Lord's people. But it is unique also in its teaching on family life, and or relationships in the world. It would be good to conclude this section by repeating the first Psalm. Blessing always comes when we do things God's ways; problems magnify when we ignore His ways and walk in the ways of sinful men.

All of this, too, is in special preparation for what the Apostle Paul is going to teach us about the spiritual warfare we are all involved in, a war for which the first five and a half chapters of this epistle give us our preparation.

May 16, 2011

As we come to verse 10 of Ephesians 6, we come to the last major point in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesian church. And, assuming that Paul intended for it to be a circular letter, that is, a letter to be circulated among other nearby churches, it was a point that was intended to draw major attention to all churches. And when I say that, I mean all churches down to the present day.

The epistles of Paul represent what have been three major problems among the people of God from the beginning of time, both with Jews and Gentiles. But they are especially three major problems in the professing church today. What are they?

- 1) Ignorance of the great doctrines of the Bible. {
- 2) A failure to live according to the will of God and for the glory of God. {Comment briefly on each one.}
- 3) Too little attention given to the opposition which we face from the Devil. {

We can consider this last section (before Paul's conclusion) as an point all by itself, or we can consider it as the last part of the practical section of the book which began with 4:1. Paul gives us more practical exhortation, more commandments, in verses 10 through 20, so the word "finally" at the beginning of verse 10 can mean that Paul was about to give them his final words of exhortation. Notice:

- 1) "Be strong" in verse 10.
- 2) "Put on" in verse 11.
- 3) "Take" in verse 13.
- 4) "Stand" in verse 14.
- 5) "Taking" in verse 16. This is the same verb as in verse 13.
- 6) "Take" in verse 17. This is a different verb from those found in verses 13 and 16, but the meaning is the same.
- 7) "Praying" in verse 18.

Let me sound a word of warning as we begin these verses about the Devil. **The Devil does not like to be exposed.** But this is what Paul was doing in this passage. I am sure that the Apostle Paul suffered for it. You probably remember that in 2 Corinthians 12:7 Paul spoke of his thorn in his flesh which he called “the messenger of Satan to buffet me.” That was written seven or eight years before Paul wrote the Ephesian epistle. So Paul continued to expose Satan. God is far greater than all of the forces of the Devil put together. But Paul did not minimize what the Devil might do to anyone who sought to expose him. So I am sure that the Apostle Paul wrote these final words in the Ephesian epistle praying over every word. Let us approach this subject casting our care upon the Lord.

**6:10** The Apostle’s last instruction has to do with the spiritual conflict that we are all involved in from the moment that we are saved. And so he says, “Finally.” It suggests that what the Apostle wrote, he wrote in an orderly fashion. The first five and a half chapters were in preparation for what he is about to tell us.

Those who are in any branch of the service are faced with two basic needs. They have to be physically fit, and they must know how to use the equipment that has been issued to them. And so, the first item of business is the rugged physical training to which men and women going into the service are subjected. It is called *boot camp*. The object is to get the recruit into the best physical condition.

When we are saved, we need to be prepared for war, spiritual warfare. And so the Apostle’s first order is, “Be strong.” You can have the finest equipment in the world issued to you, but if you are not strong enough to use it, the equipment alone is not sufficient. And so the Apostle Paul’s first order is, “Be strong.” But the kind of strength that a Christian needs is spiritual strength. And so Paul said, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

To be strong means that there must be growth, and to grow demands that we are eating the right things, and getting the right exercise. Our strength is in the Lord, and in the power of His might. And so we need to “feed” on the Lord. To do that means that we need to start reading the Word, seeking the Lord’s help in understanding the Word, plus being obedient to the Word. It involves learning to pay. We are strengthened by having fellowship with other Christians. And all of this which gives us spiritual strength must be continued if our strength is to be kept up, and even increased. The form of the verb that Paul used here means that we are to continually be seeking to get stronger and stronger, but it also indicates that while we read, and obey, and pray, and seek the fellowship of other Christians, *it is the Lord Who strengthens us*. “In the Lord” means *in union with the Lord*. As long as we live, our strength comes through a growing knowledge of the Lord which is the result of our fellowship with the Lord. And it is always from the Lord that we get the strength to live for the Lord, and to be involved in the warfare all Christians are involved in.

Let us always remember that this comes first, and always needs to be kept in first place in our lives. The Christian who begins to neglect the reading of the Word and prayer, will be weakened and become more likely to be a battle statistic. Our relationship with the Lord can never be severed, but it can be weakened, and often is, leading to spiritual defeats.

“Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” are two ways of saying the same thing. The repetition, as always in Scripture, is for emphasis. And it is not just the habit of doing these things, but it is in keeping the Lord involved in every detail of our lives. We read the Word trusting the Lord to teach us of Himself. We pray to have fellowship with the Lord. And we obey the Word in order that we might be pleasing to the Lord.

**6:11** When we are saved, we are enlisting in the army of the Lord, and by grace, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, our armor is issued to us. This is the very presence of God, of the Lord Jesus, and of the



Holy Spirit in our lives, and the spiritual gifts that we have in Them. In this epistle to the Ephesians Paul call the armor “all spiritual blessings” (Eph.1:3). We don’t have to go outside of the Bible nor beyond the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to find adequate defense measures for this warfare.

What is the purpose of our warfare? It is to enable us “to stand against the wiles of the Devil.” The Greek word which is translated “wiles,” is the word from which we get our English word, methods. All of the Devil’s ways are characterized by deceit. He is the Master Deceiver. He deceived Eve by getting her to believe that God had lied to her to keep something good away from her. He even sought to deceive the Lord. Let me tell you that the only place you and I can get reliable information about the Devil is in God’s Word. The Devil would like for all of us to believe that he is a joke, and so people are often inclined to believe that that is what he is, not a real person, but just a joke – that there really is no Devil. The only place that you and I will learn the truth about the Devil, is in the Bible. Only by putting on “the whole armor of God” will we be able to stand against our archenemy. We must not omit any part.

**6:12** Our warfare with the Devil is called wrestling because he like to attack us individually. He is not omnipresent like God is, but he has countless numbers of fallen angels who make up his army. Several things make the forces of evil too much for us. First, they are stronger than we are. Second, they are more numerous than we are. And third, they are invisible so we are not able to see them. They are not “flesh and blood” like we are.

Paul used four terms to describe the demonic forces of the Devil:

- 1) “Principalities” - which seems to speak of a well organized force of evil, just like in our military we have generals, colonels, majors, etc. The Devil’s forces are well organized.
- 2) “Powers” - the word is authorities. The Bible speaks of the Devil as “the god of this world,” and we learned in 1 John 5:19 that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” or, *in the wicked one*. The world with all of its unrest and widespread sin and evil, seem content to struggle weakly year after year, and often not at all, obviously, although not consciously, not knowing the source of all evil.
- 3) “Rulers of the darkness of this world” - their dominion is over the whole world.
- 4) “Spiritual wickedness in high places” - This statement has been translated in various ways, all which seem inclined to teach that the Devil has designs ultimately on heaven as on the earth. Eadie says that it is an expression which shows that the Devil and his forces have an appetite for evil which exceeds their capacity for producing it.

It is practically impossible to portray the power of the Devil, and his objectives, all designed to plunge all of creation farther and farther away from God, and deeper and deeper into more sin and worse sin.

**6:13** Now, after seeing the great power of the Devil, and the forces allied with him to join him in achieving his objectives, this should make us as the people of God know that there is no part of the armor of God that we can afford to ignore or leave behind if we are to obtain the victory. Our God has made full provision for us in Himself, in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, to be victorious over the Devil and his forces in their own territory, this evil world.

This is the second time that Paul has used the term, “the whole armor of God.” No part can be left off if we are to be standing when each conflict is over. This should help us to understand what sufficient means we have in the armor of God for total and continual victory over our enemy. “The evil day” is the day of the Devil’s attack upon us. Geoffrey Wilson described it this way:

The Christian soldier must be thoroughly prepared in order that he may be able to withstand any sudden

assault that is launched against him. “The evil day” is the day when the conflict is most severe. It is any day of which it can be said, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (p. 131)

Now we come to a detailed listing of the parts of the armor.

**6:14** Two pieces of the armor are here.

First, the girdle. It was probably one of the last pieces of armor that the ancient soldier would put on. It was a wide belt, often very ornamental, sometimes with gold and silver. It held the other pieces of the armor in place. It probably speaks of the Christian’s firm belief in the Gospel in particular, and in all of the Word of God in general. Only a firm belief in the truth of the Word of God can protect the Christian when he comes face to face to meet the foe.

Second, the breastplate of righteousness. As important as practical righteousness is, it is not sufficient for a time of spiritual conflict. Our consciences tell us that it is not perfect, and the Devil, who is the accuser of the brethren, has done his homework very well, and he knows how to raise past sins to our minds to weaken us in our conflict. No, it is not our practical righteousness, but the perfect righteousness of Christ which has been charged to our account, and which can withstand every charge that the Devil might bring against us. His righteousness in us and upon us is perfect, and is the same always. No assault of the Devil can injure us in the security we have, clothed in the righteousness of God through Christ.

**6:15** This has to do with the shoes we wear and which are very important if we are to stand. Again we have the Gospel, the Gospel of peace, the peace of God, and peace with God. How important it is to have these shoes on for the battle! A trial comes up in our lives, and the Devil and his demons are quick to point out to us that this has come because of something which we have done in the past that has been displeasing to God. Every part of the armor has to be put on, and kept on. We are to be on the alert. So in a time like this when the Devil is seeking to weaken our ability to fight by reminding us of past sins, we answer him with what we read in Psalm 103:10-12:

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

**6:16** “Above all” should be translated, *in addition to all*. The shield is not worn, but carried, which suggests active faith, such as we read about in Hebrews 11. Here its defensive value is pointed out. The shields in those ancient days were like doors, which was the original meaning of the word. They were about four feet high and two and a half feet wide. Such is faith. The fiery darts of the wicked as explained by Geoffrey Wilson are ways in which he uses horrible thoughts which often crowd into our minds, or angry words, or blasphemous words. Sometimes the Devil tempts us to pride, or discontent, sexual passion, anger, and the like. Fiery darts not only would penetrate the flesh, but also could set the body on fire. How many sins the Lord keeps us from, none of us knows. But what we do know is that the strengthening of our faith safeguards us from the worst which the Devil can shoot at us.

Faith is not something that we generate ourselves, but it is always a gift from God Himself produced in our hearts the fruit of the Word of God in us.

**6:17** This is the final part of the defensive part of the armor. We are to take “the helmet of salvation.” To “take” is, is to appropriate it, to put it on for the safety that it provides for us. There is a passage in 1 Thessalonians that seems to throw light upon what the Apostle Paul had in mind as he spoke of “the helmet

of salvation. Let me read that passage in 1 Thessalonians to you. Its reference is 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11:

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

I think that it is very possible that when the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus about “the helmet of salvation,” he was speaking of the hope, the future prospect, that we have who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is our hope? It is the return of the Lord for His Church. Paul had just referred to this in 1 Thessalonians at the end of chapter 4. When that day comes, the Devil will never again be able to tempt us. We will be with the Lord, but what a blessing is added to that when we understand that the goal of our salvation is that we will be like the Lord Jesus – with Him, and like Him, forever!

Let me ask you: Are you wearing that hope? Have you taken the helmet of salvation? Isn't it wonderful to know that the day is coming when sin will be a thing of the past, when we will never again be tempted to do anything, or saying anything wrong, or even to think anything that is displeasing to the Lord? And we won't have to worry about going to the wrong place where we will be with the wrong kind of people. There won't be any wrong places for us, or any wrong people. The Lord will be all to all of us, all in all!

But there is one other thing that we are to take, and to hold it in our heart first, and then in our hands for use. It is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” How often do you use the Word of God in your opposition to the Devil and temptation? This is what the Lord did. Read about it in Matthew 4:1-11. Remember also what the writer of the book of Hebrews said about the Word of God:

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Let us always remember that the Bible is “the sword of the Spirit.” We take it and use it, but it is always up to the Spirit of God as to how the Word of God is used. The Word of God itself is more powerful than anything that you and I can say about it.

But we still have not gotten to the end of our list. Look with me now at Ephesians 6:18.

**6:18** This is always the companion of the Word of God. It is prayer! How often? “Always.” What is all prayer? It is all kinds of prayer – worship, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition (which is supplication). It is also ejaculatory prayers, and days of prayer; private prayer, and corporate prayer. “All prayer” is prayer for everyone and individuals. It is prayer for all times – when we are happy, and when we are under trials. It is prayer when we feel like praying, and prayer when we don't feel like praying. We are to be praying “always.” Learn to pray from your Bible. Pray the prayers of the Bible when they are appropriate. The Psalms are a great guide for us to pray. So are the prayers of the Apostle Paul. They teach us not only how to pray for our fellow believers, but that it is often good to tell them verbally, or in writing, what it is that we are praying for when we pray for them.

What did the Apostle Paul mean by “watching”? It means that they were to persevere, not be remiss in prayer,

but always be on guard both for ourselves and for others. When we hear about soldiers who risk their lives to save a buddy in trouble, and often they do give their lives to save others, they are being “watchful.”

**6:19-20** The Apostle Paul wanted prayer for himself, not that he would be released from confinement by the Roman government, but that he might speak boldly and effectively. This was to individuals as well as to groups. In Acts 14:1 it is said of Paul and Barnabas that in a synagogue in Iconium they “so spake, that a great multitude both of Jews and also of the Greeks believed”! If that is possible, Dr. Ironside said that it is also possible to “so speak” that no one will believe. The effectiveness of what we say is always linked with what we are in the sight of the Lord.

**6:21-22** It is important for to keep in touch with others that they may know how we are doing, and that we might know how they are doing. None of us is serving the Lord alone. We are “workers together.” We are not in this work alone. When God blesses one, it is blessing also for another. We are not in competition, but we are ‘workers together” (2 Cor. 6:1).

**6:23-24** Here is another way for us to pray with all prayer. We can pray audibly. We can pray with pen and ink (or with our computers). “Peace” is always a proper subject for prayer because we live in a world which knows nothing about true peace, and we as believers are constantly faced with circumstances which can be an attack on our peace. Our greeting that we often use routinely, “How are you?”, ought to have behind it the thought, how are you doing spiritually as well as how are you doing physically. When people are grieving over the death of a loved one, or have received news that they are seriously ill, or have not been walking in fellowship with the Lord, it is important for us to know how they are doing in every way.

(Close our study by reading Ephesians 6:23 and 24.)