

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – October 6, 1998

Intro: There are four of Paul's epistles which are believed to have been written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. They were written in the early years of the A. D. 60's. The Epistle to the Philippians was probably the first, followed by Colossians and Philemon, and then Ephesians. The evidence in the epistles that Paul was a prisoner at the time he wrote these four letters are as follows:

- 1) Philippians – 1:7, 13, 14, 16.
- 2) Colossians – 4:10, 18.
- 3) Philemon – vv. 1, 10, 23 (with 22).
- 4) Ephesians – 3:1; 4:1; 6:20. Eph. 4:13 may also be a reference to Paul's imprisonment.

The brief historical record of this, Paul's first imprisonment, is given in Acts 28:16-31.

Thus, the conditions under which the Apostle Paul wrote these letters was anything but favorable. And yet we do not see a man filled with a lot of self pity, but we see him as one deeply devoted to God and to Christ, as well as to the people of God. We will appreciate these epistles much more if we remember that Paul was a prisoner of Rome when he wrote these.

A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. xvii, made this interesting statement:

The study of Paul's Epistles in the order of their writing is the best possible way of seeing his own growth as a theologian and interpreter of Christ.

However, we need to realize that scholars have given us a good idea as to when Paul's epistles were written, but we can't be absolutely sure that we know all of the dates or the exact order in which the epistles were written. But Dr. Robertson was certainly right: we can see in Paul's writings his own growth in the Lord and his devotion to God and the work that the Lord had given him to do. Regardless of where he was, and regardless of His circumstances, Paul was always active as an ambassador of Christ. In the case of the Prison Epistles, they were written so near the same time that the order is not as significant as it would be if we were comparing these four epistles with the others which the Apostle Paul wrote, before these, and afterwards.

I am not going to get into the critical problems which have concerned many NT scholars except as they might raise some questions in our reading of the English text. You will find, for example, that in the NASB and the NIV that there is a note in connection with the words "in" or "at Ephesus," indicating that these words are not in some of the early MSS. That may be true, but it seems certain that this epistle was sent to Ephesus first, and then may have been circulated to other churches – very possibly the same churches to whom the Apostle John wrote the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Besides, church historians tell us that the early church believed that it was written and sent originally to Ephesus. So we don't need to bother ourselves about that comment from some writers. Some scholars write with the idea of questioning all that they can in all of the books of the Bible. There are some who even say that Paul did not write this letter which we call, Ephesians. But if Paul wrote Colossians, we can be sure that he wrote Ephesians because of the many similarities between the two epistles. I personally am not at all worried about such criticisms, and I hope you won't worry about them either. We know that Ephesians has always been accepted as the work of the Apostle Paul, and that he wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Handley Moule pointed in his commentary to the fact of the similarities found in Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, indicating that they were written at the same time, and probably sent out at the same time.

Let us now turn to consider the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

I want to encourage you to be reading and re-reading this epistle. Yesterday I times myself reading it aloud,

concentrating on what I was reading, but not trying to get through it as quickly as I could. I found that it took me just a little less than 23 minutes. I have been asking our people on Sunday to read the Sermon on the Mount which I am teaching in our Sunday morning services, and also asking them to read John 17 which I am going through on Sunday evenings. After church on Sunday night one of our young children came to me to tell me that her family had read the Sermon on the Mount together, and that they had read John 17 two times. That was a great encouragement to me. I hope you all will be reading Ephesians over and over during the weeks that we will be studying it.

I mentioned to our people on Sunday morning that D. L. Moody was asked what was the greatest blessing that he had ever experienced. Think of all that he could have drawn from, having preached in so many places, and having seen so many people turn to the Lord. But his answer was this: It was the month that he read Paul's epistle to the Romans *forty-seven times!* That is the kind of blessing we all need, and so I trust that you will really discipline yourself to do this additional Bible reading.

Having said all of that, I am going to teach these epistles in the order in which they appear in our English Bibles. So we will begin with Ephesians.

The theme: In this letter to the church at Ephesus Paul was teaching them about *the Church, the body of Christ*. The New Testament speaks of many local churches – for example, the church at Rome, or at Corinth, or at Ephesus, and so on. The Galatian epistle was written to "the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2). But there is another way in which the word *church* is used in the NT. This is what the Apostle Paul called, "the church, which is His [Christ's] body" (Eph. 1:22, 23). We are going to be learning about that Church, which is made up of all true believers in Christ. It is a spiritual body, but a very real body. Christ is the Head of the Church, and all of us have been baptized by the Spirit into that body. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:13. Unfortunately it is possible for unsaved people to get into our local churches in spite of how we try to make sure that all of our members are truly saved. But that is not true of the body of Christ, the Church. Only those who have been truly saved are members of Christ's body. Paul in Ephesians was led by the Holy Spirit to give us this wonderful teaching at least in part because it was his special calling to go to the Gentiles. Saved Jews and saved Gentiles during this age are brought together into this one body. *The Ephesian church was a predominantly Gentile church, and it seems clear that Paul was writing this letter especially for Gentiles.* Cf. Eph. 2:11; 3:1, 6, 8; 4:17.

I would like to give you *a simple outline of the epistle* which I hope will be an aid to understanding the message which is contained in this book.

Of course the simplest outline that anyone can make for this epistle is:

- I. The Doctrinal Section (1-3).
- II. The Practical Section (4-6).

This division was really characteristic of most of Paul's epistles. It shows that both doctrinal teaching and practical teaching are what every Christian needs. It also shows that doctrine forms the foundation for practical living. Therefore, never minimize the importance of doctrine. It is because the people of God usually know so little of the great doctrines of Scripture that local churches are doing many of the things that they are doing today.

However, these two points only let us recognize in a general way the emphasis of the Apostle Paul's ministry, but they do not tell us what the doctrine was which Paul was teaching, nor the practical instruction that he was giving to the believers in Ephesus, and elsewhere down to the present day. So we need more detail than that. Let us see what we find as we try to be more explicit.

I believe that any outline of Ephesians must show that Paul was writing particularly for Gentiles. And his emphasis is upon the Gospel, the place that Gentiles have in the Body of Christ, and the life that they are expected to live as the people of God. Paul makes it very clear also that his ministry to the Gentiles is not just a ministry of teaching them the truth of God, but it is a ministry of prayer for them. Gentiles, raised in a pagan society, would have no idea as to what salvation really was, nor of the Christian life lived always in spiritual conflict with the very real and evil forces with which we have to contend daily. So this is Paul's epistle explaining for Gentile believers the great truths that they needed to believe as well as the godly way in which they were expected to live.

- I. Paul's Salutation (Eph. 1:1-2).
- II. Paul's Doxology followed by his prayer for the believers in Ephesus (1:3-26).
- III. Two descriptions of the Gentiles' past and present (Eph. 2:1-22).
 - A. The first description
 - 1. The past (2:1-3).
 - 2. The present (2:4-10).
 - B. The second description
 - 1. The past (2:11-12).
 - 2. The present (2:13-22).
- IV. The Apostle Paul's Ministry – to the Gentiles (3:1-21).
 - A. The Gospel for the Gentiles (3:1-13).
 - B. Paul's prayer for the Gentiles (3:14-21).
- V. The Walk of a Christian (4:1-6:9).
 - A. Personal instructions for all believers (4:1-5:21).
 - B. Specific instructions for the family (5:22-6:4).
 - C. Special instructions for the workplace (6:5-9).
- VI. The Warfare of a Christian (6:10-20).
- VII. Paul's Conclusion and Benediction (6:21-24).

Now we turn to the exposition of the epistle.

I. Paul's Salutation (Eph. 1:1-2).

We are all familiar with Paul's customary greetings in his epistles. They are all so very similar that it is easy for us to lose sight of their importance. We need to remember that verses 1 and 2 were written just as much under the direction of the Spirit of God as any other part of the epistle. Every word of Scripture is inspired of God, and so all are worthy of our attention.

Today when we write a letter we put the name, or names, of the people we are writing to at the beginning of the letter. They did this also in Paul's day. But where they were different from us is in the fact that the writer would put his name *first* before anything else. So in reading a letter you would know immediately who it was from.

Paul called himself here "an apostle of Jesus Christ." Robertson pointed out that the Apostle Paul used this title more frequently in his later epistles because his position was more severely attacked later in his ministry, and he used this title to show his right to speak with authority on behalf of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of God.

But when Paul used the title "apostle" it was also to show that authority. And it was when he was writing on a subject of special importance. In Eph. 2:19-20 Paul told the Ephesian believers that as "the household of God

they were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." So we can truthfully say that the teaching of the NT rests upon the authority, the God-given authority of "the apostles and prophets." Paul's position was usually questioned because he was not one of the original twelve, but the NT leaves no doubt but that he was a true apostle! In fact, when you look at the books of the NT, and who the writers were and how much each wrote, it is clear that the Apostle Paul had a special place of importance among the apostles.

What does the word "apostle" mean? Basically the word is formed from the verb ἀποστέλλω, and it speaks of one who is sent forth from another person as that person's representative. As Paul indicated here it indicates that he was commissioned, commissioned by "Jesus Christ." Thus, he was duly authorized to speak with the highest possible authority, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. As an apostle he did not have the right to make up his own message, but he was to deliver faithfully the message he had received from Jesus Christ.

So the use of this title means that the epistle which Paul the apostle wrote was in reality from Jesus Christ. So this takes Paul's epistle to the Ephesians out of the category of a mere human production and places it in the category of being a letter from Jesus Christ. Paul obviously wrote other letters which did not have this same character, but it is important that we treat this letter we are beginning to study as a message from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from God.

Paul did not seek this position, but he was commissioned as an apostle of Jesus Christ "by the will of God."

We need to remember that even our Lord Jesus Christ had this title. In Heb. 3:1-2 we have these words:

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

This is why in reading the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John, you find the Lord speaking often of the fact that He was sent by the Father, and that the message He brought was a message from God. Take, for example, what our Lord said in His High Priestly prayer in John 17:8:

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

But in no way was this a matter of boasting, or pride, with the Apostle Paul. When Paul was writing to his first epistle to the Corinthian church, and mentioning those who had seen the Lord after His resurrection, he had this to say:

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

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.

11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed (1 Cor. 15:8-11).

So instead of flaunting the fact that he was an apostle, it was a matter of the deepest humility with the Apostle Paul. Although there are no apostles today, and no men were appointed to succeed the original apostles, yet we all should feel that we are the least of all saints, and are not worthy to be in the family of God. We do have Paul's statement to this effect, and you will find it in this very epistle as he spoke of the special commission he had received from the Lord. Look at Eph. 3, verses 1-12, esp. v. 8.

But to whom did the Apostle Paul write this letter? "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus."

This was not a letter to every Ephesian, but "to the saints which are at Ephesus..." Paul was not writing to two groups, those who were "saints" and those who were "faithful in Christ Jesus." These are two descriptions of one and the same group – the people in Ephesus who were true believers in Christ Jesus. If a person really knows the Lord Jesus as Savior, he (or she) is a saint, and he (or she) will be faithful to the Lord.

Even in those days there were those who *professed* faith in Christ, but who did not really *possess* eternal life. And so it is today. A saint is a holy person. It speaks of one who has separated himself (or herself) from sin and from a worldly life, to live a life that is pleasing to God. Perhaps it is more in keeping with Scripture to say, as Lenski the Lutheran commentator said, that a saint is "separated from the world by God for Himself" (p. 345). At the same time the life of a true Christian is characterized by faithfulness to God and to His Word. A person who is not concerned about holiness and/or faithfulness, has no right to call himself a Christian. It is God Who enables us to be holy, and it is God Who makes us faithful, and the source of our strength for such a life is "in Christ Jesus." When we were saved we were eternally joined to Christ, and the Apostle has much to say about that relationship right here in this epistle. One scholar has counted 164 times that the Apostle Paul spoke in his epistles of our being "in Christ." It is especially important in Ephesians and Colossians, and this truth helps us to understand the truth of these two epistles that each of us being "in Christ" so that together we form the body of Christ, the church. To be "in Christ" is to be saved. Our acceptance is in Him. But it also is the source of our life and power.

After identifying himself and the people to whom he was writing, Paul went on with his greeting which was actually *a prayer for the people of God in Ephesus*. Geographically the people were "at Ephesus," but spiritually they were "in Christ Jesus."

When you put together Paul's description of a believer in Christ from verse 1, and his prayer for that very same group in verse 2, you can see that although a Christian is a holy person, he is not perfectly holy, and although a Christian is characterized by faithfulness to God, he is not perfectly faithful. We are all growing in holiness, and growing in faithfulness. God is not finished with us. His work in us continues. And so we have a daily need for "grace" and "peace," and will continue to have this need as long as we live on this earth. And we can be thankful that the supply is inexhaustible because "grace ... and peace" come to us day by day and moment by moment "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Nevertheless, it was constantly a matter for prayer with the Apostle Paul as he prayed for the people of God. This is not common prayer, no mere greeting, but nothing could be more basic to our spiritual welfare and progress than that we are daily experiencing God's grace and God's peace.

"Grace" reminds us that we are undeserving of God's blessing, but we need to recognize that "grace," grace from God, means *strength!* Paul made that very clear in 2 Cor. 12 when he was speaking of his own troubles, and particularly his thorn in the flesh which was given to him to keep him humble. He earnestly prayed that the Lord would take it away, but instead in 2 Cor. 12:7-9 we have the Lord's response to Paul's prayer, and Paul's response to God's word to him:

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

So Paul prayed daily that the saints would be trusting God and trusting Christ for daily strength to live joyously

and triumphantly by the grace of God.

What about "peace"? When we are saved we have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). But daily we need "the peace of God" (Phil. 4:6-7). This does not mean that we will not have any trials in our lives. In fact, it is God's provision for us in our trials, peace in all of the ups and downs of life. But now we move on to:

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II. Paul's Doxology followed by his prayer for the believers at Ephesus (Eph. 1:3-26).

A. Paul's Doxology (Eph. 1:3-14).

I mentioned earlier that if it were not that the Apostle Paul mentioned his "bonds," or chains, or made other very few references to his imprisonment, we could not tell from any of the for Prison Epistles that he was actually a prisoner of Rome when he wrote them. He always was so concerned about the people to whom he was writing that he appeared to forget about his own circumstances. Paul was not one to pity himself because he was so Christ-centered in his outlook on life. A good illustration of what I mean is the passage that we come to right after his greetings here in the book of Ephesians, chapter 1. We find him reveling in the truths of the Gospel, and it is quite obvious that his heart was overflowing with praise to the Lord. How wonderful it would be if, in the midst of our trials today, we all would manifest the same spirit. Let us prayerfully consider what he had to say.

Before we in fact get into this section, let me make some general observations.

First, we need to recognize that the blessings which Paul mentioned here are blessings which we all have. They are not blessings which only the apostles had, but they were blessings enjoyed then by every true believer, and the same is true of us today. You cannot be saved without having every blessing which the Apostle Paul mentioned here. We have all of them, and one wonderful thing about these blessings is that we can never lose them! This means that we can use the words of this section as our very own. We have been blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." So that ought to make this passage even more interesting to each one of us. Some may appreciate these blessings more than others do, but we all have them even though we may not have known about all of them before.

So in salvation we all stand on the same ground. And I am sure that we all recognize that there is not one of these blessings that we deserve. They are all given to us by the grace of God, and given to us "in Christ." We may not have much of this world's goods, but we are very, very rich in Christ. But let us move into this very wonderful passage.

1:3 "Blessed" means *praise*. God saves us even with all of our demerit, saves us through Christ apart from a single contribution on our part, and we are to render our praises to Him for this great salvation. There probably was not a day in which Paul did not praise God for his salvation – and there were very likely many days when he praised the Lord more than once for his salvation. Let us follow his example.

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" – In these days in which we live, the term "God" is used to refer to different gods. When Paul said, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," we know exactly what he meant, and Who he was referring to. In John 17 our Lord called His Father, "the only true God." There are lots of people who would join with Paul if he had only said, "Blessed be God," but when he said, "the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that excluded every other so-called god.

"The Lord Jesus Christ" is the full name or title that our Lord had here on earth. God was His God and His Father. God was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in a very unique sense, in an eternal sense, and so we have in this expression evidence of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as you and I bear the same nature as the fathers who have begotten us, so the Lord Jesus Christ, while being a Son of Mary, continued to be the Son of the Living God.. So nobody can be mistaken as to whom Paul was offering his praise.

It would be good for all of us just to stop after reading just the words we have covered so far: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." As Martyn Lloyd-Jones pointed out in one of his messages on this verse, *Paul began with God. He began with worship. God is worthy of our worship even before we speak of the blessings that He has bestowed upon us. When we worship God, we need to pause and remember Who He is, and revere Him for the marvelous God that He is. We sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow," but we need to concentrate and meditate on those words, "Praise God"!* He is worthy of our praise if He had never blessed us at all. It is our highest privilege and honor to be able to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we need to praise Him for the Lord Jesus Christ. How good it is for us to delight in God as a Person, and to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way. But we praise Him, and need to praise Him often, because of the ways in which He has blessed us.

This God "hath blessed us." That in itself is a most amazing truth. Paul would have been the first to say that he did not deserve a single thing that God had done for him. In chapter 3, verse 8, he spoke of himself as "less than the least of all saints." When Paul looked at all of the believers he knew, or ever had heard about, he felt himself to be less worthy of salvation than any of them. And this was not just some flowery oratory spoken by Paul, but these were words that came from his heart.

This God Whom we praise "hath blessed us." Paul was not speaking in the perfect tense, but in the past tense, and perhaps the English would be strong like the Greek if we simply and correctly translated this expression, "Who blessed us." It was not that He was going to bless us, but that He did bless us – and the following verses will show many of the ways in which He did bless us. "'Tis done, the great transactions done. I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

"With all spiritual blessings" – The Greek should be translated, *with every spiritual blessing*. The meaning of both statements is the same, but the Greek seems to put the emphasis on every single blessing by itself, rather than looking at them as together making up one big blessing. Both views are correct, but we need to be thankful for every single one of them. And we bless Him because He blessed us. Both words come from the same Greek root, but in the first instance we are speaking of praise we offer to God, in the second, of the ways in which God has favored us with the gift of salvation. *We bless God because He has blessed us with blessings*. That is what the Apostle Paul was actually saying.

God blesses us in many ways. He has blessed us with physical life. He blesses us with material blessings – the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the homes we live in, the families and friends that we have. But here Paul was concerned about "spiritual blessings." What are "spiritual blessings"?

Reliable expositors of the Word indicate that these blessings are called "spiritual" because they are conferred upon us by the Holy Spirit. John Eadie, whom you may hear me quoting often in our studies, said in his commentary on Ephesians that "'spiritual' means produced by or belonging to the Holy Spirit" (p. 14). Dr. Lloyd-Jones said this:

These blessings come from Christ, but they also come through the Spirit; they are blessings which are

mediated to us from God through Christ *via* the Holy Spirit. It is by the Holy Spirit they become ours (*God's Ultimate Purpose, An Exposition of Romans 1*, p. 60).

Charles Hodge wrote,

These blessings are *spiritual* not merely because they pertain to the soul, but because derived from the Holy Spirit, Whose presence and influence are the great blessing purchased by Christ (*An Exposition of Ephesians*, p.11).

At the same time we need to recognize that to speak of "spiritual blessings" is to lift us out of the earthly and merely human, into the divine order. It is to be brought into the sphere of fellowship with God, with a new life and having become a new person in Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 2 we have Paul's statement concerning "spiritual things," and it will help us to read that whole chapter. But for the present let me read from verse 7 down through verse 16. You can follow in your Bibles if you like, or just listen to me as I read. These are the words of the Apostle Paul written under the direction of the Holy Spirit: **(Read 1 Cor. 2:7-16.)**

We have two more prepositional phrases to consider before going on to verse 4: "in heavenly places," or, *in the heavenlies*, and "in Christ."

The first of these two expressions is found five times throughout the epistle: here in 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12. Many have felt that the expression, *in the heavenlies*, is really the theme of this epistle. And it has been explained in many different ways. The two expressions with which verse 3 ends are also found together in 2:6. And there the clear indication is that although we presently, and in a physical sense, are still on earth, yet spiritually we are "in Christ," seated with him in the heavenlies in Him. So it seems that these phrases emphasize more fully the spiritual position that we have in Christ because we have been joined together with Him. But more than that, they show the security of us and our blessings. "In heavenly places" is where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where thieves do not break through and steal. Being "in Christ," it is just like we were already in heaven, and all that we have in Christ is absolutely safe.

This third verse of Ephesians 1 has to be one of the grandest, one of the most majestic verses, in all of Scripture (and there are many verses that fall into that category) because it indicates that what God intended to do, He did! And we know that He did it in spite of the opposition of men and demons, and even with all of the failures of the Lord's own people who had a part in this great work of salvation which God has done.

Now let us go on to verse 4.

1:4 "According as He hath chosen us" - God has blessed us because He has chosen us, is the meaning of this verse. "In Him" refers to Christ. God could never accept us as we are by nature, nor would we ever have turned to Him as we are by nature. And it is not just that we *would* not (although that is true), but it is that we *could not*. Our Lord said,

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).

And notice that this choice was made by God "before the foundation of the world," or, as we might say, *in eternity past*. It was in that timeless era before God created the heaven and the earth. God chose us in eternity past. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth, He bought us with His precious blood. And when we came along in time, He sought us out, and brought us to Himself, giving us the gift of faith enabling us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. And God did not choose us

because He knew that we would trust Him. That would give us some place to glory in our salvation. But that could not be because our salvation is all of grace. Let me give some other passages that will help us to see that this is truly a Biblical doctrine, a very important and basic doctrine of the Word of God.

Cf. 2 Thess. 2:13-14:

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. When the Apostle Peter said that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," he did not mean that God chose us knowing what we would do, that we would believe in Christ, but that He foreknew what He would do. He predetermined that He would save us. We have this same thought in Rom. 8:28-30.

This is teaching which many among the Lord's people prefer to leave alone. It runs contrary to what they have been taught that we have a free will, and we decide for ourselves whether we will be saved or lost. But our wills are not free. We make choices every day, but our choices are made consistent with our nature. And no person will ever come to Christ of His own will. Cf. John 1:11-13:

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. We would do well also to study what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 9 about Jacob and Esau. Cf. Rom. 9:10-16:

10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

When once you understand this doctrine of election, you will be convinced in your heart that salvation could be no other way. The very fact, as Eph. 1:4 tells us, that we were "chosen in Him," *i.e., in Christ*, indicates even God's choice of any of us could only be on the basis of the merit we have in the death of Christ.

But why were we chosen before the foundation of the world? "That we should be holy and without blame before Him," *i.e., before God*. In other words, He did not choose us because we were acceptable to Him, but He chose us in Christ because Christ by His death makes us acceptable to God. That is our position. But the work of salvation is to make us acceptable in the condition of our lives. Note those words: "Holy" and "without blame," not just so we would approve of each other, but it is to be "holy and without blame before Him"!

We have these same two words in Eph. 5:27. (Read 5:25-27.) What do these words mean?

This word "holy" is what the NT has in mind when it speaks of "saints." They are people who are to be known for their holiness. They are a people who have been set apart *for* God, and set apart *from* sin. And so this speaks of our sanctification. We will never be perfectly and completely holy in a practical sense until we are

with the Lord, but we are to be growing in holiness. It is impossible for a person to be saved, and to continue on in sin. We still sin, but a true child of God will not live in sin.

Charles Hodge has this good statement which he made concerning election and holiness:

If election is to holiness as the apostle here teaches, it follows, first, that individuals, and not communities or nations, are the objects of election; secondly, that holiness in no form can be the ground of election. If men are chosen to be holy, they cannot be chosen because they are holy. And, thirdly, that holiness is the only evidence of election. For one who lives in sin to claim to be elected unto holiness, is a contradiction (*Op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14).

But what is the meaning of "without blame"? It is a negative statement of which "holy" is the positive. Together they mean that we are chosen by God to be positively holy and to be without any blemish that would be a contradiction of holiness. We often treat holiness as meaning that we can't see anything wrong in a person's life. But we always need to ask about ourselves as well as others, what is there positively which indicates that a certain person is truly a child of God. Both characteristics need to be in place. Remember that there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission. We have been chosen by God so that we will have the positive evidence of holiness, and also that there will be no blemishes in our lives.

And please notice that Paul's emphasis is primarily upon what we *are*, and not just upon what we *do*. "That we should be holy and without blame before Him. Always *being* precedes *doing*. When we fail *to do* what is right, it is always because there is something wrong in our hearts, some failure in what we *are*."

"Before Him" – This means *in the sight of God*. It means *in God's presence*. Right and wrong are determined by God, not man. And the one who has been chosen by God, has as His daily objective, to be and to do and to say, and even to think, that which is pleasing to God. And the more that this is our purpose, the greater the likelihood that we will be "holy and without blemish" in God's sight.

October 19, 1998

Before we go any farther in dealing with these great doctrines of salvation, let me point out something from this passage which we need to take special notice of in connection with the doctrine of salvation. It is this: When Paul spoke of our election to salvation, he did not do it apologetically, nor did he do it belligerently, but he did it in an attitude of praise and worship. And this is the way we should receive it. The Apostle Paul had no trouble in believing in the sovereignty of God in salvation. He knew that he never would have been saved if the Father had not drawn him to Christ. And so he could not speak of his salvation without making it a matter of the profoundest thanksgiving. May it produce the same result in each of our lives!

I like what Lenski had to say about our election to salvation. He was making the point that our election is personal, and not that the Lord chose a certain number to be saved, which would have been a kind of salvation in mass. This latter is not the teaching of Scripture, and here are Lenski's words:

Is it not correct to say that God foresaw "us" when He entered upon this election in eternity? Did not the whole world down to the last day lie open before His omniscience? Did that omniscience halt at a certain point so that it saw only a *massa perdit*a and only Christ's redemption of this mass, and did God thus make His selection and see no more? Did that omniscience not also see all that God's grace would accomplish to the last second of the last day? Did it not see every man's whole life until the moment of death (and beyond)? Yes, in eternity He saw "us" as "saints and believers in connection with Christ" (v. 1), and "us" He elected (*St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians*, p. 356).

And so it was not that the Father decided to save ten million people, or ten trillion people, or a number beyond

our comprehension, but He chose you, and you, and you. Everyone who is saved was chosen personally. He loved me, and gave Himself for me. He loved you, and gave Himself for you. This great truth applies to every person who ever has been saved, and every person who will be saved until time is no more.

But now let us go on to verse 5. But first let me make a comment about the last two words in verse 4.

There are many (not all by any means) who believe that the words "in love" belong to verse 5. So this would mean that verse 4 would read:

According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him:

And then verse 5 would begin, "In love having predestinated us ... "

It is really true that God's choice of us, and His predestination of us to be His children, were done "in love." The reason for our salvation is to be found in the love of God for us. It was not because of any good that He saw in us. As one writer has said, "God was prompted by nothing outside of Himself, least of all by anything in us" (Lenski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 362). We are just as unworthy of the love of God as the worst sinner who ever lived. It is not because we loved God, and He has loved us in return and has saved us. But for reasons unknown to us, God has set His love upon those whom He is saving even though they did not love Him, nor seek Him, and so the ground of our salvation is in God, not in us – never in us! This also was a great reason for Paul's rejoicing and praising God at this particular time.

Now we are ready for verse 5.

1:5 The Lord could have chosen us, and saved us without doing all of the other wonderful things that He included in our salvation. And one of those we come to in verse 5. And to show the absolute certainty of this "second blessing," Paul used the word "predestinated." And this is a part of what God did in eternity past. There are a number of ways we could translate the verb which the Apostle Paul used here, among them, *to determine beforehand, to foreordain, to decree*. It means that it was definitely decided in eternity past that every person who is saved would become a part of the family of God – with no exceptions!

However, I have a problem with the translation of this verse, and my problem is with the word "adoption." I have a great deal of respect for Martin Luther, but on this point I disagree with him. He believed that we are *adopted* into the family of God. And this idea seems to carry through our English translations into several other passages. We find it in Rom. 8:15. (Read vv. 15-17.) We have it again in Gal. 4:5. This is the key passage in explaining what the Greek word which Paul used here really means. (Read vv. 1-7 a little later.)

Now let me ask all of you a question? **How did you get into the family of God?** (Ask for answers.) You were born into God's family. Cf. John 1:11-13:

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.

We were not adopted into God's family; we were born into His family. We are in God's family by birth, by the new birth! There is nothing to be ashamed of if you are an adopted member of the family you are in. In fact, adoption has proven to be a great blessing to many families and to the individuals who have been adopted. But that is not how we got into the family of God!

The word that the Apostle Paul used in all of the passages in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, to which I have referred is the word υιοθεσία. And it is formed from two Greek words, υίος, and the verb τίθημι. The first word means *son*, and the second word means, *I put*, or *I place*. And to the word υιοθεσία means *to place as a son*, or simply, *a son placing*. It means placing a person in a family as a son. Now I could go for the word "adoption" if it were not for the Biblical teaching of the new birth. But you and I have the very life of God Himself in us. That is what eternal life is – God's life! The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:11-12,

- 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.

Now let us all turn to Galatians chapter 4, verses 1-7. Here we have the Apostle Paul's description of the meaning of υιοθεσία. (Explain.)

This, too, was a major part of the Apostle Paul's rejoicing, that he would be included with all of the other saints as members of the family of God. We would all do well to be able to say with the Apostle John,

- 1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: 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 (1 John 3:1-3).

Now being placed in the family of God is "by Jesus Christ." And the word "by" is a good translation of the Greek preposition, διὰ. It is *through* the mediatorial work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross that we have become members of God's family through the new birth. It is only "by Jesus Christ" that you and I could be given such a position. And the Lord by His death has brought us *to Him*, that is, God, and not to Christ Himself. The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18).

"According to the good pleasure of His (God's) will" – God's will is the expression of His good pleasure, that which delights Him and that which He delights to do. It has given God great pleasure to save us from our sins. And He continues to delight Himself in us, His children. So here we see the basis of our election to salvation, and of our being brought into the family of God.

We have God's "good pleasure" referred to again in Eph. 1:9.

And in one of Paul's prayers for the believers in the church at Thessalonica, this is what he said which is right in line with our text in Eph. 1:

- 11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:
12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:11-12).

And we all should remember that when Paul told the Philippian believers to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, he went on to say, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

God is delighted to have made us His people. That was His good pleasure. And He continues to delight Himself in us, just as we as parents love and delight in our children. But the other side of the coin is that we are to delight ourselves in God, and to make it our business every day we live and in every circumstance of our

lives to be pleasing to Him. How can we help but love the doctrines of election and predestination when both are the expression of that which God has been delighted to do.

The thought continues into verse 6.

1:6 The glory for our salvation does not belong to us, but it all has to do with His grace, *His sovereign grace!* This means that God has not given us what we deserve, but instead He has given us what we never could deserve. And so when we think of our salvation, we have seen that we are indebted to the love of God, and to the will of God, and now to the grace of God. How blessed we are, and with what great rejoicing should we constantly be saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ..."! How glorious is the grace of God – only eternity will fully reveal to us.

"Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" – The words, "made us accepted," are the translation of the Greek verb, χαριτόω, is used only one other time in all of the NT. And that is in Luke 1:28 when the angel Gabriel said to the virgin Mary, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Here χαριτόω is translated, "thou art highly favoured." So when we bring this translation back to Eph. 1:6 we see that *we have been highly favored in the One Whom God loves, His beloved One.* And this, in turn, means that God has made us *charming, lovely, agreeable, acceptable* to Himself, but only in Christ. God has pursued us with His grace. He has compassed us with favor, and He has honored us with every blessing to make us what God requires to accept us. We hardly ever use the word *grace* as a verb, but, if we did, we could say that *God has graced us in His Beloved One.* As we have seen over and over again in these opening verses of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, our salvation is all of grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And here the sacrifice of Christ is given its highest place when Paul reminds us that God gave His dearest Treasure, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to save us, guilty, defiled, rebellious sinners from our sins.

This verse concludes the first part of Paul's doxology. But it does not exhaust the spiritual blessings which the Apostle intended to mention.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – October 26, 1998

Ephesians 1:7-12

Intro: We come in this section to the second part of the Apostle Paul's Doxology. The three parts are indicated by the statements that we find at the end of each section. See vv. 6, 12, and 14. All that God has done for us in salvation is to the praise of His glory, or as we Paul expressed it in verse 6 of this chapter, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Our salvation is all for the glory of God, and the greatness of His glory has been showered upon us by His grace. Though we are totally unworthy of any of God's blessings, even what theologians have termed *common grace* (life and all its necessities), God has bestowed upon His elect the riches of His grace in salvation. None of it is to our glory, but all of it is to His glory.

So far we have seen that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Nothing needs to be added to what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing can be added to what He has done. And every blessing which we have is our through, and only through, God's Beloved.

Lenski makes this important comment about Paul's Doxology which I would like to read to you. He said this: All that lies in the phrase "in the beloved One" is carried over into the second part of the doxology by the relative "in whom" [v. 7] and must be present in our minds as we read on. The whole doxology is a unit. It ascribes blessedness to God alone [v. 3], but to Him as the First Person, to Whom is joined the Second, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Beloved One [v. 6], and equally the Third to Whom also a significant name is given, "the Holy Spirit of Promise" [v.13]. It is thus that Paul makes the doxology Trinitarian (p. 364).

This is a very important feature of the Doxology which we need to recognize.

We are in the second part of the Apostle Paul's Doxology which is to be followed by Paul's first extended prayer for the Ephesian believers. As I have explained, the first part of the Doxology is in verses 3 through 6 of chapter 1. The second part is in verses 7 through 12.

But now let us move on to this second part of the Apostle's Doxology.

1:7 Still speaking of the Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle wrote, "In Whom we have redemption through His blood. the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

This is actually Paul's first reference in this epistle to the work of our Lord on the Cross, although our election to salvation, and our predestination to be in the family of God, both anticipated the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross.

Notice the present tense in "we have." It is in Christ that "we have" as a present possession, "redemption through His blood." Every child of God right now has this as a present possession. We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to be redeemed; we are redeemed NOW! And let us rejoice in this glorious fact of our salvation.

The idea in the word "redemption" is that our deliverance has come through the payment of a ransom. Some theologians in the past (and I suppose some even today) have come up with the idea that this ransom was paid to Satan so that he would set us free. But this is ridiculous. God is not in the business of entering into such negotiations with the Devil. Christ did not die to satisfy the Devil. He died to satisfy the righteous demands of our holy God. And God has delivered us through the sacrifice of His Son. For our redemption to require the death of One like our Lord Jesus shows the hopelessness of our condition, and the terrible nature of our sins, plus the exalted nature of our God. It took the shedding of Christ's blood, that is, His substitutionary death on

the Cross, to obtain our forgiveness.

Sin has brought every human being under a tremendous obligation, a debt which we owe to God, and a debt which has to be paid! The word "forgiveness" speaks of *a release* from that obligation, that debt. It can also be described as *a sending away*. King David was describing this when he said, "As far as is the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103:12). One writer has pointed out that it is good that he did not say "as far as the north is from the south," because the distance from the north pole to the south pole can be measured (Lenski, p. 366). When you go past the north pole, you start south again. But who can measure the distance from east to west? Wherever you may go east, you always have farther east to go. And so David meant by Psa. 103:12 that when our sins are forgiven, God moves them so very far away that we will never see them, nor be able to find them, again. And it is not because God has decided just to excuse our sins. By His very nature He could only forgive our sins if the debt were paid. Christ paid that debt. He secured the salvation of all of His chosen people. It is only by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ Who paid our debt that we are released from that debt. This is what it means that we are forgiven.

Hodge pointed out in His commentary that there is much more to redemption than forgiveness, but that securing our forgiveness was the immediate purpose of our Lord's death on the Cross.

Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, has given us a marvelous statement of our redemption in Rom. 3:24-26:

- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

So it is by the redemption of Christ that we have not only received the remission of our sins, but we have also been declared righteous before God. It is impossible for us to understand fully all that the Lord accomplished for us when He died that terrible death on Calvary.

When Paul used the word "sins," he did not try to classify them. He meant *all sins, all transgressions!*

"According to the riches of His grace" – Who can possibly calculate "the riches" of the grace of God? If we could combine the wealth of all the world, we would not even begin to measure "the riches of His Grace." All that we need to be concerned about is that God's grace is more than sufficient for the guilt we face because of all of our sins, whatever they may be! No one has sunk so deeply in sin that they are beyond the riches of God's grace. And if we could line up all of the sinners who have ever been saved, and know the extent of the sinfulness of each sinner, then we might begin to appreciate that expression, "the riches of His grace." No words in any language can adequately describe the grace of God. It is magnificent beyond the most eloquent description, greater than anything that we can possibly comprehend. And the word grace belongs to that family of words which includes the love of God, the mercy of God, the goodness of God, the lovingkindness of God, the longsuffering of God. God's grace is inexhaustible, and sufficient for even the chief of sinners. The Law of God shuts the door of salvation to all of us; grace opens wide the door.

1:8 The grace of God in salvation continues to be the subject here. Paul was explaining how it was that the saints of had come to understand this amazing Gospel message.

We know, or we should know, that there are two kinds of wisdom. There is the wisdom of this world, and there is the wisdom of God. Man by nature is blinded to the wisdom of God because of his sin. The most brilliant people in the world, if they are without Christ, are totally ignorant of the wisdom of God. This explains why people do not understand the Bible, and even why they are not interested in understanding it. The

Apostle Paul said this in 1 Cor. 2:14:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Note carefully what he said here. (Explain.) He does not receive the truth of the Word of God because it is all foolishness to him, and he is so constituted by nature that he could not know them if he wanted to know them.

Note verse 11, 12, and 13 also in this second chapter of 1 Corinthians:

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

This is precisely what the Apostle Paul was saying here in verse 8. We would never have understood the Gospel, we would never have wanted to understand it, *if it were not for the grace of God!* You see, it is this same God of grace Who has "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." You and I would still be blinded to the Gospel. unable to understand our lost condition and our need of salvation, if God *in His grace* had not given us the wisdom and prudence to understand the Gospel. He has "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." "Abounded" means that He has furnished us with such wisdom and prudence toward the things of God that we not only understand God's grace, but we want it! We hunger for it! We can never get enough of it! We long to learn more and more! And what a great time this is in any person's life when God begins to deal with that person in grace! All of you who are saved know what I am talking about. The very fact that you are here today. attending a Bible Class, is evidence that God has "abounded toward you in all wisdom and prudence."

Let me distinguish between those words for you - "wisdom and prudence."

Both of these come from God. Both are the work of the Holy Spirit. We have neither in ourselves. I have been pointing this out. "Wisdom" is the ability to understand the truth of God. It is what one writer calls, "penetrating insight into the divine realities." When we receive this, the Bible becomes a new Book to us. Things in Scripture begin to make sense to us, and we realize that we are learning things that we have never known before. This is not possible to anyone who has not been redeemed. It is not possible to anyone who is not a child of God, a member of the family of God - these great truths which we have been studying. But the Lord begins to do this as He is saving us so that we can say for ourselves what I read to you a moment ago in 1 Cor. 2:12:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

And to the word "wisdom" Paul added the word "prudence." Greek scholars tell us that this is not a word that is commonly used of God, but it certainly is here. And what it means is that as God gives us the "wisdom" to begin to understand His Word, so along with it He gives us the ability to "apply all of it to the varying situations of our lives" (Lenski, p. 369). God abounds to us both "in all wisdom and prudence." When this happens to us, we don't ask any longer, "What does a Book that is 2,000 years old, and some parts of it older than that, have that can possibly be of help to us today?" We know that it is extremely important, more important than any book that we have ever had anything to do with before. When God gives us prudence, He gives us "the ability to shape life and conduct according to what God has willed," and prudence helps us to see that this is "the only sensible thing to do" (*Ibid.*).

But let me add a word which most of us recognize, but all need to understand. We don't come into an

immediate understanding of all that we find in the Bible. Nor are we able immediately to bring our lives into conformity with all of the Word of God. But we have started, and what we need from that point on is to "grow in grace ... " (2 Pet. 3:18). We are not only saved by the grace of God, but we live by the grace of God. And as long as we live, we will continue to grow in our understanding of the Word of God, and then to bring our lives more and more into conformity with what we find in Scripture. It is illustrated by the way in which the Apostle Paul usually wrote his epistles: first, doctrine; then, the practical application of the doctrine in our lives.

But Paul continued on along this line in verse 9.

1:9 This verse tells us how the Lord has "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." He has "made known unto us the mystery of His will." This is what makes the Bible, God's Book. In it He has made known to us teaching which we could never have found any other place. What He makes known to us, is a revelation. And it is necessary for God to reveal to us things, truths, which we could never learn in any other way. This is what makes the Bible so unique. It is here that He has made known "the mystery of His will," which is the outworking of His eternal plans and purposes. No person can understand himself who does not know the teaching of the Bible about man. The same is true of God. It is in this Book that God has revealed Himself, and it is in this book that He has revealed "the mystery of His will." Verse 11 will tell us that God is working "all things after the counsel of His own will." This means that history is *His story!* History is the outworking of the plans and purposes of God. The Bible teaches us that God is absolutely sovereign over all of creation. The nations are just a drop in a bucket to Him.

Salvation is not the working out of man's will, but it is the working out of God's will – and that is the case with every detail of salvation.

The word "mystery" does not mean something that is hard to understand, but it has to do with the way the Lord has made His truth known. He didn't reveal it all at once to His people in the beginning, but little by little until the Bible was completed, God has continued to make His truth known, and then through the Holy Spirit He has given His people the ability to search the Word and to understand what He has been pleased to make known.

The word "mystery" is defined for us in Eph. 3:3-5 where it is used twice. And the word is used for a fourth and fifth time in this epistle in Eph. 3:9 and 5:32.

Now in this passage we are considering together, the Apostle Paul's main interest is in salvation – what God has done through His Son to save us from our sins. And Paul described this salvation as "according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed," not "in himself," as the King James has rendered it, but *in Him*, that is, *in Christ!*

Let me call your attention to the two words (one in the Greek), "good pleasure." As you can tell, it speak of that which delighted God to do, that which brought Him great pleasure, and that which satisfied Him. We read in Isa. 53:10, speaking of the Father and the Son, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." This is one of the most amazing statements in all of Scripture. It pleased the Father to bruise His Son!?? Does this mean that the Father took sides with our Lord's enemies, and that He enjoyed seeing His Son suffer as He did before He went to the Cross. and as He died on the Cross? Of course it does not mean that! Christ was the Father's "Beloved" as we learned in verse 6. *What it does mean is that proving salvation for His people gave God great pleasure, great satisfaction, because of His great love for them, and because He would be merciful to them. Even though it cost our Lord His very life, the Father and the Son could only be satisfied by bringing salvation to those whom the Father had chosen.*

It seems that this passage gets more and more amazing, and yet more and more wonderful, the farther we go in

considering what the Apostle Paul has written about it here. And don't forget that God has not done anything for you and for me with regard to our salvation that is not centered upon our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is all "in Him." May we never fail to thank our loving heavenly Father for the amazing gift of His Son.

Now what purpose did the Father have in our salvation?

There are many things that can be said about the purposes of God in salvation. One we mention all of the time is God's purpose to make us like His Son. This is the object of all spiritual growth. We measure our growth by our likeness to Christ.

However, our next verse, verse 10, tells us another of God's purposes in salvation. Let us see what it is.

1:10 God's good pleasure in the working out of His will has to do with that which is yet future as it had to do with the work of Christ which is past. It has to do with what the Apostle Paul called here, "the fulness of times." This generally is taken to mean, *the end times, the eternal state, the culmination of the work which the Lord is now doing*. It is not the millennial period, but the end of all things.

A dispensation is an economy. Sometimes it is referred to as an administration. There have been various dispensations throughout time, although not various ways of salvation. God's manner of dealing with His people has varied from dispensation to dispensation, but all is heading to a grand and glorious climax.

This verse is a difficult verse, and it has been explained in a variety of ways but men who truly love the Lord and who want to be correct in the interpretation of Scripture. Charles Hodge mentioned five different interpretations which are held by the people of God. One thing is very apparent. It is that the One Who will administer this purpose is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One Who will gather together in one "all things in Christ." The fulfillment of God's purposes rest upon Him, not upon us.

Much depends upon the meaning of the expression, "all things in Christ." It can mean that Christ is the One Who will gather all things together under His authority, but the expression "things" seems to go beyond the people who are going to be involved. The eternal state is described as being "a new heaven and a new earth." Does this just mean a new order so that we are not to take those terms as actually referring to a complete replacement of the present heaven and earth? And if there will actually be "a new heaven and a new earth," would it not seem to indicate that they will be populated, populated by the redeemed?

I don't think anyone has the answer to all of the questions that can be asked about "the dispensation of the fulness of times." It will all become clear some day, but as in the interpretation of many prophetic passages of Scripture, true believers often differ, so we must be gracious, hold to our own convictions, but recognize that it is still true that we all, as we look into the future, see "through a glass darkly."

One thing is clear from verse 10. The Lord Jesus is administering all things so that this oneness will finally be accomplished. I personally believe that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and that there will be some distinctions which remain among the Lord's people, as in OT and NT times. I personally question whether OT saints will be included with NT saints in the church, the body of Christ. But at the same time I believe that there will be a wonderful harmony among all of the people of God, and that even though there is a new heaven and a new earth, there will not be the separation between that new order which exists today under the present order. When people go to heaven today, we are cut off from them. But I doubt seriously if that will be the case in the eternal state.

Paul was certainly making a point in this passage that *we* are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

That was not true of believers in OT times, and one very clear difference is the relationship that we enjoy today with the Holy Spirit, permanently indwelling every believer, which was not the case in OT times. Also, do we ever read about OT saints being baptized by the Holy Spirit? If we do, I don't know where it is. Anyway, let us hold our differences graciously, and continue to seek greater light upon the Word while we away that wonderful day when our faith will be forever turned to sight. Glorious days are ahead, and they are absolutely certain to come because even now everything is under the administration of our sovereign Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

November 2, 1998

"Both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" – cf. 3:15. So the meaning is that those who are gathered together as one "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," are those who are with the Lord and those who are still living upon the earth. And all are "in Him," that is, *in Christ*.

Some take the reference to those "which are in heaven," as a reference to angels. But that is impossible because angels are not *in Christ*.

So you can see that in the span of seven verses (4-10), the Apostle Paul takes us from eternity past to eternity to come. We are individually "chosen" in Christ, and this was "before the foundation of the world," but all of us will be gathered together "in one" when the work of the Lord is completed in us.

From John 17 on there is a special emphasis upon the oneness of the people of God. This was one of the main burdens of our Lord's prayer for us, His people. We see it first in John 17:11b:

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Back in Psalm 133. the first verse, King David wrote, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And Solomon taught us that one of the seven things that the Lord hates because they are an abomination to Him, is "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:19b).

As the Apostle Paul was bringing his epistle to the church at Rome to a conclusion, this is what he wrote in Rom. 15:5-6:

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And to the church at Corinth, a church that was sadly divided in many ways, the Apostle Paul had this to say at the very beginning of his first epistle to them:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

And later on in that same epistle, he spoke of the basis of our unity:

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

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 (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

And this subject of oneness is prominent also here in this Ephesian epistle, not only in this verse that we are considering, but also in chapter 4. (Read Eph. 4:1-6.)

One of the great problems that has always been evident among the people of God, is the divisions that have

existed. Following the reign of King Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah. We can see in the Gospels evidence of disunity among the apostles of our Lord. And the same has been true throughout the history of the church. Even today we have Bible churches, Baptist churches, Presbyterian churches, and so on and on. Often there is a movement initiated by someone to get everyone together, but it seems that all of these attempts at unity have been at the sacrifice of doctrine. It is said that if there are certain doctrines we can't agree on, we will not make those doctrines an issue. And we soon find out that what we are divided on is the nature of God, the Deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the way of salvation, and on and on. Unity at the expense of doctrine is an empty shell, and is nothing that could ever have the blessing of the Lord.

No, our unity is not some massive, man-made organization. Our unity is in the Lord. It is within the bounds of the truth of the Word of God. It is a spiritual unity, the fruit of our mutual relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord and our Head. We do not create this unity. As we read a moment ago in Ephesians 4, we have this unity in Christ, and we are to maintain it! So what we need is not less doctrine, less of the Scriptures, less teaching, but more of the truth. And the more we understand the truth and walk in the truth, the greater will be our unity.

While we are here on earth, we are in a constant stretch to maintain this doctrine. But verse 10 of Ephesians 1 tells us when this unity will finally be realized. And what a glorious day that will be!

I remember when this truth first dawn upon my own heart. When I was a university student, and preaching in a small country church on Sundays, I taught this epistle to the Ephesians, and I am sure that the people thought that I would never get out of this tenth verse of Ephesians 1. It was such a blessing to me to discover that all believers, regardless of their church affiliation, were members of the one body of Christ. And what became important to me in those days was not what church people attended, but whether or not they were trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. 1 Corinthians 12 tells us that by the baptism of the Spirit (which is different from the filling of the Spirit) we have all been "baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." In the day that the Apostle Paul was speaking about, we will all know for the first time how glorious our fellowship is when all of us who are in Christ are gathered together by the Lord Himself "in one"! May the Lord hasten that day.

But I must hasten on to verse 11.

1:11 Here we learn about another of the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. In Christ we have an inheritance. That goes with being a member of the family of God, doesn't it? And in the remainder of verse 11, and especially in verse 12, we are told what that inheritance is. And it is more glorious than anything that anyone of us could possibly have anticipated, or even thought possible. Let us look at these two verses, and enjoy what we read.

Keep in mind that in this second part of the Apostle Paul's Doxology he was emphasizing the place of Christ in our redemption, just as in the first part he emphasized God's place in our redemption, and in the third part, which we are coming to, we have the Spirit's part in our redemption. Now none of this is exclusive. By that I mean, what God does for us does not exclude the other Members of the Godhead. And what Christ does for us does not exclude God, the Father. Nor is the Holy Spirit excluded from what the Father and the Lord Jesus have done for us in salvation. Our salvation is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the Apostle has singled out what is done by each Member of the Godhead to show that all of Them have a part.

All that the Apostle said here is still "in Christ."

"We have obtained an inheritance" is the translation of one Greek verb, κληρώ. And this is the only time that the verb is used in the NT. It carries with it the idea that just as our parents decide what they want to leave to us as our inheritance. so in Christ God has made, has assigned to us, our inheritance. Some expositors take it as meaning that we ourselves have become the inheritance (and you will see the possibility of this translation when we go on to see what it is).

The point is that our inheritance is ours now. It is secured for us. We are already partaking of it.

Now the certainty of it is indicated by the words. "being predestinated," this word which we met in verse 5. It was *predetermined* before the foundation of the world that salvation in all that the word means, would be ours by God's eternal decree. And this is where it is important to know that God is absolutely sovereign in all that He has decreed. He not only has decreed what His purpose in salvation shall be, but just as He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," so in this too the purpose of God cannot possibly fail! We could never bring about what God has decreed for our salvation, but there is no question but that God is perfectly able to carry out His purpose in every person He has chosen and redeemed. This does not mean that we do not have responsibilities in our salvation, but it does mean that salvation is God's work, and He will see it through to the end for every single one of us. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

There is much comfort for us in all of these words, and it is easy to see why the Apostle Paul was rejoicing so much in the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. The goal of salvation itself is guaranteed by the decree of God and by God's ability to work out what He has decreed shall be done. We look at ourselves, and see our many weaknesses. and how many times we have failed the Lord, and then we wonder how God's purpose in salvation can ever be fulfilled in us. The reason is because it is God's work, and He never fails to accomplish what He has ordained shall be done.

What is God's will concerning your salvation and mine? It is stated clearly in verse 12. (Read v. 12.)

It has to do with what we shall "be"! "That we should be to the praise of His glory."

When Paul was writing Ephesians, he had already written Romans. And one of the great things (among many) that he wrote to the Roman church, was this:

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 (Rom. 8:28-30).

We have some of the same words in these verses that we have been considering in Ephesians, chapter 1. Note the word "purpose" in verse 28. And notice the word "predestinate" in verse 29, and again in verse 30. But what was Paul writing about? He was saying that God's purpose for all of us in salvation is, that we should "be conformed to the image of His Son." To be "conformed to the image of His Son, means that all who are saved are to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's purpose in our redemption, in yours and in mine. And we already have it as our inheritance, not because we are presently like the Lord Jesus, but because this is what God has been doing since the moment we were saved, and it is a work that He is going to see through to the end. And this is the "good" that God is accomplishing as He works all things in our lives together toward that end, that goal. that purpose which He is certain to fulfil.

We are going to "be to the praise of His glory." To state it as Paul did in Romans 8:30, we are to be "glorified." In fact, our glorification is so certain that Paul could speak of it as already accomplished. *Who among any of*

the people of God could have possibly thought that this would be God's purpose in our salvation? God is working in our hearts at this very moment to make us like His Son. This does not mean that we will become Deity. There will always be ways in which we are not completely like our Lord. But the attributes of our Lord will be displayed in us. His holiness, His love, His tenderheartedness, His wisdom – all of those attributes which He is pleased to work into our hearts.

I am sure that as I say these things, many of you are thinking of those great words of the Apostle John which are found in our Bibles at the beginning of 1 John 3. Let me read them to you even though you may know them by heart. Here is what John said:

- 1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: 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 (1 John 3:1-3).

I said a few minutes ago that we have responsibilities in this although the work is God's work. Verse 3 of 1 John 3 indicates what that responsibility is. To purify ourselves means to live in obedience to the Word of God, not doing what God does not want us to do, but doing what He wants us to do. And this is only possible for any of us as we walk day by day in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

But what did Paul mean by the words at the end of verse 12, "Who first trusted in Christ." "First trusted" is another verb which is only found this one time in all of the New Testament.

There are two possible interpretations to what Paul said here, and it is very likely that both were in the thinking of the Apostle Paul as he wrote this epistle. In the first place, he could have been contrasting the salvation of Jewish believers with the salvation of Gentile believers. The Gospel had come to the Jews first. The early church in its beginning was predominantly Jewish. But the church at Ephesus, while it could have had Jewish believers in it, was especially a Gentile church. This idea, that Paul was contrasting Jewish and Gentile believers is confirmed by the fact that Paul went on in verse 13 to say, "In whom ye [Gentiles] also trusted." But, on the other hand, and in the second place, Paul may not have been just talking about the fact that some had trusted in Christ, or lit. *hoped before* others. But he may have been thinking that all of us, Jews and Gentiles together, believed in Christ before this glorious purpose was fulfilled. In fact, right at this moment we have our hope, our trust in Christ, and yet God's purpose is not completed in any of us. Most of us trusted in Christ before we knew anything about this glorious purpose, and it is certain that all of us trusted in Christ before this glorious work was even begun in us. This latter point is made by many dependable expositors. Both of these ideas are true, and both probably were in the thinking of the Apostle Paul as he wrote. It is wonderful to keep all of these aspects of the purpose of God in our own minds.

As we go through these great and glorious verses, we can see more clearly why Paul began as he did in Eph. 1:3. Let us read or quote them together. (Read Eph. 1:3.)

We still have two more verses: 13 and 14.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – November 3, 1998
Ephesians 1:13-14

Intro: We come now to the last two verses of Paul's Doxology, the part which deals especially with the Holy Spirit and His ministry to us in our salvation. I remind you again that the first part of the Doxology has to do with God, the Father (vv. 3-6), and the second part (vv. 7-12) has to do with our Lord Jesus Christ. And keep in mind that this emphasis is not exclusive in each case, but that our salvation is a work of all Three Persons of the Godhead.

But now let us go on to see what the Apostle Paul had to say about the Holy Spirit.

1:13 But first he spoke of their relationship, as Gentile believers, to Christ. "In whom" continues to refer to Christ.

If your Bible uses italics to show words that have been added to make the meaning clearer, you will notice that the word "*trusted*" is in italics. So that the Greek indicates that verse 13 should read,

In Whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in Whom also having believed, ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise, the Holy One.

This doesn't change the meaning of the verse at all. In fact, we would have to admit that the translators of the KJV did make it more readable and understandable by adding the word "*trusted*" in the first part of the verse.

Note how the Gentile Ephesians were saved. First of all, they heard the Word of truth which was, and continues to be, the Gospel the Gospel of their salvation. And then they believed. This is the way it always is in the salvation of any person. They hear the Word of truth, which is the Gospel. As I have said many times before, *no one is ever saved apart from the Word of God!* Paul's statement here agrees perfectly with what the Apostle Peter wrote in his first epistle, that we are "born again ... by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet.2:23).

But it is important to notice another fact from what the Apostle Paul said in our text. They heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation, *and then they believed!* Faith is not something that is produced by us. It is as the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the church at Rome: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom.10:17). He did not mean that people always believe when they first hear the Word, the Gospel of our salvation. In most instances I believe it can be said that we hear the message over and over again. Some have translated Rom. 10:17 in this way, that *faith cometh by hearing and hearing and hearing the Word of God.* And it is through hearing the Word that faith is imparted to us by God Himself.

All of you remember, I feel sure. Eph. 2:8-10. (Quote it.) *Everything about our salvation is a gift from God.* If faith were something that we contributed to our salvation, then faith would be a work, and we could take some of the glory for our salvation. But faith is not a work; it is a gift from God. And that gift is bestowed upon us by God in His grace after we, and as we, hear the preaching of the Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ is, according to Heb. 12:2, "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

Now, after we believe, we are "sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise." And remember what I have been saying about these spiritual blessings that we have. All believers have all of them. And so if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, *you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit!* This is not an experience we seek. We were not conscious of it when it happened, but we know that it has happened because it is the teaching of Scripture. We need to learn to distinguish between what we have in Christ, in contrast with what we still need

to seek. We seek the fulness of the Spirit in our lives, but we have Him, we are indwelt by Him, have been baptized by Him, and also have been sealed by Him.

Now what is the significance of our having been sealed with the Holy Spirit?

Notice that this verse clearly states that the Holy Spirit has *sealed us in Christ*. This sealing means two things: first, it means that the Holy Spirit Himself identifies us as belonging to Christ, and as being in Christ. The Holy Spirit Himself is our seal. The second thing that the sealing of the Spirit means is that we are *secure in Christ*. Once we understand this we will never talk about losing our salvation, or of getting in and out of salvation. According to John 10:27-30, we are in the Lord's hand, and we are in the Father's hand, and no one can take us out of Their hands. But we are also sealed by the Holy Spirit. So all Three Persons of the Godhead have a part in bringing us to salvation in Christ, and all have a part in eternally securing us in our salvation.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth,

- 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 (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

The Holy Spirit is called in our text, "that Holy Spirit of promise," because He was promised by our Lord as a gift to His people. We read these words spoken by our Lord and recorded for us in John 14:16-17:

- 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

We also read in Acts 1:4 that this happened just before our Lord's ascension back to the Father in heaven:

- And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem. but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

And that this promise was first fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost following the ascension of our Lord, was confirmed by the Apostle Peter as he spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem on that day:

- 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:32-33).

And let me give you two more verses, this time from Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia, chapter 3, verses 13 and 14:

- 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

So the Holy Spirit was given in fulfillment of the promise of our Lord. He came to indwell all believers permanently. He came to anoint all believers, sealing them in Christ. Thus, identifying them as true believers in Christ, and also eternally securing their salvation.

But this is not all that the Apostle Paul had to say about the Holy Spirit. Let us go on to the last verse of the Apostle Paul's Doxology.

1:14 The Holy Spirit is "the earnest of our inheritance." What does the word "earnest" mean?

This is a word with which most of us are familiar. In making the purchase of a home, or a car, or anything else

of significance, we may put down earnest money which is a pledge or down payment that the full amount will subsequently be paid. This is the way Thayer defined the word "earnest" in his Lexicon, or Greek Dictionary.

When Lucille and I bought our home, we placed money down on our purchase until we could arrange to have the full price paid. That was earnest money. It was our way of assuring the builder that we really intended to purchase a house from him.

Now we can see from Paul's use of this word in Ephesians that this has been a practice in business for a long, long time. Paul has taken this word to indicate that when God gave us His Holy Spirit, He did it as a guarantee that the full purpose of our salvation would eventually be fulfilled. The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's way of indicating that He is going to finish the work of salvation which He has already started in us. He has already started to change us to make us like the Lord Jesus, but He still has much to do with all of us. But the day will come when our salvation will be completed, and this is when the Lord Jesus comes back for His church. Then we shall be with Him, and be like Him forever, "for we shall see Him as He is." This is what Paul called "the redemption of the purchased possession."

This word "redemption" here in verse 14 is the same word that Paul used in 1:7, and he used it again in Eph. 4:30. (Read.) This is one word which describes our salvation, when the Son of God by the shedding of His precious blood purchased us for God. So that you and I are God's purchased possession – body, soul, and spirit! You see, our bodies also are a part of God's redemptive work. We are being change inwardly now, but when we see the Lord that inward work will be completed, and even our bodies will be changed so that we will have a glorified body like our Lord has.

And all of this will be "unto the praise of His," God's, "glory." And the Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that this redemption will in fact be completed in all of us. Nothing is left to chance. All is secured for us by God Himself.

Concl: As Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones completed verse 14 of Ephesians 1 in his messages on this precious epistle, and prepared to move on to verse 14, he made this statement:

We have completed our study of the great statement which began at verse 3 and went on without interruption to the end of verse 14. It is one of the mightiest statements of the Christian faith which is found anywhere in the Scripture, if indeed it is not actually the mightiest of all (*God's Ultimate Purpose*, p. 312).

There is no way that we could possibly overstate either the importance or the glory of what the Apostle Paul has written. But the question I pose as we conclude this first part of the epistle is, Do these truths produce in us the same overwhelming gratitude to God that obviously was moving the heart of the Apostle at this time? This was his salvation that he was talking about, a salvation that he did not deserve, a salvation which he could never have produced for himself, nor could he have earned it in any way. And it is very clear from the writings of the Apostle that he never got over the joy of His salvation. The more he learned about it, the more gloried in it. And it may have been that being imprisoned by the Roman government had made him even more thankful for what he had in Christ. May the Lord give us that same joy in the Lord, but let us not hold that joy within ourselves. Let it be manifested daily as we, too, lift our hearts and voices in praise to God Who has blessed us in like Paul was blessed. "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – November 10, 1998

Ephesians 1:15-23

Intro: The marvelous account of the glory of our salvation, was followed immediately by one of the way the Apostle Paul had been praying for the believers at Ephesus. How blessed are any believers who have those who pray for them, especially godly intercessors like the Apostle Paul was. It makes no difference how long we have known the Lord, we need to have people who are praying for us, and praying regularly. And the kind of praying that the Apostle Paul did, was especially valuable. One reason the Holy Spirit led the Apostle to record the content of his prayers, was that we might have a pattern for our prayers. And, if we understand Paul's prayers and have made them our own, we can do no better than to pray as he prayed. Often our prayers focus upon the health of those we pray for, or particular problems that they might be facing, but often we fail to deal with the great issues of spiritual life and growth like the Apostle Paul did. His prayers were mainly concerned about the building up of the people of God in their most holy faith. We can see in Paul's prayers that none of us should ever be satisfied with the spiritual ground that we have gained, but that we should be continually pressing on, seeking greater understanding of, as Bishop Moule said, of *where we are and what we have!* (See his *Ephesian Studies*, p. 43.) And so, in the light of this fact, Bishop Moule went on to say this:

It must be so, the Gospel being what it is. The life eternal is "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent" (John xvii, 3). They who have it are indeed to "rest and be thankful," in respect of the Rock beneath their feet; they are to taste, and to evidence, the deep repose born of the discovery of the Summum Bonum itself. But they are to be thankful *and never to rest* in respect of the realization of what they have discovered. "He who says *Enough*," writes Augustine somewhere, "is already a lost man." If the Christian man is indeed on who has caught a genuine glimpse of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6), how can he *not* be sure that he has still before him indefinitely greater discoveries there, "from glory to glory"? His root is settled, and for ever; he will never find a substitute for the Cross. But his branches will extend themselves, and for ever, in that place of root and rest, to receive more and more the living power of the light and air around, and to bring forth more fruit and yet more for the heavenly Planter (*Op. cit.*, pp. 43, 44).

What Bishop Moule was saying is that coming to Christ is not the end, but it is only the beginning. You and I need, as long as we live, to be pressing on to know the Word better, and to know the Lord better, and to manifest that growth in lives of greater holiness and greater obedience to the Word of God.

This was the burden of the prayer before us in the latter part of Ephesians 1. As I have mentioned repeatedly, we all have every blessing that Paul has mentioned in verses 3 through 14. And we should never get over marveling over what we have in Christ. But to really understand these and all of the other blessings that we have in Christ, we need to grow in our understanding, and grow in manifesting by the lives we live that we are truly new creatures in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what I need; this is what you need; this is what every true believer needs. The person who professes to know Christ, but who never grows in Christ, is probably, as Augustine said, still "a lost man." The Apostle Peter's last word in his second epistle was,

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen (2 Pet. 3:18).

The fact that there are so many people in our churches today who do not even read the Bible on a regular basis, and who are not really interested in hearing the Bible taught, may indicate that we have many people in our churches today who are not really saved. On the other hand, how truly exciting it is to see someone who just can't get enough of the Word of God, and cannot hear enough about our Lord Jesus Christ. It behooves all of us to examine our own hearts to see if we are really growing in the Lord. It is to this end that we all need to be praying for each other.

But now let us look at this wonderful prayer. As we begin to examine it, let me read the entire prayer so that it will all be fresh in our minds.

1:15 How do we explain Paul's statement about only *hearing* of their faith and love? We understand it in the Colossian epistle because Paul had never been in Colosse when he wrote to them. But he had not only been in Ephesus, but he had been instrumental in getting the church established there.

We may not be able to explain this fully, but let me suggest two possible meanings to the Apostle's words. One is that there had undoubtedly been many people saved during the five years since Paul had been in Ephesus. The other explanation could be that Paul was rejoicing in the way faith and love had *continued to be manifested* in the lives of those who had professed faith in Christ even while he had been with them. Probably both of these thoughts were in the mind of the Apostle Paul.

Whatever the true explanation might be, we need to note that wherever in the life of every true Christian you will always find "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." They may be present in varying degrees of strength, but they will always be present – and in the order in which the Apostle Paul has mentioned them here: first faith in the Lord Jesus, and then love for the people of God, "the saints."

Note the words, "faith in the Lord Jesus." Recently there has been much talk among teachers of the Bible as to whether or not if Jesus Christ is your Savior, He is also your Lord. And some have been very strong in saying that Jesus Christ can be our Savior without being our Lord. The Apostle Paul would deny that. And the way he referred to our Lord here would seem to indicate that. Our Savior is not only Jesus Who came to save His people from their sins, but he is *the Lord* Jesus. A Christian is one who not only has professed faith in the Lord Jesus at some time in the past, but he is one who is continuing to trust the Lord Jesus day by day. Not all of us may know exactly when it was that we first trusted in Christ, but there was a time! And yet, if our faith was real saving faith, it did not stop then, but will continue on throughout our lives. A person who denies, or who has serious questions about whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was and is "the Lord Jesus," cannot be a true Christian. So Paul was encouraged by their continuing faith in the Lord Jesus.

But that was not all! Along with "faith in the Lord Jesus," you will always find in a true Christian, "love unto all the saints." Before we were saved, Christians was the last people we wanted to have anything with. But after we were saved, then we loved the saints, the people of God, and always look forward to the times when we can be with them. The Apostle John said this as he was giving the evidences that we should look for that we are saved:

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).

To the church at Thessalonica the Apostle Paul wrote,

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more (1 Thess. 4:9-10).

And the Apostle Peter wrote these words in 1 Pet. 1:22-23:

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

And the Lord Jesus said, "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:17)..

Finally, let me read what the writer of the book of Hebrews wrote:

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end (Heb. 6:10-11).

When we are born again, born of God, the Lord puts in our hearts not only a love for Himself, but a love for all of the people of God. But, as we can see from Scripture, we all constantly need to be reminded that we should seek to love each other more and more.

Paul had seen all of this in some; he had heard about it in others. But it was because of this that he went on to say what he did in the following verses.

1:16 Paul did not mention here to whom he was giving thanks, but obviously his thanksgiving would be *to God!* And he gave thanks to God because God was the One Who had given them "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." The believers in Ephesus did not produce faith and love out of their own hearts. If so, Paul would have praised them. But because both of these are gifts from God, faith and love, Paul thanked God, and remembered them in prayer *unceasingly!*

People really praised the Lord when Saul of Tarsus was saved. He had been the chief persecutor of the church, and many of the early Christians found it very difficult to believe that he had actually been saved. Paul referred to this in the last three verses of Galatians 1. This is what he said as he reviewed those early days after he had been saved. Listen to his words:

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me (Gal. 1:22-24).

Did you ever stop to think what we all would be like if the Lord had not saved us? I shudder to think about that about myself. And I shudder to think that about you. I remember a cartoon that I saw years ago in a Christian paper. It was of an African who was sitting beside a big pot that was hanging over a fire. He was obviously cooking his dinner. But as he was sitting there, he was reading his Bible. A hunter approached him, and said, "You don't believe that book, do you?" And he answered, "If I didn't, you would be in the pot!" That hunter could thank God that the African was a Christian.

As we pray for each other, let us remember to thank God for saving us. Let us thank God for saving our children. We didn't give them faith; God did. We didn't make them see their need of a Savior; God did that, and He is the One we must praise for it. How different we all would be, in a bad way, if the Lord had not given us "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." The Lord Jesus is, according to Heb. 12:2, "the Author and Finisher of our faith." And the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:5 that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." God is the One Who has saved us, and changed our lives, and so He is the One to Whom we need to give thanks. Let us do it constantly like the Apostle Paul did.

Now, as Paul made mention of them in his prayers, how did he pray for them? He has told us in verses 17 on

to the end of this chapter. "Making mention" really means *remembering*. When you pray, whom do you remember? Do certain people come to your mind? I'm sure they do. And as we pray the Lord brings certain people to our remembrance.. Often when I am praying for my family, or our church family, or those of you who are in the Tuesday Class, suddenly some person will come to my mind, and I have learned to interrupt what I have been praying about, and pray briefly for that person, or persons. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to tell people if it is true, "When I get on my knees to pray, I remember you." As I have said, it has been estimated that it had been at least five years since Paul had been in Ephesus, and yet those people were on his heart so much that it was just like he was still living among them. How many people do you and I pray for that we haven't seen, or maybe we haven't heard from them in years? When the Lord brings them to your mind, pray for them, and if they know the Lord, thank God for them and for the faith and love that He has given to them.

But now we come to the actual prayer that Paul prayed.

1:17 Will you be sure to notice that beginning with verse 3 we have *Paul's doxology*, followed by *his thanksgiving to God*, and this, in turn, led to *his intercession for the people of God in Ephesus*. This is as it should be, and is an excellent example for us to follow.

This verse gives us Paul's main burden for the saints in Ephesus in this particular prayer. It is only as the Lord answered this request that the petitions which follow in verses 18 and 19 can be answered. Each believer needs the Spirit (the word should be capitalized) of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and the only One Who can give us that Spirit is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory."

Looking back to verse 3 you can see that here the Apostle was using the same title for God that he used in that verse. I like the way Lenski has described this glorious title for God. Here are his words:

According to Christ's human nature God was His God. For the sake of his readers Paul brings out the truth that the God to whom he and they go in prayer is the God Who sent Jesus into the flesh as Christ to work out our redemption and made Him our blessed Lord Who is exalted forever. As the God of our Lord He is our God, the Fount of infinite grace. At the same time He is [lit.] "the Father of the glory" to Whom all "the glory" of Deity belongs. This *doxa* distinguishes God as God, [and how] His infinite greatness, excellence, perfection, and majesty ever shine forth. It is the sum of all the divine attributes in their manifestation (Lenski on Ephesians, p. 392).

And as Bishop Moule so correctly observed, Paul was praying that the Ephesian believers might "have supernatural light shed upon the gold of their supernatural wealth" (p. 48). Their wealth is in part described in verses 3 through 14. This instructs us to know that while it is extremely important that we read the Word of God, yet the truth of the Word needs to be prayed into our understanding so that it can be manifested in our lives.

Expositors differ as to whether the word "spirit" in verse 17 refers to the Holy Spirit, or that it refers to some kind of an attitude or temper which is characterized by "wisdom and revelation." The word "the" is not in the Greek, and this is the reason for the difference. But I like what A. T. Robertson says in his *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, IV, 520, that "it is open to question if it is possible to obtain this wisdom and revelation apart from the Holy Spirit." And I feel sure that even those who do not take this as a reference to the Holy Spirit would agree that what Paul was praying about here is definitely the work of the Third Person of the Godhead. That is why I prefer to take "spirit" as a reference to the Holy Spirit, and I believe that it should be

capitalized.

The wisdom that Paul was referring to is, of course, not the wisdom of the world, but the wisdom of God. In Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, he said this:

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

Even here in verse 12, the KJ translators did not capitalize "spirit" when from verse 13 it is clear that it is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

By praying that the Lord would "give" them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, he was not implying that they did not have the Holy Spirit. He was simply praying that the Holy Spirit would so work in them that they would understand the wisdom of God as it is revealed in the Word. And that is just what the Holy Spirit has been commissioned to do. He has given us the Word. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:21. He is the Author of every book of holy Scripture. And He has been given to us to guide us into all the truth. In addition He has been given to take the things of Christ, and to show them unto us. So He is the Teacher of Scripture. Cf. John 16:13-14:

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.

So here are two very important facts that we need to remember about the Holy Spirit:

- 1) He is our Teacher of Scripture.
- 2) The heart of His teaching is the revelation of Christ – Christ in the Old Testament, Christ in the Gospels, Christ in the book of Acts, Christ in the epistles, and Christ in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. There is nothing that delights the Holy Spirit more than to show us Christ in the Word!

The Bible not only contains the wisdom of God, but it is a revelation from God. God reveals what we cannot know in any other way. And what He revealed to Paul so that Paul could write this epistle to the Ephesians, it is necessary for God to reveal to us the meaning, the understanding, of what we find here and everywhere else in the Word of God. Therefore, when we read the Word, when we meditate on the Word, when we hear the Word proclaimed, or read books which are designed to help us in our understanding of the Word, we must always look to the Holy Spirit for our knowledge and understanding. And let us remember, as I have said so many times before, but it always bears repeating, *the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but it is a revelation of God.* God has made Himself known to us in His Word.

So Paul did not say that he was praying that they would be able to figure out all of the truth he had mentioned in his Doxology, but he was praying that the Holy Spirit would enable them to understand it, and to make it of practical benefit to them in their daily lives.

The "him" at the end of verse 17 refers to God. And that is made clear by the verses which follow.

1:18 "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Lit. what Paul said, was, *the eyes of your heart being enlightened.* Did you know that your heart has eyes? Paul was not speaking of that heart of yours which pumps blood all through your body, not the physical heart, but he was speaking of your inner man.

We are not only body, but, to use a couple of other words like "heart," we are soul and spirit. Now before we were saved we were, as Lenski explained it, "stone-blind." We could not see or understand the truth of God. But when the Lord saved us, He gave us spiritual sight. He gave us the capacity to know and understand and enjoy the truth of God. So that from a spiritual standpoint we can say what the man who had been born blind was given physical sight by our Lord, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). However, even with spiritual sight, only the Lord can open the eyes of our hearts so that we are able to understand the Word. And this was Paul's request. The most brilliant Christian from an intellectual standpoint still needs the Spirit of God to open the eyes of his heart so that he can understand the truth.

And so, assuming that the Lord has done this by His Holy Spirit, then we are capable of knowing "what is the hope of His calling." When Paul spoke of "His calling," he was speaking of God calling us to Himself in order that we might be saved. We have come to Christ, but we did not come on our own initiative. He called us. He awakened us to our spiritual need, that we were sinners under divine judgment. He called us also to Christ, or we would never have come. And He called us with a particular "hope" in mind. Now again, as I have said many times, Paul was not using this word "hope" with any idea of uncertainty. In fact, it is just the opposite. The "hope" that we have in Christ is called a "hope" because the fulfillment of it is still future, but contrary to a merely human hope. It is absolutely certain, guaranteed by the power of God, by the love of God, and by the decree of God. What Paul was saying here was that he was praying that they would know why they were saved, that they would know what God's purpose was in saving them, and that such knowledge would have a powerful and transforming influence on their lives.

What was God's "hope" in saving them? What is the purpose of our salvation? Why did He save you and me? Well, those questions are answered in what we had in verse 12 of this chapter. It is "that we should be to the praise of His glory," with the emphasis on the word "be." And this purpose stated as Paul stated it in Romans and as the Apostle John stated it in his first epistle, means that God has saved us to make us like Christ. This is the primary objective that God has in all that He is doing in our lives, the blessings He has given us, the way He leads us and teaches us, even the trials and testings that we go through – all are designed by the loving hand of our God to focus our attention on His purpose in saving us.

I suppose everyone here could say that he or she knew this before coming to the class today. Yes, we have been told this many times, and we have seen it often as we have read our Bibles. But Paul was thinking about more than mere knowledge. It is important to know this because many believers do not know it. But just the knowledge is not what Paul had in mind. Paul was thinking of a divinely given knowledge where this has made a profound effect upon the very way we live day by day. Is this what we want? And are we looking forward to heaven when this work of God will be completed. Hopefully we are like the Apostle John, we don't understand it all, but we know it, we love it, and we are living each day in the light of this glorious truth, that gradually the Lord is right now working in all of our hearts to make us like His beloved Son! "That ye may know the hope of His calling."

November 16, 1998

But what is the next request?

It is found in the last part of verse 18: "And what [are] the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." I don't know why the translators of the KJV did not supply the verb *are* in italics because it needs to be in there, and certainly had to be implied in the Greek text.

Expositors are divided as to whether this is another reference to our inheritance, to which Paul referred in verse 11, or is this, as it seems, a reference to an inheritance that God has in us, "in the saints"? Dr. Lloyd-Jones preferred the former because he did not like the idea of God having an inheritance. But, at the same time, he felt that it was impossible to be really dogmatic on either interpretation.

Now I don't often take sides against Dr. Lloyd-Jones, but I do here. It seems that, taking the statement as it stands, and this is a good translation of the Greek text, Paul was saying that God does have an inheritance in us. It is not that God lacks anything. We know that all things belong to Him, and that our Lord is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And yet let us recognize, to express it in one way, that God has a lot invested in us. He sent His only begotten, His very beloved Son, to die for our sins. God gave the dearest Treasure in all of heaven that you and I might be saved. We have just seen what the purpose is that God has in our salvation, a purpose far beyond anything that any of us in our right minds would ever have thought possible. We are to be like the Lord Jesus Christ when God's saving work is completed. And personally I don't see anything wrong in saying that this is God's inheritance in us. Think of what it is going to mean to God when you and I and all the saints stand before Him transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Taking some illustrations from Scripture, think of what it meant to Noah when the ark was completed. Think of what it meant to Moses when the Tabernacle was completed, and the glory of God settled down upon the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant in the Holy of holies. Or think of what it meant to Joshua when the children of Israel were settled in the land of Canaan. Think of what it meant to Solomon when the Temple was finally completed. Recently we have been studying about the return of the exiles under Ezra and Nehemiah. Think of what it meant when first the Temple was restored, and then the walls of Jerusalem were reconstructed. All of these works were the fruit of the labors of the men who were involved in each one.

Now I realize that we don't work for our inheritances in a human sense. But our inheritances are the result of our relationship to our parents. Sometimes we may receive some kind of an inheritance from a friend, but most of the time inheritances are family matters. It is certain that we can't give anything to God. Everything already belongs to Him. But in eternity past God planned our redemption. And He is working in each of our lives to make us like His Son. This is His work, not ours. We may obey the Lord, and we may seek to please Him in all that we do, but He is the One Who gets the glory because all of the good that we do is the result of the work that He does "in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). *So what He does "in us" is what He gets from us.* And I believe that this is the Lord's inheritance. The word may be used in a slightly different way, but inheritances are what we get, and God's inheritance is what He gets.

There is a passage in the fifth chapter of Ephesians that may help us to understand this idea that God has an inheritance in us. The passage refers to Christ, but we know that God is involved in all that our Lord does. The verses to which I refer are Eph. 5:25-27. (Read.)

Note the words at the beginning of verse 27: "That He might present it to Himself." This is Christ's gift to Himself. God's inheritance in us is God's gift to Himself. Just as Noah and Moses and Joshua and Solomon and Ezra and Nehemiah gloried, giving glory to God, when their work was completed, the same will be true of God and of Christ when Their work in us is completed.

So our attention needs to be directed toward the words, "the riches of the glory." We have already learned from Paul's Doxology that we are to "be to the praise of His glory." Now Paul was speaking of "the riches of" that "glory"! God's glory is the manifestation of Himself. It is the revelation of What and Who He is. When the

apostle John was speaking of seeing the glory of the Lord Jesus, he was speaking of seeing the Lord as He is, in His glory. When the glory of God descended upon the Tabernacle in the desert, this means that GOD descended upon the Tabernacle.

The word "riches" does not mean dollars and cents, but it speaks of *an abundance*. We had this word in verse 7, didn't we? There it was "the riches of His grace." This means that whatever it required for God to forgive your sins and mind, there was such an abundance of God's grace that there was no doubt but that every sin of every believer would be totally forgiven. Now in order for God's purpose in saving us to be realized, *i.e.*, for each of us to "know" that His purpose will not fail, we need to understand how rich God is in glory, and how abundantly that will be manifested when finally the work of salvation is finished in us.

You and I can't possibly understand this unless God gives us "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him," *i.e.*, of God! And then He needs to open the eyes of our hearts so that we will "know," not just in our minds, but that it will become of great practical importance to us in making want to be more like the Lord.

You can see how really astounding these first two requests are. And the third is no less amazing. Let us note what it is as we move on to verse 19.

1:19 This request continues on with the idea that we have seen in the first two, but it carries them along into what the Apostle Paul had to say about God's resurrection of Christ as being the same power by which God's purpose in our salvation will finally be completed.

What is this request?

It is "that ye may know ... what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward [toward us] who believe." Paul prayed that the believers at Ephesus would understand God's calling of us, and His inheritance "in" us, and now His power toward us.

As with everything else about God, His grace and His glory, so in speaking of God's power we can speak in the most superlative terms. In fact, there are no words in the Greek language, nor in the English language, nor in any other language, that can sufficiently describe the character of God. *But the Holy Spirit can give us the wisdom and revelation that we need to understand all that He wants us to know about Himself.* And it certainly is to be expected that somewhere in a passage like this, and in a prayer like this, we would find a reference to *the power of God*. Nothing short of the power of God could possibly be adequate to secure what God has ordained that He will do in us.

Notice how Paul described it: "The exceeding greatness of His power." Listen to the way Lenski described it in his commentary on Ephesians:

Paul wants [wanted] the Ephesians to know "the exceeding greatness of His power" as it is effective "for us believing ones." It exceeds all other power that might interfere to nullify our hope, to prevent the bestowal of the riches of the glory of the inheritance God intends for us believing ones. When we know the excessive greatness of this power, nothing will ever disturb our hope. Other men also hope; alas, their hopes are built on air: there is no power to fulfill their hopes, to bestow that for which they hope. God's power is only "for us the believing ones," for us who trust Him in that trust hope (*Op. cit.*, p.397).

Following this statement Lenski went on to point out the meaning of the Greek which is translated, "who believe." It means those *who have believed and continue to believe*. One evidence that a person has really been saved is that he not only trusted Christ at some time in the past, but he continues to trust Christ day after day. This is truth that applies only to those who continue on trusting Christ.

But the point that Paul was making was that whatever it takes to make us like Christ, God's power, and God's power *alone*, is sufficient.

We often get discouraged, don't we, when we see how we continue to be defeated by the same sins. Of we feel that our circumstances are such that we are inclined to feel that we will never be like Christ living in the conditions that we live under. But Paul would set aside every excuse that we have. He would strengthen our faith to be like Abraham in the OT, who "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what He [God] has promised, He [God] was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-21). We will always have trouble with discouragement as long as we think in terms of what we can do for ourselves, but once God opens the eyes of our hearts to "know" His power, then it will be a new day for us!

Now how would you describe the power of God? I think that one good way would be to point out what God did in creation. This is truth that is hidden from most people because they don't believe that God created the heavens and the earth. But we do, because we believe what the Bible says about creation. We read in Gen. 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." All He had to do was to speak the word, and that which you and I could never have done, He did in a instant of time! In Psa. 33:6 we read,

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. And in Psa. 33:9 we are told, "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." That surely was a most amazing display of the power of God. He didn't need millions or billions of years to bring the universe into being. He is God! And He only needed to speak the word, "and it was done."

Or think of how the Lord fed a million and a half to two million people in the desert for forty years. The certainly was a display of the power of God. Think of how the Lord opened a path through the Red Sea. Even today with all of our technology nobody is even suggesting that we try to do such a thing.

What about the miracles that our Lord performed, every one of them proof that He was the Son of God. The Lord healed diseases for which we are still trying to find an answer today, and He did it so easily.

We are told that God not only made the world, but that He sustains the world. He keeps the sun, moon, and stars in operation. He gives us the four seasons of every year. We are able to keep time because of the order that God has established in the universe. All of these are evidences of His power.

But when the Apostle Paul wanted an illustration of the power of God, He spoke of the power that God exercised when He raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That undoubtedly was the greatest display of the power of God that the world has ever known. Paul called it "according to the working of his mighty power." And this is the very same power that God is exercising every day as He continues His work in us to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ! The work is of such a magnitude that it requires omnipotence. Nothing can possibly stand in God's way to keep Him from carrying out His plan to make us like His Son. We see many hindrances, but one by one they fall before the mighty power of God. As the Apostle described the power of God He did what one writer said, he was heaping together the Greek words for power to show us how

really mighty our Lord is! He said it was "according to the working of His mighty power." God exercised the extremely great power which He has always possessed in order to raise His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and there to exalt Him higher than any of the creatures of each, men or angels. We are continually told that we are the greatest nation on the face of the earth, with more power than any other nation. So what? Isaiah said that the nations of the earth are only a drop in a bucket to the Lord - all of us just one drop! So that makes us just a fraction of a drop. With one word our God could wipe us off of the face of the earth!

But let us go on to verse 20.

1:20 The greatest display of God's power was not in creation, nor was it in providing for His people throughout the Old Testament. It was not in the many miracles which our Lord performed. The greatest display of the power of God was seen when He raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

That is the way the Apostle Paul identified God as he began his epistle to the churches of Galatia. Listen to what he wrote:

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) (Gal. 1:1).

When we consider all that was involved in the death of Christ, and all that was involved in the resurrection of Christ (the fulfillment of the promises, the glorification of the Son, the complete sanctification of every believer, and the ultimate downfall of all of the forces of evil who did all that they could to keep the Lord in the tomb, then we can begin to appreciate how great and glorious the power of God is.

But God, by His mighty power, did even more than raise His Son from the dead, as glorious as that was beyond our ability to describe it. He ascended back to the Father in heaven by the power of God, and by that same power was seated at God's right hand "in the heavenly places." It is that very same power that is working every day *in us*, guaranteeing the ultimate completion of God's work in us, as He fashions us more and more, day by day, into the very image of Christ. I say, only an omnipotent God could possibly do such a work!

The NT makes a strong emphasis upon the fact that after our Lord was raised from the dead, that not only did He ascend back to the Father in heaven, but that He was *seated at the Father's right hand*. And this is what we are told here at the end of verse 20. This is obviously the place of acceptance, and honor. It is evidence that our Lord's work was finished. This is proof that our Lord had perfectly done the will of the Father in every respect during His life on the earth.

The Apostle Paul put the main ministries of our Lord Jesus Christ together when he wrote to the church at Rome that "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. 8:34).

In Col. 3:1 the Apostle Paul wrote these words: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

But it is in the book of Hebrews that we have the strongest emphasis upon the present ministry of Christ, and where He is described as sitting at the right hand of God. Cf. Heb. 1:3. Speaking of Christ the writer of Hebrews said,

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by

the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

And then in Heb. 8:1-2 we read these words:

1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The third reference in Hebrews is found in chapter 10, verses 12 and 13. Again, speaking of Christ, we have these words:

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool (Heb. 10:12-13).

The fourth and final reference in Hebrews is in chapter 12, verse 2. And this is what we read there:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb 12:2).

Even the Apostle Peter wrote of this great fact. As he spoke of Christ in 1 Pet. 3:22, he wrote this:

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

And last, but certainly not least, our Lord spoke of this in his letter to the church at Laodicea when at that very moment He was at the right hand of God. These were His words:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Rev. 3:21).

When the Lord Jesus was being tried before the high priest, and refused to speak out in His own defense, we read this:

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:63-64).

And so the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, was declaring where Christ is now, was stating one of the cardinal doctrines of the NT. And note in Eph. 1:20 that it was the Father Who seated Christ "at His own right hand." Even in this we see the continued submissiveness of Christ, the Son, to God, the Father.

But just how exalted a place this was is declared as we go on to verse 21.

November 23, 1998

1:21 In verse 20 the Apostle Paul spoke of the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ following His resurrection. He could not have been exalted to any greater height than to have been seated at God's "own right hand in the heavenly places." But to emphasize even more the honor bestowed upon the Son by the Father, the Apostle went on in this verse to give to show that none in all of the universe has a greater place of glory than does our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Far above" -- The Lord Jesus was not only higher, but "greatly higher," as Strong has suggested -- so far above

all others that there is no way that their place can be compared with His!

The first two words here, "principality, and power," are repeated in the plural in Eph. 3:10. And you will notice that in 3:10 the Apostle added "in heavenly places." But, as Lenski brought out, these words can be used not only for angelic beings, but also for earthly potentates and powers. And then when we get to Eph. 6:12 we have the first two words that are found here, but they are used to refer to Satanic and demonic forces. So we can say that when Paul used the expressions that we have here in 1:21 he was speaking of all human and earthly authorities, but also all angelic authorities including those among the fallen angels, or demons. Just as we have what Paul called, "the powers that be" (Rom. 13:1), so among angels they have their degrees of authority. And Paul took all terms that could apply to any man or angel, good or bad, and said that regardless of the authority that any one has, or that all of them have together, the authority and power and might and dominion of our Lord, is infinitely greater. We could hardly have a greater statement of the absolute sovereignty of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It seems from Isa. 14:12-14 that the Devil was originally called, "Lucifer, son of the morning," and that he had been given the greatest authority among all of the angels, but his I will's in that passage indicate that he was not going to be satisfied until he took over the universe, and set himself up as God. He became "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). But the Apostle John has told us that "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). So our Lord is greater in His position than Satan is. He is greater in His power. His domain is infinitely greater. And this is the subject to which the Apostle Paul was introducing us in this verse which we are now considering.

But let me enlarge a little upon each of these terms so that we will have some idea of what each means.

"Principality" is the translation of the Greek word ἀρχή, and it means the one who has the first place in rank or power. And so when Jude referred to "Michael the archangel in Jude 9, he was identifying Michael as the one with the highest rank among the angels. Kings fall into this category among men.

"Power" is the Greek word ἐξουσία, which basically mean *authoritative power*. Not every position has the same authority, but some authority belongs to all leaders. In this connection it is good to remember that our Lord said, "All power [authority] is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). And this fits in with what our text in Ephesians is telling us.

"Might" is the regular Greek word for *power*, δύναμις. This speaks of the manifestation of power, but our Lord alone possesses *omnipotence*. However, speaking of creatures, whether human or angelic, their position of authority carries with it the power to carry out the position which they hold.

"Dominion" is the Greek word κυριότης.. This is formed from the Greek word for "Lord." And it puts this added meaning on the terms which we have already described. It implies that the one who holds this position of authority is charged with seeking the good of those over whom he holds this position. This applies both to men and angels, and even gives us some insight into the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ because all of these words have their primary significance when applied to Him.

And then to conclude this part of the exaltation of our Lord, the Apostle Paul concluded by saying, "and every name that is named, not only is that world [age], but also in that which is to come." The word *age* which is here translated "world" speaks of the world in relation to all of the activities involved in the world. And this

applies not only to the present time, but to the future age. So the authority, the God-given authorities, are not limited to this present life, but will carry over into eternity. Some of our Lord's parables made this emphasis.

"Every name that is named." Cf. Phil. 2:9-11:

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.

Names are very important in Scripture, and very often carry with them great relevance. B. F. Westcott made this comment about the significance of the name:

A name describes a dignity more personal and essential than an office. The name is designed to express what he who bears it *is* (italics mine) and not simply what he holds (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 26).

History is full of names. The Bible is full of names. But no name is greater than the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. There have been many great men and women throughout history, but none can stand up to being compared with the Name of our Lord, and men like Abraham, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and Paul, and many others, would be the first to say that their names were not even fit to be mentioned in the same sentence. And Sarah and Ruth and Mary the mother of our Lord, would say the same thing. There is no greater name among men or angels than the Name of our blessed Lord. *What a grand statement verse 21 is of the excellent glory of our Lord, both as to the position which He will forever hold, and as to the Name which He bears. And people who use His Name in vain had better fear the consequences of what they have done, and repent immediately before God.*

But let us go on to verse 22 because the Apostle Paul was not finished speaking of the more excellent glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:22 God has "put all things under His feet," *i.e.*, under the feet of our Lord. Our Lord has always been sovereign over all of creation, but, because of His work on the Cross, that position has been secured for Him for all eternity.

At this point let us turn to Psalm 8. The Apostle Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was in this verse referring to a prophecy declared by King David, who also was speaking by the Holy Spirit, a prophecy which was to be fulfilled in Christ. Here we have *Christ in the Old Testament*, a study which we have just completed here in our Tuesday Class.

I want to read this Psalm, and, as I do, notice how this fits in so perfectly with what Paul has written at the end of Ephesians 1. (Read Psalm 8, noting especially verse 6.)

In Psalm 8 we have the incarnation of Christ, and the work of Christ, and the glory of Christ. When Adam was created, he became the lord (small "l") of creation. But that was lost through sin. However, God's purposes do not change, and it has always been the purpose of God that the exalted place described in Psalm 8, would one day be occupied by the Son of God Who became a Man, and in His glory will one day rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. We don't see it yet, but we are going to see it when all creation will finally give the Lord Jesus the glory which is due to His Name alone.

Let us turn to Hebrews 2, and there read verses 5-11 where we will see how God's eternal plan will be fulfilled.. Here there is clear evidence that when David wrote Psalm 8, he was speaking of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is another passage that we need to look at: 1 Cor. 15:20-28, noting especially the statement at the beginning of verse 27. This is a confirmation of the same truth of the coming glory of our Lord.

In Psalm 110:1 we read that David also wrote, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

How surprised the enemies of our Lord in all generations are going to be when the Lord Jesus, Who is sovereign now, will make them His footstool. What an unspeakably glorious day that will be!

But even this did not exhaust what the Apostle Paul had to say about the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this we need to look at the latter part of verse 22, and on into verse 23.

"And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

This is the first mention of the church in Ephesians, but it is not the last. Cf. Eph. 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29. And it is undoubtedly one of the main subjects of the epistle.

1:23 We are told in verse 23 that the church is the body of Christ. The body is mentioned in Eph. 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16 (2x), 5:23, 30.

So to begin with the Apostle Paul brought these two words together: church and body, "the church which is His body.

Now to get a better and clearer picture of what the Apostle Paul meant by this expression, we need to turn to 1 Cor. 12, and there we will read verses 12-28. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians before he wrote Ephesians, but how much contact the Ephesian church had had with 1 Corinthians, if any, we do not know. But anyway 1 Corinthians will give us a good background for what Paul wrote in Ephesians about the church. This is one of the major doctrines of the NT.

(Read 1 Cor. 12:12-28.)

We see from 1 Corinthians that the human body provides us with an illustration of what the church, the body of Christ, is. Our bodies have many members, and they all have their own particular place in our bodies. We have eyes and ears and noses and hands and feet, and so on and on. And all of us have in our bodies a head. This is the place that Christ has in relation to us in the church. He is the Head. He is the Supreme Authority in the church. And notice that we are talking here about one church, not churches, such as the church at Corinth, and the church at Ephesus, and so on. He was not talking about the Presbyterian church or the Baptist church or Bible churches. Those are local churches. Sometimes people get into our local churches who do not know the Lord, but only those who are truly saved are in the body of Christ. And, as 1 Cor. 12:13 said, we all, as believers in Christ, have been baptized by the Spirit into this "one body." So, if you want to know when the church began, you have to find out when believers were first baptized by the Spirit. The present generation of

Christians are notorious for saying that to be baptized with the Spirit and to be filled with the Spirit are the same thing. But those who say this have not read their Bibles as carefully as they need to. We all today have been baptized by the Spirit, but not all are filled with the Spirit. One thing all of us who are truly saved, have in common, is that we are all members of the church which is His body. We may belong to different local churches, but if we really know the Lord Jesus as our Savior, we are in the body of Christ, "the church which is His body, " Christ's body.

The word "church" means that we are *a called out group of people*, called out from sin and from the world, to belong to Christ as members of His body. He is our Head, and we as members of His body, belong to Him. We are related to Christ in the same way that the members of our bodies are united to us. And as members of His body, we draw our life from Him. He is our life.

But Paul gives a very amazing description of us when he said that we are "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." What did He mean by this? This has to be one of the most amazing statements in all of Scripture, if not indeed the most amazing! We can understand how Christ fills all in all things. This not only speaks of His omnipresence throughout all of His creation, but the manner in which all creation is utterly dependent upon Him. Although unbelievers do not recognize this, they owe their very existence to God. He gives life, and they live; He takes their life away, and they die. The same is true of all of nature. He gives life to trees and plants and all things which are a part of that which grows out of the earth, but the same is true of birds, and fish, and all animals. He fills all things. Even the heavenly bodies owe their existence to Christ, not only as the Creator of the universe, but as the Sustainer. Every day the Lord is upholding all things by the word of His power – moving all things along according to God's eternal plan. What a tragedy that even many who are Christians do not fully appreciate these great truths.

But how can the Church, those of us who are in the body of Christ, be the fulness of Him? It certainly does not mean that He is dependent upon us, or that He in any way is insufficient without us. It would be ridiculous even to think such things.

We are the fulness of Him in the sense of what He is doing in our lives. We have been joined to Him in one body. Our perfection will be ultimately the full display of His glory. "The fulness" in the original Greek is a present participle indicating that this is a process which is going on. The fulness can not yet be seen. But it will be seen when our Lord's work is completed in us, not just individually, but together as the body of Christ. Then the glory of Christ will be displayed as never before.

Paul, in Col. 3:4, was speaking of this when he wrote, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." How we need to be living daily in dependence upon our Savior as He works in us that ultimately His glory may be displayed in us, His body. I have said many times that no man could have devised such a glorious salvation as we have, and those words are confirmed by what the Apostle had to say in the verses which we have just completed.

Concl: As we complete this part of the epistle, let us not forget what we all have in Christ. That takes us back to verses 3 through 14 in this chapter. But let us remember also that the reason behind Paul's prayer in the verses which we have just completed, was toward the fulfillment of the purpose that God had in saving us, that through appropriating what we have in Christ, we are the church might be moving ahead day by day toward that time when the fulness of Christ shall be seen in us. And so may Paul's prayer be our prayer for ourselves, and for all who are members of the body of Christ.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – December 1, 1998

Ephesians 2:1-10

Intro: In studying our Bibles, we should keep in mind that the books of the Bible were not written in chapters and verses. Those divisions were added later to help us find our way around in the Bible. Imagine the time that would be lost and the trouble we would have if we had to find our place in any book of the Bible without these chapters and verses. Instead, we have no trouble finding our place when I say, "Please turn to Ephesians, chapter 2, and verse 1. You turn there immediately, and we can go on with our study.

Sometimes we have to recognize that the chapter, or verse, divisions are not where they ought to be, but for the greater part of the Bible I think we can say that the chapter and verse divisions are where they ought to be. That is true of Ephesians 2. These verses were definitely not a part of Paul's prayer which we have just concluded, and so this was a good place to start a new chapter: chapter 2.

But in teaching Ephesians (or any other book) we need to try at least to determine what the relationship is between chapter, particularly if it is apparent that there has been a change in the subject. That is certainly true as we move from Ephesians 1 to Ephesians 2.

With the exception of the Apostle John's epistles, the other epistles of the NT were written to young churches whose people were really babes in Christ. They had not been saved very long, and so they did not have the knowledge of the truth that they needed to have. That is what made the writings of the apostles so very important. They were seeking to establish in the truth those early believers who were still young in the faith. Many of them were learning for the first time the truths that the Apostle Paul had mentioned in his Doxology in chapter 1. And that is why, after stating his Doxology, the Apostle went on to tell those Ephesian Christians how he had been praying that God would enable them to understand the truth. His prayer ended with verse 23 of chapter 1. And then the Apostle Paul began to tell them what they used to be, and then what they had become by the grace of God. He did this twice, first in verses 1-10, and then in verses 11-22, which is the end of chapter 2. *Now the question that we need to ask, and hopefully to find an answer, is, "Why did the Apostle Paul do this?"* Before we give it some prayer thought, we may not be able to give an immediate answer. But let me suggest what I believe the answer is.

Paul did not want them to lose sight of that amazing work that God had done in their hearts, that work which is rightly called, *salvation!* He wanted them to understand in a fuller way what they had been before they were saved. And he told that just that in verses 1 through 3 of chapter 2. And then he moved on immediately to tell them what they had become in Christ. He wanted them to have a growing appreciation of the tremendous change that the Lord had made in their lives, and that such changes were only possible by the power of God and the grace of God. In the latter part of this epistle he was going to tell them how they were to walk, that is, to live. But here he reminded them how they used to walk, how corrupt they were, how totally under the judgment of God. It is not a pretty picture. But when we get down to verse 4 we come to those wonderful words that have come to mean the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death to us, the words, "But God . . ." This change was not the result of anything that we did. It was totally of God, and it was a change that will never be reversed.

Let me read to you what Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones had to say about this point in this epistle. Here are his words. Speaking of the Apostle Paul, Dr. Lloyd-Jones said,

He wants them to grasp something of the largeness and the greatness and the majesty of this wonderful salvation. And subject as they still are to temptation, and living in a gainsaying world and surrounded

by paganism and opposition in various forms, the apostle was particularly anxious that they should be clear about the greatness of the power of God toward all that believe (*God's Way of Reconciliation*, p. 13).

And then Dr. Lloyd-Jones said this:

And that is surely the one thing we need to know and to be certain of in the Christian life. Nothing is more vital than that we should be clear about the power of God that is manifested in this Christian salvation (*Ibid.*).

We can all agree with that, can't we? Paul had mentioned in his prayer in chapter 1 that the power that it took to save each one of us, from start to finish, was the power that God exercised in raising His Son from the dead. That ought to teach us how impossible it would have been for us to save ourselves. And, at the same time, it ought to make us marvel at what God has done in us and for us in saving us from our sins.

You see, we must never forget how loving and gracious God has been in saving us. That is one reason we remember our sins, and we remember what we would be and where we might be today if the Lord had not saved us. It goes without saying, and yet it needs to be said, if He could save us, then there is nothing else that He cannot do to meet our needs from day to day.

Now let us examine verses 1 through 3 of chapter 2 where we have the Apostle Paul's first description of what we were in the past.

2:1 The word "quicken" is not in the Greek text, and, as I have reminded you before, if your Bible uses italics, you will find that the words "hath he quickened" are in italics. They were added by the translators because they were trying to make the meaning clearer. But it is actually more forceful to leave it as it is in the original. The NASB renders it, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." That is the way it ought to be.

We were not just sick; we were "dead." We were spiritual corpses, and you will see them walking around Portland every day you are out on the town. And just as a person who is physically dead, cannot see, cannot hear, cannot walk or talk, so a person who does not know the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ, cannot see the truth. That is, he cannot understand the truth. He can't really hear what the Bible has to say. He hears words, or reads words, but their meaning is completely beyond him. He does not have the capacity to understand the Word of God. He is totally without spiritual life. He is dead!

What is the cause of man's deadness spiritually? It is because of two words which the world hates: "Trespasses and sins." These are two words which describe things that we say, or think, or do, which are displeasing to God. The reason people do not understand how terrible sin is, is because they do not understand how perfect and how holy God is!

I was speaking to a man in a hospital the other day. He was very friendly and talkative with me until I brought up the subject of his relationship with God. He responded immediately by telling me that he didn't always do the right thing, *but that he wasn't a sinner*. Well, if he didn't always do the right thing, then he was a sinner. But he totally rejected that word.

A lady was telling me recently about her brother who died very suddenly within the last two weeks. As the family was planning for the service they made it clear that they didn't want that brother to be referred to as a sinner. He did a lot of good. He worked with young people trying to get them to do the right thing. He helped

seniors get to church on Sunday. But the family insisted that he was not a sinner.

James tells us in his epistle, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). We are born in sin, but even if we look upon every person as having a clean slate when he is born, nobody lives very long until it is apparent that they are not perfect. And since we are not perfect, we are sinners – all of us are sinners! The Bible says that "there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc. 7:20). It is because of sin that we are dead, and the person who says that he is not a sinner, is proving that he is spiritually dead!

Lenski, the Lutheran commentator, says that the word "trespasses" can be described by a man who is on the road, but something happens and he drives off of the road into a ditch. And "sins" are those things that we do which miss the mark. When the Apostle Paul said, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), he was saying that our failure to glorify God in all the circumstances of our lives, is an indication that we have missed the mark.

The Apostle Paul did not mean by these terms that our trespasses and sins were always deliberate. Sometimes they are, but many times they are not. Our trespasses can be like a car accident in which we run into a ditch. We don't intend to do what we do, but nevertheless we do them. They can be either unintentional errors, or willful transgressions. But trespasses are trespasses, and sins are sins, regardless of how they happen, and they have an enslaving, overpowering effect upon our lives.

Only the Lord can make us understand what the Apostle Paul wrote in this verse, but let me say that there were many people in that city which was devoted to the worship of the goddess Diana who had received life, eternal life, and they started to hear what the Apostles were saying. They understood that they were sinners and could never be acceptable to God until their sins were forgiven. And they also began to understand that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, Who died on the Cross, died to save people from their sins. And their lives were marvelously transformed!

But let us go on thinking about the past.

2:2 "Wherein" can be translated simply *where*, or *in which*. It means that it was in those "trespasses and sins" that we "walked," we lived. Comparing this verse with verse 1 we see that those who are "dead in trespasses and sins" are actually in another sense, in a human way, alive – alive physically, but dead spiritually.

However, in man's unregenerate state, while he is still "dead in trespasses and sins," he lives "according to the course of this world." The word "course" is the Greek word, *αἶων*. It is sometimes translated *world*. But to say that we walked *according to the world of this world*, would really make it more difficult to understand. So our translators have used the word "course" to show that life in this world follows certain patterns, or characteristics. It was live as it was then in the Roman world, and, as far as its basic pattern, it is the same today at this particular time in world history. People in the world do not understand why they live the way they do, but it is because they are a part of this whole world system which is alienated from God and in rebellion against that which is according to the will of God. Instead, it is "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

There is no question but by the words, "the prince of the power of the air," the Apostle Paul was referring to the Devil. People in the world live in accordance with the present depraved state of things which is due to two

things: (1) what Lenski called, "the present corrupt and debased order which is due to the fallen state of mankind" (*Op. cit.*, p. 408), and (2) the fact that "the prince of the power of the air" is actually ruling in their lives. In calling the Devil, a "prince," he was calling him *the chief ruler of this world*. He is not greater than God, but he has great power which is always exercised within the limits that a sovereign God has placed upon him. But when man persists in living according to the desires of his sinful heart, the Lord often lets sin take its course, and the Devil have his way. *It is very apparent that this is what is taking place on a major scale in our country today.*

But why is the Devil called, "the prince of the power of the air"? Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, explains this word "air" as referring to this atmospheric region. "Power" is the translation of that familiar Greek word, ἐξουσία, which is authoritative power. The Devil has great authority. I repeat, it is not greater than the authority of God, but it is authority nevertheless. People make light of the Devil, and most people don't really believe that there is such a being, in the same way that they try to convince themselves that there is no God. Because they are incapable of understanding the truth, they deny what is really true. Always, always, always, regardless of what period of time in human history you may be considering, life has to be explained in terms of the way in which the Devil is exercising his great power. We blame Saddam Hussein, or Arafat, or Hitler, or Caesar, and they all carry their share of the blame for the way things are going on. We also need to recognize that each person is responsible before God for his or her own actions, even though they are living under the domain of the Devil. But the Apostle Paul pointed to the true nature of our warfare in Eph. 6:12 where we read:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

The fact that we can't see the Devil, doesn't mean that he does not exist. And the fact that we can't see demons, does not mean that they do not exist. Just as the fact that we can't see God, doesn't mean that He does not exist. This is why God has given us His Word, so that we would understand truths which we otherwise would never be able to know. Man by nature is totally blind to the truth which the Apostle Paul was expressing here in verse 2 of Ephesians 2, and even he would not have known this if God had not made it known to him. Men scoff at such teaching, but someday, and it is when they die if not before, they will regret eternally that they did not pay attention to the teaching of the Word of God. People convince themselves that they are free when just the opposite is true. They are slaves, slaves to their own nature, and slaves to the Satanic forces which are presently ruling in the world. And we all would continue to be slaves if it were not for the amazing power and grace of God which He has exercised in setting us free from sin and free from the Devil.

The Devil is the "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Be sure to notice the word "now." It means that *at this very moment* the Devil is at work, doing his evil and deadly deeds, "in the children of disobedience." Who are they? They are the millions upon millions of people in every generation who, as the Apostle Paul described them, "know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8). "Disobedience" in our text means *obstinate and rebellious opposition to God's will*. So it is not just that they do not believe in Christ and the Gospel, but they are strongly opposed to it. They resist it for themselves, and do all that they can to keep others away from it as well.

But this is not all that the Apostle had to say about our past. Let us go on to verse 3.

2:3 "Among whom," *i.e.*, among the people of this world. Not everyone sins to the same degree, but all are sinners. And it was once true of all of us that "we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh."

I love the King James translation of the Bible, but we all have to realize that it is a translation. The Bible was not written originally in English. And, since the KJ was translated back in the 1600's, we need to recognize that the meaning of some words have changed since then. And this word "conversation" in verse 3 is one of those words. When we speak of "conversation," we are speaking about people *talking*. But this word in Old English had to do with how people *lived*. It is a word that means the same as the word "walked" in verse 2 of this chapter.

Your dictionary may tell you that at one time this word once meant a person's manner of living, his conduct. And that is what the Apostle Paul was referring to here in verse 3. Every person, before he is saved, lives the way the Devil wants him to live, but he also lives according to "the lusts of" his "flesh." And that is what the Devil wants us to do. How else can a person live? He can live to please and glorify God, and this is what God wants us to do. And to turn us from our own lusts to the will of God, God works in our hearts to make us new creatures in Christ. Salvation brings into our hearts a whole new set of desires. It is only then that we want to please God.

But let us look at that phrase, "the lusts of our flesh." Two things need to be said about this expression. One is that the Apostle Paul was not saying that we were all as bad as it is possible for us to be. Thank God for His restraining hand in our lives both before we were saved, and after we were saved. If it were not for the restraining hand of God in our lives, all of us would be much worse than we are. That is the reason that when Spurgeon used to see a drunk staggering down a street in London, he would say to himself, "There go I, but for the grace of God!" And that was true! That is true of all of us.

The second thing that needs to be said about this expression, "the lusts of the flesh," is that it does not just mean *sexual cravings* -- although illicit sexual desires are included. I noticed in looking up the word "conversation" in the dictionary, that it once was used to describe sexual intercourse. The term, "the lusts of the flesh," includes all of the desires that we have that are produced by our old nature. A man who is driven by the desire to be at the top of his profession so that he sacrifices his family and everything else to reach that place, is a man who is exercising "the lusts of the flesh." Our desire to have everything bigger and better, is a manifestation of the lusts of the flesh. However, it usually carries with it the idea of something that is forbidden. People are driven by their lusts. And often they will kill to get what they want. Hitler was a man driven by "the lusts of our flesh." And so is Saddam Hussein. And the same is true of other governmental leaders that we are familiar with.

The Apostle Paul here describes "the lusts of the flesh" as "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." "Desires" is the translation of the Greek word for *will*. By nature we are all concerned about doing our will, but have no interest in doing the will of God. It is at this point that becoming a Christian makes such a great change. We are not entirely free from wanting to do our own will, but as God continues to work in us, doing His will becomes increasingly important to us.

When Paul spoke of "the desires of the flesh and of the mind" he was including intellectual desires as well as physical desires. You see, the Devil not only want us to do what he does, but he wants us to think like he thinks. So many of our young people are being ruined today by what they are learning in our schools. Our thinking by nature is corrupt. How else can you explain the fact that very well educated people will insist that this world came into being by a process they call evolution, when they would laugh at you if you said the same thing about a wrist watch, or an automobile, or a skyscraper! Sinful man's thinking is corrupted along with everything else about him.

Finally, the Apostle comes down to the basic reason for all of the corruption in the world. Men "by nature" are "the children of wrath." We all were born sinners. That is our nature. That is why we do what we do, and why we live the way we live. This is why our world is going down and down and down. People by nature are under the judgment of God! People may ridicule statements like I am making this morning, but this is the teaching of Scripture, and the proof is to be seen in the way people live every day. And the only reason we aren't living the way other people live in this world, is because of what God has done in our hearts by His grace and power.

"Children of wrath" – What a solemn expression that is! By nature, by birth, we are sinners. Bishop Moule spoke of "the inward wrongness" of our condition. We are all sinners by nature. David had this to say about all of us:

- 2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.
- 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
- 4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear;
- 5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely (Psa. 58:2-5).

It is impossible to understand man until we understand this awful truth. What the Apostle Paul was describing in these first three verses of Ephesians 2, was total depravity. It is not that we are all as bad as it is possible for us to be, but that every part of our being has been affected by sin, and that affects the way we live, the things we say, and even the thoughts that we think.

"Even as others" – There has never been a single person born any place in all of the world who does not fit into the description of man as given here. We do not all sin to the same degree, but we all sin. Sin is man's greatest problem, and in the following verses Paul reminded the Ephesian believers how it was that they were not as they used to be, but that some great and wonderful changes had taken place in their lives. That is the bright side of the picture, and we come to it in verse 4.

December 7, 1998

2:4 The pathway from sin to salvation is marked by the words, "But God." There is nothing about the facts described in verses 1 through 3 that would indicate that there was anything about men that would make it a divine obligation to save us. The root of our salvation is not in man, but in the heart of God, in God's mercy and in His love.

With respect to the words, "But God," Dr. Lloyd-Jones has this to say:

We not come to look at two wonderful words—'But God.' These words obviously suggest a connection with something that has gone before. The word "but" is a conjunction, and yet it suggests always a contrast; and here we have the connection and the contrast...

With these two words we come to the introduction to the Christian message, the peculiar, specific message which the Christian faith has to offer us. These two words, in and of themselves, in a sense contain the whole of the Gospel. The Gospel tells of what God has done, God's intervention; it is something that comes entirely from outside us and displays to us that wondrous and amazing and astonishing work of God which the apostle goes on to describe and to define in the following verses (*God's Way of Reconciliation*, p. 59).

In verses 1 through 3 of Ephesians 2 Paul was writing about the original and universal nature of man's sin. But in the next seven verses we see the amazing character of God and what He has done to meet man's need.

He is "rich in mercy." "Rich" means that He is abounding in mercy. The supply is inexhaustible, and it is great enough to save the worst of sinners. This is where we need to begin when we are speaking of salvation. God is a God of wrath, as we learned in verse 3, but He is also a God of mercy. And, as I have mentioned before, and as is generally recognized by those who know the language of the NT, God's "mercy" is His answer for *man's misery*. Sin makes man miserable. He loves his sin, but he fails to recognize how sin is responsible for the miseries of life. It is God's mercy that has moved Him to do what is necessary to save sinners. He is a God of infinite compassion. We are always quick to blame God when things go wrong, but we fail to recognize the mercy of God in His longsuffering toward man as man persists in sinning. It is God's mercy that has moved Him to do what is necessary regarding the terrible plight into which sin has plunged every human being.

But it is also His love. The Apostle rightly spoke of it as a "great love." *And will you notice that at this point the Apostle Paul directed his comments in a very personal way to the believers in Ephesus.* He mentioned here in verse 4 that God loved "us." In verse 5 he was speaking about when "we were dead in sins," and that God "hath quickened us," and that by grace "ye are saved." (Continue on down through verse 10 pointing out this same emphasis.)

Remember that we had this emphasis in Paul's Doxology in chapter 1. This personal application goes back to that amazing and thoroughly wonderful statement in Eph. 1:4, that God "hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world." This is one reason why the Apostle Paul spoke of God's love as "great" in Eph. 2:4. If God chose us before the foundation of the world, then He must have loved us from before the foundation of the world. And is this not what the Lord told the people of Israel in Jer. 31:1, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness [the same as *mercy*] have I drawn thee." Everlasting love is a love without beginning, and without ending, and without change. Why God set His love upon us, is a mystery to us all now, and perhaps will be throughout eternity. But this is a large part of our security.

But the greatness of God's love is seen not only in its eternal nature, but that it was turned toward us "even when we were dead in sins." He did not wait until we were saved to start loving us, but He loved us while we were still in our sins, and sinning every day! That is truly amazing, isn't it?

Let me remind you of Paul's astounding statement about the love of God in the last few verses of Romans 8, verses 35-39:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is hard for us to comprehend such love as that which God has for us. Human love is never that strong. It always has a beginning. Sometimes, very unfortunately, it has an ending. And it is always subject to change. We love people when we see in them characteristics that are loveable. God loved us when we were "dead in sins," and utterly incapable of loving Him in return. So He did not love us because He saw anything in us that was loveable. It was exactly the opposite. He set His love upon us knowing how we would be corrupted by sin

before we learned of Him, and knowing also how many times we would grieve Him with our sins after He had saved us. Talk about security, we have the greatest possible security in the very fact that God loved us, and continues to love us, and will always love us. Such wonderful truth defies explanation or interpretation.

But let us look at verse 5 a little more in detail.

2:5 Charles Hodge says that the first part of this verse means, "Notwithstanding our low and apparently helpless condition, God interfered for our recovery" (*Ephesians*, p. 74). And then he went on to say this:

The Greek word translated "to make alive" means "to impart life." In the New Testament it almost always refers to the giving of the life of which Christ is the Author. It either encompasses everything which is included in salvation, the giving of life in its widest scriptural sense, or it expresses some one point or moment in this general life-giving process. [My comment, "probably both."] As the death from which the Christian is delivered includes condemnation ... pollution, and misery, so the life which he receives encompasses forgiveness ... regeneration, and blessedness (*Op. cit.*, pp. 74, 75).

Notice carefully those words, "hath quickened us together with Christ." When was Christ "quickened"? He was quickened when He was raised from the dead. In God's sight when Christ was raised, all for whom He died were raised, that is, our salvation was secured at that very moment! But Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to remember that all of that was completely undeserved on our part, and so he added, "'by grace ye are saved.'" Perhaps he was feeling that believers might begin to think that they were something special to have been "quickened ... together with Christ." However, it was not that they were saved because they were special, but because nothing short of this could possibly have been sufficient for their salvation.

Let me digress here for just a moment, and yet it is not really a digression. There has always been a lot of discussion among believers in the answers that are given to the question, "For whom did Christ die?" Did He die for all people without exception, with only the hope that some would be saved, or did He offer Himself to God on behalf of those whom the Father had chosen and given to Him? Perhaps you can see that we have our answer here, as well as in many other places. Let me ask you to think about this. If Christ died for everyone, that is, with the possibility that all men might be saved, then this means that when Christ died, all men died with Him, and, as we will see in just a moment, when Christ was raised, all men were raised in Him. And we can even take it a step further. We would also have to say that when Christ ascended and was seated at the Father's right hand, then all people ascended with Him, and are now seated at the right hand of God. Now here is my question: If all of this happened to all people, then is it possible that anybody would be lost? You see, if you believe that Christ died for all people without exception, then there is more sense to universalism, that all will eventually be saved, than there is sense in saying that He did for all, but that many who died with Him, and arose with Him, and are now seated in heaven with Him, will finally go to hell. We don't question the value of Christ's death to save everyone. His death would have been of infinite value. But what was His objective when He died? Did He pay the price for the sins of those who will finally be lost in hell? If so, then why are they in hell? And are they going to have to pay for their sins a second time?

But someone always says that they are in hell, not for their sins, but because they did not accept Christ. Let me ask you to turn to Eph. 5. I want to read four verses for you, verses 3-6:

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of

thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

If the wrath of God comes on people because of "these things," the sins, and others like them, which the Apostle Paul had mentioned, *then this means that Christ did not pay the penalty for their sins.* They did not die with Christ. They were not raised with Christ. And they are not seated with Christ now, as we are, in heavenly places.

We have to remember that God did not owe salvation to man, any man. And we need to remember, too, that if God planned salvation, then He had every right to make it on His terms. And this is what He has done. He has chosen those who are to be saved. Christ died specifically for them. The Holy Spirit brings conviction to their hearts, and draws them to Christ.

That little chorus which was so popular a few years ago, tells the whole story. Do you remember it? Here are the words:

His very own, His very own,
Wonderful grace in His Word is made known;
Chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son,
Sealed by the Spirit, I'm His very own.

You see it took the sovereign grace of God to reach me, and to reach you, and to reach everyone who has ever been saved. And I say "sovereign grace" because it is the grace of a sovereign God. He can save anyone He chooses to save. No one can stand against God. So, if people are still dying without Christ and salvation, it is not because we have a helpless, weak God. People are responsible for what they do about the Gospel, and what they need to pray is, "God be merciful to me, the sinner." Christ has promised that those who come to Him will not be cast out. But we don't find people coming in great numbers to Christ, do we? We don't hear people saying, "I want to be saved, but God will not save me." No, but we see here and there that God is claiming His elect, and working out His own sovereign purposes in every detail just as He ordained that they should be.

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan,
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man,
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary.

We can understand why David wrote in Psalm 65:4,

Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

But let us go on to verse 6.

2:6 In verse 5 and in the first part of verse 6 the Apostle Paul teaches that we were raised together with Christ. Other passages speak of our being "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). So in all that our Lord did for our salvation, God looked upon us as having a vital part with our Lord in His death, burial, resurrection, and even in His exaltation to the Father's right hand. But as Bishop Westcott has remarked, "The acts which are complete on the Divine side have to be realised on the side of man" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 32). And yet what Paul has taught here assures us that just as we have partaken in our Lord's death and

resurrection, so we, too, can be fully assured that we will share in His glory. But Paul was describing the position that we have now with Christ and in Christ before God.

December 14, 1998

Bishop Moule made a very good statement in summary of what we have here, and I want to read it to you. This is what he said:

So astonishing is the revolution of our condition; from wrath to a wealth of mercy; from dead in sin to resurrection-life; from a walk among the sons of disobedience to a session with and in the Lord upon His heavenly throne, looking down from thence on our old miseries and on our terrible but now impotent adversaries.

And why was it all done? Assuredly, as we have seen, for pure love upon us, but also so as to secure God's own glorification in His creatures' view for ever; for He, being what He is, cannot but work for the infinite end of His own glory (pp. 76, 77).

And so the blessings of salvation are not all experienced here in this life, but there is more to come throughout eternity. And this is what we have in verse 7.

2:7 "That" means *in order that*, and is expressive of *purpose, God's purpose*. We have all of the blessings now to secure our salvation eternally, but the actual experience of the full measure of these blessings will not be experienced by us until we are "in the ages to come," an expression for *eternity*.

God is still the subject of the verbs here. "That He might shew," and Old English spelling for our verb *shew*, and it should be read as *show*. It is the translation of the verb ἐνδείκνυμι which means *to manifest, to display*, facets of our salvation which cannot be known until then. And what does it consist of? "The exceeding riches of His grace." In verse 4 Paul had mentioned that God was "rich in mercy." And we have all experienced God's grace in salvation. But we are yet to realize "the exceeding riches of His grace" – not just *the riches of His grace*, but "the exceeding riches of His grace."

The word "exceeding" means literally *to throw beyond*, which means that in eternity we will realize as never before how the grace of God has gone far beyond anything that we can now understand. And that will be realized mainly in understanding the infinite "kindness" of God which He has showered upon us in Christ Jesus. In Rom. 11:22 this attribute of God is placed in contrast with His severity. In Romans 2 when the Apostle Paul was warning unbelievers about the judgment of God, he said this:

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Rom. 2:4).

We all should know that God is love, but that He is also righteous and holy. He is a God of mercy, but He is also a God of wrath. This word "goodness" speaks of that which has penetrated the whole nature of God, as Trench said, "mellowing that which would have been harsh and austere" (*Synonyms*, p. 233). What has "mellowed" God in His attitude toward us, and mellowed Him in what He has done for us? Our verse tells us. It is "His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." If it were not for Christ Who took our place, we would have been the recipients of the wrath of God. But God's wrath has been satisfied by the sacrifice of His Son. However, in thinking of this, we must also remember that it was *God* who sent His Son to die for our sins thus opening the way for the marvelous manifestation of God's goodness.

We often say, don't we, how good God has been to save us. And the more we understand of the sinfulness of sin, and of the wickedness of our own hearts, the more we can glorify Him for His goodness to us, a goodness, or kindness, which Westcott called, "tender and considerate" (p. 32). We have seen much of His goodness already, but there is more to come, much more, and one thing that we will do in heaven is to learn more of the infinite goodness of God.

John Eadie, who has written many devout and heart-warming commentaries on books of the NT, reminds us at this point that Paul has used four words to show us the source, the cause, of our salvation, and they are all attributes of God: His mercy, His love, His grace, and His goodness. God's mercy is directed toward our miserable condition and the misery which sin has caused us. God's love is seen in His compassion toward us, and that which moved Him to do what needed to be done in order for us to be saved. His grace takes away our guilt, and at the same time shows that our salvation was completely unmerited and undeserved. And in the goodness of God we see the abundance of our salvation, as verse 7 indicates, a goodness which runs throughout our lives here, and shows itself even more glorious and abundant throughout all eternity.

Eadie made the following wonderful comment about the truth of salvation which we have been considering:

The kindness of God in Christ Jesus is a phrase expressive of the *manner* in which grace operates. His grace is *in* His goodness. Grace may be shown among men in a very ungracious way, but God's grace clothes itself in kindness, as well in the time as in the mode of its bestowment. What kindness in sending His grace so early to Ephesus, and in converting such men as now formed its church! O, He is so kind in giving grace, and such grace, to so many men, and of such spiritual demerit and degradation; so kind as not only to forgive sin, but even to forget it (Heb. viii. 12); so kind, in short, as not only by His grace to quicken us, but in the riches of His grace to raise us up, and in its exceeding riches to enthrone us in the heavenly places in Christ! And all of grace in this kindness shown in the first century is a lesson even to the nineteenth century (we can say, the twentieth century). What God did then, He can do now and will do now; and one reason why He did it then was, to teach the men of the present age His ability and desire to repeat in them the same blessed process of salvation and life (pp. 148, 149).

This is what God has done for us, saving us from a life of sin and from the fires of eternal hell. And this is the message that we can still proclaim to a lost world, can't we? We, like Paul, have no need to be ashamed of the Gospel, because it is still the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. And we must add, *it is the only power that can transform guilty, defiled sinners, into saints. May the Lord give us the boldness we need to declare this wonderful message to the people of our generation. There is no other Savior but Christ. There is not other message of hope but the Gospel.*

But let us go on to verse 8.

2:8 Verses 8 and 9 would have to be listed among the best known and best loved of all Bible verses. They give us the truth of the Gospel by stating what it is, and what it is not. But one thing that we all have probably failed to do, or to do as thoroughly as we should, is to notice the context of these two verses. Verse 8 begins with the word "for." Here it is used as a word to tie verses 8 and 9 and even 10 with verses 4 through 7. Paul has been dealing with the most important truth in all of the world. It is the truth of the Gospel. It is the truth of salvation. It is glorious truth, truth which transcends anything that man would consider possible. And in this sense we probably need to go back again to verses 1 through 3 to remember what we used to be, and then what God has done for us. *How can we be assured that the truth of verses 4 through 7 actually apply to us, and that we can rest in those glorious truths which have to do, not only with time, but with all eternity? The*

simple answer to that question is, because salvation is a work of God, based on the sacrifice of Christ, and that it is not dependent in any way upon us.

Most people, and even a lot of professing Christians, do not like to be told that. Man always wants to have some of the glory, some credit, for a place of acceptance with God. But in these two verses, and we must also include verse 10, the Apostle Paul swept away all possible human merit, and shows that salvation is entirely of God!

The word that he spreads over all of our salvation is "grace," the grace of God. The only way that God could possibly save us was *by grace*. We were not only lacking in any kind of merit, but we had all kinds of demerit charged against us. And no amount of good works could possibly undo the bad works that we have done. And no amount of good works could ever change our hearts. We don't need to talk about how many sins we have committed, or what sins they were. We have been sinners by nature and time and time again, sinners by choice. What we deserved, all of us, was to be cast forever from the presence of God, to suffer the judgment which was rightly ours. But it is "by grace that ye are saved." If it were not for the grace of God, there would be no hope for any of us!

Now notice the two negatives is these verses:

- 1) "Not of yourselves."
- 2) "Not of works."

"Not of yourselves" means that you and I had nothing that would obligate God to save us. We had no personal merit. God didn't save us because we have tried to do the right thing. He didn't save us because we have been sincere in our lives. He certainly did not see that our hearts were different from other people, and so just on the basis of "Personal Recognizance" He felt that He ought to save us. None of us were of such a character that we deserved to be saved.

"Not of works" means just what it says. We hear a lot about what people do during the Christmas season to help other people who are in need. Now there is nothing wrong with this. It is good to do these things. But if you are talking about how to get right with God by doing those things, you are on the wrong track. Going to church is a very good thing to do, but just by going to church you are not going to be saved because salvation is "not of works." People will do a lot of good by money they give to worthwhile projects, but you can't buy your way into salvation. In fact, the prophet Isaiah has given us an amazing statement about good works. Let me read it to you. You will find it in Isa. 64:6-7:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousneses 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.

When Isaiah said, "We are all as an unclean thing," he was saying that salvation is "not of ourselves." And when he said that "all our righteousneses are as filthy rags," he was saying that salvation is "not of works." All good works, regardless of what they are, if they are done with the idea of earning our salvation, they are like filthy, worthless rags, good for nothing but to be cast on the garbage dump. Many people are going to get the most tragic surprise of their lives when they die if they have been doing good works thinking that those good works will get them into heaven.

How, then, are we saved?

It is by grace. It is the gift of God, every part of it, from start to finish. And it is "by faith." And this also is a part of God's gift of salvation. If faith is what we contribute to our salvation, then salvation is partly our work, and we can boast about it. But the Apostle Paul specifically said here that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." The Greek text actually said, "Lest any one should boast," man, woman, or child.

The Bible teaches us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). God gives us faith as we hear His Word. That is one reason why, when you and I are talking to anyone about being saved, we need to use the very Word of God. The Bible also teaches us the Jesus is "the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). So, it is very proper for a person seeking to be saved, to ask God for faith.

But this brings up another question: What is faith? Faith is believing. Faith is trust. But what do we believe, or whom do we trust? It is very clear from our text that we are not to trust in ourselves, and we are not to trust in our works. No, we are to trust in Christ, and in what He did to become the Savior of sinners. Instead of trusting in our work, we trust in His work, the work which He did when He died on the Cross. He died for sinners. He took the penalty that should have fallen on us, that we might escape the terrible judgment of God. If you and I want to understand the goodness of God and the grace of God and the mercy of God and the love of God, then let us look at the Cross and the death that Jesus Christ died there. He was there made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him!*

So salvation is the result of Christ's work, and we are to put our trust in what He did, dying for sinners, because this is the only way of acceptance with God. Cf. John 3:16-17; Acts 16:31. And let me read to you also what the Apostle John wrote in his first epistle, 1 John 5:11-12. The Apostle John had just said that if we don't believe God, we make Him a liar "because we believe not the record [the witness] that God gave of His Son." And then the Apostle continued with these words:

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 5:11-12).

It's as simple as that. If you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are saved; you have eternal life. But if you don't have the Son of God as your Savior, it doesn't make any difference how many good things people say about you, or how many good deeds you have done, without Christ you are without God and still in your sins.

We all need to make sure that we are really trusting Jesus Christ, and Christ alone for our salvation.

Now let us move on to verse 10.

2:10 Here we meet with the word "for" again. And in this verse the Apostle Paul brings our a feature about salvation that is often overlooked even by people who know the Lord. Salvation is not just a work that God does *for us*, but it is a work which God does *in us*. "We are His workmanship." *A Christian is not a self-made man, but a God-made man, or woman.* The changes that take place in a Christian's life to make him in his behavior, pleasing to God, are all traceable to God. We may not be all that we should be, or all that we want to be, or all that we someday will be, but whatever good there is about us, whatever we are and whatever we do, which is pleasing to God, is the result of God's working in us. And may I say, *His creative work.*

Notice the expression, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And make sure that you notice the word, "created." This reminds us how this world came into being. We have been told that this world, and all that is in it, and above it, is not God's creation, but is the result of a process of evolution. I doubt if any of you here

today believe that nonsense, but it is being taught as the truth in our schools today when it is totally false. Any reasonable person should know that it would have been impossible for this world just to evolve. There had to be a beginning to everything around us. The truth is that God created the world and even created the matter out of which the world is made.

Now if you believe that, it will help you to understand what salvation is. Salvation is a creation by God. In fact, this word "workmanship" is a word that is used in Scripture for creation. And you will find it in Rom. 1:20. Let me read to you Rom. 1:18-20:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Notice that expression, "being understood by the things that are made." The word in the Greek which is translated, "the things that are made," is the same word that is translated "workmanship" in Eph. 2:10. Where did man come from? He is God's workmanship; he was created by God. Where do Christians come from? Every one is God's workmanship. That new life in us is the result of God's creative work in us. That is why the Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians church said,

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

God doesn't make over the old to make us His people, but He creates in us a new life, and it is just as original as it was when the Lord brought the heaven and the earth into existence. And just as it would have been totally impossible for man to create the heaven and the earth, so it is entirely impossible for man to make himself a child of God.

Surely the very words which the Spirit of God directed the Apostle Paul to use in this passage will help us to see that salvation is a work of God, and it is not in any way due to us, nor to any works that we might do.

But look! In the last part of verse 10 the Apostle Paul mentioned "good works." We are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." "Good works" are the result of salvation, not the cause of salvation. And when the Bible speaks of "good works," it has in mind not just works as we normally think of works, but here it speaks of the new life that we live. When we are saved, we are changed in our hearts, and we can no longer live the way we lived before we were saved. Remember that our past is in verses 1-3 of this chapter, and in verses 4-10 we have our present. A Christian is not perfect. Some day he will be, but he won't reach perfection here. However, a Christian is a new creature and he lives a new life. His object is to please God. And you will see that Paul was speaking about the life of a Christian because Paul said of "good works" that "God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

"Before ordained" – These are interesting words. Probably a better translation would be, "prepared before." What time was the Apostle Paul referring to when he said "before"? Well, in chapter 1, verse 4, Paul said that we were "chosen" in Christ "before the foundation of the world that we should be holy." You see, the only way those who were chosen of God could be holy, was for them to be saved first, to be made new creatures by the Creator. And it was at that time that the Lord laid out the life that you and I were to live as the

people of God. And at the time the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle to the church at Ephesus, the Spirit of God was directing him to write out some of the details of the way you and I, and all other Christians, are to live. So the Christian life is not what we decide that it should be, but it is the life that God prepared before the foundation of the world, and has revealed to us in the Word.

I get very impatient with Christian leaders who are challenging their people to live like people in the world live in order to win them to Christ. Some churches are more like a standup comedy than they are like the preaching of the apostles. And churches are notorious for bringing the world's music into so-called worship services. I was shocked the other day when I went into a Christian bookstore in our city and found compact discs of the world's music right along with hymns. I'm even afraid to buy hymns on tape or CD's until I hear them because even the old hymns are often jazzed up to fit in with the music of the world.

What the churches today need to realize is that God made us new creatures, and He, not the world, has determined how we are to live and how we are to please the Lord in every detail of our lives. I have heard people who have been saved out of very worldly lives, say, "If we were saved out of the world, then why are we going back into the world." Oh, how we need the simple teaching of well-known verses like Eph. 2:8-10 so that we will know what salvation really is, and so we will see that God planned before the foundation of the world how He wanted His people to live. If we want to see God's blessing, true blessing, today, we need to forget about what is going on in the world, and start to show the world that it makes a difference when a person really knows the Lord, and that we have been saved out of the world to live lives that are pleasing to God. And the only way we can learn what that life is, is by reading our Bibles and getting our guidance there. And then only the Holy Spirit can empower us to live the way God wants us to live.

(Read again Eph. 2:4-10.)

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – January 4, 1999

Ephesians 2:11-22

Intro: Again in this section, as in verses 1 through 10 of Ephesians 2, we find the Apostle Paul comparing the condition of the Ephesian (Gentile) believers *in the past* with what they were at that time *in the present*. Matthew Henry made a very significant comment on what the Apostle Paul did two times in this chapter, and we all would do well to follow his advice. Here are his words:

Note, Converted sinners ought frequently to reflect upon the sinfulness and misery of the state they were in by nature.

And he sought to paraphrase what the Apostle was doing by suggesting that this seems to have been his intention:

As if he had said, "You should remember what you have been, and compare it with what you now are, in order to humble yourselves and to excite your love and thankfulness to God."

It seems that if we faithfully did this, it would be a practice that would tend toward greater holiness in our lives. And we could add to that, the thought of what we would have been if God in His grace had not redeemed us from the penalty and power of our sins. There is no way to tell what we would have done, nor where we would have gone, if God had not intervened in our lives to make us new creatures in Christ.

The difference between the first comparison of the believer's past and present (2:1-10), and the section which we come to now, is that the first comparison is personal, including all Jews and all Gentiles. Note the words "we all" in verse 3. But this second comparison which we are beginning has to do with Jews as a group, and Gentiles as a group, and the natural animosity which exists between them. Sin has caused great divisions in the human family. In the case of the Jews and Gentiles, the Jews considered all Gentiles as "dogs"; the Greeks, who took great pride in their philosophy and wisdom, considered the Jews to be Barbarians and fools. We have the same problem today with our racial and ethnic problems, the long-standing difficulty between the whites and the blacks, and between men and women. But basic to all of our differences and those "middle wall of partition" which exist among us, is pride. And pride is caused by sin. And Paul here in Ephesians two was showing the Ephesians originally, and all people from that day to this, that the only cure for the great differences that we have, is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out that instead of having conferences in which we try to iron out our differences, we need to be preaching the Gospel. Christ is the answer to all the differences among us. What we need to have is changed hearts. No conference can do that. No amount of resolutions which we might pass can do that. Only Christ can bring together Jews and Gentiles, blacks and whites, men and women, Jews and Arabs. This is the point that the Apostle Paul was making in these comparisons which the Apostle Paul has given us here in Ephesians 2.

And so as we move into this section, the Apostle Paul wrote:

2:11 "Wherefore remember" – Bengel agreed with Matthew Henry because he said, "Such remembrance excites gratitude and strengthens faith" (I, 393).

It is important to see that in this word "remember" we have a commandment coming even before we get to the practical section of the epistle. And so what Paul says here is more than just a suggestion; it is a habit which is to become a part of the daily life of every believer. "Remember" is a second person plural present imperative which means that they were to *keep on remembering* what they had been, and what they are now in Christ.

There are many things that we as believers need to remember. We observe the Lord's Supper, as our Lord Himself said, "In remembrance of Me." The book of Deuteronomy is full of truth that the people of Israel were

to remember of their own spiritual benefit and progress. And we have it also in our Lord's letters to the churches of Asia in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Cf. 2:5; 3:3.

But what were they to remember?

They were to remember that "in time past" they were "Gentiles in the flesh." This means that they were heathen, following false gods in their ignorance (with them it probably was the goddess Diana). They were pagan. They were "called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." So they did not have the truth, and were despised by those who did have it. However, for any Jews who happened to be reading this, Paul's words here would remind them that circumcision had become to them just a ritual, and not, as God intended that it should be for them, an evidence of their faith in the promises that God had made with them. The reference to the "flesh" and "made by hands" indicates that with the Jews their circumcision was simply a work of men, but not evidence of a work of God.

So those who had the truth, the Jews, were definitely not inclined to bring them, the Gentiles, in, even though God did intend for them to be witnesses to the whole world.

2:12 Here Paul continued to describe the "time past" for the Gentiles. And he used five expressions to show the hopelessness of their condition.

First, they were "without Christ." Note how much in contrast this statement is with what Paul said about them in verse 13: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." It was true that the Gentiles were excluded. In this the Pharisees were right. But they were wrong as to the reason. It was not because of their national origin, but because they were "without Christ," even as most Jews were in those days.

And this is true of most Gentiles today. They are "without Christ." Many are good people morally. And many are religious, doing good works. But it makes no difference how good a person may be from a human point of view, nor how religious they might be, if they are "without Christ," they are without salvation. The Gentiles, for the most part, did not even have any knowledge of Christ.

Second, they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." This speaks of the government which had been set up by God in which there was no evidence of separation of the people's relationship to God and their relationship to their King. In fact, the King was to be the main spiritual leader of the people. And all of the affairs of their government were to be carried out in the strictest obedience to the Word of God. God made them a nation, and He gave them their laws and their leaders. But He also gave them their sacrifices and their holy days. It was all combined. Moses was speaking of "the commonwealth of Israel" when he spoke to the people the words that we find in Deut. 4:7-8:

7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

The answer to those questions is that there was no other nation among all of the nations on the earth, which had the same relationship to God, nor anything even approaching what Israel had. The nation of Abraham's descendants had a unique relation to God which did not include the Gentiles. The Gentiles were "aliens."

Third, the Gentiles were "strangers from the covenants of promise." This means, *covenants which were characterized by promises*. God promised Israel a nation, and a land, and a Redeemer, and salvation. The

Gentiles were to be included, but the promises were not given primarily to them. They were outsiders.

Fourth, the Gentiles were "without hope." "Hope" as it is used here means *a certain prospect of blessing*. Thayer defined "hope" in Scripture as the "joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation." The Gentiles had nothing like that. To be "without Christ" is to be "without hope." In fact, He is our "blessed hope."

Fifth and last in this verse, "without God in this world." Most people who are interested in God without really knowing Him, are of the persuasion that they don't need Christ in order to have God as their God. The Gentiles had many gods, but they did not have the one, true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Eadie said that

The Gentile world was without God to counsel, befriend, guide, bless, and save them. In this sense they were godless, having no one to cry to, to trust in, to love, praise, and serve (p.168).

In saying all of this, the Apostle Paul was saying that the Gentile world had nothing. And the same is true today. Apparently (although I have no confidence in poles) – but apparently the people of America are inclined to be satisfied, and will put up with any kind of outrageous behavior, and even crimes, if they can live financially prosperous lives. They need to be told those words of the Lord Jesus when He said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Many Jews were also "without Christ" and "without God" even though as a nation that were the "commonwealth" of God, were possessors of the "covenants of promise," and had a marvelous "hope" as a nation. But in spite of all that they had, it meant nothing to them if they did not have Christ and God, and, we can add, the Holy Spirit!

So, as we consider the world in Paul's day, or in our own day, or every generation between Paul and us, the cause of all of our problems, whether personal or national, is sin. And sin causes us to be proud. Pride, in turn, causes us to think more highly of ourselves that we ought to think, and it causes us to think less of others than we ought to think. But when God deals with us in the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, we see that we are nothing before God, hopeless, helpless, lost sinners. This humbles our pride, and prepares our hearts for the reception of Christ. Our condition is so hopeless that we are incapable of even the faith that is necessary for salvation. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote what he has written here in chapter 2 about salvation. Even our faith is a part of the salvation which is "a gift from God." It is not man's determination to change himself which is needed but "the exceeding greatness of His [God's] power," and "the working of His mighty power" through the Gospel, that God's creative work of salvation is used to change our hearts. What we all need, whether Jew or Gentile, is to be humbled as we see the holiness of our God and the sinfulness of our own hearts. The Gospel of Jesus Christ humbles man and exalts God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ

Now we are ready to move into the part of this chapter in which Paul was showing the Gentile believers in Ephesus the change that Christ had made in their lives by the Gospel.

2:13 Be sure to note the contrast between the words, "in time past," in verse 11, and the words with which the Apostle began this verse: "But now in Christ Jesus ..." Formerly the Gentiles were "far off," but now they were "made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Here the Apostle Paul was drawing upon expressions found in the prophecy of Isaiah to describe the difference between Jews and Gentiles as far as their covenant relationship to God was concerned, or, as in the case of the Gentiles, the lack of any covenant relationship with God. For example, we read these words in Isa. 33:13,

"Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might." And Isa. 49 begins with these words: "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from afar ... " (Isa. 49:1). But even more familiar are the words found in Isa. 57:

- 19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.
 20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
 21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isa. 57:19-21).

While the Apostle was thinking primarily of the position of the Gentiles under the Law, yet spiritually the same was true of the Jews. All people are born "far off" from God, "far off" from His promises, but we all are "made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Bishop Moule says in his commentary on this passage that those expressions "far off" and "made nigh" were used by the Jewish Rabbis with reference to not having or having a part in the covenants of God. In fact, he said that there is on record the account of a Gentile woman who came to Rabbi Eliezer, "saying to him, 'Rabbi, make me nigh'" (*Ephesian Studies*, p. 87). Of course, no Rabbi can do that even for himself. We all, Jews and Gentiles, are "far off" from God and from His purposes, but it took the horrible death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, to bring us near to God and to have a part in His purposes.

"The blood of Christ" speaks, of course, of the death of Christ, where He took the penalty upon Himself that would otherwise have fallen upon those whom He died to redeem. Or, in the words of Eph. 1:4, those "chosen ... in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world." We can never understand how terrible our sin is before God until we understand Who Christ is, and what He had to do in order to save us from our sins. No other person would have been qualified in the sight of God to redeem us. And even He did not come to redeem us by the example of His infinitely perfect life before God, but by His death and the shedding of His precious blood.

2:14 "For He [Christ] is our peace." The thought here is not like Rom. 5:1 where we read, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This, of course, is our first and greatest need – "peace with God." But what Paul had in mind here in verse 14 is that Christ is "our peace," peace between Jew and Gentile, but remember that it is only "in Christ Jesus." This is the main reason that the peace talks between Arafat and Netanyahu will never last. Even Clinton has shown that he doesn't understand what the real problem is. He summons these men to the White House to confer together, and it is all a colossal and expensive waste of everybody's time and money. "Peace among men" is only possible, as the angels sang so long ago, through the Baby Who was born to the virgin Mary.

Christ has made both the believing Jew and the believing Gentile "one." He, Christ, causes us to realize that no man by nature has any acceptance with God. The covenants, the promises, the sacrifices, the feast days, the Aaronic priesthood – none of those great blessings can mean anything, even to the Jews, apart from Christ. But Christ alone by His death, by the Gospel, has "broken down the middle wall of partition between us." It was sin that raised a "middle wall of partition between Cain and Abel in the beginning of human history. And that "middle wall" remains to this day for all people who are without Christ. In fact, man is good about raising his own walls of partition with other men. It needs to be said over and over again, *only in Christ can there be any real personal and lasting peace, and it is only in Christ that there can be peace among nations.* Man, blinded by sin, spends his time working out His own treaties, and all the time ignores God and His covenants.

World War I was supposed to have been "a war to end all wars." But now World War II has come and gone. And the world is not finished with war yet. How foolish men can be who otherwise are wise because they cannot understand what the real problem of life is. It is S-I-N!

But Paul from this point went on to tell how the Lord Jesus Christ has broken down that middle wall of partition between us Jews and Gentiles.

2:15 This verse describes for us one of the great teachings of the NT with regard to the Law of Moses which the Apostle Paul describes here as "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." It was this which added to the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles -- that which the Jews were required to do under the Law of Moses. This was one thing which created such hatred in the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees toward the Lord Jesus Christ even though He said that He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (cf. Matt. 5:17).

The word "abolished" means *to do away with*, and it is translated that way in 2 Cor. 3. Note the following verses. (The verses underlined are all the same verb that is translated "abolished" in Eph. 2:15.)

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away (2 Cor. 3:12-16).

This does not mean that the moral standards established by the Law of Moses are no longer in effect, but it does explain why we are not required to offer animal sacrifices, nor to observe the holy days the Jews observed under the Law, *i.e.*, the Sabbath, the Passover, etc. Christ by His death fulfilled all of those (as the book of Hebrews clearly shows). It is as Lenski has stated so well, He, Christ, "met all its requirements and satisfied all its penalties" (p.441). Now the important issue for both Jews and Gentiles is that which Pilate, without knowing what he was doing, asked the Jews when he gave them a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. Pilate asked them, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:22). His question also meant, *What will you do with Jesus which is called Christ?* That is the big question which faces every human being on the earth today.

Notice in verse 14 that Christ has "made both one," that is, Jew and Gentile are brought together, as we read in verse 15, and made "in Himself," *i.e.*, in Christ, "one new man, so making peace. And then Paul went on in verse 16 to say "that He," Christ again, "might reconcile both unto God," both Jew and Gentile, believing Jew and believing Gentile, "in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

2:16 Here in verse 16 we have the second use of the word "body" in this epistle. We had it in verse 23 of chapter 1, and linking it with verse 22 of that chapter, we have the phrase, "the church, which is His body."

Let me take you back for a moment to a verse which the Apostle Paul had written before in his first epistle to the church at Corinth. I am referring to 1 Cor. 12:12, 13:

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

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.

This bringing together of Jewish believers and Gentile believers was accomplished "by the cross," *i.e.*, the cross of Christ, because it was there that He slew "the enmity" that existed between Jews and Gentiles. And 1 Cor. 12:13 indicates that it was the work of the Holy Spirit by Whom we have been baptized into that one body.

We have the word "enmity" again in this verse, 16. We had it before in verse 15. And there that "enmity" was described as "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." Jesus Christ by His death satisfied the just demands of the Law, and so Christ satisfied God concerning our sins. As we saw before, it is sin that has created the barriers between men, men individually as well as whole nations. It is even evident between men and animals, as well as between animals and animals. And when the Lord comes to reign upon the earth all of that enmity will be take away, so that the lion and the lamb will lie down together. But the main theme that Paul was getting into here was the unique character to the church, made up of redeemed Jews and Gentiles, one body, at peace with God (reconciled), and at peace with each other.

It is not until we get into Biblical passages like this that we begin to see what a truly marvelous work the Lord did when He died upon the Cross.

2:17 Note the references to "peace" in this passage.

In verse 14 we are told that "He," Christ, "is our peace." In verse 15 (at the end) that He, Christ again, has *made peace*. Now here in verse 17 we are told that He, Christ again, "came and preached peace to you which were afar off," the Gentiles, "and to them that were nigh," the Jews.

How did He make peace, and with whom? Cf. Col. 1:20-22:

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.

Peace with God must come first, and then it is followed by peace with each other in the body of Christ.

Do you suppose that this is one reason the Lord prayed so intensely in His prayer recorded for us in John 17, that all believers, present and future, would be one? I say again that sin not only destroyed man's relationship with God, but it destroyed any possibility of peace among men. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was heralded by the angels who declared to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, **and on earth peace, good will toward men**" (Luke 2:14). This verse is translated in the NASB this way: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased."

In what sense can it be said that Christ "came and preached peace." After His resurrection He was only on earth for forty days, and He appeared only to those who were His disciples. I think the answer to that question is given in verses like 2 Cor. 5:19-20:

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

And you will remember that when the Lord stopped Paul on the road to Damascus, and saved him, later Ananias was told to go where Paul was in the house of a man named Judas. Ananias objected because he knew that Paul, then Saul, had come to arrest the believers. But the Lord responded to him with these words:

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15).

Just before His ascension, the Lord promised to be with His disciples to the end of the age. And so from that

day to this our Lord has been working through His servants as they have gone throughout the world, preaching to both Jews and Gentiles even to this present day in which we live. We preach in Christ's Name, by His authority, and by His power. He is the One Who gets the glory for all of the true evangelism and true missionary work that has been done from that day until this. He will not let His message die. Jews and Gentiles have been saved from that day until this, and then joined together in that one body, the Church. Of course our Lord was not talking about any particular denomination, but He was speaking of the Church, which is His body.

2:18 One special fact about this verse is that all three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned, and brought together to show how we are saved, and how we continue to have fellowship with the Father after we are saved. (Read.)

The "Him" is Christ. The "one Spirit" is the Holy Spirit. And "the Father" is God. In the Gospel it is perfectly clear that no one can get to God except through Christ, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. No person can come to God except through Christ and the work which He accomplished by His death on the Cross. To have "access" to God is to be made acceptable to God. It is that which gives us admission to God Himself. This is what Queen Esther had when King Ahasuerus extended his scepter to her. She had "access." She was accepted. And when any person, Jew or Gentile, comes to God through Christ and His work of the Cross, so to speak, the Father extends His scepter to us, and we are accepted and saved and our petition for salvation is granted. We certainly don't deserve it, but that access was guaranteed for us when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross.

This is a very simple statement of the Gospel. We don't go "on our own," but the Holy Spirit draws us. He convicts and He redeems us. We are "born of the Spirit." No one is saved just because Christ died, but we must come to the Father by Christ through the Spirit.

When that godly preacher and teacher of the Word, Charles Simeon, was preaching on this text, he made the following statement that we do well to consider. These were his words:

What consideration can be more *awakening* than that which necessarily arises from the subject before us? Was such a dispensation necessary in order to our restoration to the Divine favour? Must the Father send his only Son to die for us? Must the Son atone and intercede for us? Must the Holy Spirit descend and dwell in our hearts? Can none of us be save in any other way than this? How deep then must have been our fall; how desperate our condition! And how inconceivably dreadful must our state be, if we neglect so great salvation!

On the other hand, what can be more *encouraging* than to see that such abundant provision has been made for us? What can a sinner desire more? What clearer evidence can he have of the Father's willingness to receive him? What firmer ground of confidence can he desire, than the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord Jesus? What further aid can he want, who has the Holy Spirit to instruct, assist, and sanctify him? Surely none can despond, however great their guilt may be, or however inveterate [firmly rooted and deeply established] their corruptions (Vol. 17, pp. 310, 311).

But while this verse describes the Gospel so clearly for us, it also describes our lives of fellowship with God after we are saved. How carelessly we often approach God in prayer, and we forget that the only way we can come to God is through Christ. And we also forget that it is the Holy Spirit Who escorts us into the very presence of God, our heavenly Father. It is the Holy Spirit Who prepares us for our time of fellowship with the Father. And yet the wonderful thing about our fellowship with God is that it is not restricted to a few moments here and there, or once in a while to an hour or longer, but the place of fellowship with God is where we live twenty-four hours of every day! And all Three Persons of the Godhead are involved in our coming, and in giving us the blessing which we seek. And it is especially true when you see a Jew and a Gentile on their knees together, remember that this is evidence of the marvelous grace of God Who has by the death of His Son

removed the barriers that would otherwise be there so that the Jew and the Gentile are drawn not only to the Father, but to each other, because of the shedding of the blood of Christ to take away our sins. It was the Gospel of God's grace that turned Saul of Tarsus from being a Gentile hater into an Apostle who spent his life winning Gentiles to Christ, and then teaching them the Word and the ways of the Lord.

I hope all of you know what it is to have "access" to God through Christ by the Holy Spirit. That is, I hope you know personally what it is to be saved. But I trust that the reality of your faith in Christ is to be seen in the fellowship that you enjoy with the Father every day, through Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. What a terrible death Christ had to die to save us from our sins, but what glorious blessings we have because we are in Christ!

2:19 Beginning with this verse the Apostle Paul spoke of some of those spiritual blessings he had referred to in 1:3 which we have in Christ. Let us see what he said in verses 19 through 22. The words "no more" indicate that what we have in Christ is ours forever. Being in Christ we can never again go back to the way things were before we came to Christ.

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In reading this verse we need to contrast it with verse 12. And this verse is addressed to the Gentiles generally, and to the Ephesians in particular. In Christ the Gentile believers are no longer "strangers," *i.e.*, "strangers from the covenants of promise." That is, the covenants of promise which had to do with salvation. And so neither are they "foreigners." They have not become Jews, but by the grace of God extended to them in Christ they are now a part of the kingdom of God, as the apostle went on to explain when he wrote that they were "fellow-citizens with the saints." Remember that a saint is a child of God, one who has been born again. But, as if this were not enough, they were also "of the household of God"; they were in the family of God. Believing Jews had no blessings which were withheld from the believing Gentiles. They have all been saved the same way, and they all enjoy the same privileges bestowed by God. And all believers are in the family of God, not by adoption, *but by birth!* And, as I have already mentioned, none of this can be undone. God will not take His promises away from us. Our position in the Kingdom of God is secure. And we can never be removed from the family of God once we become the children of God.

2:20 Not only are we citizens of the kingdom of God, and members of the family of God, but we are a building. This is the subject of the last three verses in this chapter. This building is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now it is their teaching which forms the foundation of this building which is called, *the church*. And the teaching of the apostles and prophets has been preserved for us in the writings of the New Testament. Obviously the titles, "apostles and prophets," means *New Testament apostles and prophets*.

Now this does not mean that we cannot teach the books of the Old Testament, and profit from them, but the teachings of the New Testament form the foundation of the church. And in this building, Jesus Christ Himself" is "the chief cornerstone." And with this description the Apostle Paul has stated for us the characteristics of the true church.

You probably remember that in the Corinthian church, they were divided over who was the most important: Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas [Peter], or Christ. They probably would all have agreed that Christ was the most important, but by their actions the names of Paul, Apollos, and Peter were actually being put upon a par with our Lord. And one of the first duties which the Apostle Paul undertook was to correct this error. And he did so by asking some very searching questions which we find in 1 Cor. 3:5-10:

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave

to every man?

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

So the church was not built upon Paul. Nor was it built upon Peter. It was not built on Mary the mother of our Lord. It was built upon Christ. And the Apostles in their work in the first century, and through their writings which are preserved for us in the NT, have laid a solid foundation. And it behooves every servant of the Lord to build upon that same foundation, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin, commenting on the way in which some say that Christ is the Chief Cornerstone, but that there are others as well upon whom the church is founded, says that they are "so void of shame" that they will even quote this Scripture to try to prove their point. Calvin added that if Paul had meant to say that Christ was only a part of the foundation, and the cornerstone, he would never have said, as he did, in 1 Cor. 3:11, that "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And then Calvin added:

He does not therefore mean, that Christ is merely a corner, or a part of the foundation; for then he would contradict himself. What then? He means that Jews and Gentiles were two separate walls, but are formed into one spiritual building. Christ is placed in the middle of the corner for the purpose of uniting both, and this is the force of the metaphor. What is ultimately added [he means in verse 21] shows sufficiently that he is very far from limiting Christ to any one part of the building (p. 244).

Charles Hodge would not make Jews and Gentiles separate walls, but believes that the Apostle Paul simply intended to express "the general idea that the whole church rests on Christ" (p. 53).

Paul was speaking here of the true church, the body of Christ. But churches were established by the apostles and prophets in the first century, and they have continued to be established from that day until this. But any work that is called a church, but is not built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets, with Christ both as the foundation and the chief cornerstone, is not a true church. And the same is true of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, but who go beyond the teachings of the New Testament. However, one of the tragedies of the present time is that many Christians don't know enough about the teachings of the apostles and prophets to determine whether the teaching they are receiving is true to the Word of God, or not.

We all know who the apostles were: Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbeaus (or as he was also called, Thaddaeus, and also Judas the brother of James), Simon the Canaanite (also called Simon Zelotes), and Judas Iscariot. When Judas betrayed the Lord, and then took his own life, Matthias was appointed to take Judas' place. And then the Apostle Paul became number thirteen.

For a list of the original twelve, cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13.

But perhaps we are not as well acquainted with those who were called prophets. Consult the following passages:

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:27-30).

Then turn to Acts 13:1:

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

And then Acts 15:32 where we read, "And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

We read of Agabus again in Acts 21:10-11:

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Cf. also 1 Cor. 12:8-29 and 14:29-32. In addition to the present verse we are considering, see Eph. 3:5 and 4:11.

January 19, 1999

"Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone" – The Apostle Paul here was referring to Isa. 28:16:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

And the Apostle Peter also referred to that passage in 1 Pet. 2:6. Let me read to you from 1 Peter 2, beginning with verse 1:

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

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.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Pet. 2:1-10).

With the Lord Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone, this means not only that the teaching of the apostles and prophets is not only the basis of the faith of the saints, but also of their unity. (See Moule, p. 91).

Bishop Moule also made this significant comment on our Lord as the Cornerstone. He said in his translation and commentary, that

the Cornerstone, the great Stone in the angle of the substructure, where the walls meet, their mighty Bond and Unity, **being Christ Jesus Himself**; for all the ranges of saving truth ever set before you by Apostle or by Prophet meet in Him, and get all their significance and symmetry from Him (pp. 91, 92).

2:21 The Apostle Paul used two expressions here with regard to this building, the church, one which is always characteristic of a building, the other which is unique to the church. The one which is always characteristic of a building is that the stones are "fitly framed together." Each part of the building has its own unique place, and is so fashioned that it fits together with all of the other parts. And, in the case of the church, this is all "in" Christ.

It will be of interest to all of us that the verb which is translated here, "fitly framed together," is used only one other time in the NT, and that is here in Ephesians, chapter 4, and verse 16. There it is used of the human body which is another illustration that Paul has given us of the church. There this verb is translated, "fitly joined together." The verb is συναρμολογέω. It speaks of binding together, or joining together. So the translation in the KJV is excellent. And so both a building and the human body give us excellent illustrations of the church, the body of Christ.

The one which is not normally unique to a building is that this building that Paul was talking about is *growing*. It is true that a building grows as each stone is added to it until it is completed. But the Apostle Peter spoke of those of us who are a part of this building as "lively," or *living*, "stones." And that is consistent with what the Apostle Paul said here in Eph. 2:21. This is a growing temple. God is adding to His church until one day it will be completed, but each of us in the building is also growing. And we are "an holy temple in the Lord."

The mention of the temple, and the same was true of the tabernacle in OT times, should remind us that the temple, and the tabernacle before the temple, were the places where God had chosen to dwell among His people. Now, since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, He dwells in a very unique and real way in us who are His church. What amazing truth this is!

2:22 It is God Who dwells in His church, and it is by the Holy Spirit that this marvelous work is being carried on. This is why we are, and why we need to be, as verse 21 indicates, "an holy temple in the Lord." We will learn more about this as we continue on in the following chapters of the epistle.

Concl: We cannot finish this chapter without reflecting upon verses 1-3, and then verses 11-12, and contrasting what we were with what we are now in the body of Christ, even having been made the dwelling place of God on earth, "an holy temple in the Lord." And this has not been done with a single bit of human merit, but all by the richness of God's mercy and the greatness of His love. It is all because we are in Christ. Therefore, all of the glory belongs to the triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And this should cause us daily to worship God for what He has done for us in Christ, and how that work has become a reality in our hearts by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – January 25, 1999

Ephesians 3:1-13

Intro: As I have indicated in my outline of this epistle, we come at the beginning of chapter 3 to Paul's explanation of his ministry to the Gentiles. There are at least three times in Paul's epistles that he referred to himself as an apostle to the Gentiles. You will find these in:

- 1) Rom. 11:13: "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.
- 2) 1 Tim. 2:7: "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity."
- 3) 2 Tim. 1:11: "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles."

I think that I already have called your attention to Paul's words in Galatians where he spoke of the different assignments that he and Peter had from the Lord. In case you may have forgotten, the verse is Gal. 2:8: "For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles."

cf. Rom. 1:5.

This did not mean, as I have said before, that Peter never preached to Gentiles, or that Paul never preached to Jews, but it means that their main ministries were distinguished in this way. And this explains why the Apostle Paul traveled so extensively in his ministry, and why he wrote what he did as he was bringing his epistle to the church at Rome to a conclusion. Listen to these words:

- 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,
- 16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- 17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.
- 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,
- 19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
- 20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation (Rom. 15:15-20).

This is really the point that the Apostle Paul was making in the first part of Ephesians 3. It was really evidence of how the Lord had worked in the heart of the Apostle Paul, that he, a Jew, would be so greatly concerned about the salvation of Gentiles. Yet remember that, at the same time, he carried a great burden on his heart for his own people, the people of Israel. In this same epistle to the Romans, Paul spoke of his burden for the people of Israel. This is what he said:

- 1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,
- 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
- 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3)

And then he added in Rom. 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

However, having said all of this, yet the Apostle Paul's particular calling was to the Gentiles. It can be likened in a lesser way to a pastor's call to minister to a particular group of people in a particular church. Paul spoke to

the elders of the church in Ephesus telling them that God had made the overseers of that particular church. I don't see any Scriptural evidence for such a title as "pastor at large." I received a letter about a week ago from a pastor in Montgomery, Alabama. He is the pastor of a large Presbyterian Church there, and that is his particular place of ministry. But every Saturday night, as he prays for his own services on the following day, he has a list of pastors in different parts of the country for whom he prays, seeking the Lord's blessing upon their ministries on the following Sunday. And I am grateful to him, and to the Lord for leading him, to put me on that list. He has many missionaries that are supported by their church, and I know that he prays for them. He is genuinely concerned about the Lord's work around the world, *but his special place of ministry is in his church in Montgomery.*

This is the way it was with the Apostle Paul. He was instrumental in establishing churches throughout the Empire. When he would go into any city to preach the Gospel, he usually began by reaching Jewish people in their synagogues. *But his main ministry was to the Gentiles in all of those places, and whatever else he might do in the way of ministry, his calling from God was to make sure that the Gentiles in all of those cities heard the Gospel of the grace of God. And, after they were saved, he would seek to teach them the truth of God so that they would be established in their faith.*

Now with this introduction, let us look at what the Apostle had to say in Ephesians 3.

In the outline I have given you this is **IV.**, and I have called it, **The Apostle Paul's Ministry – to the Gentiles.** And this heading applies to the whole third chapter.

3:1 "For this cause" is the way he began this part of his epistle, and we have to recognize that he was referring to what the Lord was doing in their day with respect to the salvation of the Gentiles and their God-given place in the body of Christ. His going to the Gentiles was not his own choice, but God's calling for him.

After Paul was struck down by the Lord on the road to Damascus as he was going there to arrest those who believed in Jesus Christ, somehow he got to the home of a man named Judas. In another part of the city the Lord appeared to one of the believers, a man by the name of Ananias. He told Ananias to go to Judas' home where Paul, then Saul, was, to put his hands upon Saul so that he would receive his sight. But Ananias did not want to do what the Lord had told him to do. But then it was that the Lord said this to Ananias,

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake (Acts 9:15-16).

His ministry would include kings, and it would include "the children of Israel," but his primary calling was to the Gentiles.

Shortly before the Apostle Paul was sent to Rome to appear before Caesar, he was caught in Jerusalem by a mob of Jews who thought that he had defiled their temple by bringing a Gentile into it, and other charges were laid against him as well. Paul explained to them how he had met the Lord, and how the Lord had commissioned him with these words: "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21). Then we read this in the next verse:

And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live (Acts 22:22).

And so here in Eph. 3:1 Paul called himself, "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He was a prisoner of the Roman government, but he looked beyond his immediate circumstances and said that he was "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" because he knew that the Lord was sovereign even over Rome in his imprisonment,

and that he was in prison "for you Gentiles," *i.e.*, because he had been faithfully carrying out the work which the Lord had called him to do. How necessary, and how very important it is, for us to see the hand of the Lord in all of the circumstances of our lives – especially when opposition arises when we are seeking to do the will of the Lord.

3:2 The word "if" here can be translated *since*. Paul had established the work in Ephesus, and most of them knew very well what God's will was for the Apostle Paul. Paul called it "the dispensation of the grace of God."

Paul looked upon both his message and his ministry as a stewardship from the Lord. A stewardship is when that which belongs to one person is committed to the care of another. This is what Potiphar did with Joseph. He committed the oversight of all his business into Joseph's hands. Later, this is what the jailor in the prison where Joseph was being held did with all of his responsibilities. And later Pharaoh did the same. In the parables where the Lord spoke of a master committing certain talents to his servants, that master was making stewards of his servants. In each of these cases what was committed to Joseph, or to the servants in the parables, continued to belong to Potiphar, or the one in charge in each case, but what he committed to them they were responsible to take care of according to the desires of the one who placed whatever they had in their care.

Paul spoke of this in his first epistle to the church at Corinth. In 1 Cor. 4:1-2 we read these words:

- 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.

We have the same idea in 1 Thess. 2:4 where the Apostle Paul said,

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

You see, the Gospel belongs to God. It is His message. And He has committed this message to us, not to do with it whatever we want to do, but to proclaim it faithfully, knowing that we are accountable to God for what we do with it. We have no right to keep it to ourselves. We have no right to change it. It is God's message, and we are God's servants, and we are to be faithful in protecting that message and in proclaiming it wherever the Lord may lead us.

So in verse 2 Paul was saying that "the grace of God" as it is displayed in the Gospel had been committed to him as a sacred trust, not to keep to himself, but to pass it on to the Gentiles, not in any cold and formal way, but with a deep and sincere desire to see people turn to Christ to be saved. He considered his message and his ministry as a sacred trust, a stewardship from God – and that is exactly what it was!

This is how we all should consider the message that the Lord has given to us to proclaim, and also the work that the Lord has given us to do. It is a sacred trust for which some day we will all have to give an account. So, whether it meant life or death for the Apostle Paul, he could not turn away from the stewardship he had received from the Lord.

But now let us see in verse 3 how he got this message.

3:3 He received it "by revelation."

In thinking about this word "revelation," I will ask you to turn to 1 Cor. 2:9-10. Here the Apostle Paul explained how God gave His message to men. Notice what he said:

9 But as it is written, 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.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

What does God reveal? God reveals truth which man is incapable of having and learning in any other way. We can rightly speak of the Bible as *a revelation from God!* Man by the use of his eyes, his ears, and his heart by which the Apostle Paul meant his ability to grasp truth and to understand it – cannot discover the truth of God. God has to bring down to us the knowledge which we are incapable of discovering on our own. God's truth is completely out of the range of what men like to call "the scientific method." So if we are to know the truth about God, and all of the truth of God, God has to bring it down to us. And this divine method of making the truth of God known is called *a revelation*.

When Pharaoh dreamed his dreams in the days of Joseph, God was speaking to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh had no idea as to what they meant. He heard from his butler that Joseph had interpreted a dream for him, and so Joseph was brought in to interpret Pharaoh's dream for him. When Joseph came before Pharaoh, this is how their conversation began:

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace (Gen. 41:15-16).

In those days God often spoke through dreams. He is not doing that today. But the dream itself was a revelation from God, and Joseph knew that the only way that those dreams could be understood was for God Himself to give the interpretation. And so that is why Joseph said that he was not able to interpret Pharaoh's dream by his own wisdom, but that God would help him to understand it so that he could tell Pharaoh what God was telling him.

At the time that the Apostle Paul lived, the Bible was not yet complete. And Paul was one of those men whom the Lord was going to use to complete His Word. Many things that the Apostle Paul learned, he could have learned from the other Apostles, but in order to safeguard the truth, much was made known to the Apostle Paul by direct revelation from God. And that is what the Apostle was speaking about here in Ephesians 3. Paul did not figure all of this out by himself, but it was God Who revealed the truth to him.

Paul called the message that he received from God, "the mystery."

This word "mystery" is used six times in this epistle to the Ephesians, and so it is important that we understand what it means. But first notice the verses where it is used: Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19.

Obviously it has to do with *a message*. The phrase, "as I wrote afore in few words," may be a reference to Eph. 1:9. And this seems to be confirmed by verse 4.

3:4 So as this epistle was read publicly, the people would be able to understand the knowledge that had been given to him of "the mystery of Christ." So now we have two reasons for understanding the meaning of the word mystery – one, in verse 3; the other, here in verse 4.

"The mystery of Christ" is the message of Christ, but with a special emphasis as we shall see in verse 5.

3:5 Here we have one of several places in Paul's epistles where he defines for us the way this word

"mystery" is used in the NT.

A New Testament mystery is truth "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." *This is the definition of a New Testament mystery.* God has revealed His truth in a progressive manner. His truth does not proceed from that which is even only partly true to that which is completely true. The first revelations in Scripture are all absolutely true. But the final revelations are called "a mystery" because they contain truths which were never before revealed.

This verse gives us the authority for saying that the Holy Spirit is the true Author of Scripture. There were many writers, but all under the authority of one Author. Much truth was reserved until after the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. But that which was written in Old Testament times was just as much under the inspiration of the Spirit as that about which the Apostle Paul was speaking here.

Concerning "apostles and prophets," remember what we learned in discussing Eph. 2:20.

What, specifically, was the mystery that the Apostle Paul had in mind here? Let us move on to verse 5, and we shall see what it was.

3:6 It was what the Apostle Paul had already been teaching from verse 13 on in chapter 2. (Read verse 6.)

This mystery was the revelation from God that a new day had dawned for Gentiles, for those Gentiles who would be saved and become "fellowheirs" of the promises of salvation, would be made members of the same body, the church, and would share in the same promises "in Christ by the Gospel." Robertson pointed out that the Greek could be translated, *fellowheirs, fellowmembers, fellowpartakers*. Jews and Gentiles alike have the same inheritance, the same relationship to Christ in His body, and share in all of the same promises. One has no standing above the other, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

And it is Christ, and Christ alone, Who gives life to the promise. The promises are without substance except for Christ, and in Christ.

3:7 In relation to this mystery and the ministry which Paul had, he spoke of himself as the recipient of this mystery, and as being made "a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God which had been given to him. None of it is what he had in himself, but all which he received. This could have given Paul a feeling of great pride in the exalted position which had been given to him, but instead we see how it humbled him to have such a ministry.

"Minister" is the familiar Greek word, *διδάκονος*. "is one who serves in the interest for the benefit of another" (Lenski, p. 474). He serves freely and voluntarily. In Paul's case, he was given a world-wide ministry because Gentiles were everywhere! But how could he ever hope to accomplish such a ministry. He had a message which people did not really want, and which they were incapable of understanding. The last part of this verse gives us the Apostle's hope of seeing the blessing of God upon his work. It was to be as the appointment was given, "by the effectual working of His power."

The Apostle Paul felt keenly his unworthiness for the office to which God had appointed him, not only because of what he knew that he was by nature, but also because of the way he had lived before he became a child of God. He was still very conscious of his unworthiness as he drew close to the end of his life and ministry.

These are his words which we find 1 Tim. 1:11-14:

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. How important it is for all of us that we remember what we were before we were saved, and also what we would be now, and where we would be, if it were not for the marvelous grace of God.

January 26, 1999

Bishop Moule paraphrased the words of this verse, and the beginning of the next, as though the Apostle Paul were saying this:

Woe to me if I sent myself; but He sent me. Woe yet more to me if I seek to sustain myself in self-born energies and enthusiasm; but He is in me, "working His work" (John xiv. 10). With such power lodged within me, there is no discouragement, while there is unspeakable humiliation, in the fact that the "vessel" is truly "earthen, in itself unmeasurably unworthy of its contents (p. 115).

Lenski says that the "unto me" in verse 7, and "unto me" at the beginning of verse 8, plus the use of the word "grace" in both verses, are indications that verse 7 should end with a colon or a dash, but not a period. The thought of verse 7 continues into verse 8, but stands in contrast with it.

3:8 "Unto me" is emphatic, standing as it does at the beginning of verse 8 in the Greek text. It is as though he were saying, "Unto me, even to me, with all of my unworthiness, anyone of the saints being more worthy than I, is this grace given."

"Less than the least of all saints" – Paul put himself at the bottom of the list of all of the people of God when it came to such a ministry as he had received. Lenski made this comment:

This is no false humility. To think that a man with a record like Paul's, a violent persecutor of the church, should upon his conversion be made one of the chosen apostles! Incredible but true. We should have relegated such a convert to the most obscure corner of the church, to stay where no one would note his presence; God elevated him to the highest position in the church, the apostolate. Grace, grace; gift, gift – unexampled, glorious (p. 476).

And instead of chafing under God's appointment for him to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, this was a part of the unworthiness that he felt in his heart. Before he was saved, Paul scorned all believers, and scorned all Gentiles whether they were believers in Christ, or not. But now he is amazed that the Lord would appoint him to carry the Gospel anywhere, but even that it might be to the Gentiles which formerly he had looked down upon with the greatest of contempt. What miracles God works in the hearts of His people *by grace!* Paul was saying in so many words, "Just think, God has given me the great honor of carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles!"

And even Paul's message was amazing to him. He called the Gospel, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

This word, "unsearchable," is used only one other time in the NT, and that was also by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 11:33. There it is translated, "past finding out."

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Thayer said that this means that the Gospel cannot be fully comprehended. It goes beyond our ability to

explain why God would do such a marvelous work for any sinner, regardless of who he might be. Paul had a growing appreciation of the Gospel, but felt that no one was really capable to plumbing the depths of the Gospel. Paul was still marveling at God's grace in the Gospel when he wrote one of his last epistles,

1 Timothy. Speaking of His own salvation, he wrote:

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.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen (1 Tim. 1:14-17).

So, as the Apostle said, as hard as it is for us to understand why God would do such a thing for sinners, yet it is true, and everyone should accept it as the unchanging truth of God.

But what were God's objectives in committing such a ministry to Paul? Verses 9 and 10 show that God not only had earthly objectives among men, but also heavenly objective among the angels.

3:9 First of all, Paul's ministry had to do with "all men." Here, as in many other places, the word "all" does not mean *all men without exception*. If it did, then we would have to say that Paul's ministry was not successful. Instead it means *all kinds of men*, and probably, in this case, *all kinds of Gentiles*. There were in those days those who were socially high, and socially low, and those who were in between. There were those who from a human standpoint were moral, seeking to do the right thing, many who were very religious, but there were those who were in the opposite category – those who were morally bad and who were a blight on society. The Gospel was to go to all kinds of men. And among those were many who would "see," *i.e.*, understand. And many did see by the grace of God.

The word translated "fellowship," is the same word that we had in verse 2, and back in 1:10. And it seems best to give it the same meaning here that it had in verse 2. It was God's purpose that among men there would be those who would understand that the truth of this mystery had been committed to the Apostle Paul as a trust from God, a revelation of God purpose for the Gentiles, which, although not made known in its fulness in OT times, yet (looking ahead) was not an afterthought with God, but concurring with verse 11, was in complete agreement with the eternal purpose of God. And so Paul said here in verse 9 that this purpose regarding the Gentiles, although not hidden in the OT, was hidden in God "from the beginning of the world," and was all a part of God's plan when He "created all things by Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ was the Creator, and Jesus Christ is the One in Whom Jews and Gentiles are brought together in one body of redeemed sinners (who have been made saints).

In that generation in which Paul lived and worked, and in every generation down to the present, God has been fulfilling that purpose. And He will continue to do it until the time when the Lord comes to remove His church from the earth.

But, in verse 10 we see that God's purpose extended not just to men on the earth, but to "principalities and powers in heavenly places." This would mean *angels, the elect angels*.

3:10 In 6:12 we are going to learn that these words, "principalities and powers," refers to Satanic forces "in high places." These would be demons who are arrayed against God and against the people of God. But here in 3:10 the words apply to good "principalities and powers." These would be the elect angels whereas the others are fallen angels.

We know that there is no salvation for angels. Christ became a man to die for men, not angels. But God is giving the elect angels an education in the wisdom of God by making it possible for them to see and understand what God is doing in the church. And all of this was originally a part of God's purpose in creating the heaven and the earth. Darwin, in his theory of evolution (and it is still only a theory, and that is all that it will ever be) has not only sought to separate God from creation, but without knowing the extent of what he was doing, his theory separates God also from meeting the greatest need which man has, which is salvation. The Bible puts God at the very center of both, creation and regeneration. And it is through God's work in the church that angels are being educated in what Lenski called "the all-embracing view" (p. 480) of the purpose of God. And this is going on right "now."

And that which makes angels marvel at the wisdom of God, should make us do the same. It is wonderful to see in Scripture how God is bringing all things together as they ultimately will be, and it demonstrates His wisdom as well as His grace. Angels are learning this, and we should be learning more and more about it all of the time even though no one, including the Apostle Paul, has ever been able to comprehend fully the glory of it all - at least, not in this life.

In this connection it would be good for all of us to read 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 where the Apostle Paul contrasted the wisdom of men with the wisdom of God. The wisdom of men is foolishness to God and should not even be consulted when it comes to God and God's place in the world. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in all of its fulness, the embodiment of the wisdom of God. And the fact that a full understanding of it goes completely beyond man's ability to understand, is further proof that it is the wisdom of God.

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3:11 To pick up the thought in this verse, it is necessary to go back to verse 8. Verses 8 through 12 are one sentence in the KJV, and that is because the same thought runs through all of those verses. Paul is in these verses speaking of his ministry to the Gentiles. This was the concluding thought in verse 7 which is the last of another long sentence which began in verse 1 of this chapter. So in this section of the epistle there are two long sentences, verses 1 through 7, and then verses 8 through 12, concluding verse 13 where Paul expressed his concern for the Ephesian believers, that they would not faint because of the trials that he was going through at that time for them and all other Gentiles.

Now here in verse 11 he pointed out that this "mystery" of which he had been made a steward, was not an after-thought with God, but it was, as the verse says, "according to the eternal purpose which He [God] purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Note the words, "eternal purpose." God does not decide as He moves through time, what is coming next. His purposes were all determined before creation. This is what we learned in verse 9. So that when God created the heaven and the earth, His plans were completed for the salvation and glorification of all those whom He in sovereign grace had chosen to save. In fact, being an "eternal purpose," it was not a plan that the Lord decided upon just prior to creation, but it was all eternal in the making. This goes beyond our ability to understand and to explain. We accept it because it is in the Scriptures, and exclaim, as the Apostle Paul did in Rom. 11:33 to 36 after he had concluded all that had been revealed to him about God's amazing plan of salvation. Let me read those words to you:

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

Calvin said, "How carefully does he [Paul] guard against the objection, that the purpose of God has been changed! A third time, he repeats that the decree was eternal and unchangeable, but must be carried into effect by *Christ Jesus our Lord*, because in Him it was made" (XXI, 256).

Speaking of "a third time," Calvin was referring to Eph. 1:9 as the first, 1:11 as the second, and here in 3:11 as the third. The dictionary defines *a purpose* as "that which one sets before himself as an object to be attained" (Webster's Collegiate, p. 807). We often set goals, but, since we do not have control over either circumstances or people or time, or even ourselves, our purposes can easily fail. But that is not the case with God. He is in sovereign control of all things. Some day it will be said about the purposes of God, what was said about the children of Israel when they finally took possession of the land of Canaan:

There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass (Joshua 21:45).

God cannot fail because He is God! He has seen fit to announce His purposes in a progressive way, but His plans are eternal, and because they are His plans, His purposes, He will see to it that they all are fulfilled. God waited to make this plan regarding the Gentiles fully known until "Christ Jesus our Lord" came, because this was a purpose that had been made in Him. This means that it was to be fulfilled in Christ.

3:12 The Greek would justify making the verse end as it begins: "In whom ... by our faith in Him It is only in Christ that "we have boldness and access with confidence" *by our faith in Him*. It is in Christ that we have, and only in Christ, that we have the freedom to approach God, and it is only by faith. Calvin says that statements like this, so full of Christ, "shut up every other approach - which excludes every other method of obtaining Divine Fellowship" (XXI, 256, 257).

This verse is full of assurance. It is in the words "boldness" and "access" and "confidence." We can approach God, calling upon Him. This is the idea in "boldness." And we do so knowing that in Christ we have "access" to God, which Thayer describes as "that relationship to God whereby we are acceptable to Him and have the assurance that He is favorably disposed toward us." And our "confidence" rests in the One in Whom we place our faith.

So one of the great privileges that the Gospel brings to those who believe, is the privilege of fellowship with God. This is the objective of the Gospel. Fellowship with God is impossible except through Christ, but in Christ it is full of blessing. And so in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, he was not only bringing to them the message of the forgiveness of sins, but of that precious fellowship believers can enjoy with God through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So this second sentence in the chapter shows how confident the Apostle Paul was in the message he had to proclaim, and how assured he was of the blessing that it would to the people to whom the Lord had sent him.

And so he added the following word.

3:13 Paul asked them not to faint because of the sufferings he had, and was, experiencing. To Paul it was a small price to pay for the privilege of reaching Gentiles with the Gospel.

And so he began this section in verse 1 by referring to his imprisonment, and he concluded on the same note. It shows how greatly concerned the Ephesians were for his safety. However, he was thinking of their "glory."

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – February 1, 1999

Ephesians 3:14-21

Intro: We now come to Paul's second major prayer in this epistle. And verse 14 begins with the same words that we had in 3:1. In chapter 2 the Apostle had explained to them what the Gentiles were before they turned to Christ, and what had taken place in their lives after they were saved. He did this twice, as we have seen, first, with the emphasis on what had happened to them individually, and second, how they had been united to Christ in one body with Jews who had trusted in Christ.

The first part of chapter 3 was spent in explaining his ministry to them, a ministry which he had received as a special stewardship from the Lord. And although his preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles had landed him in prison, yet he considered that a minor issue in view of the blessing that had come to those Gentiles who had believed the Gospel and had been saved.

And so, from the recording of his first major prayer, to the recording of this second prayer, he had been spending his time in *teaching!* As we come to verse 14 of chapter three, his emphasis turns to *prayer!* Paul was not only telling them again how he had been praying for them, but he was showing them how they needed to pray for themselves. And he was setting an example for all who teach the Word that teaching, while a major part of the work of a servant of the Lord, is not the only work. The work of teaching must be preceded and followed by prayer. This cannot be emphasized too strongly.

In Calvin's commentary on Ephesians, he took the opportunity at this point to exhort pastors. This is what he had to say:

Let pastors learn from Paul's example, not only to admonish and exhort their people, but to entreat the Lord to bless their labours, that they may not be unfruitful. Nothing will be gained by their industry and toil, –all their study and application will be to no purpose, except so far as the Lord bestows His blessing... It is their duty ... to labour earnestly in sowing and watering, provided they, at the same time, ask and expect the increase from the Lord (XXI, 259).

Every teacher of the Word needs to learn this, and to follow the example of the Apostle Paul. He was busier in his work than most servants of the Lord are. He traveled all over the Empire in a day when travel was not easy. It was wearisome because it was so difficult. And yet we can tell from Paul's epistles that much of his time every day was spent in prayer, regardless of what else he might be doing.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones pointed out another factor about Paul's prayers here in this epistle. This is what Dr. Lloyd-Jones said as he preached on this passage:

When the Apostle was writing this letter he was a prisoner; it is one of the 'prison epistles.' He was probably a prisoner in Rome but that is immaterial. The important thing for us to realize is that what he is saying in effect is, that though he was a prisoner, though a malignant enemy has arrested him, and has put him into bonds, and has made it impossible for him to visit them at Ephesus and to preach to them, or to go anywhere else to preach, there is one thing that the enemy cannot do, and that is, he cannot prevent him from praying. He can still pray. The enemy can confine him to a cell, he can bolt and bar doors, he can chain him to soldiers, he can put bars in the windows, he can hem him in and confine him physically, but he can never obstruct the way from the heart of the humblest believer to the heart of the Eternal God (*The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 107).

This ought to be an encouragement to all of us. And we need to continue to pray even when because of our circumstances we may be prevented for a time from meeting with the people of God. Not only should pastors pray, but all Christians should pray, pray faithfully, pray fervently, pray in faith. Often we do not see the an-

swer to our prayers, but that should not determine whether or not we are to continue in prayer. One major reason for the great blessing which the Apostle Paul saw in his ministry, was the fact that he was a man who continually gave himself to prayer. Every part of this epistle is important, but no parts are of greater importance than the parts he gave to his prayers. And I hope that reading Paul's prayers will always be a reminder to each of us that we need to be faithful in prayer, too.

But now let us turn to the text.

3:14 "For this cause" – I have already mentioned that we have these words in 3:1 as well as here. The repetition of the words may mean that Paul was indicating that his ministry to the Gentiles was duly ordained by God, but that it also included the responsibility to pray.

"I bow my knees" – Lenski pointed out that this is a present tense, and that it suggests not that he was doing this as he wrote, but that this was his habit whenever it was possible for him to do so. Such a posture expresses humility, a sense of unworthiness, an attitude of the deepest dependence, and that the one in prayer was coming with a great need for which he was praying that the Father would meet his need.

If there is a posture which expresses even greater humility and a greater burden, it was that which our Lord took when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is said in Matt. 26:39 that the Lord went into the inner part of the Garden "and fell on His face." It is amazing that our Lord prayed at all, but it is even more amazing that when He prayed, He "fell on His face."

But never was the posture of kneeling an expression of greater ridicule and blasphemy than it was when the Roman soldiers bowed before our Lord. Mark gives us this account in Mark 15:16-20:

- 16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.
 17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,
 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!
 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.
 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

Bowing the knee has become a ritualistic form which many people assume in some church services today, but that is not at all like the kneeling which characterized Paul's praying whenever he could get on his knees. And not from the text that he was kneeling "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." How we need a sense of the majesty of our heavenly Father, of His holiness, which will bring us before Him in true humility as we pour out our hearts to Him. When the Apostle John saw our Lord in His glory, as we read in Rev. 1:17, he "fell at His feet as dead." In ourselves we are not worthy to come to the Lord, but when we do we need to humble ourselves before Him, beseeching Him to hear our prayers and to meet the needs we bring to Him.

So Paul was not just bowing on his knees, but it was "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And he was doing so because all of our blessings come from God.

Adam Clarke has an interesting comment on the Apostle Paul kneeling in prayer:

The apostle prays to God the Father, that they may not faint; and he bows his knees in this praying. What can any man think of himself, who, in his addresses to God, can either sit on his seat or stand in the presence of the Maker and Judge of all men! Would they sit while addressing any person of ordinary

respectability? If they did so they would be reckoned very rude indeed. Would they sit in the presence of the king of their own land? They would not be permitted so to do. Is God then to be treated with less respect than a fellow mortal? Paul kneeled in praying, <Acts 20:36; 21:5>. Stephen kneeled when he was stoned, <Acts 7:60>. And Peter kneeled when he raised Tabitha, <Acts 9:40>

Many parts of this prayer bear a strict resemblance to that offered up by Solomon, <2 Chr. 6:1>, etc., when dedicating the temple: He kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven; <2 Chr. 6:13>. The apostle was now dedicating the Christian church, that then was and that ever should be, to God; and praying for those blessings which should ever rest on and distinguish it; and he kneels down after the example of Solomon, and invokes him to whom the first temple was dedicated, and who had made it a type of the Gospel church.

Believers sometimes ask if we can pray to the Lord Jesus, as well as to the Holy Spirit. When Stephen was being stoned to death, he prayed to the Lord Jesus, but it seems from Scripture that the ordinary way we are to pray is as we saw in Eph. 2:18: "For through Him [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile believers] have access by one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] unto the Father." Our Lord taught His disciples, "When ye pray, say, Our Father..."

We can certainly pray for those who are not in the family of God, that they might be saved and become a part of God's family, but the prayers of the Bible teach us that the main object of our praying should be those who are already in the family of God.

3:15 "Of Whom" – probably refers to God, the Father. We get our name from Him. We are members of His family. And some members of this great family are in heaven, and some of us are still here on earth awaiting that time when we will be there too. This means that God is not only the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but He is our Father as well – not in the same sense, but we have the same relationship nevertheless. This is another way in which we are one. We are all brothers and sisters in the family of God.

I got my name from my father, and you got your name from your father. And I have always been happy to bear that name. It is a honor, and if you had known my Dad, you would have felt that it was an honor. Illus: the man in the foundry in Seattle who complimented my Dad.

However, as honored as we may be to have the name of our earthly fathers, how much more are we honored by God to bear His Name as members of His family. And He is working in all of us so that more and more we will bear the likeness of our heavenly Father and the likeness of His greatest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

February 8, 1999

3:16 It is clear that the Apostle Paul felt that prayer was important, and that God bestowed blessings upon His people in answer to prayer which would not have been given if prayer had not been offered to God.

Let me clarify, if I can, the petitions which the Apostle Paul was bringing to the Father.

His first petition was that *they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man which was necessary if Christ was to dwell in their hearts by faith*. That is his first request. Then he went on to pray, *in order that being rooted and grounded in love they might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, for the purpose of knowing the love of Christ. And all of this was in order that they might be filled with all the fulness of God*.

You can see that all Three Persons of the Godhead were involved in the prayer that Paul was praying for them.

The Spirit would strengthen them in preparation for the indwelling presence of Christ, which was by faith. The fellowship with Christ that would follow would result in their being rooted and grounded in love, in the love of Christ so that they would come to know the love of Christ in its four dimensions: breadth, and length, and depth, and height. This, in turn, would result in their being "filled with all the fulness of God."

Paul used the little conjunction ἵνα three times in telling the Ephesian believers how he was praying for them. It means, *in order that*. And so it points out what Paul's three main petitions were. In our English text it is the "that" at the beginning of verse 16, the second "that" in verse 17, and the third one is in the middle of verse 19. These three times indicate his three main requests. The "that" at the beginning of verse 17 is not a translation of ἵνα, but is the translation of a verb in the infinitive form which gives us the result of the Spirit's work when He strengthens us. I hope that this will help you understand the main petitions of this prayer.

If you underline words in your Bible, the words that you want to underline are the "that" at the beginning of verse 16, the second "that" in the middle of verse 17, and the final petition is indicated by the "that" in the middle of verse 19. Those three that's should be translated, *in order that*. The "that" at the beginning of verse 17 should be translated, "so that."

Let me give you a slightly revised translation of the prayer to make the requests stand out more clearly than they do in the KJV. It would go like this:

- 16 In order that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
 17 So that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; in order that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, in order that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

It is important in seeking to understand Paul's prayer, that we see how the first request flows into the second, and the second flows into the third. They are not separate requests in that Paul was asking the Father to do three separate things, but they are like three links of a chain, the first leading to the second, and so on to the end.

Now all that I have said about the Holy Spirit is in no way to minimize the importance of the Spirit's ministry. That must never be done. In fact, if we understand this prayer of the Apostle, as well as the words of the Lord Jesus in John 14, 15, and 16, we will see how very important the Spirit's ministry is. The ministry of the Spirit is indispensable. But one point I am making is that so much of the emphasis on the Spirit among certain professing Christians today, makes the ministry of the Spirit an end in itself. However, if we understand the Scriptures on this point, we will see that it is the purpose of the Spirit to lead us into a closer relationship with Christ. We must never forget those words of the Lord Jesus when speaking of the Holy Spirit He said, "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:14).

So now let us deal with the first request, and I will read it for you again.

- A. **"In order that He [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; So that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:16-17a).**

Paul was praying to the Father about the power of the Holy Spirit which would bring the Ephesians into a very intimate and precious relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This request is very interesting when you consider the way charismatic people pray about the power of the Holy Spirit. To them the power of the Holy Spirit is an end in itself. It wasn't that way with the Apostle Paul. To him the power of the Holy Spirit would strengthen believers inwardly in preparation for a life of deeper fellowship with Christ, with the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is entirely in agreement with what the Lord Jesus taught His disciples about the Holy Spirit when He was with them in the Upper Room. Please turn with me to John 14.

In John 14, 15, and 16 we have four passages which are sometimes called Comforter passages because in all four the Lord Jesus was speaking to them about the Holy Spirit.

The first one is in John 14, verses 16 and 17. (Read.) As you can see the Lord Jesus told them here that He would pray to the Father, and that the Father would give them the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of truth." The Spirit had been "with" them before, but when the Father would give the Holy Spirit to them, after that the Spirit would "abide" with them "for ever." Thus the Holy Spirit would begin a new relationship, a permanent relationship, with the disciples after the Lord had returned to the Father in heaven.

The second Comforter passage is in this same fourteenth chapter of John, verse 26, and please note carefully what the Lord said here about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Read.) The Father would send Him in the Lord's Name, and His work would be to remind them of that Christ had taught them. So this is why the Holy Spirit is called in various places in the NT, "the Spirit of Christ." He came to represent Christ, and to keep the disciples reminded of what the Lord had taught them.

Now move on to the third Comforter passage in John 15:26. (Read.) The Lord said that He would send the Holy Spirit to them "from the Father," and then the Lord added, "He [the Comforter, the Holy Spirit] shall testify of Me." So you see it was not to be the purpose of the Holy Spirit to direct attention to Himself, but He was being sent to bear witness of Christ. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is Christ-centered.

The fourth and last and longest Comforter passage is in John 16, verses 7 through 15. (Read.) Notice especially verses 12 through 15. The Lord said that He had many things to say to them, but they were not prepared for those things at that time. So in verse 13 when the Lord said that the Holy Spirit would not speak "of Himself," meaning that He was not speaking on His own initiative, but would speak whatever He would hear, to whom was He listening. Obviously the text indicates that it would be through the Holy Spirit that the Lord would in the future tell His disciples the things that He was not ready to tell them at that time. So again we see how the Spirit was given to carry on the ministry of Christ.

And what could be clearer than verses 14 and 15 here in John 16? (Read.) How can you identify the ministry of the Holy Spirit? It is a ministry of Christ. Where the Holy Spirit is at work, Christ is being exalted. Believers are learning about Christ. Believers are learning to trust Christ and to exalt Christ.

So, although the Apostle Paul was not even saved when the other apostles were with Him in the Upper Room, yet it is clear that the Spirit of God had made very clear to the Apostle Paul that the ministry of the Spirit is to exalt and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord's people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they speak of Christ.

Let me give you another very familiar verse which emphasizes this same basic truth concerning the Holy Spirit.

It is found in Acts 1:8. (Read, or quote.) The power of the Holy Spirit was given to those early Christians, as our Lord said, so that they would "be witnesses unto me," *witnesses of Christ*. *And if you go on reading in the book of Acts, you will see how Peter, "filled with the Holy Spirit," brought a message to those people who were in Jerusalem, a message that was all about Christ.*

So now let me give you the first request of this prayer again, reading from Eph. 3:14 down through the middle of verse 17. (Read.)

Now we are ready to go on with this request in verse 16.

It is good for us to notice that Paul was not commanding God, but that he was appealing to God in the greatest humility for blessings which he knew the Ephesian believers needed. The word "grant" is the familiar Greek word for *give*. And Paul prayed that God's gift would be "according to the riches of His glory." As many expositors have recognized, God's glory is the sum total of His attributes. It is the fulness of His divine Person. God gives to us from Himself, and He possesses all of His attributes in such a fulness that He, the Source of all of our blessings, can never be depleted. God has many attributes, or characteristics, that He does not share with us, but "power," which was the subject of Paul's petition, is one that He shares abundantly and continuously with us.

One feature that Paul's two prayers here in the book of Ephesians have in common, is that they are both concerned with "power," the power of God. See Eph. 1:19 ff. Bishop Moule translates "to be strengthened with might by His Spirit," "to be with power made mighty, by means of His Spirit" (p. 129). The power that is needed is the power of God, and it is given to us by the Spirit of God. It is only the power of God by which we can be truly strengthened in our walk with the Lord. And it is only that same power of God, given to us by the Spirit, which enables us to understand Christ and all that pertains to our relationship with Him.

This strengthening by the Spirit takes place "in the inner man." Here Paul had in mind *the new nature of the believer*. When we are saved, we are made *a new creation*. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. From that point on we still have our old sinful nature, but we have *a new nature*, with new life in Christ. Charles Hodge said concerning the truth that Paul was dealing with here, the "the classical passages of Scripture relating to this subject, are Rom. 7, 14-25. 1 Cor. 2, 14-15. Gal. 5:17-26. But we also have this truth here in Ephesians. See Eph. 4:17-24.

Paul also spoke of "the inner man" in 2 Cor. 4:16: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

In his prayer Paul was concerned about the spiritual growth of the people of God in Ephesus, and his request instructs us as to the place that the Holy Spirit has in that growth. In the latter part of this request, found in the first part of verse 17, Paul indicates that this "inner man" has to do with our hearts, not the physical organ in our chests which beats moment by moment and day after day, but he was speaking of this new life we have in Christ. When we were born into this life, we had all of the faculties for living, but we had to grow. They had to be developed.

The writer of the book of Hebrews ran into the spiritual immaturity of the people to whom he was writing, as a problem in teaching them the truth about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ. And so this is what he had to say to them. He was speaking of Christ when he said,

- 11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.
- 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong

meat.

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:11-14).

Notice the expression, "those who by reason of use." When we are saved, we have all that we will ever have in Christ. But we need to learn to use what we have, and it is the Spirit of God Who strengthens us in the inner man so that we may have the power to be what the Lord wants us to be, and to do, to live, the way the Lord wants us to live.

3:17 Now this strengthening is all for the purpose "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

This statement might raise the question, "But does not Christ live in every person who has been truly born again?" And the answer to that question is, "Yes!" In Col. 3:4 Paul spoke to the Colossian believers about "Christ, Who is our life." In Gal. 2:20 he said that "Christ liveth in me." And the Apostle John said concerning salvation that "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

So we all have Christ living in us. He is our life. What, then, did the Apostle Paul mean when he said, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"?

Some expositors paraphrase this statement, "so that Christ may settle down in your hearts, and be at home." Thayer says that it speaks of Christ governing in our hearts. It is when we cease to treat the Lord as a guest, and submit ourselves to Him as our Lord. And Paul was not speaking of some experience which settles our relationship with the Lord once-and-for-all, but of a daily relationship with the Lord in which we submit ourselves to Him.

And note that this is "by faith." We are given the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ may truly be the Lord of our lives, and this is carried out day by day "by faith."

Now what are we talking about here? Is the Apostle speaking of some experience that we have after salvation whereby the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the Lord of our lives? I don't believe that is the case. When we are saved the Lord Jesus not only is our Savior, but He is our Lord. But it is through the work of the Spirit in our hearts, in "the inner man," that we learn to live under the sovereign authority of our Lord, looking to Him day by day and moment by moment for the strength to do His will. Ours is a life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But how does this all come about? Do we just pray, and then wait to see what will happen? Well, we always need to pray, even as the Apostle Paul was praying about this matter as he prayed for the believers in Ephesus. But the Holy Spirit strengthens us in one way: He strengthens us by the Word. He ministers faith to us by the Word. He strengthens our faith by teaching us about Christ in the Word. And the more we learn of Christ, the more the power of the Spirit is experienced in our lives, and the stronger our faith will become.

So the question that we all have to face is this: Am I treating the Lord like a guest in my heart, or am I living in daily submission to Him to do His will by faith in His power?

What the Apostle Paul was praying about here is utterly impossible apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. We can't live to please God with the Holy Spirit, and without His power, and without the faith that the Spirit gives us through the Word.

As we speak of the Holy Spirit and His part in our lives, it is good to remember what Paul said about "the fruit

of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

In the next part of Paul's prayer we are going to be thinking and talking about "love." Paul tells us that the love which we are to manifest, whether toward God, or toward each other, is a part of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. But look at the sixth word following "love." There you come to the word "faith." Often we say that this is *faithfulness*. And that is not necessarily wrong. But perhaps we will have a better understanding of faithfulness if we leave it like Paul wrote it. "Faith" is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. We don't produce our own faith; it is included as one of those spiritual qualities that the Spirit has come to bring into our lives. We are saved by faith, and after we are saved we live by faith. And this faith is a gift from God, bestowed upon us as the Holy Spirit teaches us more and more about Christ in the Word of God.

Spiritual growth does not produce in us less dependence upon the Holy Spirit and upon the Lord, but greater dependence upon them – and upon God as we come to Him in prayer.

So this is the first part of Paul's prayer. Now let us go on to the second.

B. "In order that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:17b-19a).

This second part of Paul's prayer has to do with *love*. The first with *power* and *faith*; this second request with *love* – "the love of Christ."

You will remember that the Apostle Paul prayed that, "according to the riches of His glory," He would strengthen the Lord's people. Now if God's glory includes all of His attributes, it would appear that while the saints were experiencing the "power" of God by the Holy Spirit, they would also be experiencing more of the "love" of God by the Holy Spirit.

"Being rooted and grounded in love" can be translated, *having been rooted and grounded in love*. This would mean, not that their rooting and grounding was complete, but that it was a process taking place in their lives *by degrees*. The same is true of Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith. That relationship with Christ was not the best it could be, but it was improving *by degrees*. And it would differ in each case among believers. We are not all that we shall be, but we are becoming what we shall be. We don't know all that we can know, by the grace of God, but we are learning.

"Rooted" means to be like a tree. Cf. Psa. 1:3. The only other place this word is used in the NT is in Col. 2:7. "Grounded" has to do with a building. And the idea in both is that they are becoming stronger like a tree and as becoming more complete as a building. And the phrase "in love" applies to both of these words.

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Paul used the same word translated "grounded" in his epistle to the Colossians:

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the

gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:21-23).

Our Lord used it as He was concluding His Sermon on the Mount as He spoke of the man who built his house upon the rock. Here are the Lord's words:

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock (Matt. 7:24-25).

The Apostle Peter used it in his prayer at the close of his first epistle. This is how he prayed:

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 5:10-11).

The idea that these words, "rooted and grounded," express, is contained here in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 14 and 15. (Read.) "Rooted and grounded" Christians are those who are growing in their knowledge of the truth and in their fellowship with the Lord, so they are not being tossed around by their circumstances or by every new doctrine or type of ministry that comes along. None of us is fully mature, but if we are growing in the Lord, there will be a strength and a stability that will be evident in our lives.

So with the kind of fellowship with the Lord that the Apostle Paul had in mind as he prayed that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, the result would be that the believers would be growing, becoming stronger in the Lord, and so "rooted and grounded in love."

Ours is a walk of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We learn of Him and dwell in Him and He is us by faith. But the more we know of our Lord, the more we will be established "in love." This is not our love for Him (although that will increase too), but it is His love for us. Growing in the Lord, growing in our fellowship with Him, will mean a greater understanding of His love for us, and a greater enjoyment of His love in all of the experiences of our lives.

We all know that Christ loves us or He never would have died for us. And when we are saved we have some appreciation of His love. But at that time we have just embarked upon a life-long and increasing knowledge of and enjoyment of the love of Christ. And as Paul said later in verse 19, we will find that "the love of Christ" is a love which "passeth knowledge." We will come to that in a moment.

Thus growth and progress in the Christian life means a closer relationship with Christ, and a greater understanding of His love. *But keep in mind that this is also a matter of degrees.* I like the way our relationship with the Lord is expressed in the RSV translation of 2 Cor. 3:18:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

From the time we are first saved until the Lord comes, or until He takes us home, we needed to be growing in the Lord. And one primary way in which we can all test our growth, is by the way we revel in the love of Christ (and of God) in all of the experiences of our lives.

For example, when trials come, a rooted and grounded Christians will think first of the love of God, not like Job's friends who were very sure that God was punishing Job for sins that he had in his life. Trials do tend to make us seek cleansing from the Lord, but a growing Christian rests first of all in Christ's love, and from that vantage point asks the Lord to search his heart and to cleanse him and to lead him in the way everlasting. Psalm 139 is an excellent example of a believer, King David, who was "rooted and grounded" in the love of

God – not perfectly "rooted and grounded," but moving in that direction which David experienced fully when he stepped into heaven at the time of his death.

I have referred before to a dear, dear Christian lady whom the Lord brought into our lives, Lucille's and mine, when we were having church trouble a few years ago. I am speaking of Mrs. Edith Nanz Willies. And at that time she was going through some troubles of her own. She was here in Portland for a considerable period of time, but just shortly before I was voted out of the church we were in, her twin brother who had been a pastor and who lived in Rueti, Switzerland, was very ill, and he needed her to return to Switzerland to help him. I don't remember all of the circumstances of what I am about to tell you, but I do remember that she had trouble getting a plane reservation for her trip back to Switzerland, and her brother's need made it imperative that she get there as soon as possible. And to complicate the situation in her own heart, *this was the first time in all of her world travels that she had ever faced this situation*. Many of us in a situation like that would very get upset, and wonder why the Lord wasn't helping us. And we would start to ask "why" this and "why" that. But do you know what Mrs. Willies said? This is not an exact quotation, but very close to what she said to us. She said, "You know, I have known the Lord for many, many years, and He has never failed me before, *and I know that He will not fail me now.*" And the Lord did not fail her! It was just a matter of days and the whole problem was cleared up, and she was on her way, arriving in Switzerland just shortly before her brother went on to his heavenly home.

Now Mrs. Willies reacted like that because she had lived a life of being "rooted and grounded in love." Her first reaction to that problem was, "The Lord loves me. He knows how urgent this need is, and He is not going to fail me now."

Life is full of frustrations which try our faith, and our reactions to even those little things that often give us so much distress show how much we are "rooted and grounded in love." My own heart rebukes me as I talk about this, and I trust that the Lord will strengthen me more and more in my inner man so that my reaction to my trials will show more than they do now that I am "rooted and grounded in love," in the love of Christ, and the love of God.

But let us move on to see more about this wonderful love of Christ.

3:18 Paul went on to pray that we would be able to "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." When it comes to the things of God, we always have to realize that we are seeking to know the unknowable! By that we mean that we can't learn this by taking classes in school, nor by some manner of teaching ourselves, but it is God by His Holy Spirit Who must teach us if we are to learn what He wants us to know.

And so Paul prayed "that ye . . . may be able to comprehend . . ." The word "able" suggests that the ability to comprehend the love of Christ, is going to take power from God. None of us can comprehend it with our own limited ability. And unfortunately some of the Lord's people never seem to be able to comprehend the meaning of Christ's love. That is why we need to pray that the Lord will strengthen us in our relationship with Him so that we will be able to understand it.

The word "comprehend" is a very interesting word. It means *to get it, to catch it, to take it in*. You and I are familiar with the love that people manifest toward each other (and I am speaking of true love, not the lust that is paraded before us constantly). But the love of Christ so far surpasses any love that is merely human, that they really can't be likened to each other. This is a love which "passeth knowledge," and so we need the Lord's help to understand what it is, or we will never get it! But that is exactly why the Apostle Paul was making this a matter of prayer for the believers at Ephesus.

Paul said that the love of Christ has four dimensions:

- 1) "Breadth."
- 2) "Length."
- 3) "Depth."
- 4) "Height."

In measuring the love of Christ, we recognize that it has to be infinite because Christ, as well as the Father and the Holy Spirit, are infinite. Now we are talking about *measuring that which is immeasurable*. And this presents us with the same kind of a problem as *knowing that which is unknowable*. Only when we get to heaven will we be able to comprehend fully the amazing love of God, but by God's grace we all can come to a greater understanding and enjoyment of it than we have attained so far.

The love of God is broad enough to include the chief of sinners. Its length is without beginning and without ending. It extends from eternity to eternity. The Lord spoke through Jeremiah to His people in OT times, saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love . . ." (Jer. 31:3). In its depth it reaches us regardless of how far we have fallen, or how deep our trials may take us. And the height of God's love brings us within the gates of glory itself.

On a day when I have spoken of Mrs. Willies, it seems appropriate that I should read to you what Adam Clarke wrote in his commentary about these four dimensions of the love to God. She was the one who gave me her set of Adam Clarke's commentary, all six, huge volumes. This is what Adam Clarke wrote on what we are considering just now:

But what can the apostle mean by the breadth, length, depth, and height, of the love of God? Imagination can scarcely frame any satisfactory answer to this question. It takes in the eternity of God. GOD is LOVE; and in that, an infinity of breadth, length, depth, and height, is included; or rather all breadth, length, depth, and height, are lost in this immensity. It comprehends all that is above, all that is below, all that is past, and all that is to come. In reference to human beings, the love of God, in its BREADTH, is a girdle that encompasses the globe; its LENGTH reaches from the eternal purpose of the mission of Christ, to the eternity of blessedness which is to be spent in his ineffable glories; its DEPTH reaches to the lowest fallen of the sons of Adam, and to the deepest depravity of the human heart; and its HEIGHT to the infinite dignities of the throne of Christ. He that overcometh will I give to sit down with me upon my throne, as I have overcome and sat down with the Father upon his throne. Thus we see that the Father, the Son, and all true believers in him, are to be seated on the same throne! This is the height of the love of God, and the height to which that love raises the souls that believe in Christ Jesus!

I doubt if there is just a single definition for each of those four dimensions. The more you meditate on what they mean, the more glorious the love of Christ becomes. And it ought to be our prayer for ourselves, for our families, and for each other, that daily we would be growing in our comprehension of the amazing love of Christ. And let us remember verses like 2 Cor. 5:14-15 in this connection:

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Also, Rom. 8:35-39:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the

slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Charles Simeon in his sermon on this passage in Ephesians said, "Properly speaking, nothing has more than three dimensions; length, breadth, and thickness. The Apostle divides the last into two, in order the more strongly to express his idea" (Vol. 17, p. 326). So this, too, is evidence of the surpassing and unsearchable character of the love of Christ.

So we can be assured that the love of Christ is broad enough to include all of us, and it is long enough to last us throughout our lives, in all of our circumstances however difficult they may be, reaching us at our lowest points, and finally bringing us to the glorious purpose for which we have been saved.

3:19 This is, as the Apostle said, "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." This is a paradox, isn't it? It appears to be a contradiction. But what Paul meant was that regardless of how much we know of the love of Christ, we realize that there is more to be known, and that in this life we will never know all that there is to know about Christ's love.

But let me point out what is indicated in the word "know" which the Apostle Paul used in this passage. It does not mean a mere intellectual understanding, but an experiential knowledge of Christ's love. It is a knowledge that changes us! It is a knowledge that affects our behavior and our reaction to the circumstances of life.

Now this brings us to the third and last request in Paul's prayer. Before we consider it, let me review the requests for you – starting back with verse 16:

16 **That** he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 [So] That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; **that** ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, **that** ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

The last request is: "That ye might be filled with all of the fulness of God."

Remember that Paul's first request is on a very high level, his second request rises higher, and this third request is higher than the other two. The third is built upon the second, and the second is built upon the first. *What could the Apostle Paul possibly mean, "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"?*

In Col. 2:9 we are told concerning Christ, "For in Him dwelleth all of fulness of the Godhead bodily." Many commentators link Col. 2:9 with Eph 4:19 – and I believe rightly so. By bringing these two together, they do not mean that for us to be "filled with all of the fulness of God" will make us exactly like God, as Jesus Christ was. But it means that we will be God-like and Christ-like. Our Lord Jesus told His disciples while He was here on earth, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." And we know from Rom. 8:29 that we are predestinated "to be conformed to the image of His Son." "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). And when we get to Eph. 4:11-13 we will learn this about God's ministry through His servants in the church:

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 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 (Eph. 4:11-13).

Charles Hodge explained this amazing statement, "that ye might be filled with all of the fulness of God," with these words:

Absolute perfection is the standard to which the believer is to attain. . . He is to be perfect as man, as God is perfect as God; and the perfection of man consists in his being full of God; God dwelling in him so as absolutely to control all his cognitions [knowledge], feelings, and outward actions (p. 67).

But we have to ask ourselves the questions: "Is such a life really possible? Or was the Apostle Paul so carried away with the truth that he was discussing that he has led us to expect life with Christ on a plane that is so high that we can never reach it?" It seems like that, doesn't it? How many believers do we know who manifest in their living that they are "filled with all the fulness of God"?

Many years ago a man by the name of Albert Barnes by the name of Albert Barnes wrote a commentary on the whole Bible which have become known as Barnes' Notes. He made a very excellent observation about Christians in his day that is certainly applicable to us as Christians in our day. In a day when the world is so corrupt, and our own nation has lost its way morally and spiritually, we need to pay particular attention to our own lives, and to the condition of the professing church in general. Barnes made this comment which we all would do well to remember, and think about how it may apply to ourselves. This is what he said:

Let us seek to know more of the love of Christ in our redemption-- to understand more of the extent of that love which he evinced for us; (Eph. 3:16-19). It is worth our study. It will reward our efforts. There are few Christians-- if there are any-- who understand the richness and fulness of the gospel of Christ; few who have such elevated views as they might have and should have of the glory of that gospel. It is wonderful that they who profess to love the Lord Jesus do not study that system more, and desire more to know the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. True, it passes knowledge. We cannot hope fully to fathom it in this world. But we may know more of it than we do. We may aspire to being filled with all the fullness of God. We may long for it; pant for it; strive for it; pray for it-- and we shall not strive in vain. Though we shall not attain all we wish; though there will be an infinity beyond what we can understand in this world, yet there will be enough attained to reward all our efforts, and to fill us with love and joy and peace. The love of God our Saviour is indeed an illimitable ocean; but we may see enough of it in this world to lead us to adore and praise God with overflowing hearts.

Well, we are confronted here in Paul's prayer with the fact that the Christian life is a supernatural life. It is so high that we cannot reach it IF we are left to our own resources. But that is the glory of the Christian life: We are not left to our own resources. *Our resources are in God Himself!* And that is the reason that the Apostle concluded this passage on an even higher plane. Our hope for living such a life is clearly expressed in Eph. 3:20-21. (Read.)

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3:20 In verse 17 and 18 the Apostle prayed "that ye . . . may be able"; here in verse 20 he declared that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh

in us." If there is anything which is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, it is in the petitions that the Apostle Paul presented to God in the preceding verses on behalf of the believers in Ephesus. Who among us would even "think" that we might be "filled with all the fulness of God"? And who among us would dare to make such a request if this possibility were not set before us in the Word? But it is possible! It is to be prayed for and sought for each of our lives by the power of God. We certainly cannot attain such a life, such a relationship with God, but God Himself guarantees that through His power what Paul has prayed for can become a blessed reality in all of our lives. But it is not by our power, nor by our wisdom, but by the power of a sovereign, almighty God!

"The power that worketh in us" should remind us that, in Paul's prayer, he had prayed that the believers in Ephesus "might be strengthened with mighty by His Spirit in the inner man."

Adolphe Monod, who ministered in France in the early part of the nineteenth century, and was to France what Calvin was to Switzerland, and what Luther was to Germany, and what Spurgeon was to England, and what Jonathan Edwards was to the United States, preached with great power and blessing to French believers, often speaking four times a Sunday. He made this statement about the power of God:

Nothing can restrain or bound the power of God towards us; nothing in Him, nothing even in us; no limits set to His power, for it knows no limits; not even the weakness of our prayers, and the imperfection of our knowledge, for He is able to transcend all our demands and all our conceptions (quoted by H. C. G. Moule in his *Ephesian Studies*, pp. 133, 134).

And the words, "exceeding abundantly above" indicates that as glorious as the life is which Paul has described in his prayer, this in no way is the limit of the power of our God. What God is able to do is "vastly beyond" all that we can ask or think, as Bishop Moule defined the words of this verse. So there is no excuse for any of us to be living below the requests that the Apostle prayed in this prayer.

And so it is not surprising that the Apostle concludes his prayer by declaring that all of the glory belongs to God alone.

One fact about such a prayer as this that we need to recognize is that its very appearance in Scripture is an indication that it is a prayer which has God's stamp of approval on it. It is very doubtful if it would be here in this book of Ephesians if God did not intend that the requests which the Apostle Paul present to the Lord should be taken by us as promises from God. Paul's prayer was certainly directed by the Spirit of God, and it is to be accepted by *all* believers as describing for us the kind of a life that we all should seek. We should pray this prayer for ourselves first, and then pray it for every child of God we know. In fact, we need to pray that this prayer, as well as the prayer in chapter 1, should become the burden that we all carry for ourselves, as well as for the church in our day. Were our hearts set upon the requests which the Apostle Paul sought for those believers who first received this letter, what a difference it would make in us, and what power would be manifest through the church upon our God-less world.

But now let us consider the last verse of this chapter.

3:21 Notice that this glory is to be given (1) "unto Him," *i.e.*, to God, (2) "in the church," (3) "by Christ Jesus," and (4) both now and throughout all eternity – "throughout all ages, world without end." And Paul concluded with that wonderful word: "Amen."

Not a bit of the glory belonged even to Paul for his prayer. Nor to the church in Ephesus for whatever prayers they might pray along the same line, nor for any efforts they might make to seek such blessings from God.

All of the praise belonged to God alone.

"In the church" should remind us of that which certainly one of the main subjects of this epistle. And the mention of the church here indicates that we need to be just as concerned about such blessings for all of the body of Christ, as we are for ourselves. This should be the prayer that we pray for each other. And how it is needed in this day in which we live. People in the professing church are proclaiming all kinds of ideas as to what we should be personally and in our families, but most of them fall far short of the truth that Paul prayed about in this marvelous prayer.

And we should not be surprised that Paul indicated here that none of this life is possible except "by Christ Jesus." It is the experiential enjoyment of the love of Christ that makes possible the enjoyment of being filled with all the fulness of God!

And how long is this to last? Is it just an occasional experience of special blessing from the Lord? No, it is a relationship that we have now, and it will only continue and be better throughout eternity. The NASB translates the latter part of verse 21, "to all generations forever and ever." And the other recent translations render it in much the same way. How wonderful it is to think of being with the Lord in perfect fellowship throughout all eternity, but it is equally wonderful to know that the beginnings of that fellowship can be ours, by the grace of God, NOW!

Concl: I have already quoted that French preached, Adolphe Monod, who was so greatly used of God in his native France. Let me, in concluding our study of Ephesians 3, give you another quotation from him in which he, too, like so many others reflected upon the glorious truths in this prayer, and how we should be humbled by our failure to climb the heights which it sets before us. This is what he said, and I could not find better words to conclude this part of the epistle:

After the grandest promises which human language can express, the Holy Spirit here closes by declaring that all which can be expressed is infinitely below the reality which is in God. In vain we mount, even in the track of an Apostle; we can only contemplate, after all, 'parts of the ways of God' (Job 26:14) . . .

Nothing can restrain or bound the power of God toward us; nothing in Him, nothing even in us; no limits set to His power, for it knows no limits; not even the weakness of our prayers, and the imperfection of our knowledge, for He is able to transcend all our demands and all our conceptions.

But alas for us, if this language, infinitely below the reality which is in God, should be infinitely above the reality which is in us! Imagine a practical Christianity conceived according to the text of the Scriptures only, and irrespective of the personal experience of believers; and then imagine a practical Christianity conceived only according to the experience of believers, and irrespective of the written Word. Should we not say that here were two different religions? To Pass from Scripture to our experience seems like a fall from heaven to earth . . . Let us class . . . our Christianity aright. And may the Lord teach us how to bring our experience into harmony with His promises . . . (Quoted by H. C. G. Moule in his *Ephesian Studies*, pp. 133, 134).

Our daily prayer, following the pattern of the Apostle Paul's prayer here in Ephesians 3, should be, that we might be "filled with all the fulness of God." But when we examine such heights of fellowship with God in the light of our own strength, a sense of hopelessness must surely fill our hearts *until we remember Paul's words in Ephesians 3:20*, "Now unto him Who is able . . ." It is God's purpose and it is God's power, and this is what makes such a life possible.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class - February 22, 1999

Ephesians 4:1-16

Intro: We come at the beginning of Ephesians 4 to what is generally recognized by most, if not all who have expounded this epistle, to what is the practical section of the book. This was a characteristic of Paul's writing. He usually had a particular doctrine that he was concerned about, and then he sought to enforce that doctrine upon the lives of the people of God. This is a ministry that needs to be impressed upon many believers in our generation because the desire of a large segment of the professing church is to minimize doctrine, or teaching, and to want to go almost exclusively to practical matters. But this manifests a terrible ignorance of the ways of the Lord.

But if there is one thing that stands between the teaching of the Word and the application of the Word, it is *prayer!* And that is illustrated perfectly in the first three chapters of Ephesians. For example, in the first fourteen verses of chapter 1 we have some of the most glorious teaching that is to be found any place in all of the Bible. However, you will remember that Paul concluded that teaching with a prayer, a prayer which he told the believers in Ephesus that he was praying for them. With the beginning of chapter 2 and on down through the first part of chapter 3, we have some more teaching. Then we come to a second prayer, the prayer which we have just concluded studying. This led to the practical application of the teaching. And the connection between the first three chapters and what follows in chapter 4 (we can actually say in chapters 4 through 6) is clearly indicated by the words of Eph. 4:1. (Read.)

All doctrine with no application is wrong. And doctrine without prayer is wrong. Prayer without either doctrine or application is also wrong. And certainly application with no doctrine and little or no prayer is wrong. The epistle to the Ephesians teaches us that doctrine supported by prayer which leads to application is the divine plan for the ministry of the church. I do not mean to say that we only pray after we have taught because, the truth is, we need to pray as we prepare to teach and preach, and we need to pray as we teach, and then we need to follow up our practical application of our teaching with more prayer. So let us not get our guidance from certain well-meaning Christians who are primarily interested in the application of the truth. If they are not learning the truth of the Word, they have nothing to apply. So let us get our direction from the Word of God, and Ephesians gives us a perfect example as to what the ministry must be if we are to glorify God, and if we are going to be able to give the people of God the help which we all so sorely need.

Bishop Moule calls the beginning of chapter 4 "the middle point of the Epistle" (p. 147). And then he added, With some obvious qualifications, the first three chapters treat of doctrine, and the last three of practice; the first lead us to the secrets and resources of the Christian life, and the last to its exercise in the church and in the world (*Ibid.*). And then he added these important words which emphasize what I have been saying:

The connexion of the two sections is vital and profound; this hardly needs to be explained. But it cannot be too earnestly pressed on the attention of the believing reader. For it is a grand illustration of the truth that, in the Gospel, all doctrine bears upon practice, and all the practice is rooted in doctrine. Or, to put it in terms more living, more personal, more fully true; all the revelation of God in Christ is for the sake of His people's life and service before Him; all the Christian's life and service depends, for its peace, purity, and power, upon his revealed Lord and God, known, trusted, invoked, and used (*Op. cit.*, pp. 147, 148).

Now the first part of the practical section of this epistle goes from 4:1 to 4:16. (Point out the mistake in the outline in V, A, 1.)

In this part of the epistle Paul made use of a word which we all need to become familiar with. It is the word "walk." Actually this word is used eight times in Ephesians. We have already had it twice. See 2:2 and 2:10. Then it is here in 4:1, followed by 4:17 (two times), and 5:2, 5:8, and 5:15.

Sometimes this word is used in the Bible, both OT and NT, just to describe how somebody got from one place to another, *i.e., he or she walked*. But the way it is used here in Ephesians, like many other places in the NT, is to describe *the way a person lives*. The first time we find the word "walked" in the Bible is in Gen. 5:22, and again in Gen. 5:24, where we are told that "Enoch walked with God." This means that Enoch, contrary to most of the other people in his day, *lived in fellowship with God*. In the very next chapter of Genesis, chapter 6, and verse 5, the same thing is said about Noah: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." He too, like Enoch, *lived in fellowship with God*. And so the Apostle Paul used this word, which we can call *a Hebraism* (because it comes to us from the way the Lord spoke about the lives of His people in Israel).

But now let us get into chapter 4.

4:1 The "I" is emphatic. But it is significant that he does not call himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ," as he did in 1:1, with all of the authority that that title would give him, but as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ," as he had referred to himself in 3:1. And it is significant that he did not call himself *a prisoner of Nero*, or *a victim of the Jews*. He knew that he was where he was because it was the will of Jesus Christ for him to be there, not because he was an evildoer, but because he claimed to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and because he had been spreading the Gospel among the Gentiles. But over all of his trials he saw the sovereign hand of God working out His own purposes.

The "therefore" ties together the first part of the epistle with this second part. It was in the light of all that they had in Christ, and in view of the Gospel which was God's expression of the four dimensions of His love, Paul would now bring to bear upon the Ephesians that behavior which was consistent with the calling that they had from God. Paul had mentioned God's calling in their lives in Eph. 1:18, and this had been a major part of his first prayer – that they would know and experience the power of "the hope of His calling." See also 4:4b. This was their "vocation." And it was the Apostle Paul's desire that they would "walk worthy" of that calling, a calling to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ. If we know "the hope of his calling," it will have a profound and abiding effect upon all that we are, and all that we do. And the fact that Paul was "a prisoner of Jesus Christ" showed how deeply committed he was to the calling he had received. Paul would not let anything stand in the way of the calling he had received. "Worthy" means in a manner that would be consistent with what the Lord was doing in their lives.

What would you think would be a walk consistent with such a calling? Well, the answer is given to us in verses 2 and 3. There are five characteristics which the Apostle Paul mentioned.

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4:2 The first characteristic is "with all lowliness." The Greek word is *ταπεινοφροσύνη*. A true understanding of our calling does not produce pride, but it produces *humility*. Charles Hodge gave an excellent explanation of the word "lowliness"

which the Apostle Paul used here at the very beginning of his helpful description of one who walks "worthy of the vocation" unto which we have been called. Basically Hodge said that if we are to walk worthy of the calling that we have from God, we must have a deep sense of our own *unworthiness*. But these are his words:

Lowliness of mind . . . includes a low estimate of one's self, founded on the consciousness of guilt and

weakness, and a consequent disposition to be low, unnoticed, and unpraised. It stands opposed not only to self-complacency and self-conceit, but also to self-exaltation, and setting one's self up to attract the honour which comes from men (Hodge, Charles, *An Exposition of Ephesians*, p. 70).

This is such a very important point that the Apostle Paul was making, that I want to give you also what Bishop Moule said about "all lowliness":

You look around, and find yourself "called" to all the peace and power of a living union with Christ, planned for you in the deep eternity, realized now in your living persons, so that you are "seated together with Him in heavenly places." But you remember instantly *how* you are so seated, and so enriched. You were dead, and a boundless mercy has bid you live. You were excommunicated aliens, and God has been pleased in His glorious freedom to give you the citizenship, yea, the nobility of the Israel of God. Ponder your magnificence of condition, till you begin in some true sense to realize it. But remember how you reached it, and each reflection upon it, while it rejoices your souls with a joy full of glory, and educates you already for the exaltations of the life to come, will only set you lower in your own esteem. . .

So the very greatness of the Christian's elevation, seen in the light of the Lord, tends directly to his personal humility. It is the profound secret of an abasement (not debasement) which cannot possibly be a matter for merely theoretical estimates; it must lay the man so low in his own esteem before God that he cannot possibly be other than softened and chastened before his fellow-men. He has been trusted with the riches of his King, and he feels them with his hands. But he remembers that his King has first forgiven him a hopeless debt, many more than ten thousand talents. . . Are his eyes really open to the greatness of his salvation? Then he sees his own demerit as he could not see it in the light of a salvation smaller and less divinely generous (*Op. cit.*, pp. 174, 175).

"All lowliness" leaves no room for anything else. The first step in walking *worthy* of our calling is to realize how *unworthy* we are of such grace. So it is the recognition of what we are by nature in the light of what we have become by the grace of God.. The Apostle Paul was expressing "all lowliness" when he wrote to the church at Corinth,

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9).

And in OT days we have that remarkable statement of Jacob which showed the deep work of God in his heart as he returned home after twenty years of separation from his family. This is what he said as he contemplated meeting Esau after that long time:

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands (Gen. 32:10).

Of course the greatest example we have of "all lowliness" is our Lord Jesus Christ Who, although He was without sin, "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. 2:8).

The second characteristic of a "walk worthy of" our "vocation" is "meekness." And it is closely associated with "all lowliness." The Greek word is *πραότης*. You will remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29), and as He said, the best place to learn about these characteristics is in our Lord Himself. How amazing, for example, it was that our Lord would take a towel and wash His disciples' feet. See John 13:4-5. And it is infinitely more amazing that He would lay down His life in order to save His people from their sins. Our Lord's prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane were an expression of His meekness before God.

Archbishop Trench said of "meekness" that "it is that temper of spirit in which we accept is dealings with us as

good, and therefore without disputing or resisting . . . and which does not fight against God, and more or less struggle and contend with Him" (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 152). And Trench cited David's reaction when Shimei was throwing stones at him when he (David) was fleeing from Absalom. We have it in 2 Sam. 16:11. You will remember what David's nephew Abishai said. His words are recorded in 2 Sam. 16:9: "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." But then we read what David said in response to him:

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day (2 Sam. 16:11-12).

That is meekness. David did not put himself into Shimei's hands, but he refused to retaliate because he was trusting God in that time of need, and could see the hand of God in what was happening to him.

"Meekness" does not mean that we do not pray about God's dealings with us, and even ask in prayer that we might be delivered, but it is submission to His will, trusting Him to work all things out for His own glory and for our good.

The third characteristic of a walk worthy of our vocation is "forbearing one another in love."

Probably the best illustration of *forbearance* is when the Scriptures speak of God as being "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psa. 103:8). The whole verse says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." We need to notice also what David went on to say in verse 9 of that same Psalm (103): "He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever."

The Lord is "slow to anger" because He is patient. All of us can be thankful for the forbearance of God when we have frequently provoked Him to be angry with us. And that is the way we need to be in our relationships with each other: forbearing. There may come a time when we have to deal with others because of their continued provocations, but we need to be careful about immediately reacting in anger. And such forbearance will be prompted by the love that we are to have with each other as the people of God.

Another word for forbearance is *longsuffering*. Moule said in his commentary that we need to "outlast" the things that people do to us that can so easily provoke us to anger. And our Lord is again our greatest example of this grace of forbearance. The Apostle Peter reminded the believers in his day of the behavior of our Lord Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:23).

That is forbearance.

It always helps us to be forbearing and longsuffering with others when we remember how longsuffering the Lord has been with us. And it is significant that the Lord did not mention forbearance first because it is only as we are lowly and meek before God that we will be forbearing in our relationships with others.

The fourth characteristic takes us to verse 3.

4:3 The grand and supreme purpose of walking worthy of our calling is the preservation "of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are not to create it. We already have that in Christ. But we are to preserve it. And the word "endeavoring" suggests that we are to do it as promptly as possible. In fact, we should always be on the alert for anything that threatens the fellowship of the saints. It is so easy for us "to fly off the

handle," so to speak, to respond to others in the flesh instead of in the Spirit. Others may not be doing the right thing toward us, but that does not free us to do the wrong thing toward them. The Devil is always seeking to do all that he can to disrupt our fellowship with each other, and that is the reason that the Apostle Paul did not begin with this point, but preceded it with the need each one of us has to be humble and meek before God, and then toward each other. Then we will be prepared by God's grace to be patient with each other, and concerned that we will do everything we can, again, by God's grace, to preserve that oneness in the Spirit, that fellowship, into which we have been called.

But what is "the bond of peace?"

Going back to chapter 2, we learned that "He," Christ, "is our peace." And it is the Holy Spirit Who maintains that peace which we have as Jewish and Gentile believers in the body of Christ. And it is a peace that is preserved by humility, meekness, longsuffering, and love. Such peace is evidence of the Spirit's blessing upon the church. Pride, self-will, impatience, and hatred destroy the fellowship of the saints. So in Christ, Who is our peace, He is the bond Who binds us together in the precious fellowship we enjoy – in Him, in trusting Him, in seeking to please Him, and in seeking to be like Him, we have this wonderful peace with each other which is so essential to our fellowship.

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And so in the first three verses of this chapter, the Apostle Paul emphasized the need for each member of the body of Christ to walk (live) in a manner that is worthy of the calling which each one has received from the Lord. The calling of each child of God is the same. We may have been brought to the Lord at different times and under different circumstances, but God's purpose in saving us is the same in every case. And it is important for each one of us to recognize this, to humble ourselves, to love each other, and all of this is with the purpose of preserving "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Every Christian is responsible before God "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

"Keep" is a verb which means that we have something to guard, to protect. The care of this unity is to be one of our greatest concerns. As I have said, we do not create it, but we are to preserve it. And this is not to be done by sacrificing any of the truth of God's Word, but it is a unity within the bounds of the truth.

This was one of the great burdens expressed by our Lord in His great prayer in John 17. In John 17:11, in the latter part of the verse, we see that the Lord made this request of His Father: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." And then He added this in John 17:12: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept ..." In both of these verses our Lord used the same word for "keep" and "kept" that the Apostle Paul used in Eph. 4:3. The Lord had been on guard keeping each one of them in salvation, but He had also been working in each of their hearts to bind them together as one group. And the Lord continues to do the same work in our hearts today. As we look at the professing church today we see much that speaks of *disunity*, but the work of the Lord continues in the hearts of all who are truly saved to bring us eventually in heaven to a condition of perfect unity.

The word we are talking about is the word $\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$. The Lord used the same word again in John 17:15 where we read that He prayed,

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

So this means that much of the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in our lives is spent in guarding

us against the evil that is in all of our hearts, and against *the Evil One* who is in the world. We often are grieved because there seems to be so little true spiritual progress in our lives individually, as well as in the body of Christ, but just imagine what it would be like if the Members of the Godhead were not continually guarding us against all of the evil influences to which we are exposed.

Now all that I have mentioned about our Lord's prayer up to this point, had to do with those who were His disciples when our Lord was here on earth. But beginning with verse 20 in John 17 the Lord began to pray for all future believers. And this was His prayer for them (and remember that you and I are included in what I about to read to you). Here are the Lord's words as He prayed:

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23).

For the Lord to make this request for those who were His disciples while He was here on earth, and then to repeat the same request for all who would believe in the future, should make us realize how extremely important it is for us to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Every Christian has his hands full in seeking to walk in fellowship with the Lord each day, but when we add to that the need we have to keep the unity of the Spirit in our relationship with each other, you can see what tremendous challenges face us day by day in our lives as the people of God. How thankful we should be that keeping us is a work that the Father is doing every day, and that this is one of the great burdens that the Lord Jesus is continually bringing to the Father, where He is seated at His right hand, and where "He ever lives to make intercession for us." And the fact that the Apostle Paul called this "the unity of the Spirit," is an indication that the Holy Spirit is working in our hearts to make us one as well.

Now as is the case with everything else that we learn from our Bibles, *it is vitally important that we know this! But we also need to be guarding this great truth: we are all one in Christ!* The Lord was not talking about denominational unity, or interdenominational unity. He was not talking about some world-wide church organization. He was not talking about what men sometimes attempt to do, to bring together all who profess to be Christians even if it means setting aside certain doctrines of the faith. This unity is of true believers only, a unity based solidly upon the doctrines of Scripture, a unity of precious fellowship through the saving grace of God and the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is binding upon all of us who know the Lord, not only to maintain a life of fellowship with the Lord ourselves, but to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "Endeavoring," remember, means *to give our prompt and diligent and continuous attention, praying for this, and making sure that we do not do anything to sow discord in the church, but, on the other hand, that we do all that we can to promote true, spiritual unity. And one of the best ways we can do this is by the faithful teaching of the Word of God.*

Now let us go on to verse 4.

4:4 Bishop Westcott, who served the Lord in the Church of England in the nineteenth century, and who spent a part of his life teaching theology at Cambridge University, a sincere believer in Christ and a devout student of the Word of God, said in his commentary on Ephesians, that *from verse 4 of chapter 4, down through the sixteenth verse of this chapter, the Apostle Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, has told us the provisions which God has made for the realization of this unity.* Unity in the body of Christ is like God's

purpose to make us all like the Lord Jesus. They will never be completely accomplished in this life, but these are the goals toward which we who know the Lord are moving. The importance of both of these goals can not be overemphasized. And it is important to see that they are closely related to each other.

When Bishop Westcott spoke of *the provisions which God has made for the realization of this unity*, what did he have in mind?

Well, first he listed some of the great doctrines of Biblical theology: *one body, one Spirit, one hope*, and so on down through verse 6. And then he spoke of the gifts which God has given to His church, individual gifts as well as men who are gifts to the church. And those gifts are mentioned in verse 11, followed by their responsibilities which he mentioned in verses 12 through 16. This has to do with the work of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers – or as some say, pastor-teachers.

So first we want to look at these great doctrines which are the very foundation upon which unity in the body of Christ, is firmly established. *The Apostle Paul mentioned seven great truths.*

The first is, "There is one body."

The Apostle Paul mentioned this truth at the end of his first prayer in chapter 1, verses 22 and 23. (Read.) The church is the body of Christ, and He, the risen, exalted, sovereign, is "the head over all things to the church."

I am sure that most of you know that the word "church" is used in two different ways in the NT. There were local churches in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Thessalonica, throughout the region of Galatia, and in many other places. Today we have countless numbers of churches. We come from several different churches. So God has established churches where we meet together to worship God, to sing His praises, to teach the Word, to pray, and to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ at home and around the world. So the word "church" is used in Scripture in a local sense.

But this is not what the Apostle Paul had in mind here in Ephesians. He was speaking of the church as made up of all believers throughout the world, those who truly know Jesus Christ as their Savior. We are members of the body of Christ on earth. It is possible for people to get into our local churches who do not know the Lord Jesus as their Savior. Local churches are never completely pure in the sense that everyone is saved. But the body of Christ is different. The only way anyone can be a member of the great spiritual body of Christ, is by being saved through Christ. In 1 Cor. 12:13 the Apostle Paul made this statement:

For by one Spirit are [were] 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.

If you know the Lord as your Savior, and anyone asks you if you have been baptized by the Spirit, you can tell them very positively, "Yes!" Although I didn't know it at the time I was saved, and it is doubtful if you knew it when you were saved, but in this dispensation in which we live, we who know the Lord have all been baptized into this one body. And there is only one body of Christ. We are all different members of that body, and we have different functions in the body, *but there is just one body.* Christians may be members of different local churches, but we all are members of this one body Paul was writing about, the body of Christ. Instead of being an organization, Bishop Moule said that it is "one Organism, and one only, consisting of the regenerated and living members of the one Head" (Moule, p. 178), Who is Christ.

John Eadie described this "one body" very well, and I will read to you what he said:

The body with its many members, and complex array of organs of very different positions, functions, and honor, is yet one. The church, no matter where it is situated, or in what age of the world it exists –

no matter of what race, blood, or color are its members, or how various the tongues in which its services are presented – is one, and remains so, unaffected by distance or time, or physical, intellectual, and social distinctions (p. 273).

This is why, whenever you meet another Christian, a true Christian, you immediately feel a bond with him or her. You will feel closer to a fellow Christian than you will to members of your immediate family who do not know the Lord. I trust that you really understand what the Apostle Paul was teaching in this passage. It is so vital to our understanding of what God is doing in our day, not only with us, but with His people throughout the whole world. "There is one body."

Second, "There is . . . one Spirit." Many expositors try to make this our human, redeemed spirit. In fact, one said that a reference to the Holy Spirit here would be out of place. I would ask, "Why is it out of place when Paul went on to say, "one Lord" and "one God and Father of all"? Our KJ translators were absolutely right in capitalizing the word Spirit, thus making it a reference to the Holy Spirit, the One we correctly refer to as the third Member of the Godhead.

It is this "one Spirit" who has convicted each one of us of our need of Christ. We have been born of the Spirit into God's family and into Christ's church. The Holy Spirit has indwelt us from the moment we were saved, and He is in us to abide with us forever! He is our Teacher. The fact that we find true Christians who have different interpretations of different passages of the Bible, is not the Spirit's fault, but it is our failure to understand the Word as we should. "There is . . . one Spirit," one Holy Spirit, one Spirit of Christ and of God – and there is only one Spirit! He is a living Person, and possesses all of the same attributes as God the Father does, and as our Lord Jesus Christ does.

Third, we all have the same calling. We are "called in one hope of His calling." We have already talked about this in our study of this epistle. Our "one hope" is that God has called us to Christ and to Himself with one purpose in mind – that we would become like the Lord Jesus Christ. We all have different places and functions in the body of Christ, but we have all been called not only to belong to Jesus Christ, but to become like the Lord Jesus Christ! This is our one hope, the same hope for every child of God.

Paul expressed our calling and our hope in Rom. 8:28 and 29. (Quote.) He stated it in different words in 1 Thess. 4:7. There he said, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." And the Apostle John also stated it very clearly 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.

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

We have been "called in one hope of" our "calling." There is just one hope for every child of God, one destiny, not only to be with Christ, but like Him. That work of God in our hearts is going on now, and it will be completed when we see the Lord face to face.

The next three doctrines are in verse 5.

4:5 "There is . . . one Lord." This is the fourth great doctrine which Paul was declaring. He can be none other than our Lord Jesus Christ since God the Father is mentioned in verse 6. This Lord Jesus Christ is God's Son. He is our Savior, "neither is there salvation in any other . . ." (Acts 4:12). At this very moment He is Lord of heaven and earth. Zechariah has told us in Zech. 14:9 that when He comes back to the earth that in that day "the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."

The world has no conception of this now. Men, women, young people, and even children have no hesitation about taking His holy Name in vain. The Apostle Paul, in writing to his son in the faith, said of our Lord that "in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Even now He is the Lord over all the earth, but the day will come when He will make it clear to all that He is the Lord, the Lord over all other lords, the Sovereign over all the earth.

Never hesitate to speak of Him as the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul did at the beginning of this epistle in verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1. "There is . . . one Lord," and only one!

The fifth great doctrine is that "there is . . . one faith." In the context in which we find this word, it does not seem that the Apostle Paul was speaking of the faith that we exercise for salvation, that is, it is not faith in a personal sense, but faith as the body of truth which God has revealed in His Word. On down in verse 13 the Apostle Paul spoke of the purpose behind the ministry of the men who are mentioned in verse 11. It is "till we all come in the unity of the faith."

I don't want to oversimplify this term, but it seems to me that the Apostle Paul was saying, "There is . . . one Bible." And there is only one! Some people speak of faith as though it makes little or no difference what you believe, but just that you believe! This is ridiculous. God has given us what we are to believe in His Word. It stands above all doctrinal statements, all creeds, all confessions of faith! The Bible teaches us the great doctrines which Christians believe, and it also tells us how we are to live. The Bible is the infallible source of all that we are to believe, and it is the infallible source of truth concerning the way we are to live. No other book compares with the Bible. There is just one Bible, and that contains the thirty-nine books of the OT, and the twenty-seven books of the NT – no more, no less, than the sixty-six books of our "faith." All the teaching of men is to be brought to Scripture and examined in the light of what God has given us in His Word. "There is . . . one faith." There is only one Bible, the incomparable, infallible, inspired Word of the living God.

Fifth, "there is . . . one baptism." I don't believe for a moment that the Apostle Paul here was speaking of water baptism – even though it is true that there is only one mode of baptism that is right. And that has to be the mode which pictures our death, burial, and resurrection with our Lord. Baptism is very important, but I don't think that water baptism has the place in Scripture that the other doctrines we have been considering in these verses have.

Neither do I think that this refers to the baptism of the Spirit, although that is the work of the Spirit by which we have been made a part of the body of Christ.

I believe that what the Apostle Paul was referring to here with the words, "one baptism," is salvation itself. In Gal. 3:27 Paul said, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." He certainly was not teaching baptismal salvation, but he was saying that when we are saved, we are baptized into Christ, and so have put on Christ. When did we put on Christ? We put on Christ when we were saved.

Paul got into this same subject of baptism in Romans 6. And there it is also related to salvation. Water baptism is to picture what Paul said in Romans 6, but water baptism has no part in our salvation. So Paul could not have been speaking about water baptism. Besides, if people are saved by water baptism, then salvation is at least partly of works, but it cannot be all of grace. Listen to the words we find there at the beginning of Romans 6:

- 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4).

Our union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, is called *a baptism*. And this is the "one baptism." And so in saying that "there is . . . one baptism," the Apostle was stating what we all know so well, and believe with all of our hearts, and that is that there is only one way to be saved, and that is through Christ. It is a salvation by grace without any works on our part. Christ is the only Savior. There is no other salvation. Cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12. And so what Paul was teaching here is that "there is . . . one salvation, only one Savior, only One Who can cleanse us from our sins.

This brings us to the seventh and last point that Paul was declaring as basic doctrines which are the foundation of our faith.

4:6 Here he said that "there is . . . One God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." This is very similar to the statement which Paul made at the end of Romans 11. He said this, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

As Christians we believe that there is only one Holy Spirit, and only one Lord Jesus Christ, and only one God and Father of all" – not of all human beings, but of all who are His children through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And that first "all," the "one God and Father of all," carries over in helping us to understand the next three all's. He is "above all" of us who believe, and He is "through all" of us who believe, and He is "in all" of us who believe.

Eadie made a very wonderful description of what it means that the Father is "above all." Here is what he said: The great God is high over all, robed in unsurpassable glory. There is, and can be, no superior – no co-ordinate sovereignty. The universe, no less than the church, lies beneath, far beneath, His throne, and the jurisdiction of that throne, "high and lifted up," is paramount and unchallenged (p. 276).

Eadie also helps us to understand what it means that our God is "through all." He saw in this statement evidence of *the providence of God*. And he went on to explain it in these words:

The thought seems to be that of a pervading, and thus a sustaining and working presence. Though He is "over all," yet He lives not in remote splendor and indifference, for He is "through all"; His influence being everywhere felt in its upholding energies (p. 277).

Finally Paul said that God is "in you all." No believer is excluded from any of these great statements which help us to understand God, His glory, His presence, and His sustaining power in our lives.

I had a friend in Seminary who wrote his master's thesis on *the indwelling presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. We are all more familiar with the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit. We can say with Paul as he did say that "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). And we know that the Holy Spirit has been given to be in us, and that there He abides with us forever. Cf. John 14:16-17. But the truth that the Father is in us, is a truth that is hardly ever emphasized. But we have in here in Eph. 4:6 in the word, "in you all." Not just in some of you, but in all of you. What a blessed people we are! But what is the truth that we need to understand here?

It speaks not just of a doctrine which we need to know, but of the very presence of the Lord with Whom we are to live in fellowship, upon Whom we are to depend day by day for the strength we need and for the guidance we need in all we say and do and think. Quoting Eadie again, he said that God fills us "with the light and love of His gracious presence" (p. 277).

Now what has been the Apostle Paul's primary reason for these seven great statements of Biblical truth? These are the doctrines that we need to know, and to "keep," to guard, to proclaim them and to stand by them regardless of how many of them, or all of them, might be opposed. We cannot walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called, nor can we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, unless we stand firmly upon each of these seven great truths.

As we complete this section of the epistle, let me read these first six verses of Ephesians 6 to you again. These are words well worth committing to memory, words we need to read frequently, and meditate on every opportunity we have, until the truth of what Paul said here grips our hearts, as it obviously had gripped his heart, so that we will be faithful in standing for the truth in these days when many who profess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ do not hold firmly to these truths as truths worth living for, and if need be, to die for.

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4:7 In the first six verses of chapter 4, the Apostle Paul addressed all believers, and, as we have just seen, in verse 6, he stressed the relationship which "all" believers have to our God and our Father. He is "the Father of all, and through all, and in you all." But then as he moved into verse 7, the Apostle Paul addressed himself to "every one of us." And Paul indicated by the word $\delta\epsilon$ that he was moving to a new subject. Our salvation is the same. The relationship that we have with the Father, is the same. But what is different is the grace that God has given to each one of us to fulfill the place that we have in the body of Christ. We are all in the body, but we as members differ from each other, and we all have different functions in the church. This "grace" of which the Apostle Paul was speaking is the spiritual gift which every believer has in order to fulfill the place that he has in the body of Christ. This is what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote 1 Cor. 12:11: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." We can say that the gift comes from the Father through Christ by the Holy Spirit.

And this is "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." That is, "the measure of the gift" we receive is determined by our Lord. No one in the body of Christ is unnecessary, nor unimportant. Each of us fulfills the place that the Lord has determined that we shall have, and He has given us the grace, the gift, to function in that place. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote 1 Cor. 15:10:

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.

The fact that this gift is called a "grace" is an indication that it, like our salvation, is completely undeserved! All of the abilities we have have been given to us by God, but this is beyond our natural abilities; this is a spiritual gift which is to be used for the edification of the church. And whatever our gift might be, it is not for us to become proud and boastful about it, but, on the other hand, we need to be humbled that God would so bless us in any way as to use us for the blessing of His church.

How do we find out what our spiritual gift is? It comes about in the most ordinary ways, and we may not have recognized the way the Lord uses us as a gift at all. It certainly is not for us to go around saying what gift we have, but we can be made aware of our gift by the way other people are blessed by what we are and what we do.

While I was the pastor of the Central Bible Church here in Portland, one Sunday morning at the close of the service a young man came to me as I was shaking hands with the people, and he asked me if I knew of any Christian organization that was looking for an administrator. He told me that he had just graduated from a Christian school in California, and he knew that he had the gift of administration and he had come to Portland

looking for a job. I asked him if he had ever been an administrator for an organization, and he said "no," but quickly added that he knew he had that gift. I never saw him again, but he clearly was very mistaken about his gift. We don't need to know what our gift is. We simply need to see what doors the Lord opens for us, how he blesses us, what we enjoy doing, and how he uses us to bless others. It is not for us to say what our gifts are, but for us to walk in fellowship with the Lord, humbly trusting Him to guide and to bless us as we seek to minister to others in any way that the Lord may lead. Sometimes Christians are inclined to feel useless, and without any gift. But if the Word here is true, we all are gifted in some way, and sometimes in different ways to minister to the body of Christ. Sometimes it is by prayer. Sometimes it is by letter writing. Sometimes it is by encouraging others in the Lord. You don't have to be a preacher, or even a leader in the church, to be a blessing to others. The whole idea in spiritual gifts is that God intends to use us all. How He uses us, is up to Him.

Now let us move on to verse 8.

4:8 It is because of the truth which Paul expressed in verse 7 that God said in Psa. 68:18 these words: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou has led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men . . ." There may have been some victory which David was referring to in Psalm 68, but the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to apply this to Christ. The Lord had died, He had arisen victoriously leading captives captive (a very likely reference to His victory over Satan, sin, death, and all the forces of evil), and then received gifts which He was to bestow upon His people. So the gifts which our Lord gives to us are like the spoil which a victor in war would share with his people after he returns from the conflict. Paul certainly was not saying that the gifts our Lord gives to us were taken away from Satan and the demons, but he simply was using that human example to picture spiritual truth.

The translators of the KJV regarded verses 9 and 10 as being a parenthesis. Now let me give you the dictionary's definition of a parenthesis just so all of us will know the place that verses 9 and 10 have in this chapter.

A parenthesis is "a word, phrase, or sentence, by way of comment or explanation, inserted in, or attached to, a sentence grammatically complete without it" (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition*, p. 720).

The sentence which the Apostle Paul began in verse 8, is completed in verse 11 and following. But verses 9 and 10 are inserted between these verses which are complete without them, to help us to understand our Lord's ascension and the giving of gifts to men.

4:9 So the parenthesis begins.

In order for Christ to ascend back to heaven, it meant that He had to descend to the earth first, which He did. But He not only descended to the earth, but He descended "into the lower parts of the earth." This means, not that He actually went to hell (because I don't believe that He did), but that He descended into Hades, the grave, the place of the dead. That is, our Lord really died.

This is the first part of the parenthesis. The second part follows in verse 10.

4:10 The One Who descended, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was "the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." The Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God when He became incarnate, and His suffering, death for sins, and His resurrection did not in any way change or lessen what He was when He came. He was still the sinless Son of God when He ascended that He had been when He came. The only difference in His ascension was that He "ascended up far above all heavens" as the God-man, glorified.

Adam Clarke said, "His abasement was unparalleled, so also is His exaltation."

On the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ, none surpasses what we have 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 (Phil. 2:5-11).

In connection with this passage on the humiliation of our Lord, and leading as it did to His exaltation, it is good for us to remember what the Apostle Paul said at the beginning. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And we need to remember this in connection with our spiritual gifts and the way the Lord may be pleased to use us. Christ did not exalt Himself; God did. But God did not humble Him; He humbled himself. We are to be humbled over our salvation and whatever gifts the Lord may give us. But it is up to the Lord alone to lift us up however He may be pleased to do so. I say this by way of a parenthesis.

Paul ended verse 10 by saying of our Lord, "that He might fill all things." Adam Clarke made this comment on this phrase:

[That he might fill all things.] That he might be the fountain whence all blessings might flow; dispensing all good things to all his creatures, according to their several capacities and necessities; and, particularly, fill both converted Jews and Gentiles with all the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit.:

Even unbelievers are the recipients of God's common grace, but only believers are the recipients of the gifts of His grace.

Now having explained all of this, the Apostle Paul went on to speak of some of the particular gifts which our Lord has given to His church.

4:11 Pick up the thought from verse 8.

Christ has given to His church these among other gifts that He has given: some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers (or pastor-teachers). Let us seek to identify the ministry of each.

"He gave some" – The "He" is emphatic, "He," not someone else. "He" chose them, they did not volunteer or appoint themselves. It is as Westcott wrote in his commentary on this verse,

And in fulfilment of His victor's work He Himself, of His own free love (αὐτότος) gave . . . The gift was a double gift. Christ first endowed the men, and then He gave them, so endowed, to the Church (p. 62).

These are NT ministries. We all know who the original apostles were. They are listed for us in all three of the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke – Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16. I have selected Mark's account to read to you because it explains some of the reasons why God chose them, that is, what their ministry was. Cf. Mark 3:13-19:

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto

him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

16 And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house (Mark 3:13-19).

We see that the Lord chose the original twelve for three reasons that are mentioned here:

- 1) "That they should be with Him."
- 2) "That He might send them forth to preach."
- 3) "To have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons."

We also know that several of them were used to give us our NT.

We all are familiar with the tragic story of how Judas betrayed the Lord, and afterwards committed suicide. Matthias was elected by the early Christians to replace Judas as they were waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Acts 1:15-26.

Later, after he was converted, Saul of Tarsus was called to be an apostle. We know him as the Apostle Paul. There is no indication anywhere in the epistles of the NT that he considered himself to be the replacement for Judas, and that the Lord's people had made a mistake in electing Matthias to take Judas' place. Instead, in 1 Corinthians 15 we have his own statements to the effect that he was not one of the twelve. In 1 Cor. 15 where the Apostle Paul was telling about those who saw the Lord after His resurrection, he said in verse 5, "And that He [the Lord] was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve." And then in verses 7-9 he wrote this:

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:7-9).

So this means that we can say that there were actually fourteen men who were apostles: the original twelve, then Matthias replaced Judas, and the Apostle Paul was added later.

We see from 1 Cor. 9:1-2 what else was required of apostles. Listen to these words:

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 (1 Cor. 9:1-2).

When the Apostle Paul appeared before King Agrippa and Festus, he told them what had happened to him on the road to Damascus. And this is what we read in Acts 26:13-19:

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will

appear unto thee;

- 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,
18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.
19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision (Acts 26:13-19).

So the Apostle Paul saw the Lord, not while the Lord was still on earth, but after the Lord had ascended back to heaven and appeared to Paul in special revelations given to him. So Paul met the basic qualification, and the ministry to which he was appointed was identical with that which Mark recorded for us in the verses which I have read to you.

So much for the apostles, but the position they held cannot be overemphasized. There were no successors to the apostles.

What about the prophets? What were they, and who were they?

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As their name suggests, *they were primarily preachers*. A list of some of them is given in Acts 13:1:

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Barnabas, Paul's companion on his first missionary journey, was a prophet. And even Saul himself (the Apostle Paul) was not only an apostle, but he was likewise a prophet. He preached the message God had revealed to him.

In Acts 15:32 we learn that Judas and Silas were prophets:

And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

The particular ministry that Luke referred to here followed the Council in Jerusalem.

And we must not forget Agabus. In Acts 11:27-28 we are told this:

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Here we see that these NT prophets, on certain occasions, were enabled by God to predict the future.

And listen to what is written in Acts 21:10-11:

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

So as many have said, NT prophets were forthtellers and foretellers, but primarily forthtellers. The same was true of OT prophets. The writers of the NT epistles, also wrote on occasion as prophets, as those who predicted future events and conditions. For example, Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:1 and the verses which followed:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. . ."

There were no successors to the prophets in the sense that they predicted the future. As preachers and teachers of the Word, we can proclaim what is predicted in Scripture, but we cannot, and are not, to go beyond what is written in the Word of God.

The third group that Paul mentioned were "evangelists." The very name suggests one who preaches the Gospel. But it seems that the word had a very special meaning in NT times, and that meaning is brought out in Paul's letter to the church at Rome in Rom. 15:18-24, especially in verse 20:

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company (Rom. 15:18-24).

So the Apostle Paul was an apostle, a prophet, and an evangelist.

Philip, who was one of the original deacons, was also an evangelist. This is point out in Acts 21:8:

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

We also see in what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:5 that Timothy was an evangelist:

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Again quoting Westcott, he said that "the work of the εὐαγγελιστής was probably that of a missionary to the unbelieving" (p. 62). Dr. Chafer, in his book *True Evangelism*, took the position that an evangelist was a pioneer missionary. This is an interesting point in the light of the way the term *evangelist* is used today, and has been used for many years. Lenski said in his commentary, "'Evangelists' spread the gospel in new places. . . They . . . planted the gospel in other localities" (p. 528). Moule defined an evangelist as one who was "devoted expressly to the *extension* of the Church rather than to its internal edification" (p. 191). Although when people were saved, the evangelists did often seek to establish the new converts in the truth of God.

The last group that Paul mentioned, "pastors and teachers," are generally considered to be "two sides of one work; men who were set over the local 'flocks' of believers to be their leaders and instructors in the Lord (Moule, p. 191). And so many expositors speak of *pastor-teachers*. A pastor is a shepherd, and the main way in which he shepherds is by teaching, teaching the Word of God. He certainly is not mainly an administrator, nor is he an entertainer (the apostles would have been astounded by such a thought), but they were to do as the Apostle Paul exhorted the elders of Ephesus to do in Acts 20:28:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

And so all elders actually have this responsibility. They are "overseers" (the Greek word from which we get

the English word, *bishops*). The pastor-teachers do everything for the people of God that a shepherd does for his sheep – feeding, guiding, protecting, and seeking them when they go astray. The word "pastor" fits in perfectly with the idea that the people of God are "sheep."

It is interesting that the Apostle Peter called our Lord Jesus Christ both a Pastor and an Overseer. Cf. 1 Peter 2:25: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Now in describing what each of these offices was, we have seen what was involved in their work. But the Apostle Paul in the next verse we will consider has stated very clearly what *all* of them were to be concerned about. Let us notice what he wrote beginning with verse 12.

4:12 (Read.)

Many of you have heard me say that my Greek professor at Dallas, Dr. Everett Harrison, used to tell his students that there should not be any commas in this verse except at the end. The NASB has omitted one of them, but has left the second one. And so they have printed verse 12 like this: "For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

The Greek word translated "for" can be translated, *with a view to*. That is, the Lord has given the men mentioned in verse 11 *for the following purpose* (not *purposes*).

Lenski has done away with the commas in the verse. His translation reads, "In view of the complete outfitting of the saints for ministrations work for upbuilding of the body of Christ" (p. 529). And he expressed his conviction that the meaning of the verse has been obscured somewhat by the way commas have been used in verse 12.

The purpose for God's gift of these men to the Church begins with "the perfecting of the saints." The word "perfecting" means *equipping*, or as Lenski has translated it, "in view of the complete outfitting of the saints." The Lord never intended that all of His work should be done by the Moseses, or the Joshuas, or the Davids, or the Jeremiahs in OT times, and He does not intend that in the body of Christ, the Church, all of the work was to be done by just the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. All of the saints, every child of God, is to be involved in the work of the ministry, *but for this work every saint, every individual saint, needs to be equipped!* And this equipping is done by teaching. This means the teaching of the truths of the Bible, and teaching as to how the truth is to affect every aspect of our lives. This is why Dr. Chafer used to say that *every local church ought to be a miniature Bible institute*. The ministry of the local church is to be focused particularly on the saints and their preparation to become involved in the ministry.

One reason that people in our churches today are so ready to accept every new idea that comes along, is because they do not understand what the ministry of the church is supposed to be. And so we have a lot of organizations outside of the church which are having a greater influence on our churches than the elders and deacons have. They are rightly called *parachurch* organizations. That word is formed with the Greek preposition *παρά* which means *by* or *along side of*. But they are not the local church, and they are not the God-appointed leaders of the local church. The same is true of Bible schools and seminaries. They are only helpful as long as they follow the pattern established in these verses, but when they change or add to what the Word of God teaches about the local church, then they become a detriment, and not an asset. Seminaries now are accepting women into their pastoral studies, and it is only a matter of time until women will be the pastors of churches which have claimed to be evangelical.

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Another inroad that parachurch organizations have made into the local church is through humanistic psychology. James Dobson is having a growing influence on churches everywhere, but James Dobson is a psychologist, not one who is trained in the truths of the Word of God.

Another misconception that some Christians have is that we ought to be block abortion clinics. I am strongly opposed to abortion, but it is legal in our country, and what we need to be doing is that the Lord would change the hearts of people so that they will see that abortion is murder in God's sight, and it is not an option for us. Those who get arrested for blocking the entrances to abortion clinics feel that they are being persecuted for righteousness' sake, but it is actually because of their own stupidity. Our country is not a Christian country, and it is a nation under judgment, which is only going to get worse. Our calling is by the Gospel message to snatch people from the fiery judgment of God which is to come.

Another way the local churches are being sidetracked in these days is by their involvement in politics. There is absolutely no place, according to Scripture, for Christians and churches to be involved in a "Christian coalition." Did the Lord Jesus get involved in politics? Or did the Apostles Paul, or Peter, or John. We are admonished to pray for our leaders, but changing government is not our calling. When God has worked in powerful ways through His church, society has been changed, but this world is passing away with all of its lusts. See 1 John 2:17. "But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." No country has ever gone the way our country is going, and has survived. We are already under the judgment of God, but most Americans don't know it. But we all are going to find out that God's judgments get worse until we realize that we cannot prosper as a nation as long as we ignore that which is pleasing to God. So the business of the church as far as the world is concerned, is to preach the Gospel that people might be saved. And as far as the church itself is concerned, our business for our people is building them up in the faith so that we all can be involved in the ministry which the Lord has given to us. We all need to be concerned about "the edifying of the body of Christ."

What churches need today is pastor-teachers who will devote themselves to the study of the Word of God, and then who will devote their lives to teaching their people the Word of God, and only the Word of God. The more the local church gets away from the Word of God, the less effective it becomes because it is being robbed of its unique power. We need to pray that there will be a real revival of Bible teaching in our churches today, and that our pastor-teachers will be men who know and love the Word of God, and who teach it under the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The saints, the people of God, need to be equipped for the work of the ministry (even to know what it really is supposed to be), and such equipping can only be accomplished through the teaching of God's precious and infallible and holy Word of God. We all need to be working together for the building up of the body of Christ.

Verse 12 is one of the most important verses in the Bible for the church today. And it will not be until we get back to the truth expressed in this verse that the church will once again become a mighty force in the world.

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Let me point out again that verse 12 begins with "the saints." Although this is plural, "the saints" are not equipped as a group, but individually – one by one! And so it is important to see that each believer is being instructed in the great doctrines of Scripture, and then that they are also helped to see how the Word of God is

to affect their lives. And as saints are thus equipped, it is obvious that the body of Christ is being edified. The pastor and the other elders are to be primarily teachers, teachers of the Word of God, and overseers of the Lord's people in their walk with the Lord. And let every pastor and elder remember, as the Apostle Peter said toward the end of his first epistle, that they are not to be lords over God's heritage, but they are to be examples to the flock. See 1 Peter 5:1-4, especially verse 3.

4:13 This verse gives us the ultimate goal which is set by God Himself for apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

In this verse the apostle Paul used the little preposition $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ three times. This would have been just a little clearer if the translators of the KJV had changed just one word. And that one word is the word "in." If they had made it "unto" it would have given us a clearer picture of the original Greek because they did use the word "unto" two times later here in verse 13. So let me change that word, and then you will see clearly the three divisions that Paul made in this verse. Let me do it this way:

Till we all come

unto 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.

Let me point out too that there should be no comma after "faith" because the phrase, "of the knowledge of the Son of God," belongs with "the unity of the faith."

The NKJV has correctly translated it but it uses the word "to" instead of "unto," which is just as accurate. So the NKJV renders this verse like this:

Till we all come

to the unity of the faith (no comma) and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
to a perfect man,
to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Now these are not three separate goals, but it is that the first is explained by the second, and the third explains the third. So for us all to attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God is to become a perfect man, and the perfect man is one who has attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

But one point we need to understand is that the "perfect man" which the Apostle Paul was talking about, is not an individual believer, but it is the whole body of Christ. The Church is the "perfect man." So Paul was speaking about all of us together who are in the body of Christ.

And now we are in a better position to see what Paul had in mind when he said in verse 3 of this chapter that we are to be "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And that unity is based upon the details given to us in verses 4 through 6.

It is, first, that we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." Let's take it just that far for the present.

"Till we all come," that is, *until we all arrive at*, or *until we all attain*. Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, was declaring a purpose which includes and affects every child of God. In the light of all of the divisions that we see in the body of Christ today, this goal seems to be one that is utterly impossible to reach. Just think of how many ways those of us who are in the body of Christ differ as to our interpretation of Scripture. "The faith," like Paul's "one faith" in verse 5 of this chapter, points to the Bible where we find the great doctrines of the

Christian faith. We all use the same Bible, but there are many differences between us as to the way we interpret the Scriptures. We have Calvinists and Arminians, and those who are in between, sometimes called "Cal-minians." We believe that salvation is eternal, but there are believers who sincerely believe that it is possible for a person to lose his salvation. We believe that we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but there are those who believe that you have to pray for the Holy Spirit to indwell you. We differ as to modes of baptism, and there are differences among us as to the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Some believe that we are still under the Law, but we believe that we are not under the Law. And we could go on and on pointing out other differences. But the fact is that we all have just one Bible, and we all claim (or most of us do) that what we believe is taught in this Bible.

Now if this were the case, then we would have to say that the Bible is full of contradictions. But the fact is that the Bible does not contradict itself. It is one book written over a period of some 1600 years by approximately 40 different writers, but all of them wrote under the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit.

I can't begin to point out the differences we have. And so I ask, "Is what the Apostle Paul mentioned here at all in the realm of possibility?" And I have to answer, "Yes, it is!" It is or you wouldn't have such a statement as we have here in Eph. 4:13. But I think that we have to say this: Just as none of us will be perfect until we get to heaven, so you are not going to have a perfect Church until we are all glorified! How, then, are we to be affected by what the Apostle Paul said here? *This is the goal toward which we all must be working. If the Holy Spirit was grieved by the divisions in the church at Corinth, what do you think the Spirit of God feels about the condition of the body of Christ on earth today? He must be grieved even more! And I am sure that He is. What, then, should we do about it?*

I have mentioned before that when some people in the professing church talk about unity, they mean that it is doctrine which divides us, and so we ought to forget about those doctrines over which we don't agree, and then we can have unity. ***That is not unity; that is apostasy! And that is entirely in conflict with what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian church almost two thousand years ago. He said, "Till we all come unto the unity of the faith."*** This is doctrinal unity! And doctrinal unity is the foundation of all true, Biblical unity. If we talk about a unity outside of the Bible and what it teaches, we are not talking about what the Apostle Paul had in mind.

And will you notice that the Apostle Paul (and remembering that he was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit) added to "the unity of the faith," "and the knowledge of the Son of God." It is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Key to understanding the oneness of Scripture. And I say this with reference to the OT as well as to the NT. Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God are so closely related to each other that you can't be wrong with either one without being wrong about the other. The Bible is a book about our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so I ask again, "What shall we do about the terrible situation that exists in the Church, the body of Christ, today?" Paul was not speaking about unity with people who only profess to be Christians, but who never have been really saved. We will never be at one with them anymore than we will with people who make no profession at all. We are to be concerned about people who truly know the Savior.

What better answer can there be to that question than the three verses with which the Apostle Paul introduced this whole subject. (Read Eph. 4:1-3.) We need to be careful about our own walk. We need to be humble. We need to be patient with each other always showing love for those who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And it is reasonable to expect that the remainder of this epistle will also be of help to us. But we always need to keep in mind that our Lord is moving His Church toward that time when all of us will have the same

understanding about God and the marvelous book that He has given to us and preserved for us.

Do you remember a statement that the Apostle Paul made early in this epistle which bears upon this subject of unity in the body of Christ? I am referring to Eph. 1:10. (Read.) Some day all of our differences will be gone, and we will all have perfect understanding of the truth of God. Now we see through a glass darkly. None of us has perfect understanding of the truth, but then we shall know as we are known. And just to jump ahead a couple of verses, let us seek by the grace of God to do what the Apostle said we are to do in Eph. 5:15. (Read.)

We are all to be concerned about "the edifying of the body of Christ," and working toward that time when the Lord comes when perfect unity in the truth and in the full knowledge (τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως) of the Son of God, will be realized by all who are in the body of Christ.

Then, too, we together will be that "perfect man," fully matured as the body of Christ, and "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is God's certain purpose in our salvation that we will be like our precious Savior. When this takes place at the coming of the Lord, then the body of Christ will be complete, not only as to the number who make up that body, but as to the individual perfection of each member of that body. We are not there yet, but that is where we are headed, and we can say to the glory of God that we are all sure to arrive.

In contrast with "the perfect man," in verse 14 the Apostle Paul described the present, pitiful state of the body of Christ, looking at us as individual members of that body.

4:14 "Children" is in contrast with the "perfect" in verse 13. Notice how Paul put himself with those to whom he was writing when he said "we" - "that we should no longer be children" (NKJV). It seems that even in the early church one of the greatest problems was the spiritual immaturity of believers. There is nothing wrong with being "children," but there is something wrong when we remain children. The word that the Apostle Paul used here was *νήπιοι*. And this means *a baby, one who is spiritually immature, either untaught or one who has failed to understand what he has been taught.*

The Apostle Paul used this word in 1 Cor. 3:1 where we read, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." And we also find this same word in Heb. 5:13, "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."

You see, one of the major reasons for the differences we have as Christians, is due to the fact that we are immature in our understanding of the truth. We have learned to "show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

And those who are immature in the faith, either because they haven't been taught or have not learned what they have been taught, are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Have you noticed how it seems like the majority of professing Christians go after first one teacher who comes along, and then somebody else comes along, and they spend their lives following first one person and then another. These teachers may be sincere in what they are doing, but they are deceivers. This is the meaning of the word "sleight," and it has its roots in men who rolled the dice in Bible times. It finds its illustration in the casinos of today. These teachers find an easy prey among believers who do not know the truth. "Cunning craftiness" speaks of the subtle and deceptive way in which the Devil deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. They claim to have the truth, but they actually are spreading heresy and error. And like a wild animal stalking his prey, "they lie in wait to deceive."

And so Paul said that such infants are "tossed to and fro," to picture their absolute helplessness because of their own immaturity and lack of understanding of the truth.

It seems that this is how many of the people of God in Ephesus could be described, and the same condition has been prevalent among many of the Lord's people, or those who profess to be, in every generation.

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At this point Bishop Moule made a very important observation, an observation which is very apparent in these verses which have to do with the ministry of those men who are God's gift to the church. This is what he wrote in his commentary:

For alas, there are those around you who not only do lead you astray, but mean to do it, laying deliberate traps, and arranging well-drawn methods, *on purpose to guide you away from the Christ whom they do not love* (italics mine, p 193).

Notice in verse 12 that we are "the body of Christ." And in verse 13 Paul spoke of "the knowledge of the Son of God," and then that we are to attain "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And then in verse 15 we are told that we are to "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

There are two ways in which we can detect false teachings:

- 1) Is the teacher giving us the Word of God, the truth of the Word of God, the doctrine of the Word of God. In order to be able to answer that question, we need to be acquainted with the truth of the Word ourselves. False teachers flourish where there is a dearth of true Bible teaching. However, we also need to know that even where the Bible is being taught, people may not be learning as much as we think they are learning. This calls for prayer on the part of the teachers, much prayer, followed by the careful teaching of the Word, and that, in turn, needs to be followed by the application of the Word to the heart.
- 2) Is Christ at the very heart of the teaching that we are hearing. As Bishop Moule said in the quotation that I have given to you, it is the purpose of many teachers to guide us away from Christ. So find out what any teacher believes about Christ, and then listen carefully to see what place Christ has in his teaching. Many teachers can be very convincing in what they say, and yet never refer to Christ, or, if they do, they give Him less of a place than He is given in the Word of God.

What is the remedy? This brings us to verse 15.

4:15 Verse 13 gives us God's purpose for His people. Verse 14 shows what many were, but what they were not to be. Then verse 15 shows what was needed in the lives of those who were still in a state of immaturity. False teaching leaves people in spiritual infancy, but it is through the truth of God's Word, knowing what it is, believing it, and then living it, that we come to maturity in Christ. They needed the truth. And those who have the truth are to speak the truth in love. This is what is needed and what is required if believers are to grow in the Lord.

When the Apostle Paul wrote of "speaking the truth in love," he used a word which means not merely speaking, but *following the truth in our daily living* (Matthew Henry), or "living the truth" (Westcott). Moule says that it is more than "truth-speaking," although it includes that. It is "being followers of the truth."

And the "in love" can have many applications. It is our love for the truth of God's Word itself. But it is also out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ Who is at the very heart of all that the Scriptures teach us. If we love the Word, and love the Christ of the Word, false teachers are going to have a difficult time, if not an impossible task, of getting us away from the Word and its Christ-centered message.

So if we are "speaking the truth in love," and living it out in our lives, this is how we grow up into Christ, Who is our Head. And this is the only way that we can be protected from false teachers and their false teaching. From the very beginning of human history we see that the Devil has specialized in false teaching, in misinterpreting what God said, and his vicious attacks upon all people continue to this very day.

The fact that we are to "grow up into Him [Christ] in all things," means that the Word of God is to be applied to every part of our being – our thoughts, our words, our actions, and ultimately to every part of our character. It includes what we look at, what we listen to, where we go, the friendships which we establish. This is why the Apostle Paul told the believers at Thessalonica,

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23).

I like what Matthew Henry had to say about growing up into Christ:

The more we grow into an acquaintance with Christ, faith in him, love to him, dependence upon him, the more we shall flourish in every grace. He is the head; and we should thus grow, that we may thereby honour our head. The Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ.

4:16 As we come to the last verse in this section of Ephesians, which began with the first verse of chapter 4, we see that the Apostle Paul used a healthy human body to illustrate the Body of Christ, the Church. And we need to see how important the Head is in the Body of Christ as stated in verse 15. As members in the Body of Christ, we are all related to the Head. But we are also related to each other under the Head, as is the case with the various members of the human body. And it is when every part of the body is working effectually under the head, and in each member's relationship with the other members of the body, that the body grows, and is healthy and strong. And so it is with the Church, the Body of Christ.

This verse gives us evidence that the Apostle Paul had a most amazing understanding of the functioning of the human body, and this helped him immeasurably in understanding the place that each of us has, in the use of the gift or gifts which God has given us, toward making the Body of Christ a mighty force for good in the world in every generation.

This leads me to say what I have said many times before today. It is that if we are to be a mighty force for good in the world as it is today, the Church must be strong. And if it is to be strong, every member in the Body of Christ must be strong. And we are strengthened by our relationship with Christ through the Word, and the reality of our fellowship with Christ is to be seen in the precious fellowship we have with each other, and the concern that we show every day for each other. And it is our personal spiritual health that obviously was Paul's great burden as he moved from this point to the end of this epistle.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – March 22, 1999

Ephesians 4:17-32

Intro: We have said that the practical section of Paul's letter to the Ephesian church, begins with the first verse of chapter 4 – and we believe that this is true. But after just 3 verses of practical exhortation, the Apostle Paul went back to teaching, teaching about his main theme, the Body of Christ. And it is not until we get to verse 17 that he got back to his practical teaching.

As we have now come to that point, I want you to notice that Paul's emphasis in this section (4:17-32) is basically *negative*. By that I mean that Paul was telling them here what they were *not to do*, *how they were not to live*. This does not mean that it is all negative with no positive instruction, but the negative emphasis is stronger than the positive. And to some extent that carries over into chapter 5, especially in the first 14 verses. The reason for this is that the Christian life is so completely different from the lives people live who do not know the Lord. We are not to expect that the people of the world will live like we do, but we are to expect that any person who claims to be a Christian will live as Christians should live. But in order for us to be keenly aware that there is a different way of life for Christians, the Apostle Paul placed special emphasis upon *how we are not to live*. And so in the first three verses of this section (vv. 17-19) Paul specifically told them that they were not to walk the way "other Gentiles walk," that is, "other Gentiles" who do not know the Lord. And so let us begin our study of this part of the epistle by noting what Paul said in verses 17, 18, and 19.

4:17 "This I say therefore," are words which tie together what the Apostle Paul was about to write with what he had just written. He had been stressing how we as individual members of the Body of Christ need to seek to be mature in Christ so that the Body of Christ will function on earth as God intended it to function (for the glory of God, for the blessing of every member in the Body, and for the ministry that God has given us in the world for the spread of the Gospel. If we are to grow in the Lord, and if the Church is to be what God intends for it to be, *then there are certain things that we must not do*. I hope you see the connection between the first part of this chapter, and the second and last part.

Paul was speaking with his apostolic authority. This is how he began in the first verse of the epistle: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." This is why he said here in 4:17, "This I say therefore."

But he quickly added, "and testify in the Lord." As an apostle he was not free to say anything that he wanted to say, but he was the Lord's spokesman. If any men were ever called to deliver the Word of the Lord to people, whether saved or unsaved, it was the apostles. Their authority supports the message of the NT. And so we do not find the Apostle Paul just giving his own opinions as to how the Lord's people should "walk," but he was delivering to them the Word of the Lord. He was giving them the will of God for their lives.

"Henceforth," or *no longer*, means that *never again were they to live like the people of the world live*. "Other Gentiles" are Gentiles who do not know the Lord. The Ephesian believers used to live like the "other Gentiles" still live, but since Christ had saved them and changed their hearts, they really couldn't live like they used to live and speak and think, *but they needed to be told that they were not to live the way they used to live*. And then Paul proceeded to tell them about the old life.

And the first thing that he had to say about it was that it was they were not to "walk, in the vanity of their mind." "Vanity" speaks of the aimlessness of man's life by nature. He is incapable of thinking correctly about things. Many expositors use the word *illusion*. People can only be happy with this life, as Bishop Moule has

said, because they are ignorant of the truth of God! They do not know what reality is. Their minds are clouded so that they cannot see things as they really are. They are incapable of thinking straight. They act as though this life is everything, and that there is no life hereafter, no God, no judgment. Many of these ideas are brought out in verses 18 and 19.

What Paul said here in these verses, 17, 18, and 19, he said more in detail in **Romans 1:21-32**. (Read.)

Lenski had this to say about Paul's words here:

Paul does not say that the Gentiles are addlebrained [without brains], that their mind has nothing in it; it is only too full. He says that all that their mind contains leads them to nothing. It puts them on a course that ends far from the goal. Their mind directs them on a wild-goose chase (p. 553).

Man claims to be so wise, but in the sight of God he is a fool. And as long as he chases his own thoughts, he will find that the good things that he thinks are ahead, are only a mirage. Lenski added, speaking of the last part of this verse:

What a picture! Men with thinking, willing minds, rational creatures, walking and walking on and on throughout life, following the dictates of a mind that leads them at every step and at the end to nothing, to monumental, tragic failure! (p. 554).

What a difference it makes when a person by salvation is led out of darkness into God's marvelous light!

But let us go on into verse 18.

4:18 Here Paul was not saying that man is in a state of darkness from which he could bring himself out, but he was saying that his mind, his understanding, was utter darkness. It is true that they live in a world of spiritual darkness, but that darkness has penetrated every part of their beings. They are blinded by it, and the Devil only makes it worse so that they are kept from the Gospel which is their only hope. And in this nation of ours we are seeing that darkness getting darker and darker and darker. We may find out in the coming days that our senators stepped over the line of God's patience when they refused to take a stand for the truth because they were so afraid that they might lose their jobs. They are blind, spiritually blind, and most of the people they lead are blind, and they are all falling into the ditch of their own foolishness, and of the judgment of God. And if you ever see spiritual blindness at its worst it is in the ALCU. They are a curse to our country!

"Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." Their ignorance of God and their ignorance of what is really true, have "alienated" them "from the life of God," and this is salvation. Their hearts are blinded, which not only means that they are incapable of understanding spiritual truth, but they are hardened in that condition.

What we are reading about in these verses is **total depravity**. Sin has invaded and infected every part of man's being, and it is everywhere evident in the way man thinks and in the way man lives. Man's condition before God is absolutely hopeless. Sin has ruined him beyond repair. No amount of reformation can change a man's heart. What man needs is regeneration, and that is only possible through the saving grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. In all the years since the Apostle Paul wrote these words, man's condition by nature has not changed. Man is just as bad as he ever has been, but it may be that we are seeing more evidence of it because God has obviously been withdrawing His hand more and more so that man can follow the inclinations of his own heart, and fall deeper and deeper into trouble and farther and farther away from God.

Verse 19 shows how things get progressively worse. And we can see this taking place in our own society. Perhaps we are very close to the coming of the Lord. If the Lord doesn't come, I shudder to think of what can

happen right here in our own country, and what is happening, because instead of waking up and realizing how much we need God's blessing, we seem more intent than ever that we are going to keep God from having anything at all to do with our lives. And this only leads to greater and more tragic trouble.

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4:19 What the Apostle Paul said here is the result of what he had just written in verses 17 and 18. Those who walk aimlessly and without God, with their understanding darkened, without the life that comes from God, and because of the hardness and blindness of their hearts, demonstrate by their lives that they are in bondage to sin. Note how the Apostle expressed it.

"Who being past feeling" – They become apathetic. They become calloused. They sin with impunity, that is, they do so without any fear of punishment, or without any feeling that sin can harm them, or that they will suffer loss in any way by persisting in a sinful life. And all of this means that the more a person sins, the less concerned he is because it is sin, and he is satisfied to continue on in things which his conscience had formerly told him are wrong.

And so they "give themselves over unto lasciviousness." It becomes a matter of self-sacrifice to sin. A person may experience a lot of pain because of sin, but this no longer is any deterrent to his or her sinning. In fact, just the opposite takes place. "Lasciviousness" is lust which is out of control. It is outrageous and shameless sin. A person may not want it to be like that, or think that it will be that way, but he find out that he is a slave to the wickedness that is in his heart. He will persist in doing that which can only lead to total disgrace.

Note the difference between this passage and what was stated in Romans 1. In Romans 1 we see how God abandons man to his sin, but here in Ephesians 4 we are told how man delivers himself over to more and more sinning. John Eadie was right when he said that "self-abandonment to deeper sin is the Divine judicial penalty of sin" (p. 332).

But that is not all.

Such depraved behavior is not limited to such immoral behavior as has been described up to the point, but it includes "all uncleanness," all kinds of uncleanness, "with greediness," which is covetousness, or the love of money.

And so, as Lenski and others have pointed out, two sins are mentioned here as companion sins, and "they are special marks of paganism" (Lenski, p. 558). They picture "the entire Gentile world in all its depravity" (*Ibid.*). They are sexual lust and covetousness.

Eadie made this comment about the combination of sexual sins and covetousness:

This spirit of covetous extortion was an accompaniment of their sensual indulgences. Self was the prevailing power—the gathering in of all possible objects and enjoyments on [one's self] was the absorbing occupation. This accompaniment of sensualism sprang from the same root with itself, and was but another form of its development. The heathen world manifested the intense spirit of acquisition. It showed itself in its unbounded licentiousness, and its irrepressible thirst for gold. There might be reckless and profligate expenditures on wantonness and debauchery, but with was combined with insatiable cupidity [desire to be wealthy] . . . Self in everything; God in nothing (Eadie, p. 334).

Or, as Bishop Westcott said, "Self takes the place of God" (p. 67). And he referred to Col. 3:5 which I quote here along with the two verses which follow:

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them (Col. 3:5-7).

To "mortify" these lusts that are in our hearts is to subdue them, to take a positive stand against them primarily by replacing them with the fruit of the Spirit and a life in which we are concerned about holiness.

Isn't this what we see in our country today? We are a nation occupied with sex and money. The people of our country were willing to close their eyes to the sins and the lawless acts of our President as long as our economy was giving them what they wanted. And our governmental representatives were, most of them, willing to close their eyes to wrongdoing in order to safeguard their positions and their income. We seem oblivious to the fact that thousands of people are losing their jobs, and that the experts are saying that the stock market is very, very fragile. God has so many ways of pulling the rug out from under us that there ought to be a widespread move among people crying out to God in repentance for His mercy and forgiveness for the way we have despised Him and have chosen to go our own way.

The Bible is really timeless, isn't it? But let us remember that this potential for sinning is in all of us. The Apostle Paul was not just warning the Ephesian believers about the sinful condition of the world, *but he was warning them that they must not live like the other Gentiles live*. There are two kinds of Gentiles in the world: Gentiles who have turned to God and to Jesus Christ for their forgiveness of their sins, and Gentiles who are content to live their lives without God and without Christ. These are the "other Gentiles" that Paul was thinking about. But the possibility of sinning remains in all of us, and we need to live each day trusting the Lord to keep us from sin, and to put in our hearts an ever-increasing desire to be obedient to the Word of God, and to live for the glory of God.

What a commentary these verses are on the warning that the Lord God gave to Adam when He spoke to Adam about the dire consequences of disobeying God:

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:16-17).

Spiritual death, alienation from God and bondage to sin became the curse upon the human race which is still with us today. And this terrible judgment from God which at the present time is destroying the United States of America, can only be remedied by the Gospel of the grace of God. There is no other remedy. But man will try everything else rather than to turn to God through faith in Christ. Such is his blindness, his hardness, and really, his love of sin.

Concl: We all need to remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy on this very subject. His words are found in 1 Tim. 6:6-12:

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:6-12).

So among the first things that we need to learn in our lives as Christians, is that we must *not* go on living like we did before we were saved. We must *not* follow the deceived and destructive way of life that people live who do not know the Savior. And so it is important to remember *why* we lived the way we lived, and *why* people continue to live as they do even though it produces in them the very opposite of what they desire. It is not to our glory that we have been changed, but it is all to the glory of the God of grace and mercy Who has redeemed us by the precious blood of Christ. So in the deepest humility of heart we need to praise God continually for what He has done for us, and, at the same time, we need to spread the good news of salvation to those "other Gentiles" and *other Jews* who are still in darkness and held in the bondage of sin. It is only Christ Who can set sinners free, not free to sin, but free from sin, and free to pursue the holiness that is in Christ.

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4:20 After this brief but very complete description of how people in the world live, and why they do, a life which believers in Christ once lived to varying degrees, at this point the Apostle Paul was ready to move on to describe how Christians should conduct themselves in their daily living. And so we find here the words, "But ye have not so learned Christ."

Perhaps the Apostle Paul had in mind what he had written to the Ephesian believers in verse 4 of chapter 1, a point which is often overlooked by many who read that verse. Why was it that God chose us to salvation "before the foundation of the world"? It was "that we should be holy and without blame before Him." It is as Dr. Lloyd-Jones commented on this verse: "Paul's teaching is that the Gospel preaches holiness" (*Darkness and Light*, p.103). And this is the teaching of all of the Word of God. We are delivered from the power and bondage of sin, set free in Christ, not so that we can go on sinning, but that we may live a life of holiness, seeking in all things to be pleasing to the Lord.

4:21 And then he continued, "If so be," or *If indeed*. Bishop Moule, commenting on the Greek text said that these words "do not imply doubt, necessarily, but calls the reader to verify the statement. And this is a good thing for all of us to do. Have we really had personal dealings with the Lord, and do our hearts confirm that what the Apostle Paul has been saying here is really the truth? One who merely professes faith in Christ, but who has not experienced the saving grace of Christ, would take issue with the Apostle Paul. But a true believer would not! "Heard" points to the time of their salvation; "learned" speaks of what the Lord had taught them since they had been saved. Were they convinced that "the truth is in Jesus," or as He Himself said, "I am . . . the truth" (John 14:6). In this world so enveloped in spiritual darkness and sin, what a blessed discovery it is when our Lord "helps us to find that there is something substantial under all the fleeting forms of earthly phenomena" (Westcott, p. 67). In salvation the Lord deals with us, and after we are saved He continues to teach us and to guide us into His ways.

But we need to notice how our hearts respond to this kind of teaching. If we resent teaching which calls us away from our sins, and we still want to engage in them, this can be evidence that we have never really been saved. And so Paul was calling upon the Ephesians here to examine their hearts, and to make sure that they really did know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

4:22 What had the Lord taught them? What has the Lord taught all of His people? What conviction does a true believer have with regard to his past life? At this point the Apostle began to remind them. Let us make sure that this is what we have been taught, that this is our understanding of the Christian life.

There are three points that the Apostle Paul made here concerning the basic teaching of Christ concerning the conduct of all who truly know Him as their Savior. The first is here in verse 22. The second is in verse 23. And the third and last is in verse 24.

The first is this: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation [way of life] the old man."

The "ye" here is emphatic, as it is in verse 17. The Apostle Paul was speaking here (in v. 22), and there (in v. 17), what each of us is responsible to do. Of course we can only do this with the strength and determination that the Lord gives us, but this is the personal responsibility each one of us has. No one else is going to do it for us. Just like we would take off dirty clothes, we are to put off our former way of living.

As in several other verses in the NT, "conversation" means not our talk (although it includes our talk), but specifically it means *our walk, the way we used to live before we were saved*. But the word also is used in the NT to speak of the way we live after we are saved. It is used only twice in Ephesians (2:3 and here in 4:22), but it appears some fifteen times in the NT – over half of these times (eight) in the two epistles of Peter. There are times when it is used in English (KJV) where it is not the same word we are talking about here in Eph. 4:22. This is the word ἀναστροφῆ. And it is defined as *a mode of life, conduct, or deportment*.

"The old man" does not here mean our sin nature, but it means what we were before we were saved, and how we lived. "Old" means *old in contrast with the new life that we have in Christ*. That old life was a life constantly corrupting us because of the way our lusts were leading us astray. We are not to talk the way we used to. You can't listen to most programs on TV for any time at all before you hear corrupt, dirty, speech. We can't go to many of the places where we used to go. We can't look at the things that we used to enjoy looking at. Probably some of our reading habits have to be changed. Life undergoes a major transformation when we are saved. Before we lived for self. That objective has to come to an end. Now we are to live for Christ and in Christ.

The changes from the old life to the new life do not all take place at once. It may mean some real struggles on our part. There is a part of us that still tries to cling to the old life. Many battles may need to be fought and won. But the Lord will help us. In fact, we can't put off what we need to put off unless the Lord is our strength. Remember what the Apostle Paul wrote in verses 15 and 16 of this chapter.

We don't hear much any more about living lives of separation from the world. But the verses that tell us to be different and to separate are still in the Bible. For example, Rom. 12:1-2. And remember that great passage at the end of 2 Corinthians 6, where beginning with verse 14 we read these words:

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

CHAPTER 7

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

The Apostle Paul was quoting here from Isa. 52:11, showing that the Lord called His people in OT times to

turn away from the world and from its ways, and from its sin.

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4:23 As we move on to verse 23 we see that living for Christ is not just a matter of what we do not do, but it involves what we are and what we do. You see this contrast in Rom. 12:1-2 which I quoted a moment ago. And, as I have pointed out, you see the contrast between the negative and the positive aspects of Christian living all the way through this practical section of Ephesians. So, as Dr. Lloyd-Jones said in his message on this verse, Paul was at this point moving from the negative to the positive.

And so in moving from verse 22 to verse 23 we move from what we are not to be and do, to the matter of first concern in the transformation of our way of life. (Read verse 23.) Be sure to notice that this verse begins with "and," which is also true of verse 24. So it is clear that the Apostle Paul intended that these three verses be taken together. But what did he mean by this statement?

Bishop Westcott made this comment about this verse and verse 24:

Two things are required for the positive formation of the Christian character, the continuous and progressive renewal of our highest faculty (by which he means "the mind") and the decisive acceptance of 'the new man' (p. 68).

With reference to this renewal, Dr. Lloyd-Jones said that we can translate what Paul said here as "that you go on being constantly renewed" (*Darkness and Light*, p. 154). So it needs to be said that this renewal is a work that is constantly going on in our lives from the time that we are saved until we are finally "with the Lord."

I think that we all realize, or we should realize, how our thinking influences our behavior. Our minds influenced us before we were saved, and they certainly influence us after we are saved. And so after we are saved we need to learn to think about things in an entirely different manner. Our thinking is surely influenced by the Holy Spirit Who has come to dwell in us at the time of our salvation, but the Apostle Paul was not speaking of the Holy Spirit when he used this expression. The spirit of our minds is that attitude which enables us to change our way of thinking, and then our conduct. And so there is no question that we need the help of the Spirit in this, but we definitely have a responsibility in this. We need to submit to those influences which God has placed at our disposal if our way of thinking is to change from what has been wrong, to what is right in the sight of God. *And the major instrument which the Holy Spirit uses in our renewal, and which we need to use, is the Word of God!* This is why we teach people who have been saved that they need to read the Bible. The Bible is to our minds and hearts what food is to our bodies. It is by the Word of God that we are strengthened to live out the new life that we have in Christ. And this is why I say, as Paul was saying here, that we have a great responsibility in this renewal which is going on day by day in all of our lives. It is what we need to be concerned about *today, at this very moment!*

But we need to be warned that this is not a work that we can do by ourselves. This is why the Holy Spirit has been given to us. And this is one reason Paul went on to say what he said in Eph. 4:30. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we do not live according to the Word of God. He empowers us to be obedient to the Word. But we do not know what is in the Word unless we read it. We need to read it from cover to cover, day after day, month after month, and year after year. People are making a lot of plans about what they are going to be doing in the twenty-first century, but how many of us who know the Lord are thinking about how much more our lives can be brought under the mighty influence and power of the Word of God? Renewal is growth. It is change. It is the major factor in putting off the old man and putting on the new man. As our way of thinking is changed by the Word of God, then we are going to be changed. Our habits are going to be changed. Our

character is going to be changed. Everything about us is going to be changed. This transition from the old life to the new life is a process of renewal.

It begins with reading, but reading alone is not sufficient. We need to think about what we read. We must seek to understand what we read. And we need to apply to our lives the truth that we are learning. Meditation is extremely important. Meditation is thinking about the Word. It is mulling over in our minds the truth that we find in God's Word. I am afraid that all of us are too guilty of trying to read a certain amount a Scripture each day, but that we read and that is all that we do. We need to read, to meditate, to understand, and to obey.

I am sure that we all know what it means to learn something from Scripture that we did not know before, and then we see how we need to change what we have been doing.

Another major way in which the spirit of our minds is renewed is when we hear the Word of God explained. This is why we have churches, and this is why Christian books are printed. But here we need to exercise the greatest care because you don't hear the Word of God in many churches, and there is a lot of trash that is being printed today and circulated as Christian teaching. The only way we can judge what we hear and what we read is by our own personal understanding of the Word of God, and this takes us back again to the necessity that we read the Word for ourselves. We need to check what we are learning with others who are more mature in the Lord than we are. It is not unusual to find a young Christian who is just starting to learn who sets himself up as an authority on the Scriptures. A teachable spirit, a hunger for the Word, coupled with real humility, are what we look for in the lives of those who profess to know the Lord.

Again I refer you to verses 11 through 16 in this fourth chapter of Ephesians.

But let us go on. We have covered two of the points that Paul was making; now we need the third. Remember that verses 22 through 24 are tied together with Paul's use of the word "and" at the beginning of verses 23 and 24.

4:24 As we learn what we find in Scripture, and as the Holy Spirit helps us to understand what we read, we need to apply to our lives what we are learning from the Word of God. And so we continue to "put off" some things, and to "put on" others. And what we are learning here in Ephesians 4 helps us with our putting off and putting on.

At this point I would like to read to you the verses that we find in Peter's second epistle because it describes perfectly what Paul was teaching here in these verses we are considering now. I refer to 2 Peter 1. It is an extremely important chapter because of the insight it gives us into what the Christian life is. And you will notice how Peter in this chapter, does what Paul has been doing in Ephesians 4. They both related our growth to Christ! Paul said in Eph. 4:15, speaking of Christ, that we are to "grow up into Him in all things." And along this line, be sure to notice what Peter said in 1 Peter 1 about knowing God and knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, not just in a purely intellectual way, but in a life-transforming way. (Read 2 Peter 1.)

Another passage which can help us in understanding what it means to put off the old man and to put on the new man, is Romans 6. I won't take the time to read the whole chapter (although I hope that all of us will take the time soon to read it all), but let me focus just upon verses 11-14. (Read Rom. 6:11-14.)

Now, going on with Eph. 4:24.

Before we were saved our minds were corrupted by sin, and so that corruption was manifested in the way we

thought, and what we did, and the objectives that we had in life. But salvation through Christ has brought major changes into our lives. Cf. Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ . . ." Salvation is an act of creation by God Himself, creating in us a new life. And this is the basis of the change that takes place in our living. And that is what Paul was saying here. This new man which we are to put on is possible only because we have a new life which has been created in us by the same God Who created the heavens and the earth. (By the way, when you see the oneness that there is in Scripture, isn't it wonderful to see how all of Scripture ties together. There is a marvelous unity to what we are taught in the Bible, and this is one of the great evidences that the Bible is truly the Word of God.)

This life which we have from God and in Christ, is a life created in us "in righteousness and true holiness."

Although I have not come across in any commentary what I am about to say (which is not to say that I am the only one who has said this), I wonder if when Paul said that this life that we have from God is "created in righteousness and true holiness," if he was bringing together the two great doctrines of justification and sanctification. Justification is being declared righteous before God, which is salvation, and sanctification is that ongoing work of the Spirit of God whereby we are made holy. No person can be truly holy who has not been justified through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way, any person who has been justified will go on to seek that holiness of life which is the fruit of justification.

Charles Hodge made an interesting distinction between "righteousness" and "holiness." He said that when the word "righteousness" is used by itself in practical matters, it includes all kinds of morality, that is, in our relationship with God and with man. But when the two appear together, as they do here in verse 24, "righteousness" has to do with moral behavior toward man, but "holiness" speaks of what we are before God.

"True holiness" can be translated, and probably should be translated, *holiness of the truth*. And it is very likely that *of the truth* applies just as much to "righteousness" as it does to "holiness." Charles Hodge indicated as much in his commentary. "The truth," of course, is the truth of the Word of God, the truth as it is in Christ, the truth which has been given to us by the Holy Spirit, and which is taught to us by this same Holy Spirit Who is called, "the Spirit of truth." Cf. John 14:17 and 16:13. In both of these passages the Holy Spirit is actually called *the Spirit of the truth*.

So the Spirit of the truth works through the truth of God's Word to produce in us righteousness, and the fruit of righteousness which is holiness. And all of this is through our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This life that the Apostle Paul was speaking about already exists in absolute perfection. It is in Christ. But as Westcott has said, "it has to be personally appropriated" (p. 68). That is why we are instructed to put it on.

It seems by the tense that Paul used when he spoke of putting off and putting on, he was indicating that there must be a determination on our part to do just this. But the renewal is, as I have tried to say, a process. And so this means that throughout life, as our knowledge of God and of Christ and of the Word increases, so we will be continually putting off those evidences of the old life that seem to hang on, but replacing them with the new life which we have in Christ and which is displayed by Christ living in us and through us.

"After God," or lit. *according to God*, means *likeness to God*. And we know that this ultimately is the purpose of our redemption. We are being conformed to the image of Christ, but since Christ and God are identical in nature, to be made like One is to be made like the Other.

At this point the Apostle Paul was ready to help us to understand even more about what it means to put off the

old man and to put off the new man, and interestingly he began by speaking about *lying*.

4:25 In general, we are to "put off the old man," and to "put on the new man." But in a practical sense, there are certain details that we need to give attention to. And so the word "wherefore" indicates that the Apostle Paul was going to take up certain details to help us in our day to day "walk" which is to be "worthy of the vocation wherewith" we "are called" (4:1), and so we will not walk "as other Gentiles walk" (4:17). Abbott in the ICC Commentary speaks of verses 25 to the end of the chapter as a section in which the Apostle Paul was warning the Ephesian believers about special sins. And you will notice that Paul begins with what they are not to do, and then goes on to say what they should do. This is consistent with what he had said about putting off the old man and putting on the new man.

The ninth commandment in the Law was, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Ex. 20:16).

Why would Paul start with the sin of lying? Or do you really think that it is a sin? How many of you have told a lie? Two lies? Three lies? How many of you actually know how many lies you have told?

Illus: My first pastor, Dr. C. Oscar Johnson, speaking at a Rotary or Kiwanis Club in Tacoma years ago, asked the men who were present, "How many of you have never told a lie?" And he asked that if there were a person present who had never told a lie, he would stand. Then, without looking around the room, he continued, "I want you to see the biggest liar who is here today." Well, when he asked the question, a man toward the back of the room stood up. But when he heard the second statement that Dr. Johnson made, that he wanted everybody to see the biggest liar in the room, this man dropped to his seat like a ton of bricks.

Paul evidently began with lying because that is a sin which gets everyone of us. Do you remember what David wrote in Psalm 58:3? "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." If Paul had started with murder, that would not have hit any of us. And there are other sins that might not have convicted us. But lying hits all of us.

April 12, 1999

"Lying" is a part of "the old man." A person who is a consistent liar has not been born again. But commentators seem to be in agreement that Paul was thinking about everything that is not true. Obviously a Christian is to tell the truth, but he also is to put away all forms of error. Man in his sinful state does not know the truth about God, nor about himself, nor about sin and righteousness, that is, right and wrong. We have recently seen how the politicians in Washington could close their eyes to what the President has done because it seemed expedient to them now to upset things by impeaching the President. Apparently they believed that they could do this because they also believe a lie about God's punishment of sin. When we are saved and come to an understanding of the truth, then we see the true nature of sin because we begin to understand something of the absolute holiness of God. We learn that there are not only temporal punishments for sin, but that there is eternal punishment for all who are without Christ. Man is blinded to the truth.

Romans 1:18-25 is a passage where the Apostle Paul spoke before of man's natural inclination to believe a lie, and to promote lies in spite of the fact that by nature he does have some understanding that there is a God. Let me read this passage to you.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto

them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom.1:18-25).

As believers in Christ we are not to have anything to do with lying in any form. We are to speak the truth with our neighbors, which in some instances can mean anyone, saved or unsaved, who are near us, but when Paul went on to say, "for we are members one of another," he obviously had in mind our fellow-believers. Falsehood in any form has no place among the people of God. We believe the truth of God's Word, and we speak the truth with each other. But, as Bishop Moule has pointed out, faithfulness to the inner circle of the family of God will better enable us to be faithful to the wider circle of the people of the world. For believers, the truth must be maintained to all people.

4:26 The second word with regard to putting off the old man and putting on the new, is given here.

There are times when it is right and necessary to be angry. You will remember how our Lord drove the money-changers out of the temple, overturning their tables, and charging them with making the house of the Lord "a den of thieves. Cf. Matt. 21:13. And you will remember the time that the Lord entered into the synagogue, presumably in Capernaum, and was met by a man with a withered hand. The Jews were there just waiting to see if He would heal on the Sabbath Day. He turned to His enemies and asked them if it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to save life. But the Jews did not answer. Then we read this in Mark 3:5-6:

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

"When hypocrites come with their masks of holiness, when injustice parades as right, when tyrants trample helpless victims, anger is justified" (Lenski, p. 577).

The exhortation in this verse in Eph. 4 is taken from the Septuagint's rendering of Psa. 4:5. The KJV renders the Hebrew of Psa. 4:5, "Stand in awe, and sin not." But my Bible has a marginal reading for "stand in awe," "Be angry." So the verse is actually a command to be angry. But it is coupled with, "and sin not." Not all anger is sin, but it is easy for anger to consume us, and then we are guilty of sin. A present-day illustration is to be seen in connection with the abortion of unborn children. We ought to be angry about abortion because it is murder, but the limits to which some anti-abortionists go in blocking the entrance to the clinics, or actually bombing clinics, is strictly forbidden by this verse. Uncontrolled anger is sin. There is a verse in the book of Proverbs which says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. 25:28). So anger must always be exercised with self-control, and when we are angry, it must not be the kind of anger that keeps burning in our hearts even from one day until the next. How important it is for

us to remember the latter part of this verse: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Again, the example of our Lord is a good one for us to remember and to follow. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:23 where Peter was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:23).

The third command that Paul gave is found in verse 27.

4:27 And yet this exhortation is not totally separated from what the Apostle Paul had just written.

The Devil is always looking for opportunities to take advantage of us, especially when we faithfully stand for the truth of the Word of God.

An outstanding example of the kind of situation that the Apostle Paul had in mind, was in the case of the man who is mentioned in 1 Cor. 5 as having sinned with his stepmother. Paul was very obviously angry that the church had not taken action against him. He told them to purge out the old leaven because that sin unjudged would soon spread in other ways throughout the whole church. And we can assume that the church followed the Apostle Paul's example and orders. But it seems from 2 Cor. 2 that this same man had repented of his sin. Therefore, the Apostle Paul encouraged them to forgive and restore him to their fellowship. Here is what the Apostle Paul wrote about the same man after he had repented:

6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:6-11).

We have a very real enemy who is always on the job. And sometimes he moves in because we give him a place to act even when we are seeking to do the right thing. Right things can be done in the wrong way, and that is when the Devil moves in to take control of a situation, or at least to do some damage. We must always be very careful not to give the Devil room to do what he wants to do.

But let us move on to verse 28, and yet let us not forget anything that the Apostle Paul has just said.

4:28 The eighth commandment in the Law was, "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. 20:15). The sin in God's sight is not in getting caught, but in stealing however it may occur, and whether or not it is ever discovered by men. Nothing escapes the all-seeing eyes of God, and we need to remember that the darkness and the light are both the same to God. Men love darkness because they think that they are not being observed, but God sees just as well in the blackest darkness as in the brightest light.

The Greek would support the translation, "Let him who steals," instead of "stole." Stealing is taking that which belongs to someone else without working for it. Some stealing is on a small scale; some involves millions of dollars. Some is done by the lowest class of society, but other stealing is done among the wealthiest. Stealing is prevalent in all societies.

April 13, 1999

Before we went to Central America many years ago, we were warned about the way thieves work. Stealing was a way of life to many people, not only men, but women and children as well. At night places of business were protected by strong metal gates, in much the same way that we see places of business, as well as homes, protected in our own country today. The more our society deteriorates, the more people steal.

If a person is accustomed to stealing, it is very difficult to break that habit when that person becomes a Christian. But it must be stopped if God is to be pleased. He has used his hands to steal; now he must use his hands to work. And the word "work" indicates that he must work hard. The Bible commends work. In 2 Thess. 3, verses 10 through 12, we read these words:

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread (2 Thess. 3:10-12).

Even in the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, we read:

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing (1 Thess. 4:11-12).

In America today gambling has become a major problem, and it contributes to other sinful and lawless deeds. Millions, perhaps billions, are spent each year on lotteries of various kinds throughout our country. Many people still take pride in their work, and some people "moonlight" in order to meet the needs of their families. But there are too many others who work as little as they can, and who must be watched if their employer is to get the work out of them that he is paying them to do.

Last Sunday in teaching 1 Peter I had the opportunity to deal with that passage in 1 Peter 2 where Paul spoke to servants. Such passages are found also in Paul's writings. For example, listen to what he told the servants in Colosse:

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3:22-24).

How could work be honored any more than Paul honored it when he reminded the Christian servants that they were not just serving their masters on earth, but they were also serving the Lord in heaven.

In our text in Ephesians Paul indicated that instead of being concerned about how much we can get, we need to be concerned about being able to give to others who are in need. This was one of the main reasons that believers in the early church were encouraged to give. Even the Apostle Paul often worked at making tents in order that no one would be able to say that he was in the ministry for what he could get out of it. When Paul was taking leave of the elders in Ephesus, you will remember that from Luke's report of what the Apostle said to them, these were his last words:

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 (Acts 20:35).

But let us go on to verse 29.

4:29 Paul had spoken of their speech in verse 25. Now he comes to speech again in this verse. And in 5:4 he returned to mention their speech again. The Bible has a great deal to say about our speech. It can be an instrument of great good, or it can be an instrument of great evil. I would remind you of what James had to say about our tongues and the way we use them in James 3. Please turn to that chapter. (Read verses 2-13.)

Here Paul spoke of two ways in which we can use our tongues – either in a corrupting manner, or to edify those who hear us and to minister grace to them. In fact, the tongue is involved in what the Apostle Paul had to say in the remainder of this chapter.

"Communication" means *speech*. And "corrupt communication" not only means speech that can be harmful to others, but it also speaks of *worthless speaking*. If what we say is not worth anything, it is harmful – and how often we all are guilty of *worthless, meaningless, corrupting speech*. The word "corrupt" can also mean *putrid*.

Paul was indicating here that in our conversations with each other we can leave people in a better condition when we depart from them, or we can leave them worse. And his point is that we ought to take common conversation as an opportunity to minister "good" to each other. In fact, worthless, corrupting speech is to be avoided completely. "Good" is that which is good in the sight of God, that which will be spiritually beneficial to the people to whom we are speaking. It is clear that the Apostle Paul primarily has in mind the way believers speak to each other.

Isn't it true that we call our conversation with each other "fellowship" when we may be saying little or nothing about the Lord, or the Word, or anything else that will be edifying, building up, to our fellow believers? "Good to the use of edifying" speaks of saying that which will meet the need, the spiritual need, of the person to whom we are speaking.

There is a very interesting verse in the prophecy of Isaiah that deals with this very subject. It is found in Isa. 50:4. This is what it says:

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.

Many Hebrew authorities believe that instead of "the learned" the verse should read, *the learner*. We are all to be *learners*, aren't we? A disciple was primarily a learner. We never know as much as we can know, or as much as we need to know. But we read our Bibles and we study the Word in order that we may learn, learn the truth of God, and the ways of the Lord. A teacher must always remain a learner.

Now this verse indicates that what the Lord tells us on a particular morning may not just be something that we need, but it may be a word of truth that someone else needs, and that we may meet that needy person on that very day. If not that day, we will possibly have many occasions to use it in the future.

Let me ask you a question, and I apply this to myself as well. *What did you learn this morning when you met with the Lord that you could pass on to me today?* It is not that we need to be preaching to people all of the time, but we do need to be thinking about how we might be used of the Lord to help people in a spiritual way throughout the day. Let's be thinking in terms of the "good" that we can do. This is true fellowship. Ministering "grace" to people is ministering *strength* to them, spiritual strength.

On the other hand, let us seek and pray that people will never be left in a worse condition after we have spoken

to them, and with them. Let us be ministers of "good" and of "grace." That verse which was such a blessing to you this morning, may be the very verse which someone needs today whom the Lord is going to bring into your life.

And isn't it interesting to notice the context of verse 30?

4:30 We displease the Holy Spirit, we give Him sadness, when we use our tongues in the wrong way instead of the right way. And the Apostle Paul was bringing out the enormity of our offense by referring to the Third Person of the Godhead as "the Holy Spirit of God." He is holy, absolutely holy, and He has been given to us to make us holy. And it is His purpose to use every one of us as His instruments in making others holy. And so when we speak in a worthless, corrupting way, He is grieved. We have sinned, and such sinning needs to be confessed, forgiven, and cleansed away just like any other sin.

Illus: Dr. Ironside's rebuke of a man who wanted to tell other men a story after the ladies had left the room. The man said, "I am sorry, Dr. Ironside; I had forgotten about the Holy Spirit."

It is possible for us to grieve and to quench the Holy Spirit. Cf. 1 Thess. 5:19. Instead, we need to "be filled with the Spirit" according to Paul's word in Eph. 5:18.

Paul's exhortation here in verse 30 can be best translated, "Stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God." It indicates that they were already grieving Him. And this verse comes to us in the same tense. Let us examine what our speech is, as well as what it has been, and make sure that we are not continuing to grieve the blessed Holy Spirit.

And what is to be our incentive not to grieve Him?

Because by Him we have been "sealed unto the day of redemption." We learned that, didn't we, in chapter 1, verses 13 and 14. Hodge had this to say about this statement:

His indwelling certifies that we are the children of God, and secures our final salvation. . . To grieve Him, therefore, is to wound Him on Whom our salvation depends. Though He will not finally withdraw from those in whom He dwells, yet when grieved He withholds the manifestations of His presence (p. 96).

And so, if we are not to grieve Him, verse 31 tells us sins which we are not to commit, and verse 32 tells us the positive action we need to take to avoid all "corrupt communication."

4:31 Here Paul mentioned six sins which must be "put away," or "put off."

The first is "bitterness." This is resentment which we hold in our hearts because of ways in which others have offended us. And we even cherish it. We refuse to let it go. We refuse to forgive and to forget. Do you have any bitterness in your heart today?

The second is "wrath" and the third is "anger." What is the difference? "Wrath" is the more temporary of the two, and can be illustrated by what we call, blowing our tops. We get angry, but then we cool off. "Anger," the next word describes our hearts when we stay mad, and so the anger grows and grows.

The fourth sin is "clamour." This is when we want to let everyone else know how deeply we have been offended and how others have wronged us.

The fifth sin is "evil speaking." It is the Greek word for *blasphemy*. This does not necessarily mean cursing, but it means that we seek to revile and expose and disgrace those whom we feel have wronged us in some way. We want everyone to know how rotten that other person is.

All of these five sins must be "put away." We cannot give in to them, and it is the Holy Spirit Who will help us, and keep us from giving in to the natural and sinful inclinations that we all have in our hearts.

And then Paul mentioned a sixth sin: "Malice." This is the desire to injure that other person. Among unbeliever this often leads to physical violence, but with believers it would mean satisfaction if something really bad were to happen to that person.

These are not options for those of us who know the Lord, and who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Such feelings cause "corrupt communications" to come out of our mouths. But not only must we not be guilty of these sins, we must ask the Lord to take even the inclinations toward this sins out of our hearts.

How refreshing it is to move on to verse 32.

4:32 Hodge defined "kind" as a person who wants to be useful and helpful to others. A kind person will want to make sure that there is nothing in himself that is causing others to treat him (or her) the way they do. Our tendency is to blame others instead of wanting to help others.

"Tenderhearted" means to show pity and compassion. And these two virtues are always followed by the tendency, not to hang on to old resentments, but to exercise forgiveness. And what is our example? The fact that "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Again let me quote from Hodge:

God's forgiveness towards us is free; it precedes even our repentance and is the cause of it. It is exercised notwithstanding the number, the enormity and the long continuance of our transgressions. He forgives us far more than we can ever be called upon to forgive others. God forgives us *in Christ*. Out of Christ He is, in virtue of His holiness and justice, a consuming fire; but in Him, He is long-suffering, abundant in mercy, and ready to forgive (p. 97).

Concl: So this means that instead of being man-like toward those who have offended us, we are to be God-like and Christ-like. It takes the grace of God for us to do what Paul has exhorted us to do in this passage, but His grace is sufficient. We naturally want people to get what they deserve to get, but, when we feel that way, we need to think about what God would have done with us if He had given us what we deserve. Remember that the grace of God is twofold: He doesn't give us what we deserve, but He does give us what we will never deserve. May the Lord help each one of us to live and to speak as we are taught to do in this very, very important passage of Scripture. What a difference it will make in us, as well as in others, and instead of grieving the Spirit, we will bring glory to all Three Persons of the Godhead.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – April 19, 1999

Ephesians 5:1-21

Intro: This section of Ephesians continues what the Apostle Paul started at the beginning of chapter 4 when he started to explain in a detailed way how a Christian should live. He spoke of it as our "walk." And by this word he meant how we should live, how we should conduct ourselves day by day. The word "walk" was actually brought over into the NT from the OT. So it is what we call a Hebraism.

Here in the first twenty-one verses of chapter 5 we have five ways in which we are to walk:

- 1) "Walk in love" (Eph. 5:1-6).
- 2) "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:7-14).
- 3) "Walk circumspectly" (Eph. 5:15-21).

And he was adding these to two others in chapter 4:

- 1) "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1-16).
- 2) "Walk not as other Gentiles walk" (Eph. 4: 17-32).

These are extremely important passages. Every Christian needs to give constant attention to what the Apostle Paul said in these chapters. Much of what is being passed on today as Christian living, is not Christian at all, but a kind of humanistic morality which is a counterfeit of the truth. It sounds good, and many are deceived by it, but it shows how desperately we need to get back to what the Bible says about the way we are to live from day to day. When people are told how they are to live, without making it clear that no one can live such a life until they are born again, they it is easy for people who do not know the Lord to be trying to live the life without having eternal life. And even when people are Christians, they may attempt in their own strength that which can only be done through the enabling power of the indwelling Christ and through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. All of us need to be told over and over again, that without Christ we can do nothing. In Eph. 4:30 which we have just concluded, we are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit. And one of the ways that we grieve the Holy Spirit, is by ignoring Him!

In Zechariah 4 we read that Zechariah was commissioned to tell Zerubbabel that in rebuilding the temple that it would not and could not be accomplished by human power alone, but that it could only be done "by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). We have responsibilities that need to be carried out, but it is never enough to do these things in our own strength. So we need to keep this in mind as we learn how the Lord wants us to live.

Let's begin now by noticing what the Apostle Paul had to say about:

I. "Walk in love" (Eph. 5:1-6).

5:1 We need to notice that the first part of chapter 5 is connected with the last part of chapter 4, and so this is another rather unfortunate chapter division. Many commentators believe that the first two verses of chapter 5 should be the last two verses of chapter 4.

It is also important to notice that the verb "be" with which verse 32 begins, is the same verb with which 5:1 begins. And it could be better translated, *become*. I doubt very much if the Apostle Paul were saying that they were not at all kind like God is, not that they were not following God in their daily lives, but as Robertson pointed out, he was saying "keep on becoming" like God, kind like He is (4:32), and "keep on becoming" even greater followers of the Lord.

It has always been God's plan that fathers should be examples to their children, and the same principle applies in the family of God. We are to be like God is. Of course, we can't be exactly like God is, but we always need to be becoming more and more like God, "as dear children," or, *as His beloved children*. He loves us far more than we can possibly understand, and that love is expressed in His will that we be like He is. We learned that we are not to live like unsaved Gentiles live, but we are to live like God lives! We are to be His "followers." The Greek word is μιμηται. We get our word *mimic* from this Greek word, but unfortunately that word has become associated with a comedian, one who imitates another for the purpose of making fun of him. Rush Limbaugh talks the way Bill Clinton talks, but his purpose is to make fun of him. But actually, to be a mimic is a good thing if you are seeking to be like the right kind of a person. *And who could possibly be better than God?* But it is not just to be an outward, superficial likeness to God, but a deep inward as well as outward likeness to our heavenly Father that we seek to imitate. God wants us to be like He is, and by grace He communicates many of His glorious attributes to us.

Do you remember the teaching of our Lord along this line? Let me read to you what He said in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:43-48:

- 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?
 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

This last verse gives us a powerful command to be like our heavenly Father. The goal is so high that we can spend all of our lives seeking to be like God, and yet never perfectly reach the goal. But we will be like Him in eternity. And we need to be pursuing that goal as long as we live.

But in what sense did Paul exhort us here to be like our Father in heaven. Let us look at verse 2 to see what he had to say.

5:2 Here it is: "And walk in love." This is a present tense – *keep on walking in love*. Set this as your goal, and never deviate from it. "Walk in love." Let everything you do be characterized by love, not the perverted kind of love that we see so much of in the world, but true, God-like love, divine love.

But will you notice here that Paul did not speak of the love of God, but of the love of Christ – "As Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." So to be a follower of God is to love as Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us. John 3:16 tell us that Christ was the expression of God's love for us. (Repeat.)

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But this statement also reminds us that the love of God and the love of Christ are identical, and both were involved in the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus Christ offered for us on Calvary's Cross. Charles Hodge said, "We should be like Christ, which is being like God, for Christ is God" (p. 97).

Note also that Christ offered Himself to God, not to Satan (the ransom to Satan theory of the atonement pro-

posed by Anselm). It is God Who has been offended by our sins, and it is to God that Christ's sacrifice was presented. And this is to be the pattern of our love. There never has been, and there never will be, a greater love than the love of God for us, and the love of Christ for us.

And be sure to notice here in the words which the Apostle used, the evidence of *a limited atonement*. The Scriptures teach that Christ died for definite people. He died for particular people, His elect. It was to guarantee their salvation that He went to the Cross. And so we sometimes speak of *a definite atonement*, or *a particular redemption*. We will see this same emphasis later on in this chapter when in verse 25 where Paul, addressing husbands, said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Christ's purpose in His death was not just to make possible the salvation of sinner, but it was specifically to save, to guarantee the salvation of all whom the Father had chosen to be saved. And this was the Lord's purpose in dying, and this is the work which He accomplished by His death.

Why did the Apostle Paul use two words to describe the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross - "an offering and a sacrifice"? Again referring to Hodge, he said that the second term explains the first. An offering in Scripture speaks of that which is offered to God. But there are many different kinds of sacrifices we can bring. For example, the Apostle used the same description, in part, in his epistle to the Philippians that he used here, of the sacrifice that they had sent to him. Listen to his words of gratitude which are found in Phil. 4:18:

But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

This was a sacrifice of money. And, although it was sent to the Philippians, it was in reality a sacrifice presented to God. So Christ offered Himself to God on behalf of the people of God, and the nature of His offering was that it was a sacrifice, a blood sacrifice. He presented Himself as a sacrifice. He laid down His life. And this was to God "a sweetsmelling savour." In fact, there never was, and never will be, an offering presented to God, that gave Him more pleasure than the sacrifice of His Son.

But when we "walk in love," when we manifest love for each other, especially (in this case) by forgiving each other as "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven" us (4:32), this also is to God "an offering and a sacrifice" of a "sweetsmelling savour" - not at all on the same level as the sacrifice which Christ presented to God, but "well-pleasing" to God nevertheless.

Calvin gave this word of explanation:

Besides, we may infer from Paul's words, that, unless we love one another, none of our duties will be acceptable in the sight of God. If the reconciliation of men, effected by Christ, was *a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour*, we, too, shall be "unto God a sweet savour" (2 Cor. ii. 15), when this holy perfume is spread over us. To this applies the saying of Christ, "Leave thy gift before the altar, and go and be reconciled to thy brother" (Matt. V. 24) (XXI, p. 304).

And to these words we must add the words of the Apostle John which are found in 1 John 3:14:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

So it is very clear that the love that the Apostle Paul had in mind when he said, "walk in love," is not a mere human love, and certainly not the perverted idea that the world has of love, but it is nothing short of the astounding love that both God and Christ showed toward us, unworthy sinners that we are, when the Lord Jesus laid down His life, shedding His precious blood, for the forgiveness of our sins. It would be very appropriate for us to add at this point, the question which the Apostle Paul recorded in referring to another subject in 2 Cor. 2:16 when he said, "And who is sufficient for these things?" And he answered his own question in 2 Cor. 3:5 where it is recorded that he said, "But our sufficiency is of God." It is only by the grace of a sovereign God

that you and I could ever expect to show the kind of love that Paul was exhorting believers to manifest here at the beginning of Ephesians 5.

5:3 At this point the Apostle Paul went from the most glorious heights to descend into the worst possible depths in order to clear up any false ideas that the Ephesians might have had about the meaning of love. And today we are in need of the same clarification, not for believers who know the truth, but for the people of the world, and for believers who have just been saved out of the world. *All of the words found in verses 3 through 5 are in one way or another connected with perverted ideas of love. And there are many other words which the Apostle Paul could have added to what we find here.*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones has a very important word about the Scriptures when he reached this point in his exposition of Ephesians. He said that he had come to understand in a clearer way the experience of Peter and James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. They saw the Lord in His glory, and they wanted to stay there. He said, "Seeing the Lord thus in His glory was heaven to Peter" (*Darkness and Light*, p. 314). Obviously James and John must have felt the same way. But this was not the time for them to escape from the world and all of its ugliness, to be transported to heaven. They had to go back down into that wicked world because their work on earth was not yet completed. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones likened our experience in going from verse 2 to verse 3 as somewhat like the three Apostles experienced when they had to leave the Mount to go back again into the world. There have been times when most of us have had the same feelings. Perhaps the Lord has blessed us in a special way at camp, and we have feelings of regret when we have to leave camp where we have enjoyed such wonderful fellowship, to go back into the world. The contrast between verses 2 and 3 is emphasized by the word "but" at the beginning of verse three.

Then Dr. Lloyd-Jones made this statement:

Speaking for myself, I must confess that nothing would be more excellent and delightful than to continue with verses 1 and 2, looking at God and our relationship to Him, realising His love to us, that we are not only His children but dearly beloved children, and contemplating the Lord Jesus Christ and all He has done for us in His sacrificial atoning work on our behalf. How wonderful to go on forever in such an atmosphere! 'But' we must not do that; we must follow the Scriptures and we must take the Scriptures as a whole. There is nothing more dangerous to the life of the soul than always to be reading our favourite passages and it is not only dangerous to the soul, it is an abuse of Scripture. We must follow the Scriptures wherever they may lead us or take us. There are many people today who say, I do not like this negative aspect of the truth, why can we not keep to the positive always? I say to them, very well, you keep to it, and you will soon discover why the negative is necessary. We must take the Scripture as it is, not simply take what pleases us. We must submit ourselves to it utterly and absolutely, and follow it every step of the way. . . So far in this chapter we have had the positive, we are now coming to the negative (*Op. cit.*, pp. 314, 315).

First comes "fornication." Paul, in using this word, includes all kinds of sexual activity outside of the bonds of marriage. Bishop Moule said that this was "a sin so lightly thought of among the heathen as hardly to be held by them a wrong or shame at all" (p. 247). And then, although he was writing in the last century, he added in a footnote on the same page, "And too lightly thought of in our modern nominal Christendom, to judge by much of its public opinion and of its legislation." This was demonstrated most recently in the way the U. S. Senate handled the immorality of our President. And they were supported, apparently, by the majority of American people. This shows how far our society has strayed from that which is right and wrong in the sight of God.

Frequently we are told in news reports of a couple, a man and a woman, who are living together, and who have had children, but who have different names. Adultery has become an accepted form of behavior in the world

today. It was that was in the pagan world of the first century, and so Christians had to be taught that what they had considered acceptable behavior before they were saved, was abominable in the sight of God and would most certainly bring the judgment of God.

Homosexuality falls into the same category. People are shameless about this, and even people who are not homosexual, are inclined to accept it because people should be free to do what they want to do.

The Greek word for "fornication" is πορνεία. And the Greek word for a harlot or a prostitute is πόρνη. These are the words from which we get our word *pornography* which means obscene writing or pictures.

All of this is what makes me fearful about the future of our country. We have the idea that we are invincible. Our President thought that he would bomb Serbia for a few days, and the conflict over there would be over. But little Serbia is so far defying the great United States of America, and all of our allies. There has come a time with all of the great nations of the past, when they have fallen. No nation can defy the ways of God and continue to survive. We already have evidence of God's judgment upon us, but we are not paying any attention to it. We look at the stock market above 10,000, and we feel absolutely secure. But all of this could change so fast that we would hardly believe what was happening. God has been very patient with us. He has continued to bless us in spite of our sins. But the day comes when His patience is exhausted.

Paul followed "fornication" with "all uncleanness." By this he meant all human behavior that falls into the same category as "fornication," sins which are so often the result of "fornication," or sins which lead to "fornication." "Fornication" falls into the category of "uncleanness," and is probably its most prominent characteristic.

"Covetousness" is another example of "uncleanness." Usually this word is associated with *the love of money*, but, as the tenth commandment of the law brings out, there are other things that we can covet, including a neighbor's wife, which then can lead to fornication.

Lotteries would not succeed if it were not our nature to covet. The same is true of gambling which, largely because of our casinos has become a major problem in the U.S. We now hear psychiatrists and psychologists speaking about people who are *addicted to gambling*, who can't keep from it, and who will spend their last cent, and then borrow more money, in the hope that they will get rich quick. What an indictment all of this is against life in our country today. And yet we seem to be going deeper and deeper into sin.

Concerning all of these the Apostle Paul said, "Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." Saintliness and sinfulness are mutually exclusive terms. Christians may have been guilty of these sins before they were saved, but they are not to be guilty of them afterwards. In fact, this is a good place to remember what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church along this line. I am referring to 1 Cor. 6:9-11:

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

And notice what Paul wrote in Eph. 5:12.

There may be times when there is the need to refer quite explicitly to certain sins in or "to expose, to condemn,

to warn. But even so, let the mentions be as brief and reserved as may be, or they may hurt both the speaker and hearer" (Moule, pp. 247, 248). The eyes and the ears and the mouth can all become instruments that lead us into sin. We need to be very, very careful about all contacts with the ungodly ways of the world. They are not fitting or proper in any way for a child of God.

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5:4 In chapter 4 and verse 29 Paul had spoken of the sin which the tongue is capable of. At this point he returned specifically to sins of the tongue (although the tongue would certainly have been involved in verse 3 where Paul spoke of "all uncleanness"). And just as abominable as the sins of verse 3 are to God, the sins of verse 4 are equally abominable.

"Filthiness" – This word hardly needs to be defined for us. It is *dirty talk*. It is that which is obscene and profane. It is the kind of language that decent men would not use in the presence of a lady. But it is not acceptable to ladies, how much more offensive must it be to a holy God. This has become very common today. Such words used to be censured from radio and television, and even in our newspapers, but we often hear it even from women in these days. It also includes all forms of profanity.

"Foolish talking" – This is, as you might expect, the talk of fools. It is silly talk. When our speech is to be edifying, "foolish talking" is not only a waste of time, but it is also harmful. It can quickly deteriorate into that which is filthy. You see this in what is presently done by comedians on TV. They spend their time in "foolish talking," and this quickly spreads among people, even children. Time is not considered a stewardship to such people. It is "corrupt communication" which we were warned about in 4:29.

"Jesting" – There is a place for wholesome mirth, but Paul here was talking about language which can easily be turned into that which is evil, often those expressions which have a double meaning.

Paul said that all such speaking is "not convenient," that is, they are not becoming to a child of God. And it is even the case that a wicked world is surprised if they ever hear such words coming from the mouth of one who claims to be a Christian. Salvation extends to every part of our being. Some people have claimed that they have had to learn to speak all over again when they were saved because their speech has been so corrupt and defiled before they were born again. The evidence of salvation is to be apparent in the way we talk. We are not to seek to be pleasing to men, but to God. And only God can make our speech pure and profitable.

Listen to some of these prayers and statements from Scripture:

Psa. 19:14 – "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

Psa. 141:3 – "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

James 1:26 – "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

But notice especially what Paul added at the end of this verse: "But rather giving of thanks." Here the Apostle Paul was suggesting, as is often the case in Scripture, that we keep ourselves from doing what is wrong by doing what is right. So instead of using our tongues in an evil way which is so displeasing to the Lord, we can prevent such sin by cultivating the habit of using our tongues to give thanks to God. This, the world never does. They thank mother nature for good weather, or they thank the weather man, but those of us who know the Lord realize that it is the Lord Who is in charge of the weather, and so we give Him thanks. But our need to be thankful extends to every area of our lives, and the person who gives thanks is the person who will be

delivered from the misuse of the tongue. We must not miss this most important point that the Apostle Paul made here. Filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting are the speech of the world, but thanksgiving to God is that which continually comes from believers. So, if you are having trouble with the wrong kind of language, put into practice what the Apostle Paul exhorted us to do in the latter part of this verse.

5:5 Calvin said in his commentary that "by appealing to their own knowledge, he intimates that this was no doubtful matter" (XXI, 306). The Apostle Paul was not saying that if a person had been a whore-monger, or unclean (as he had just described it), or covetous, he could not be saved. Nor was he saying that if a believer should be guilty of these sins (but not living in them), they were not saved. But he was saying that the person who habitually lived in immorality, or in uncleanness, or was continually covetous, does not have "any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

This verse should remind us of what the Apostle Paul wrote earlier to the church at Corinth. I am referring to his words which are found in 1 Cor 6:9-11:

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Going back to our text Calvin said,

When men have repented, and thus give evidence that they are reconciled to God, they are no longer the same persons that they formerly were. But let all fornicators, or unclean or covetous persons, so long as they continue such, be assured that they have no friendship with God, and are deprived of all hope of salvation. It is called *the kingdom of Christ and of God*, because God hath given it to His Son that we may obtain it through Him" (*Op. cit.*, p. 307).

Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. Also 1 John 3:9-10:

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

In these days when so much has been made of "decisions for Christ," there are many people who call themselves Christians because they have gone forward in some meeting thinking that that is what makes a person a Christian. But more often than not these people have experienced no change of heart or life. They continue on living like they did before. And so the Apostle Paul was issuing a warning to all who were in such a condition, telling them that they were not saved. *And he continued with the warning in verse 6.*

5:6 People can be very sincere about their claims to be Christians, but here the Apostle Paul indicated that people can be *sincerely deceived!* "Vain words" are words which are false words. It is totally inconsistent with Scripture that a person can be truly saved and yet remain the same kind of a person that he or she was before they professed to believe in Christ. An unchanged person is still dead in trespasses and sins. He is without hope, and without Christ. And as proof that the sins of the unsaved have not been atoned for, the Apostle went on to say, "for because of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

How important it is that we make sure that our faith is truly in Christ, and that we have been transformed by the

power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I can't think of anything worse than for a person to go to his grave thinking that he is ready to die, only to find after death that he has been deceiving himself and has been deceived by others who encouraged him to believe that he was ready to meet God, when in reality he was not ready.

People often ridicule such teaching, even believing that there are other ways to God except through faith in the work Christ accomplished on the Cross. But anyone who reads the Bible, and believes what it has to say, knows that Jesus Christ is the Way to God, and the only way.

"The wrath of God" is a reference to the final and eternal judgment of all who do not know the saving grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. Eph. 2:3. Note these verses also from Paul's letter to the church at Rome:

Rom 1:18-19:

- 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

Rom. 2:5-6:

- 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;
6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Rom 5:8-10:

- 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Now we come to the second division in this chapter.

II. "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:7-14).

5:7 Now in spite of the fact that we have been changed, we still find exhortations like this in verse 7 exhorting us to live godly lives. "Be" = *become*. Paul meant that they should not become participants in the sins of those who do not know the Lord because that eventually will lead to sharing in the judgment that they will experience. He did not mean that a truly saved person could again be lost, but he did mean that one way we can be sure that we know the Lord is by refusing to go along with sinners in their sins, but instead seeking to live a life that is pleasing to God. This warning is very important because we have all known people whom we believed were saved, and who may have lived like they were Christians for years, and then our hearts are broken to see them turn away and never come back. The Lord saw people do that. Judas was one. Of course, the Lord was never deceived by Judas, *but all of the other apostles were!* *When the Lord announced that one of them would betray Him, there was not one of them who said, "It is Judas. I have always been suspicious of him." Instead, you will remember that each one said, "Lord, is it I?"* Listen to what is recorded in Matt.

26:21-22

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

Judas had done a perfect job of deceiving all of the other apostles, and perhaps had even succeeded in deceiving himself.

We also read in John 6:64-66 of a time when "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.

Liste to what the Apostle John wrote:

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

This means that they went away, *and they never came back!*

So this explains the reason for the warning that Paul issued here in Eph. 5:7. We need to resist every temptation that we face to get involved in sin in any way. Why? Verses 8 and following give us our answer.

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5:8 In Dr. Lloyd-Jones messages on this part of the book of Ephesians (actually from 4:17 through 5:17), he gave them the overall subject of *Darkness and Light*. Cf. 4:17-19. In this eighth verse of chapter 5 the Apostle Paul once again emphasized *darkness* and *light*. But be sure to notice that he did not simply say that they had been *in the darkness*, but now were *in the light* (although that certainly was true), but they had been *darkness*, "but now are ye light in the Lord." It is one thing to be *in the darkness*, but far worse *to be darkness*, just as it is one thing *to have the light*, or *to be in the light*, but far more glorious *to be* "light in the Lord."! And yet this is exactly what the Apostle Paul said here. Every believer in Christ was at one time darkness, but now, since we have been saved, we are light in the Lord.

Charles Hodge explained the contrast between darkness and light in this way:

As *light* stands for knowledge, and as knowledge, in the Scriptural sense of the word, produces holiness, and holiness happiness, so *darkness* stands for ignorance, such ignorance as inevitably produces sin, and sin misery. Therefore, the expression, "ye were darkness," means ye were ignorant, polluted, and wretched. "But now ye are light in the Lord, *i.e.*, in virtue of union with the Lord, ye are enlightened, sanctified, and blessed. "Walk as children of light," *i.e.*, as the children of holiness and truth (p. 101).

In our unregenerate state we and everybody else is the personification of darkness. But having been saved, we are the personification of light. This does not mean that every unsaved person is as bad as he can be, nor does it mean that we are as good as we can be, but it means that a glorious transformation has taken place within us so that we are no longer characterized by that ignorance which leads deeper and deeper into sin, but by the light which enables us to "walk as children of light." This is what Paul meant when he wrote in 2 Cor. 5:17 that we are a new creation in Christ.

Verse 8 is the positive side of Paul's teaching just as verse 7 was the negative side. And we need to be exhorted where both are concerned.

Here we need to remind ourselves of the teaching of the Apostle John in 1 John 1:5-7,

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Since we are the children of God Who is light, so are we light (although not yet *all light*, or *perfect light*) and we are to walk in a manner that is consistent with what we have become in the Lord.

5:9 Now the only reason that we can walk in the light instead of walking in darkness, is because of what the light produces in us. Many of the Greek MSS read, "the fruit of the light." The reading in the KJV is "the fruit of the Spirit." The difference between the two readings should not trouble us because if God is light, so is the Spirit light. The point is that these two metaphors, fruit and light, show the change that salvation brings to all who know the Lord.

These words, "all goodness and righteousness and truth," must, therefore, be taken as meaning *all kinds of practical goodness and righteousness and truth*, instead of speaking of our standing before God. Since God is good, His goodness will be displayed in us. Since God is righteous, we too will live righteously. Since God is truth (and here the Apostle probably had in mind *faithfulness*), these godly characteristics will be seen in us, as a very part of us. No person who has been darkness, but now has become light in the Lord, can fail to manifest the change that God has made in us.

5:10 When we walk in the light, we are "proving what is acceptable to the Lord." Before we were saved there was nothing about us, nor anything that we could do that would be well pleasing to the Lord. But now that is where we live. We are testing and proving every day those gracious qualities which are found in perfection in God. As the children of God we examine from the Word of God that which is declared to be pleasing to God. We, by His grace, do it, and show demonstrate that the only way we can possibly please God is by being good as He is, by being righteous as He is, and by being faithful as He is. Every Christian is to be a living example, living proof, that to walk in the light is not only superior to every other kind of a life from a human point of view, but it is the only kind of a life that is pleasing and acceptable to God.

5:11 Here Paul emphasized that there can be no compromise with evil. Compromise is a way of life for our politicians, but that is not the case with those of us who know the Lord. There can be no compromising with the Devil or with sin. Compromise leads only to defeat and shame. The Lord has saved us from "the unfruitful works of darkness." Those "unfruitful works" always promise more than they can deliver. They always look better than they are. Our lives are not to be made harmonious with the ways of the world, but our lives are to "reprove them." This does not mean that we are out to correct the ways of the world, but "reprove" is the Greek word which means *to convict*. This is God's way of awakening people who are still darkness, and in the darkness, that there is a better way, God's way, the way made possible only by the transforming power of God through Christ.

This is the same emphasis that James made with the wives he addressed in James 3:1-2.

This is also what the Lord stressed with His disciples as He left them to return to heaven. They were not just to give a witness, but they were to "be" witnesses. The people of the world may not read the Bible, nor allow anyone else to read it to them. They will not go to church where they can hear the Word of God. But they cannot keep themselves from, nor deny, the testimony of a transformed life. This is why the Apostle Paul was underscoring in these verses the importance of *walking in the light*.

5:12 Paul did not mean that we never talk about particular sins. He certainly named sins in passages like Romans 1. But he did not feel that he had to go into all of the gory details of sin in order to convict people that they are sinners in need of a Savior. The most powerful witness against sin is the testimony of a godly life, a life lived according to the light of the Word and the light of God Himself.

The same applies to watching sinful things on TV, or reading books where people indulge in all kinds of sin. And we are certainly not to go where people go who intend to satisfy their sinful lusts. All of these things are *shameful*. Not only are they disgraceful, but they are unprofitable. Instead we need to remember words like

the Apostle Peter was directed to give to us when he said,

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

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

5:13 Here the Apostle Paul returned to what he had been saying. If people are to be convicted of their sins, it is not going to be through discussing their sins with them, but by exposing them to the light of God. And we do that by what we are, and by the way we live. David said in Psa. 36:9, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." And the writer of Psalm 119 (probably King David) said, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psa. 119:130).

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of what the Apostle Paul was saying here. Peter repeated the same principles when he wrote the words we find in 1 Peter 3:15 and 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.

The most powerful witness we have, is the testimony of a transformed life. If our objective in life is to be godly in our conduct and in our speech, the Lord will use those to open doors for us to give the Word to people so that they may be exposed to the light, and, if God is so pleased to use us, we may have the joy of winning them to salvation in Christ. This is why the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). He saw in them something that he had never seen before, as they prayed and sang hymns at midnight in spite of the fact that they had been beaten and their feet were securely locked in the stocks. He saw "light" for the first time in his life, and he wanted to know more.

If we would only take a passage like this to heart, we might see a new day of power and blessing for the church in our relationship with a very, very wicked world. Sin reigns in the highest places of our government, and our leaders go ahead to eternal perdition. What they need is the light, and, if they are going to see it, it most likely will be in the lives of those of us who now are "light in the Lord."

May 3, 1999

5:14 A couple of questions come up in connection with this verse. One is, Who is the "he" that "saith"? And the second is, To whom was "he" speaking?

Let me try to answer the first question first.

Dr. Charles Hodge made a very important statement concerning this verse which, although it is lengthy, I want to take the time to read it. It will doubtless help us in the interpretation of other passages of Scripture. Here is what he had to say:

As this formula of quotation is never used in the New Testament except when citations are made from the Old Testament, it cannot properly be assumed that the apostle here quotes some Christian hymn with which the believers in Ephesus were familiar; or some apocryphal book; or some inspired book no longer extant. We must understand him either as referring to many exhortations of the Old Testament Scriptures, the substance of which he condenses in the few words here used; or as giving the spirit of some one passage, though not its words. Both these methods of explanation may be sustained by appeal to similar passages. The apostles in quoting the Old Testament sometimes combined several pas-

sages in the same quotation—and sometimes give as the teaching of the prophets what is nowhere taught or asserted in express terms, but is abundantly or clearly implied in what they say. At other times again, the reference is obviously to some one passage, and yet neither the Hebrew nor Septuagint is accurately followed, but the general idea is reproduced. We without the authority and divine guidance of the apostles deal in the same way with the Word of God, of which almost every sermon would furnish examples. It is generally assumed that Paul here refers to Is. 60:1, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Or, as De Wette renders it . . . *Up, become light; for thy light comes, and the glory of Jehovah riseth over thee.* The analogy between this passage and the quotation of the apostle is plain. There in both—1. The call to those who are asleep or dead to rise. 2. To receive light. 3. The promise that Jehovah, Lord, or Christ equivalent terms in the mind of the apostle, would give them light. There can, therefore, be little doubt that it was the language of Isaiah Paul intended in substance to quote (Hodge, Charles, *1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians*, pp. 103, 104).

I consider this a very helpful statement regarding references to the Old Testament in the New Testament, and so one that can help us in understanding other passages as well as this one.

In answering the questions I raised a moment ago, I believe that we can say that the "he" is the Lord, and those to whom He speaks are those are asleep in spiritual death, who need life, with the absolutely certain promise that "Christ shall give thee light."

In the preceding verses we have been speaking about New Testament evangelism with special emphasis, not upon preaching, but upon *the lives of those who were darkness, but now are light in the Lord.* *The assumption from verse 12 is that the Holy Spirit often uses the lives of the Lord's people to bring conviction to the hearts of people who do not know the Lord, and that, when the Lord chooses to work in that way, God supports that ministry by speaking directly to the heart of that person who is without Christ.* This does not mean that the Christian who is being used in this way does not speak at all, nor use Scripture, but it does mean that what has been used to make that unsaved person want to be saved, has been the light that he or she has seen in the life of some Christian.

Verses 8 through 14 are unquestionably one of the most important passages in the whole book of Ephesians. It will only be when we get back to walking in the light that we will again see people awakened to see their need of the Savior Who means everything to us.

As I have re-studied this passage, I have been reminded of that well-known statement which E. M. Bounds made in his book, *Power Through Prayer*: "Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men" (p. 5). And on the same page Mr. Bounds quoted a statement which Robert Murray M'Cheyne made to preachers:

Study universal holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last but an hour or two; your life preaches all the week (*Ibid.*).

But what he said to preachers is just as important for every Christian to realize. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of godly living. The Holy Spirit will use our lives to open the doors to people's hearts, and that is often what causes them, as Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15, to ask us for "a reason of the hope that is in us."

Now we come to the third and last part of this section.

III. "Walk circumspectly" (Eph. 5:15-21).

It is very evident that in these verses the Apostle Paul was building upon what he had just said about walking

as the children of light. Here he is helping us to know how to walk in the light. And so he wrote, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

5:15 What does it mean to "walk circumspectly"? It is the Greek adverb, ἀκριβῶς. It combines the ideas of *accuracy* and *diligence*. Robertson suggests the word *carefully*. This word is the marginal translation in the NKJ. The NASB renders the first part of this verse, "Therefore be careful how you walk." The NIV says, "Be very careful, then, how you live. The dictionary's definition of "circumspectly" tells us that this word means that we are to be "attentive to all circumstances or consequences" (Webster's Collegiate, p. 183). It also adds the word *wary*.

When we put all of this together we see that it means that we must be careful, we must make sure, that we are living as God wants us to live, and that we must be very diligent about it. We are in enemy territory, and we must never for a moment let down our guard or grow lax about what we say, what we do, what we think, where we go. The Apostle Peter has given us a good word in this connection. I am thinking about 1 Peter 5:8 and 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 stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

How well Peter himself knew the importance of what he was writing! He was not careful about praying when he was with the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. And he was too full of self-confidence. So when he was identified as one who had been with the Lord, he panicked and denied that he even knew the Lord. *We can't be too careful about our lives. We need to persevere!*

And that is the reason that Paul said, "Not as fools, but as wise." The Greek word for wise is σοφός. The word that Paul used here was that word with an "a," or alpha, placed on the front of it. So it is ἄσοφος. It doesn't mean a person who is mentally deficient or unable to learn, but here it means a person who does not know the truth of God's Word. He may be saved, but he doesn't really know doctrine, nor does he know how a child of God is to live. This is the big problem among professing Christians today, and I suppose it always has been a major problem. When we study our Bibles, this is the first step in learning how to live. And it does not mean that we just look at the practical exhortations in Scripture, but we look at all of the Word of God. The practical teaching of Scripture is built upon the foundation of Christian doctrine. When we were first saved, we didn't know anything except how to be saved. But then we need to grow, and the more we know of the Word of God, the more our lives will be changed, and the more we will be walking as the children of light.

Let me recommend to you the regular reading of the book of Proverbs. That is the wisdom book of the Bible. For several years now I have read Proverbs every month, and I am continually noticing truths which I hadn't noticed before. We must not neglect any part of the Bible, but the book of Proverbs is in a special way, a book of divine wisdom. It helps all of us to know how to live for the Lord. It is especially a good book for children and young people, but it is good for all of us to read and re-read. Let's be like Solomon who asked the Lord to "give" him "an understanding heart" so that, among other things, he could "discern between good and bad" (see 1 Kings 3:9). The pursuit of the truth of God's Word, is the pursuit of wisdom, and this is a life-long project for each one of us – and I might say that it is the most delightful work that any person can do.

But let us go on because verse 16 is a part of verse 15. The two verses really should be one.

5:16 One way in which every wise person shows that he or she is wise, is by the way he uses time. We all have the same number of hours each day, but how we use them, how we redeem them for ourselves so that we can make the best use of them, is dependent upon ourselves. We live in evil days, which has been true

of life ever since Adam committed the first sin. This means that if we just take each day as it comes, without realizing that we need to prepare to make the best use of our time, then we will find that time will be wasted as far as eternal things are concerned, and that will have an evil effect upon us. And while we all have the same number of hours in every day, our days are limited. We are not going to be here forever. And so it becomes us to remember that we are stewards of the time we have, and must use our time wisely. The person who is too busy to read and study the Bible, and/or too busy to pray, is not redeeming his time for that which is the most important. Time lost is gone forever. Therefore, we need to be sure that the time that the Lord gives us is being used for our own spiritual benefit. This is what it means to "walk circumspectly."

5:17 But in order that we will understand that the Apostle Paul was not teaching selfishness, he added that it is the will of God that we need to be concerned about.

Here Paul used a different word for "unwise" from the word he uses for "fools" in verse 15. An "unwise" person is a person who does not think straight. He fails to discern between "what is true and false, right and wrong, important and unimportant" (Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 105. He fails to understand the will of the Lord, and that is really because he hasn't taken the time to find out from a daily reading and meditating on Scripture, "what the will of the Lord is."

These are very practical points that the Apostle Paul was making. If we don't know the truth of God's Word, the fault is ours. We can't blame anyone else. We find the time to do what we want to do. We find the time to do what is important to us. So, if we are not daily in the Word, learning the great doctrines of Scripture, and applying the truth of the Word to the way we live, the blame lies right at our own feet. We all need to realize that there is nothing more important in any of our lives than our time with the Lord. And it will amaze us to discover that when we put the Lord and His Word first, somehow the Lord enables us to have the time to take care of all of the other responsibilities that we have. Some of the busiest people in the world, have still found time for the Lord and His Word.

Here in this verse the Apostle Paul has touched upon one enemy of the proper use of time. It is that we just don't think straight. In the next verse he cited another very great problem: drunkenness.

5:18 Notice how Paul tied them together with the word "and" at the beginning of this verse. Drunkenness was evidently a great problem in Ephesus like it is in Portland and throughout our country today. It is said that Alexander the Great offered a prize to the man who could drink the most wine, and thirty persons who entered the competition *died* seeking to win the prize. John Eadie had this to say about drunkenness in his commentary on Ephesians:

The tremendous sin of intemperance is all the more to shunned as its hold is so great on its victims, for with periodical remorse thee is periodical inebriety; the fatal cup is again coveted and drained; while character, fortune, and life are risked and lost in the gratification of an appetite of all others the most brutal in form and brutifying in result. There are few vices out of which there is less hope of recovery—its haunts are so numerous as it hold is so tremendous (p. 397).

But he went on to relate to drunkenness another sin, which is translated in our version, "excess," which actually means *many sins!* He indicated, as we know, that drinking leads to a whole lot of other sins. Drinking is a tool which people use to lead to immorality. Drinking often leads to murder. Drinking has been responsible for the ruin of many a promising career. It is often the cause of divorce. We all know the story which often is told as a result of drunken driving. I have recommended to you the reading of the book of Proverbs. Read it, and you will learn a great deal about the evils of drinking intoxicating beverages. Drinking tends toward anything that will destroy people's lives as well as their souls. Hodge points out that the word "excess" in the Greek, which

is ἄσωτῖα, is derived from a word which means *that which cannot be saved*. Drink makes slaves of those who use it, and enslaves them into committing many other self-destroying sins. To be drunk with wine is to be brought completely under its influence. And yet there is another way.

It is in this connection that the Apostle Paul said, "But be filled with the Spirit." Sometimes people who have had trouble with drinking before they were saved, have trouble after they are saved. Of course, the only person who can be filled with the Spirit, is the person who has been indwelt by the Spirit. And the only person who is indwelt by the Spirit is the person who has been saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is also the only real hope that any Christian has who is seeking to be delivered from a drinking habit.

To be filled with the Spirit is to be brought under the control, under the mighty influence of the Spirit of God. The Spirit does for us what we could never do for ourselves. The Apostle Paul taught the Galatians that if they would "walk in the Spirit," they would not "fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). It is the Spirit of God Who draws us to the Word of God. It is the Spirit of God Who teaches us the truths of Scripture. It is the Spirit of God Who enables us to live for the glory of God. It is the Spirit of God Who produces in us a godly character: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and self-control. Drinking is a terrible sin in itself, and it produces a whole list of other sins. But the Holy Spirit is exactly the opposite. And Paul went on in the next three verses to give us the evidences, the results, of being filled, controlled, and blessed by the Holy Spirit. Let us note what they are:

- 1) Joy expresses in singing (v. 19).
- 2) Thanksgiving (v. 20).
- 3) Humility (v. 21).

Let us note what the Apostle Paul had to say about each of these.

5:19 Let me point out as we come to these verses that in each case what is done as a result of being filled with the Spirit has the Lord, or God, or Both, as the Recipients of what is done.

Drunkards often sing, but their songs reflect the depravity of their behavior. Christians sing, too. They sing together and to each other. They sing "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." And when their singing is done properly, it has two important characteristics: (1) it comes from their hearts; (2) it is directed toward the Lord. Thus, the joy which they express in singing is directed as worship toward the Lord, while at the same time we as believers, by our singing, minister to each other.

"Psalms" – This has to be a reference to the book of Psalms, the largest book in all of Scripture. The word psalms actually means music that is sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. We have in our hymnal many Psalms which have been set to music. A book called a Psalter is used in many churches. They are paraphrases of the Psalms, and are rich in bringing before us the great truths revealed by the Spirit of God in the Psalms.

"Hymns" – It is not easy to distinguish between these different types of music, but it seems that hymns were music written after the Psalms which were directed specifically to God, worshiping Him for His glorious attributes and praising Him for His marvelous works. Of course, these characteristics were found also in many of the Psalms.

"Spiritual songs" – The word "spiritual" obviously has to do with the Spirit, and if it has to do with the Spirit, it has to do with the Book which the Spirit of God has given to us. So this would distinguish "songs" as being different from the songs of the world. They are songs that contribute to the spiritual blessings and edification of the people of God. Singing in NT times was not for fun, but it all was for ministry.

Psalms would fall into all three categories, and it may be that instead of trying to say that there were three categories of music in the church, the Apostle Paul was saying that they are the required characteristics for all of the music that was used by the people of God in their churches, and from there, in their homes, and even in their private devotions.

Again notice that it was all directed specifically and personally to the Lord.

5:20 Thanksgiving has always been one of the distinguishing features of the people of God. This can be expressed in singing, or in prayer, or in personal conversation. Our thanksgiving to God is not limited to particular times and places, but is to be constantly upon the hearts and expressed by the lips of those who are filled with the Spirit.

Pay particular attention to the word, "for all things." This is in recognition of the great truth that God is the Source of all of our blessings, and that He sovereignly has His hand upon and in every detail of our lives. And even in the things that we would never choose, the trials and the testings that are a part of every believer's life, we can praise God that everything that God brings into our lives is ultimately designed for our blessing, designed to draw us closer to the Lord, and to work in us and through us His gracious purposes for our lives. It is only by the blessing of the Spirit upon us that we can be thankful to the Lord "for all things."

But, as I have reminded you before, we are not just to be thankful, but to be thankful to God and the Father, our Father, our heavenly Father. All blessings come from Him, and He alone is worthy of our praise. He is the One to Whom we offer our praise. And it is always to be "in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even when we come with our praises, they are only acceptable to God as we bring them to Him in the Lord's Name. This verse is similar in its emphasis with Heb. 13:15:

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

5:21 The third and last evidence of being filled with the Spirit which Paul mentioned here is that of humility. Paul expresses it as *submission*. This is the word that many of us have gotten familiar with in going through the first epistle of Peter. It is the word ὑποτάσσω. This brings out another distinctive feature of the lives that we as Christians are to live. The verb means *to put under*, meaning that we are to treat each other as servants, not as being lords over everyone else. It is the opposite of always insisting that we have our own way. But we do not do this in fear of each other, but because we want to please God, and because we want to be like our Lord Jesus Christ Who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mark 10:45).

I have mentioned in other meetings the context of the verse which I have just given you. Let me remind you again of what our Lord said along this line. James and John wanted the Lord to promise them that they would sit on each side of Him when He came into His Kingdom. The request displeased the other disciples, and could have caused trouble among them if the Lord had not intervened. But this is what He said to all of them:

- 42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.
- 43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:
- 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.
- 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

Bishop Moule, linking verse 21 with verse 20, says, "Nothing so withers pride as pure thanksgiving" (p. 278).

And Calvin made this significant comment on this verse and the idea of giving thanks:

He [Paul] means that this is a pleasure which ought never to lose its relish; that this is an exercise of which we ought never to weary. Innumerable benefits which we receive from God yield fresh cause of joy and thanksgiving. At the same time, he reminds believers that it will argue ungodly and disgraceful sloth, if they shall not always give thanks, —if their whole life shall not be spent in the study and exercise of praising God (XXI, p. 316).

Concl: I trust that we have all been able to see from this fifth chapter of Ephesians that to "walk in love," and to "walk as children of light," and to "walk circumspectly," is to walk like the Lord Jesus Christ walked when He was here on earth.

And it is in being like our Lord that our lives will bear witness to the saving grace of our Savior. The basis of our witness to others, as we have seen in these verses, is what we are by God's grace, what we are in Christ. And so let us pay close attention day after day to our walk. And let us pray that the Lord will enable us in this dark period in our nation's history, to be His instruments to point others by the way we live, and by the testimony that we give, to "the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We can't do it "on our own," but by the filling of the Spirit, He will use us to glorify God and to see others come to the knowledge of Christ as their Savior.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – October 5, 1999
REVIEW LESSON – BEGINNING OF SECOND YEAR ON EPHESIANS

The first time the city of Ephesus is mentioned in the NT is in Acts 18, verse 19. Please turn with me to that passage.

The reference just includes three verses – vv. 19-21.

The whole of Acts 19 has to do with Paul's ministry in Ephesus. This was the center of the worship of the goddess Diana, as she was known to the Romans. Later this goddess was identified with Artemis, and this is how the Greeks referred to her. She was supposed to have been the goddess who helped women in childbirth, and thus she became known as the mother goddess of the whole earth.

The article in the ISBE gives us some important information about Ephesus, and I quote from the article on Ephesus because it helps us to understand something of the background of Ephesus, as well as what conditions were like when the Apostle Paul first went there on his second missionary journey. The selections of the article are as follows:

EPHESUS

(ef-e-sus) (Ephesos, "desirable"): A city of the Roman province of Asia, near the mouth of the Cayster river, 3 miles from the western coast of Asia Minor, and opposite the island of Samos. With an artificial harbor accessible to the largest ships, and rivaling the harbor at Miletus, standing at the entrance of the valley which reaches far into the interior of Asia Minor, and connected by highways with the chief cities of the province, Ephesus was the most easily accessible city in Asia, both by land and sea. Its location, therefore, favored its religious, political and commercial development, and presented a most advantageous field for the missionary labors of Paul. The city stood upon the sloping sides and at the base of two hills, Prion and Coressus, commanding a beautiful view; its climate was exceptionally fine, and the soil of the valley was unusually fertile.

Though Pergamos was the center of the Roman religion and of the government, Ephesus was the more accessible, the commercial center and the home of the native goddess Diana; and because of its wealth and situation it gradually became the chief city of the province. It is to the temple of Diana, however, that its great wealth and prominence are largely due. Like the city, it dates from the time of the Amazons, yet what the early temple was like we now have no means of knowing, and of its history we know little excepting that it was seven times destroyed by fire and rebuilt, each time on a scale larger and grander than before. The wealthy king Croesus supplied it with many of its stone columns, and the pilgrims from all the oriental world brought it of their wealth. In time the temple possessed valuable lands; it controlled the fisheries; its priests were the bankers of its enormous revenues. Because of its strength the people stored there their money for safe-keeping; and it became to the ancient world practically all that the Bank of England is to the modern world.

Not only was the temple of Diana a place of worship, and a treasure-house, but it was also a museum in which the best statuary and most beautiful paintings were preserved. Among the paintings was one by the famous Apelles, a native of Ephesus, representing Alexander the Great hurling a thunderbolt. It was also a sanctuary for the criminal, a kind of city of refuge, for none might be arrested for any crime whatever when within a bowshot of its walls. There sprang up, therefore, about the temple a village in which the thieves and murderers and other criminals made their homes. Not only did the temple bring vast numbers of pilgrims to the city, as does the Kaaba at Mecca at the present time, but it employed hosts of people apart from the priests and priestesses; among them were the large number of artisans who manufactured images of the goddess Diana, or shrines to sell to the visiting strangers.

Such was Ephesus when Paul on his 2nd missionary journey <Acts 18:19-21> first visited the city, and when, on his 3rd journey <19:8-10; 20:31>, he remained there for two years preaching in the synagogue <19:8,10>, in the school of Tyrannus <19:9> and in private houses <20:20>. Though Paul was probably not the first to bring Christianity to Ephesus, for Jews had long lived there <2:9; 6:9>, he was the first to make progress against the worship of Diana. As the fame of his teachings was carried by the pilgrims to their distant homes, his influence extended to every part of Asia Minor. In time the pilgrims, with decreasing faith in Diana, came in fewer numbers; the sales of the shrines of the goddess fell off; Diana of the Ephesians was no longer great; a Christian church was rounded there and flourished, and one of its first leaders was the apostle John. Finally in 262 AD, when the temple of Diana was again burned, its influence had so far departed that it was never again rebuilt. Diana was dead. Ephesus became a Christian city, and in 341 AD a council of the Christian church was held there. The city itself soon lost its importance and decreased in population. The sculptured stones of its great buildings, which were no longer in use and were falling to ruins, were carried away to Italy, and especially to Constantinople for the great church of Saint Sophia. In 1308 the Turks took possession of the little that remained of the city, and deported or murdered its inhabitants. The Cayster river, overflowing its banks, gradually covered with its muddy deposit the spot where the temple of Diana had once stood, and at last its very site was forgotten.

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It is very clear from Acts 19 that the worship of the goddess Diana was very powerful and influential in those days, and that it was only by the grace of God that the Gospel could be preached there, and that a church was established.

Acts 20:1 tells of Paul's departure from Ephesus, but beginning with verse 17 of Acts 20 we have the record of Paul's final meeting with the elders of Ephesus. And it tells much of Paul's ministry with them. (Read Acts 20:17-38.

We have references to Ephesus in 1 Cor. 15:32 and 16:8. Also in 1 Tim. 1:3 and 2 Tim. 1:18 and 4:12. Finally, Ephesus is mentioned with the six other churches of the Roman province of Asia in Rev. 1:11, and the first of the seven letters to those churches is found in Rev. 2:1-7.

Only ruins exist today where the city of Ephesus used to be, and like in so many places where the Gospel used to flourish, the testimony of the Gospel is in great need of reviving.

NOW LET US TURN TO THE EPISTLE ITSELF.

As you might expect from me, I am going to ask you to be reading this epistle as much as you can until we finish it. I have timed my own reading of the epistle aloud, and it took me a few seconds less than twenty-four minutes the two times that I checked myself. So we all should be able to read the epistle at least once a week, and the blessing will be greater for all of us if we do. It is easy to read what others have said about the book, and yet neglect the book itself, and we don't want to do that.

We will be starting with Paul's instruction to wives in chapter 5, but for today I want to review the epistle so that the message of the epistle can be fresh in all of our minds.

I am going to follow the outline which I gave you last year. But please have your Bible open as we look at Ephesians together.

As was characteristic of the Apostle Paul we have A DOCTRINAL SECTION first (chapters 1-3), followed by A PRACTICAL SECTION (chapters 4-6).

In the doctrinal section there are two great doctrines which the Apostle Paul emphasized: first, the Gospel, and second, the church. This probably followed the nature of Paul's teaching when he spent time with them. Paul's ministry in Ephesus was approximately in the year 57 A. D., and some three or four years later he wrote this epistle to them. As I mentioned last year, the name Ephesus does not appear in some of the MSS of this epistle, and that has given rise to the idea that this letter may have been intended as a circular letter among the same churches that are mentioned in Rev. 1-3. This may have been what happened to the letter, but Paul's comments at the end of the epistle seem to indicate that he had a specific group in mind. That group would, of course, have been the church at Ephesus.

We need to observe that when the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle, he was a prisoner of Rome. Cf. 3:1; 4:1; and 6:20. We can also see that 3:13 is a reference to what he was going through when this epistle was written. These references give added meaning to the importance of this letter.

EPHESIANS ONE

After Paul's customary greeting, we come to a lengthy section of PRAISE. That is the meaning of the word "blessed" in verse three. And it would have told the Ephesian believers, as it should tell us, that any reference to the Gospel should provoke from our hearts and from our lips, praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But we should not overlook the work that the Holy Spirit has done in bringing us to Christ. Eph. 5:20 tells us the place that thanksgiving should have in all of our lives: "always for all things." That is a big order. It includes not only what God is doing in our lives today, but all that He has done for our salvation, and all of the blessings that we have in Christ.

This is followed by a prayer of intercession in the latter part of chapter 1. And there are great lessons for us to learn from the prayers of the Apostle Paul. He was a man of prayer, a man given to prayer.

Right now I am reading a book by one of the lesser known Puritans, a man by the name of Nathanael Ranew, who lives from 1602 until 1678. He wrote a book called, *Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation*. On the back cover of the book some comments are made which need to be emphasized in these days when there is so little reading of the words of Scripture. I want to read to you what was said there. (Read.)

The truth of Scripture, and, as here in chapter 1, the Gospel, should always move our hearts to praise God for the salvation that we have in Christ. And the more we meditate on what Christ has done for us, the more fervent and enjoyable will be our prayers. Note the prayer carefully in Eph. 1:15, and note how the prayer is connected with Paul's praise by the word "wherefore" in verse 15.

At the end of chapter 1 we have Paul's first reference to the church. See vv. 22 and 23. This is followed by several other references in 3:10 and 21, 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, and 32.

EPHESIANS TWO

In this chapter Paul reminded the Ephesian believers twice what they were by nature, and what they had become by the grace of God. I have tried to bring this out in the outline I have given you.

And this chapter, too, concludes with a reference to the church, although the word church is not used in the

passage I am referring to: Eph. 2:19-22.

EPHESIANS THREE

Here the Apostle Paul got into his message about the church in even more detail, showing that this was a main theme in his epistle.

And this is also followed by an intercessory prayer. We need to pray before we teach, while we are teaching, and after we teach. And the records of Paul's prayers are extremely important in teaching us how to pray. Note what his petitions were, and how he presented them to the Lord.

EPHESIANS FOUR, FIVE, THROUGH SIX NINE

This chapter introduces the PRACTICAL SECTION of the epistle. And the dominant word in this section is the word "walk." But notice first Eph. 2:2 and 10. Now we come to 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15. The verb which Paul used means *to live, to conduct one's self*. It is a word which encompasses every detail of our lives. What we understand about the doctrine of Scripture, will affect our walk. How we live reveals what we know, and what we are. There are positive aspects to our walk, and there are also negative aspects, that is, not only what we are to do, but what we are not to do.

The point in these verses is that we are to growing in lives of holiness. As Paul indicated in Eph. 1:4 we were chosen "that we should be holy and without blame before" God. And it follows that the greater our understanding of the truth of the Word, real, genuine understanding, the more holiness will be evident in our lives. But we need the specific instruction that Paul have given in these passages.

In this PRACTICAL SECTION we first have *that which applies to all of us as believers, men and women, young and old*. But beginning with Eph. 5:22 and going on through 6:9, Paul singled out wives, then husbands; children, then fathers; and servants, then masters.

The point in this seems to be that after we have been saved and come to some understanding of the truth, and then learn to walk in fellowship with the Lord and in obedience to His Word, then in the particular roles that we have in life, particularly at home and at work, we are to live in our relationships with each other in ways that are pleasing to the Lord. Then, and only then, can we expect to have the blessing of the Lord.

EPHESIANS SIX TEN THROUGH TWENTY

Finally, in verses 10 through 20 we are reminded that being a Christian not only means that we have truth to know, and a life to live, but a war to fight.

A lady who was greatly used by God in the early years of this century, wrote a book on Ephesians. Her name was Miss Ruth Paxson. She called her book, *The Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of the Christian*. I can't think of a title that is more descriptive of this wonderful epistle which Paul wrote to the Ephesians. *The Wealth* is given to us in chapters 1-3. *The Walk* is described for us in 4:1 through 6:9. *The Warfare* is presented in 6:10-20.

Paul's conclusion is found the last four verses of the epistle.

As with any portion of the Word of God, we need to remember that Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians is the Word of God. We need to believe all that it teaches us, and we need to be obedient to all that it tells us to do. We

can't do what God wants us to do in our own strength. Only by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit can we understand the truth, and only by the same power can we obey the truth. But we find that in obeying the truth we become what God wants us to be, not perfectly, but progressively, as we are being edified. And this is the major role of the church with regard to us as believers. We are to grow. And it is as we grow that God is glorified, and we are blessed.

End of Summary of the Epistle to the Ephesians

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul
Tuesday Bible Class – May 10, 1999
Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Note: I began this lesson on May 10, 1999, but did not finish. So, in starting the Tuesday Bible Class again on October 5, 1999, I gave a review of the whole Ephesian epistle. Then I got back to this section of the Epistle of Ephesians on October 11, 1999 in preparation for the Class on Tuesday, Oct. 12, 1999.

Intro: It is good for us to be aware of the context in any passage of Scripture. A verse in any part of the Bible always means more when it is explained in the light especially of the verses which precede it, although the following verses are not to be ignored either. This principle of interpretation is important as we come to this section which we are approaching now.

You will notice that we have three groups of pairs:

- 1) The wives and then their husbands (5:22-33).
- 2) Children and their fathers (6:1-4).
- 3) Servants and their masters (6:5-9).

These instructions come after the Apostle has spent a considerable amount of time and space dealing with the Gospel and our need for it, then dealing with the marvelous truth of the Church, the body of Christ, and our place in it, and then our walk, and many details relating to it. So it would be assumed that when a man and a woman give themselves to each other in marriage, they come having trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, with some understanding of the great doctrines of Scripture (the more, the better), and that from walking with God as single persons they come to their marriage day to continue to walk with the Lord, first as husband and wife, then as parents, and also as masters and servants.

In this connection Matthew Henry made an important statement about the verses we are now to consider in relation to the verse which immediately precedes them. I am speaking of verse 21, and I believe it sets the proper tone for our consideration of verses 5:22 and following. This is what he had to say:

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to the discharge of relative duties. As a general foundation for these duties, he lays down that rule v. 21. There is a mutual submission that Christians owe one to another, condescending to bear one another's burdens: not advancing themselves above others, nor domineering over one another and giving laws to one another. Paul was an example of this truly Christian temper, for he became all things to all men. We must be of a yielding and of a submissive spirit, and ready to all the duties of the respective places and stations that God has allotted to us in the world. In the fear of God, that is, so far as is consistent with the fear of God, for his sake, and out of conscience towards him, and that hereby we may give proof that we truly fear him. Where there is this mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed. From v. 22 to the end he speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; and he speaks of these in a Christian manner, setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection, and Christ as an example of love in husbands.

There is one point that is so obvious in what the Apostle did throughout this section (5:22-6:9) that I am amazed that very few of the commentators have even referred to it. In fact, among some eight or ten commentators I have consulted, *only one has referred to the point that I am about to mention*. It is this: You will notice that as Paul moved from married couples, to the family, and on to what today we would apply to the workplace, in every case you will notice that he referred to the one having who had the less authority first. He mentioned the wives, and then the husbands. He mentioned the children, and then the fathers. He mentioned the servants, and then their masters.

One expositor from the past who did refer to this unique situation, was Charles Simeon. And this is what he had to say:

You must have observed, that in all the passage of Scripture where the relative duties are insisted on, those of the inferior are always stated first. Nor is this without reason: for they are all enjoined by God: and, however difficult they may appear, especially where the superior neglects to perform the duties assigned to him, they must all be observed from a regard to the authority of that God who has imposed them; nor must any one imagine, that his duties are a whit less incumbent on him because the superior neglects his. Power [authority], in whomsoever it is vested, is God's: and the person bearing it, so far as it is truly committed to him, is God's representative and vicegerent [one who has his authority bestowed upon him by another]. And I conceive, that this is the reason of that order, which, from being uniformly observed in the Scriptures, we may well suppose to have been wittingly and wisely fixed (Simeon, Charles, *Expository Outline on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 17, p. 401).

From what Mr. Simeon has said, he believed that Paul was emphasizing that nothing excuses us from doing what the Lord has ordained that we should do, even though the one over us in any of these relationships may be failing to do what God wants him to do. So a wife may have an unloving husband, but still she must be a submissive wife. A child may have an unreasonable father, but he, or she, is still to be obedient to him. And a master may be very hard and unreasonable, but the servant must be obedient to his master regardless. The Apostle Peter said so in 1 Peter 2:18:

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

“Froward” means *wicked, unfair, even crooked*.

But it should also be observed that in all of these relationships – the husband and wife, the father and the child, the master and the servant, the one in the lesser place is always the key to a cordial relationship. And it should always be remembered by the wife, and child, and servant, that this was the role that our Lord had in relation to His heavenly Father. Christ came to do His will. He rendered perfect obedience to His Father. When it says in Phil. 2:8 that our Lord “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” we need to ask, “Obedient to whom?” And the answer is, “Obedient to God.”

The one exception to these principles set forth in Scripture, is when the one in authority may require the one under his authority to do that which is contrary to Scripture. For example, something that is dishonest, or illegal, or something that is immoral. Our President has obviously tried to take advantage of his position by requiring that women who are under his authority submit to his immoral desires. The women who refuse are absolutely right in not submitting to his authority under those conditions because God never had in mind that an employer should ever have that kind of authority over those who are under him. A husband may want his wife to lie on their income tax. He does not have that kind of authority over his wife. And so in each case there are limitations to the authority that a husband has, or that a father has, or that a master has. Each has God-given authority with limitations. But those who are under the authority in each case must be sure that they do not object just because what is required is something that the one under authority does not want to do.

Examples where it would have been wrong for people to submit who were under authority, would include Joseph's refusal to submit to the ways in which Potiphar's wife sought to seduce him. Or Daniel was right in not submitting to the king's decree that anyone who made any petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to King Darius, would be cast into the den of lions. But he was ready to suffer the consequences. When the Jewish authorities told Peter and John that they were “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18), this was the Apostles' response:

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to

hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

And then later when they were arrested again for preaching the Gospel, the response of the apostles was, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

There are those who feel that this section we are now to consider actually begins with verse 21. However, from the standpoint of the grammar, that does not seem to be a correct idea. "Submitting" in verse 21 is a participle in the Greek as it is in the English translation, and a statement which only has a verb which is a participle, is not a complete statement. It is not a complete statement. But it certainly is true that the need for submission is appropriate as far as the passage we are now considering is concerned.

Other passages which teach a mutual submission such as we have in Eph. 5:21, are 1 Peter 5:5:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

And Rom. 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

Also Phil. 2:3:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

There is no question but that mutual submission and humility are the will of God for each and everyone of us.

Now let us go to the text.

5:22 (Read.)

We approach this passage, and all of those that follow down to the ninth verse of chapter 6, knowing that submission is to be a characteristic of all of the people of God. It was certainly characteristic even of our Lord. He was not only submissive to His Father, but we have that special passage of Scripture in which He was teaching humility and submission to His disciples where He said,

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

This would include wives before they become wives. But in the passage before us we see now that a wife, as a Christian, is to be characterized by submission to her husband. When she becomes a wife, she assumes this responsibility in a special way toward her husband. And no marriage can possibly succeed where a wife is unwilling to take this place. This is God's will for every wife.

The Apostle Peter said in the third chapter of his first epistle that this was to be the responsibility of a wife even when the husband was not a believer. (Read 1 Pet. 3:1-6.)

Adam Clarke must have had a sense of humor because you will find this statement in his commentary:

This is God's ordinance, and should not be transgressed. The husband should not be a tyrant, and the wife should not be the governor. Old Francis Quarles, in his homely rhymes, alluding to the superstitious notion, that the crowing of a hen bodes ill luck to the family, has said:

"Ill thrives the hapless family that shows
A cock that's silent, and a hen that crows:
I know not which live most unnatural lives,
Obeying husbands or commanding wives."

October 11, 1999

The verb "submit" in our English translations is not in many of the MSS, but the idea is there because it is carried over from verse 21. A wife's submission to all others is to be demonstrated in a special way to her husband. Paul said, "your own husbands." Eadie mentioned in his commentary that the word translated "your own" a special closeness of the relationship, and indicates that the wife is to look upon her husband as her own dear and special husband who is exclusively hers. So there is a real tenderness in the words of the Apostle.

And to explain what he meant, he went on to say, "as unto the Lord." This expression is capable to two meanings. It means that there is to be a strong likeness between her love for her husband, and her love for the Lord, but it also means that she is to consider her submission to her husband as a part of her submission to the Lord. A wife cannot consider herself in submission to the Lord if she is in rebellion against her husband. So the Apostle Paul put this relationship on the highest possible plane. And so a wife who wants the pastor who marries her and her husband, to leave out any promise to obey her husband is clearly rebelling against the will of God for her in marriage. The husband is not to be a tyrant, and the wife is not his slave. She is his wife, as we will see when we get to verse 25.

In the following verse the Apostle gave the reasoning behind what he had said in this verse.

5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife." All of this goes back to creation. Genesis 2 tells us that God made the man first, but that it was not good for him to be alone. And so he made Eve from one of Adam's ribs to be his helper. And the Apostle Paul was referring to man's headship when he wrote the words we find in 1 Cor. 11:8-9:

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

As the head of his wife, the husband is responsible for her, to provide for her, to protect her, to guide her, to teach her. As the head, he is his wife's security. There is nothing in this for a wife to fear, but it is all intended by the Lord to be for her blessing. Just as he went on to say, "Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the body." So all that Christ is to His Church, is the pattern for what a husband is to be to his wife. Could a wife expect any more than that her marriage should be patterned after God's plan for His Son and the Church? There can't be two heads. A body with two heads is a freak! So the wife is her husband's helper, and this means his helper spiritually as well as in every other way that she needs him. Marriage is never placed on a higher plane than it is by God in His Word.

Why did the Apostle add of Christ that He is "the Savior of the body"? It must have been because the Lord's continuing work as the Savior of the Church gives further insight into the husband's responsibility toward his wife. I have mentioned some of these thing above.

5:24 Paul could not mean here that the Church is always subject to Christ because we know that there is always much to be desired from the Church in her relationship to the Lord. What he did mean is that submission is the Church's main responsibility toward the Lord. And submission means obedience to the Word of the Lord. And this results in blessings beyond all that we could ever have expected to receive from the Lord. And as with the Church's relationship with the Lord, a wife's submission to her husband extends to

“everything.” This is a good place for us as members of the Body of Christ to examine our own hearts and our own ways, to make sure that our submission to the Lord is what it should be. The standard is high for the Church, and the standard is high for the wives. But what blessings are in store for us when we act upon the Word of God.

Before we go on to what Paul said to the husbands, let me mention what I have certainly implied in coming to these personal exhortations that we have in this section. *Paul is speaking to believers, and while it is possible for husbands and wives who are not Christians to have a good relationship, yet marriage can only reach its highest potential when both the husband and the wife know the Lord.* This is not a manual on marriage for everyone, but it is specifically for those of us who know the Lord. Only by the Word of God can we understand what God intended marriage to be.

Now let us go on to see what Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said to the husbands.

5:25 Lenski has a good word for all of us as we come to this section dealing with husbands. This is his comment:

What Paul says regarding the wives must be read in conjunction with what he says regarding the husbands; only thus shall we catch the full meaning (p. 629).

It is often the habit of husbands to want to remind their wives of what Paul said in verses 22-24, while at the same time they are inclined to forget what Paul said to the husbands.

I believe husbands and wives need to talk about these words which not only came from Paul, but from the Holy Spirit. But we all need to remember that what Paul wanted the wives to do, he addressed to the wives, and what he wanted the husbands to do, he addressed to the husbands. He did not say, “Husbands, make sure that you wives are submissive to you.” Nor did he tell the wives to keep reminding their husbands what they were supposed to do. Addressing the wives, he said, “Wives.” Addressing the husbands, he said, “Husbands.” We all have our hands full taking care of what we are to do in this relationship. As Christ prays for us, let us pray for each other that we will both do what God wants us to do, trusting Him to enable us to do what He says.

The instruction for husbands is a big order! There has never been a husband who has obeyed verse 25 perfectly. As much as we love our wives, we don’t love them like “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

When Lucille and I were married, Jim Rayburn who married us said to me in the ceremony, “Dwight, remember that you can never love Lucille too much.” As much as I love her, and I love her more today than I did then, yet I still haven’t reached the standard that God has set for us husbands. This is why I tell prospective husbands to make the love of Christ a life-long study. Why did Christ die for us? It was because He loved us. He laid down His life for us. The Lord described what the greatest love is in John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Most of us fell in love with the one we married because there were many things about them that attracted us. But, you know, God’s love for us was not that way. There was nothing good in me that caused Him to lay down His life in death for me – or for you! It was “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). We were ungodly. We were at enmity with Him. But His love is unconditional, and, through all of the years that we have been a part of His Church, His love for us has not wavered at all. He couldn’t love us any more than He did then because His love for us was perfect then, and it remains the same now. There are many good lessons a husband can learn by studying the love of Christ, and the love of God. It will make us better Christians, and it will make us better husbands.

“Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it,” that is, for the Church. I must point out as we look at this

statement that here we have Particular Redemption. Christ gave His life for the sheep! He offered Himself on the Cross for us! And this is like marriage is. As much as we love our friends, and as much as we love our own family members, there isn't anybody that we love like we as husbands love our wives. That is a special love. That is distinctly different from all other loves.

But why did Christ love us and give Himself for us? Here, beginning with verse 26, and going through verse 27, Paul has given us three reasons, and they are each indicated by the word **"that."** And they are all three tied together and related to each other.

26 **That** he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 **That** he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but **that** it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26-27).

5:26 Why did Christ love the Church, and give Himself for it? First, **"that** He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

Now all of this is traceable to the Cross of Christ. When the Lord set His love upon us in eternity past, He knew that we were not morally and spiritually clean. So He gave Himself to sanctify us, to set us apart from our sins and from the defilement that we experience in the world. And this meant cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). We are "born again . . . by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). This word of sanctification is a progressive work, and it is going on in all of our lives at this very moment. We are not perfect yet, but that is the direction that we are headed.

But what else is our Lord's purpose with the Church?

5:27 **"That** He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not have spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

There are several products being advertised now on TV that are guaranteed to remove wrinkles, and I guess that some of them work on "spots" too. Paul was using terms that we all connect with blemishes in physical beauty to picture that which makes us spiritual beautiful in God's sight, and in our Lord's sight. Sin has given all of us "wrinkles" and "spots" and blemishes of a lot of different kinds. The blood of Christ cleanses us, and the Word of God cleanses us too.

What will be our condition finally?

"That it should be holy and without blemish." Our heavenly Bridegroom is going to see to it that some day for each of us all sin will be gone, and all of the blemishes that have been caused by sin, will be no more.

Doesn't this remind you of that great doxology with which Jude closed his epistle. I know that most of you can quote it, but let me read it to you, and then ask you a question about it. Here are the verses, Jude 24-25

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.
Amen.

Now my question is this: God is going to present us faultless before His presence of His glory "with exceeding joy." This question is, whose joy is it? It is His joy, but it is also our joy. When the work of salvation is finally completed in you and me, no one will be able to measure the greatness of His joy, or of ours! I love that verse which is actually a hymn, which says,

He and I in that bright glory, one deep joy shall share;
Mine, to be forever with Him; His, that I am there.

Perhaps there ought to be another line which says, "Mine," that is, my joy, "to be forever like Him; His, that I am there."

This is the whole purpose of the writing of this epistle to the Ephesians. In chapter 1 we read that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. That purpose is to be fulfilled in our lives individually, and it is to be portrayed also in our marriages, the husband loving his wife, and leading her in sanctification; the wife, demonstrating by her submission to her husband, her love for her husband, and her love and submission to Christ.

And so Paul approaches the climax of his teaching here by saying

5:28 "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." Christ loves us, and we are His body of which He is the Head. A husband and his wife are one, and so for a man to love his wife is to love himself.

And Paul reminds us in verse 29 that

5:29 "No man ever yet hated his own flesh." Instead we nourish and cherish our bodies. That is, we take care of ourselves (or we should). And we do it with tenderness and deep affection. We don't knowingly put ourselves in dangerous conditions. We don't deliberately injure ourselves (unless there is something wrong with us). In the same way the Lord cares for His church. He chastens us because He loves us, and is always seeking our greatest good and blessing.

And why does He do that?

5:30 Because we belong to Him. We are His body.

5:31 Here Paul was quoting from Genesis 2:24. (Read.)

Paul did not mean that after marriage a man should have nothing more to do with his father and mother. He meant that the marriage relationship is a closer relationship than any other that a man, or a woman, has. I don't know of any place in Scripture where it says that parents and their children are one. It is only of a husband and wife that this statement is made. And so a man is to "be joined unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

5:32 This previously unrevealed truth had to do with the Church, and Christ's relationship to the Church, and it is truly a great truth. And it finds its greatest illustration in the marriage of a man and his wife.

And so we come to Paul's conclusion regarding wives and husbands.

5:33 A husband is to love his wife as he loves himself (with all that that means), and the wife is to reverence her husband. To "reverence" him means the same as the expression that is used in Scripture of the Lord. She is to fear her husband, not in the sense that she is afraid of him, but that she honors him, respects him, and is concerned about what is pleasing to him. If a wife and husband will do what the Lord has said that they should do here in this passage, their home can be a foretaste of heaven while they are still on the earth.

Concl: I close with the comment which Dr. Lenski made at the close of his comments on what Paul wrote

about husbands and wives. This is what he said:

Thus Paul points out to husband and to wife their proper relation and their attitude and their conduct toward each other. Nothing truer and nobler has ever been written or said on this subject. To tamper with the relation here marked out is only to cause damage, often the most terrible damage. Let the world tell its sad, sad story. Here are two great texts [one having to do with wives; the other, with husband – my comment] that are not expounded to our people often enough or thoroughly enough (p. 645).

October 18, 1999

(Refer to the outline.)

We are in the section of our outline called, **V. The Walk of a Christian (4:1-6:9)**. The first heading under that is, **A. Personal Instructions for All Believers (4:1-5:21)**. In this section the Apostle Paul used the verb, “walk,” five times: 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8,15. Next we come to: **B. Specific instructions for the family (5:22-6:4)**. We have covered the first two points under this: **1. Wives (5:22-24)**.

2. Husbands (5:25-33).

Now we are ready for the second of the family relationships which Paul mentioned:

3. Children (6:1-3).

4. Fathers (6:4).

From the order which the Apostle Paul followed here we are to understand that the relationship in a home which is the most important is the relationship between a husband and his wife. If this is not pleasing to God, then the whole family suffers. We have seen what the basic responsibilities of the wife and the husband are, and it is obeying these that the wife and husband can expect to receive the blessing of God.

But now let us look at what the Apostle Paul said about children.

6:1 The verse implies that the primary lesson that parents are to teach their children is obedience. And the primary responsibility that children have is to obey their parents. And so it is incumbent open parents to know what they should tell their children to do. And this, in turn, requires that the parents know and understand the Word of God. That is the reason I have said all along in teaching this epistle, that the very order of the epistle, doctrine, and then practical Christian living, are to be well established in the life of a man and woman *before* they take on the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood. Children need to learn obedience to their parents, but it is absolutely essential that the children be able to see that their parents are also seeking to live lives that are pleasing to the Lord.

My dad was not raised in a Christian home. Consequently he got into things before he was saved that he regretted all the rest of his life. He married my mother who was a professing Christian, but not very well taught. She had been raised in a Methodist church in the days when Methodists still believed the Bible and preached the Gospel. Anyway, after my mother and dad were married, they decided to make a fresh start, and they moved from Indiana to Tacoma, Washington. I don't know how they decided on Tacoma, but that is where they were when I was born. My dad told me that he didn't want to raise his family the way he had been raised.

He moved out to Tacoma first, and then my mother joined him later after he had found work and gotten a place

for them to live. My dad felt that going to church might be a help to him, but he did not know how to pick a church. In those days he didn't have a car, and he didn't have any friends to help him, so he literally walked the streets in Tacoma looking at churches, trying to decide where to go. Providentially he decided to go to the First Baptist Church where for the first time in his life he heard the Gospel. And a short time afterwards he was saved. As time went on he became a deacon, and also started to teach a young men's Sunday School class. It was called the Baraca Class. Well, this got him into studying the Bible. He started to buy commentaries, and I can remember as a young child the many evenings my dad would spend studying his Bible, preparing his lesson for the following Sunday. He had a large class, and the young men, college age and young professionals, really loved my Dad and his teaching.

Well, all that happened to my Dad had its influence on our home. And both of my parents taught us, and prayed for us, and lived before us as Christians should live. I remember the night that I professed faith in Christ, and following that service, when we got home that night, my dad took me aside to make sure that I understood what a Christian is. And he always sought to guide us children (and there were seven of us) according to what he knew about the Scriptures. I don't mean to imply that we had a perfect home. We had our share of problems. But I will always be thankful that my parents made me understand that what they wanted me to do, was based upon their understanding of the Word of God.

So Paul's instruction to parents, which is just as important today as it ever was, was that children should be taught obedience to their parents, so that as they grew to adulthood, that obedience would have prepared them to live lives of obedience to the Lord.

Some parents teach their children the wrong things, or they may not spend any time teaching them at all. Many children do not have parental examples to follow. And our society is suffering from a lack of parental teaching. In fact, the lack is so universal that it may spell doom for our generation. People get all exercised about Y-2-K, but they don't seem to be very concerned about the training that their children are getting at home.

But what did Paul mean by the words, "in the Lord"?

This should not be difficult to understand located as it is in an epistle which makes much of the expression, "in Christ," or "in Him," when it refers to Christ. We had it in Eph. 1:3, and in verse 4, and in verses 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12, and then in verse 13. Look at 2:6, and then verse 13, followed by verses 21 and 22. I will just go that far. Now here in the last chapter we have, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Dr. Lenski, our beloved Lutheran commentator, has an excellent comment on this expression "in the Lord." Listen to what he had to say. He says that it means

in union and communion with Him [Christ]. From their earliest days onward the children are to know their blessed Lord and to connect their young lives to Him. This phrase means more than following the Lord's example when He was a child; it means more than submitting to His will. Childhood obedience is to be the fruit of the child's entire relation to the Lord. This evidently implies that those who are thus to obey "in the Lord" have been placed in communion with Him as His very own (p. 646).

Dr. Lenski felt that baptism was very important in this, and I would not follow him in that. But apart from that, this is a very insightful comment, isn't it?

Children are to be taught what all of us who are adult Christians should know and apply to our children, and that is that the only way we can truly obey the Lord is by trusting Him to enable us to live pleasing to the Lord. He is our Example, but He is more than that: *He is our life!* So we need to aim at bringing our children to Christ as soon as they are capable of understanding the Gospel. We can't save them, but we are to teach them,

and to pray for them, and to look to God to draw them to Himself.

So we as parents are to teach our children obedience, but impressing upon them, and remembering this ourselves, that only through our “union and communion” with the Lord, can they or we, be obedient to Him.

No wonder that Paul concluded this statement with the words, “for this is right.” Child training for Christian parents is altogether different from that which parents are capable of who do not know the Lord. It has to be “right” because it is entirely consistent with the way we are taught in Scripture to live – according to the Word, and with our trust in the Lord. Let’s teach our children to know the Lord, and then teach them how much they will need to trust the Lord if they are going to be pleasing to Him.

So that is the first reason children are to obey the Lord: “For this is right.” The word for “right” is *δίκαιον*. So it is *righteous*. Nothing less than this can meet God’s standard for children. Nothing less than this can have God’s approval, and bring His blessing.

6:2 But a second reason is that it is commanded of children in the Word of God. This is the fifth commandment in the ten commandments. And I must point out that this commandment is not limited to childhood. As long as our parents live we are to honor them. This does not mean that we are under their authority all of our lives, but we are to honor them always. In childhood this means that children must obey their parents in the Lord.

To honor means *to show respect for them, to revere and respect them*. To honor our parents means that we want to please them; we want to obey them. This expression comes very close to what we mean when we speak of *fearing God*. A child is to want to please his parents more than his friends who may want him to do something that his parents would never want him to do. He won’t talk back to his parents. He will be submissive to their wishes. He respects their authority over him. He needs to know that when his parents say “no” about anything, it is always for his good.

But a third reason why children must obey their parents is because there is a promise attached to it which obedient children can claim. And this is “the first commandment with promise.”

Many of God’s commandments have promises attached to them, and the promises are encouragements for us to obey the command. There is no question, but that God rewards obedience. We don’t obligate God to bless us, but He obligates Himself by His promise.

What did Paul mean that it is the first commandment with promise?

Actually the second commandment had a promise attached to it. Cf. Ex. 20:4-6:

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

And here is the promise:

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

So what did Paul mean by “the first commandment with promise”?

We all should know that the first four commandments in the ten have to do with our relationship with God. The last six have to do with our relationship to people. "Honor thy father and thy mother" comes at the first of those which have to do with our relationship with other people. Our relationship as children is "first" to our parents, and as such is first in importance among all of the others. It would seem that obedience to parents is a safeguard against all of the last five commandments which follow.

But what is the promise?

6:3 This is the general rule. God has given His promise to encourage all of us in our childhood and youth to obey our parents, and to do it lovingly, happily, and consistently. And the evidence is overwhelming that it is true. But there are those cases where good children die, or children who have obeyed their parents are injured, or are afflicted with some crippling or deadly disease. We cannot understand fully the ways of the Lord in many instances. But even when "tragedy strikes," as we are inclined to say, even then God's goodness and His blessing are apparent, and He works all things out for the good of those concerned, and for His own glory. So we must trust Him, and believe Him, even when we do not understand many things that take place in the lives of people who really live to please the Lord.

On the other hand, we know countless stories of trouble and sorrow where children have chosen not to please their parents, not to obey what their parents in good wisdom have told them to do. Eli's sons in the OT are examples of men who despised God's will concerning their relationship to their father. See 1 Sam. 2:22-25.

Much that Paul has already said in this chapter has to do with parents, but now in verse 4 he turned specifically to address "father."

6:4 In the latter part of chapter 5 Paul showed what an intimate relationship exists between a husband and his wife. They are "one flesh." Therefore, what Paul said here to "fathers" includes also the mothers. They are to be their husbands helpers in everything, and raising the children is the greatest responsibility that parents have.

But "fathers" are addressed because they bear the chief responsibility to see that the obligations which fall upon the parents are carried out.

Here Paul told the "fathers" what they are not to do, as well as what they were to do.

"Fathers" have a tendency to be tough; "mothers," to be soft. The Lord has made us strong on the one hand, and tender on the other so that together we can reach a balance that will be pleasing to the Lord, and so we can accomplish what we want to do.

"Fathers" are not to be unduly severe, not to be unreasonable, not to be partial, or arbitrary, or even foolish. He is to be righteous, but he is also to be loving. He should be like the judge who one day looked over his bench only to see his own son who had been arrested for a traffic violation. He fined his son according to the law, but then he got up, left his bench, and went down to the person who was collecting the fines, and out of his own pocket, paid his son's fine. Husbands need to be motivated always by love toward their wives, and, as fathers, to be motivated by love toward their children. We don't overlook their faults, but we deal with them in a reasonable, yet loving way.

What a father must do is to with regard to his children, is to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." What does this mean?

Nurturing is the main responsibility of parents toward their children. It means educating them, training them, showing them what is right and what is wrong. It sometimes involves punishment, but fathers are to seek to train their children as to what they are to be as well as what they are to do, or not do, remembering that it is not just the outward performance that he needs to be concerned about, but the condition of what we can call, the inner man – what is going on in the child’s heart.

Admonishing them means rebuking sometimes, encouraging at all times, exhorting whenever it is necessary. It is what we might call a consistent “follow up” on all of the teaching that the father has been giving to his child. Thinking again of Eli, we have one instance in Scripture where he *admonished* his sons for their wicked behavior, but that evidently was not characteristic of the way he dealt with his sons. We are in 1 Sam. 3:13b that “his sons made themselves vile, and he [Eli] restrained them not.” He may have given his sons good instruction, but he failed because he did not make sure that they were doing what he had told them to do. A child needs to be taught, but then parents need to make sure that he is doing and living the way he has been taught to live.

But, again, the reference here to the Lord is very important, and we must not overlook it. Paul said that fathers were to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Our children are not to be brought up just in a man-centered way. It is important for our children to know good manners, and proper etiquette. But we are not to bring up our children “in the nurture and admonition of Emily Post.” Mere human standards are not our primary concern. We as parents are to be concerned with the Word of God, and the ways of the Lord. We want our children to know the Lord Jesus as Savior, and then to become what the Lord wants them to be. And we are to do this *with authority*. God is the One to Whom we are all accountable. It is His will that we need to be concerned about. It is pleasing Him that is our goal. We not only want our children to do what is right before men, but what is right before God. And the Bible deals with both of these relationships. We need to be constantly setting the Lord before our children. Remember David’s words in Psalm 16:8, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” We need to keep our children focused continually upon the Lord and upon His Word.

Let me recommend to all of you two books that you will find very useful in marriage and family matters. The first one is the Bible. If, as the Apostle Peter has told us, that God has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3), then He has given us everything in Christ and in His Word that we will ever need to have a happy marriage and a happy family. And in the Word, I would especially commend to you the book of Proverbs. It was written by a father, Solomon, for his son. It has thirty-one chapters, and so it is an excellent book to read every month, one chapter each day.

The other book is a book which I do not have yet, and so I have not read it. But it is highly recommended by others in whom I have a great deal of confidence. It is a book on parenting, and it is written by Dr. John MacArthur. The title is

Now we come to the third and final pair of relationships which Paul discussed with the believers of Ephesus. And although our culture is very different from the Roman culture under which the people in the lands of the Bible lived in those days, yet we have employers and we have employees. And all of us have been, or still are, in relationships like Paul discussed here. It has to do with the workplace.

6:5 In verses 5-8 Paul addressed servants; in verse 9, masters. So first let us see what he wrote to servants.

Isn’t it amazing how submission, or obedience, touches all of the relationships we have in life. Think of a servant who has been brought up in a home like Paul described when he was speaking of wives and husbands,

and who had been taught and trained by his parents according to Paul's teaching for children and fathers, or parents. He would be ready and prepared to accept what Paul would write to him as a servant. Actually the words Paul used are οἱ δοῦλοι – meaning *bondservants*. They belonged to their masters. *Their rights?* They had none! But having learned obedience to their parents as children, and then obedience to the Lord after they were saved. Now that same kind of submission, obedience, obedience that comes from the heart, was to characterize their lives as servants.

“With fear and trembling” – This was not to be in terror of what might happen to them, but with fear and trembling lest they fail to please their masters. And this would require “singleness of heart.” That is, they were to have just one motive, doing the will of their masters, and doing it in a manner that would please their masters. And just as Paul has brought the Lord into the picture in the previous relationships which he has discussed with them, he does the same thing here! Note: “as unto Christ.” By this he meant, and he went on to indicate as much, that in serving their masters, the Lord took this as service to Himself.

6:6 “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers” – This meant that they were to be just as faithful when they were not being watched as when they were being watched. Instead, they were to realize that in actuality they were serving “Christ.” And He sees us all of the time. He not only knows what we are doing outwardly, but He knows the condition of our hearts, whether or not we are just going through the motions with bitter and rebellious hearts, or if we are “doing the will of God from the heart.” So we need to be careful that we are not just doing the right thing outwardly, but rebellious in heart.

6:7 “Good will” is the translation of one word in the Greek text, and it means *with a ready mind*, or *with kindness*. It speaks of the way the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that they were to bring their offerings to the Lord, “not grudgingly, nor of necessity” (2 Cor. 9:7). The servant was to work as though he was eager to do what his master wanted him to do, to do it because it would please his master, and would help his master. He was not to serve like he hated to do what he was asked to do, or because he couldn't get out of doing it. He was to look behind and beyond his human master and realize that he was actually serving the Lord.

6:8 The servant was to look for his reward from the Lord. He might not get very much, if anything, beyond his lodging and some food, possibly some clothing once in a while. But his greatest reward would come from the Lord. And amazingly, his master in that regard was in the same position that he, the slave, was.

Paul was teaching here that we should work for rewards in heaven.

Paul's words to the servants in Colosse was much the same as what he wrote to the slaves in Ephesus. This is what we find in Colossians:

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons (Col. 3:22-4:1).

We can see how, when we keep our eyes on the Lord, and realize that whatever we do is done as unto the Lord Himself, it elevates whatever we are doing to make us see ourselves as servants of the Lord we love. Thus, bondservants were lifted to the highest possible level of service. They were bondservants of the Lord Jesus

Christ.

Now let us see, finally, what Paul had to say to the masters.

6:9 Paul had been speaking to *Christian* servants, and here he turned to write to *Christian* masters.

To the masters, he said, "Do the same things unto them." Charles Hodge made this comment on these words: Master are to act towards their slaves with the same regard for God's will, with the same recognition of Christ's authority, with the same sincerity and good feeling which had been enjoined on the slaves themselves (p. 208).

It was characteristic for masters to threaten their servants in order to get them to do what they wanted them to do. Here Paul told them to *give that up!* It is not becoming to a master on earth who knows the Lord. Besides, as Paul reminded the masters, they have a Master in heaven, one who owns them, has purchased them with the same blood by which the master was purchased. God does not look upon us according to the position that we have on earth. Quoting Lenski again,

He [God] is not a judge who "takes the face," sees who a man is and decides his case with partiality, in favor of the one who is a lord and master, rich and powerful, in disfavor of one who is only a poor slave and powerless. This heavenly Master is an absolutely impartial Judge in all his judgments present and to come. Even the emperor's purple will not shield him before this Judge (p. 656).

Concl: Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was good about reminding his people of how all that Paul wrote in this epistle is interrelated. In coming to this section with deals first with wives and husband, then with children and their parents, and finally with slaves and masters, he pointed out how Paul was showing in all three of these relationships how submission and humility are to be demonstrated. And the requirement for us to be submissive to each other as he said in Eph. 5:21, is dependent upon our being filled with the Spirit. He expressed it this way:

These words are not addressed to the world as such. The world is incapable of doing what is taught here. A godly obedience is possible only to people who are 'filled with the Spirit.' Also, we are reminded again here of certain important truths. One is that our Christian is to cover the whole of our life and affect our every relationship. Nothing that the Christian does is the same as that which is done by the non-Christian. The latter may do the same things, but he does them in a different way. Christianity is not confined to Sunday; it is something that manifests itself in the whole of life. There is nothing more practical in the world than the Christian faith and the Christian teaching. The way in which the Apostle take the trouble to work out his central principle in these various departments of life is proof of that in and of itself. He is not content with saying, 'Now those of you who are filled with the Spirit should submit yourselves one to another,' and leaving it at that. As every wise teacher he knows that it is necessary to go into details, to take up these points one by one, and apply them. So he takes these examples, and they are examples which are quite typical of daily life and especially where the stresses and the strains in life tend to manifest themselves most frequently. Clearly that was the rule which must have guided him in choosing these particular illustrations. The most delicate relationship of all is the marriage relationship, so for that very reason, the tensions and the stresses and the strains are liable to be at their greatest there. Then next to that comes the family. Here again is a most delicate intimate relationship, and the devil is always busy in his efforts to disrupt the home and its sanctity.

The third relationship is that of masters and servants. This follows the other two as a sphere where tensions, stresses, and strains are particularly to be felt. The conditions prevailing in the industrial realm today are sufficient proof of that claim (pp. 305, 306).

The ideal is where both husband and wife know the Lord, and where both parents and children know the Lord,

and then in the workplace where both master and slave, or employer and employee know the Lord. The teaching of Paul in all such relationships is clear.

But what about the situation which is more common today where one is a Christian, and the other is not? Then the one who is a Christian is bound by the Word of God, and by his or her obedience and submission to the Lord, God is pleased, and the situation may develop where the submission of the Christian will ultimately in the providence and goodness of God, lead to the salvation of the other. This is exactly what the Apostle Peter said in his first epistle to wives whose husband may not have been saved. Read 1 Peter 3:1:

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;

Add to that what Peter wrote to servants in 1 Peter 2:18-19. I am reading this from the NASB:

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

And all of this is connected again with Peter's words in that first epistle when we read in 1 Pet. 3:15. And here I am reading from the NIV:

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:15-16).

We all need to learn the ways of God, and we have in these verses a clear indication of the way He wants us to live. And he will give us the grace to be what He wants us to be, and to do what He wants us to do. But let us remember, as we have seen in this text, that Christ is more than our Teacher, and He is more than our Example. He is both of those. But it is most important to remember that He is our Life!. Without Him we can't do anything, but with Him and by His grace, we can live for His glory and experience all of the blessings that He is waiting to pour out upon us. May God enable us to really trust Him.

The Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul

Tuesday Bible Class – October 26, 1999

Ephesians 6:10-20

Intro: Miss Ruth Paxson, a Bible teacher of many years past, wrote a book on Ephesians. The title that she gave her book is an excellent way to remember the contents of this great epistle. She called her book, *The Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of the Christian*. In the first three chapters we have *the wealth of the Christian*. It speaks of the riches of God's mercy in our salvation. It speaks also of the riches of our relationship to Christ as His body, the Church. Then, beginning with chapter 4 and going on to the ninth verse of chapter 6, we have *the walk of the Christian*. We learn there how we are to live individually first, and then in our homes, and finally in the workplace.

Bishop Moule, in his very valuable commentary on this epistle, written either in the latter part of the nineteenth century, or at the beginning of this century, pointed out that all over the world there were people who believed what Paul wrote, and who were living as Paul taught believers to live, and who lived in homes like Paul had described in the verses which we have just concluded, thus bringing the light of God into this world of intense spiritual darkness. And that is true today. While it may be that the light is not as bright in our own country as it used to be, yet it is here. It is to be seen throughout Europe. Although attempts have been made to extinguish the light in China it is still there. It is in Japan. Travel down into Africa, and the light of the Gospel is there. Or go over into Central and South America, and there you will find people who love the Lord, and who are seeking by God's grace to live their lives according to what we have seen in the epistle to the Ephesians, as well as according to what is found in so many other places in the Word of God.

It is not as bright as we wish it were, here in Portland, but it is here! And you and I are a part of that light. As our Lord said, "Ye are the light of the world." There is no other light except that which is found in the Word of God, and that which is shining out from the people of God. God's people in every generation have profited from Paul's message to the church at Ephesus, as well as from all of the other books of the Bible, and it is in their lives that the light of the Gospel continues to shine.

We could wish that our homes were always like Paul described them in this epistle. And we wish that our lives were always an illustration of the truth that Paul presented in chapters 4 and 5. More than that we wish that we were as knowledgeable in the Word as the truth presented to us in the first three chapters. But whatever there is of the knowledge of the truth today, and of true Christian living, and of homes that are patterned according to the Word of God, *all of the glory belongs to God, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. And we need to pray that the Lord will give us a greater hunger for the Word, and a greater desire to live individually according to the Word, and that our homes would show that we are seeking to have homes like Paul has described that they should be in this epistle.

But why do we go from all of the glorious truth that we have covered to speak now of spiritual warfare? How would you answer that question?

If you think about it for a moment, I believe you will see that all that we have covered is important for one reason, *because we are living where we are!!!* We are in hostile territory. We learned recently in our study of 1 Peter on Sunday morning that we need to

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

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

We live, according to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:4, where

the god of this world [who is the Devil] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

It is “the light” that people need, “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ.” And the Devil will do everything he can to keep people from reading or hearing the Gospel. And so we need to tell them, and we need to be witnesses not only in what we say, *but also in the way we live!*

The main reason we need to know the truth, to live the truth, and to pattern our homes according to the truth, is that we might please and glorify God. That is the way we can enjoy the blessing of the Lord. But close behind all of that is the fact that we live in a God-less world. As I have said, it is a hostile world, spiritually hostile. As one of our hymns tells us, “this world is no friend to grace,” the grace of God. The Devil does not encourage us to obey God, but to disobey Him! We can see that from his approach to Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve was a member of the first home, and this should be a reminder to all of us that even, and especially, in our homes, the Devil and his cohorts wait for our “unguarded hours” to make their strikes against us. And that is because in our homes we often will do things and say things that we refrain from doing and saying in public. So Paul had a good reason for following his instructions about the home with the details concerning our need in the conflicts which we all face in our lives.

Now let us turn to the text.

6:10 In the outline I have given you I have divided these verses, 10 through 20, into four parts:

- 1) The strength required (vv. 10-11).
- 2) The enemies (v. 12).
- 3) The armor (vv. 13-17).
- 4) Prayer (vv. 18-20).

(Read vv. 10-20.)

“Finally” indicates here that he has reached the final part of his message to them. But even more it may express, as I have already indicated, the purpose for which he had stated everything else from the beginning. All that has gone before was to lead up to this point. Everything else was in preparation for this. And so this word would have attracted their special attention.

Grammarians disagree as to whether or not the word, “brethren,” should be here or not on the basis of MSS evidence. The consensus seems to be that it should not be here. It is a word which the Apostle Paul used a great deal in his epistles, but the only other place we find it in Ephesians is in 6:23. It is a word which emphasizes that all believers are in the family of God, and as brothers stand in the same relationship to God.

Our greatest need in this spiritual conflict is for strength, spiritual strength. Just as an army undergoes intensive training to get into the peak of condition before going into war, this is also very important in the conflict which we are involved in as believers.

Notice that we have three words here for strength, or power: “strong” (a verb), “power” and “might” (both nouns). The verb is in the present tense indicating that we must continuously seek to be strong spiritually. Just because we have been strong in the past does not necessarily mean that we will be strong today unless we continue to seek to be strong today just as we have sought to be strong in the past. The verb is ἐνδυναμοῦσθε. It is a second person plural present imperative middle. This means that it was addressed to all believers (and so “brethren” would not be out of place). It is something that they were to constantly be doing, a word which they themselves would be the beneficiaries. If we were to try to improve upon the translation, we could say that it

meant that they were to be constantly seeking to be *endued* with strength. Obviously their strength would not come from themselves, according to the word itself, and that is further emphasized by the words which Paul placed after the verb: “in the Lord.” And that would be emphasized by the last part of the verse, “and in the power of His might.”

I have pointed out to you recently how much Paul made of the expression, “in the Lord,” or similar expressions, in this epistle. We saw how it was used in what Paul said to family members. “In the Lord” means *in union and communion with the Lord*. Our strength comes from Him. He is our life. We were united to Christ when we were saved, and it is as we walk in communion with Him, or in fellowship with Him, that we receive from Him, in this case, the strength that we need to face the Enemy, and to be successful in the conflict.

Do you remember that the Apostle John said, “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4). Christ is in us, and we are in Christ. There could not be a closer relationship than we have with Him. And we are to live trusting Him moment by moment for the wisdom we need, for the strength that we need, for whatever we need. This is so important as we think of our daily walk. Paul, in writing to the Colossian church, said, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” Paul was not expressing just a sentimental emotion when he wrote to the Galatian believers, “Christ liveth in me,” but this is the very foundational truth of the Christian life.

Long before the Apostle Paul wrote these words, the prophet Isaiah was directed by the Holy Spirit to write in Isa. 40:28-41:1 these wonderful and, to many of you, familiar words:

- 28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.
- 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
- 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
- 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

So to be strengthened by the Lord requires that we walk in fellowship with the Lord, that we wait upon Him, that we trust Him. Ours is a life of faith, faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith in the Holy Spirit.

Paul used these words in his prayer in Eph. 1:19. There Paul linked it to faith, but went on to say that God’s power toward us is the same power that God exercised in raising the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. So this is true omnipotence. Paul told the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

In ourselves we are the personification of weakness, but in Christ we are strong.

And I need to remind all of us that we are not walking in fellowship with the Lord unless we are living in daily obedience to the Word. And even in this, we need the power of God, don’t we?

So in connection with what Paul was going to say about our conflict in these verses, his first statement is for us to pay particular attention to our Lord, our fellowship with Him, and our trust in Him. We need his power all of the time in all of the circumstances of our lives. If we are to live for the Lord, we must live in the Lord.

But let us move on to verse 11.

6:11 In this particular instance is how we are to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” We need to “put on the whole armor of God.”

Paul didn't use a connective here, but he issued an order like the commanding officer of an army. The verb, coming first, is emphatic, like “be strong in the Lord” in the preceding verse. We are sons of God, we are saints of God, we are servants of God, but we are also soldiers in the army of God. And so Paul spoke as a commanding officer. There cannot be any mistake as to what we need as we go into the battle.

There were two kinds of soldiers in the Roman army, and in the Greek army. The most heavily armed, and those upon whom the government depended the most, were called *hoplites*. Then there were auxiliary forces who were armed only with bows. Paul had in mind here *the hoplites*. Those were the soldiers with heavy armor, and supplied by the government with spears, swords, and all the other weapons they might need. No hoplite would even think of going into battle without his whole armor. His armor was issued to him by the government.

I think that it was during World War II that our fighting men got the nickname, G.I. It applies to all who are presently in any of our armed forces, as well as all veterans. And you probably know that these letters are the abbreviation of the words, government issue. When a man goes into the service he is issued a uniform, and, if not then, later a weapon (depending upon what branch of the service he might be in). Well, Paul wants us to know that in God's army there are G.I.'s also. And God, the supreme commander of the whole earth, has issued all of us an armor, and a weapon. That is why it is called, “the armor of God,” lit., *the panoply of God*. It is not that God wears such an armor, but He has issued this armor to us, and we are to wear it, wear it constantly. We are always on an “alert,” always on active duty. This war started in heaven, and has involved human beings ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Actually every person on the face of the earth is involved in this conflict, and we see people falling before Satan on a daily basis. But you and I who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, are the only ones who have been issued an armor, and weapons, sufficient to enable us to stand before the enemy. “To stand” means that we can be victorious. This armor and our weapons are God's issue to and for us. So it is very proper to say that we all are G.I.'s in God's army.

Charles Hodge made a comment at this point in his commentary which is good for all of us to keep in mind. He said this:

The full armor of God means that armor which God has provided and which He gives. Thus we are taught from the outset that as the strength we need is not from ourselves, so neither are the means of offense or defense. Nor are the means devised by man. This is a truth which has been overlooked in all ages of the church, to the lamentable injury of the people of God. Instead of relying on the armor which God has provided, people have always been disposed to trust to that which they provide for themselves, or which has been prescribed by others. Seclusion from the world (i.e., flight rather than conflict), ascetic and ritual observances, invocation of saints and angels, and especially celibacy, voluntary poverty, and monastic obedience constitute the armor which false religion has substituted for the armor of God (p. 212).

This was a problem in the earth church as the Apostle Paul showed in his letter to the Colossian believers. Cf. Col. 2:18-23. (Read.)

Paul knew that to prompt us to be unforgiving in our relationship with each other, is one of Satan's devices. And so he wrote this to the church at Corinth:

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:10-11).

Paul also told the Corinthian believers this concerning our warfare in 2 Cor. 10:3-6:

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Our armor and our weapons are issued to us when we are saved, but we have to put them on! And why? “That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

The word “wiles” is the word in Greek from which we get our English word, *methods*. The Devil is an expert in warfare. Lenski says, “The idea of expert skill should not be overlooked. ‘The Devil’ leads the opposing army, and he is no mean commander, he knows his game” (p. 658).

As I read to you a moment ago, the Apostle Paul said concerning Satan, “We are not ignorant of his devices.” But many Christians are. Where do we learn about Satan and his methods? There is only one reliable source of information, and the Devil tries to keep us from that. It is in the Word of God. There you learn the truth. We will see again at this Halloween season that the people of the world like to make a joke of the Devil. But he is no joke! He is a living, vicious Enemy – Enemy #1. The people who make a joke of Satan will learn some day that the joke was on them, only then they will find out that it is no joke.

Now why do we need an armor, and weapons, and the strength of God Himself? Paul tells us in the next verse.

6:12 It might seem in reading this verse that the Apostle Paul was confusing his figures of speech. Is our conflict with Satan a warfare, or is it only a wrestling match? He was not confusing his speech. He was saying that our conflict is not a wrestling match. Lenski explained Paul’s words in this way:

Paul says that we have (Greek: “There is not for us”) no mere wrestling match with an unarmed, human opponent, who at the worst is able only to lay our back to the floor, we face a tremendous army, all the evil forces of the supernatural world (p.659).

In our day professional wrestling is a farce; amateur wrestling is a sport. But Paul says that this is not a sport where we are faced with a human foe. Our conflict is deadly warfare, and our Enemy is one we cannot see, one who commands all of the forces of evil in the whole universe.

Note how he described them. All of these are demonic beings, fallen angels. They are described as being in four categories.

1) “Principalities” – These are those demons who hold the highest places of power and command under the command of Satan himself. These are Satan’s generals.

2) “Powers” – Those who have demonstrated their ability and success in warfare, by way of contrast these are like David’s mighty men.

3) “The rulers of the darkness of this world’ – Lit. they are *the world-rulers of this darkness*. These are the powerful demons whose assignment it is to make sure that the people of the world are kept in spiritual darkness which is blindness and ignorance concerning their true condition before God. And what a masterful job they

have done throughout human history!

4) “Spiritual wickedness in high places” – Spiritual means that they are not human, but they are nevertheless real. They are demonic, angelic in form. The “high places” probably refers to “heavenly places,” that is, they are in contrast with the group of demons mentioned before them who are assigned to the earth. Satan has objectives that include the whole universe, even to the overthrow of God Himself. But the Spirit of God here identifies them as *wicked*, and he used a word which indicates that they are always and only evil, absolutely incapable of doing anything good.

The Devil did not authorize the release of this information. He would like for us to think that our conflict is just with other people who are only “flesh and blood.” He does not want us to know that there is a mighty army of unseen demons under the leadership and control of Satan Himself, whose object is the eternal damnation of all men and even of the elect angels.

The Devil hates a class like we are having today. And if he could, he would shut us down. He hates the Bible because there he is exposed for what he is. One of the principles of warfare is that we need to know our enemy, where he is, and what he intends to do. The Devil is not omnipresent, nor is he omniscient, nor omnipotent. He can only be in one place at a time. But we do not know the size of his army, but it is tremendous, probably larger than all of the combined forces of the armies of the earth. In our own strength we would be helpless before him. But he is already a defeated foe. He is already condemned and under divine judgment. But in the providence of God he is allowed to continue his evil work. And the day is coming when he and all who are allied with him among angels and men, will be cast into the lake of fire to suffer the judgment of God for ever and for ever.

But for the present, we must expect continual warfare, and so we need to be prepared. And so we need the panoply of God. Any idea on our part that we can overcome such a powerful and sizeable force without God and His provision for us, is the height of folly. But we are to trust in God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, and in the armor and the weapons that God has provided for each of us who knows the Savior. How thankful we should be that we, like Noah, have “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

Now we come to the verses in which the Apostle Paul dealt with the armor of God.

6:13 “Wherefore,” that is, *on account of this*, in the light of our own weakness, and in the light of the overwhelming power of the enemy we face, and, as Hodge has said in his commentary, “the conflict is inevitable” (p. 215), we must “take” unto ourselves “the whole armor of God, that” we “may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

November 1, 1999

Notice in verse 11 that Paul’s concern is that “we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.” Lenski calls the Devil’s wiles, “his expert methods.” Just as experience is a great advantage in sports, or in war, we need to remember that the Devil has been waging warfare against the people of God from the days of Adam and Eve. We are newcomers on the scene. And so we need to be prepared by not only possessing the whole armor of God, but having it on, so that we may be able to stand against the overwhelming opposition of the Devil and his demonic forces. We are “to stand” in verse 11. Here we are to have our strength in the Lord so that we can “withstand” the Enemy, and having done all, that is, when the particular conflict is over, we will still be standing – evidence that the victory is ours.

“To withstand” means not only *resisting* the attacks of the Enemy, but mounting a strong offensive. We never know when that “evil day” will come, but it will come, and come often. We do not know when and where the Devil will attack, but we can be thankful that the Devil and all of his forces are under the sovereign control of our mighty God. God allows the Devil to attack us for at least three reasons:

- 1) For our good, that we may realize how weak we are in ourselves, and how much we stand in constant need of the Lord and His power.
- 2) That we may be in a state of constant readiness.
- 3) That we may experience the mighty power of God so that we may praise Him when He gives us the victory. We “withstand” that we might be *standing* when each conflict is over.

In chapter 5, verse 16, Paul said that “the days are evil.” That is, we are faced with the possibility of trouble at the hand of Satan at any time. This is the kind of a world we live in. But “the evil day” is the day, or days, when we are engaged in conflict with the Devil. It is to God’s glory that things are not worse than they are. We are not always in a conflict with the Devil, but there are those special times, such as Job experienced, and such as David experienced, and Jeremiah, and Peter, and Paul, and the Apostle John, when the battle is especially strong against us. The war will not be over until the Devil is finally cast into the lake of fire, and we know that the victory is the Lord’s. But what we need to be concerned about are the battles. These are “the evil day,” or days.

6:14 Notice the order of action that is necessary for us to take. We stand already having girded our loins with truth, and having already put on the breastplate of righteousness, and so on with our footwear, and shield, and helmet, and sword – and “praying . . .” It is too late to be prepared if we wait until the Devil attacks. So these are instructions that demand our attention before the Enemy attacks.

What are our “loins”? It is the part of our bodies from the waist down to our hips. There are some sixty-three references to the “loins” in the Bible, and the word is always plural.

When the children of Israel were told what to do in eating the Passover lamb, this is what they were told to do:
And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover (Ex. 12:11).

Do you remember the story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman? The story is found in 2 Kings 4. She and her husband fed the prophet Elisha whenever he passed by their home, and they even made a little prophet’s chamber where he could stay when he came their way. Well, the prophet wanted to reward her for her goodness to him, and finally promised her that she would have a son. The woman thought that he was lying to her, but, sure enough, even though her husband was old, she became pregnant and a son was born to the old couple.

When the young man was grown, one day he complained of pain in his head. They took him quickly to his mother, and at noon he died. She took him up to Elisha’s bed, and laid the body of her son on the bed. Then she and one of her servants left in haste to go to Elisha. She told him the story, and Elisha said this to his servant Gehazi, and these words may help us to understand our text here in Ephesians. Here is what Elisha said:

Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child (2 Kings 4:29).

As it turned out, this did not give life to the boy, but when Elisha arrived, he raised the boy back to life. But the part that I want you to notice, is that Elisha told Gehazi to *gird up his loins* because he wanted Gehazi to get

to the boy as soon as possible!

It is said of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 that “she girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms”(Prov. 31:17).

When the Lord was talking to His disciples about His own return, He said, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning” (Luke 12:35). So there is the thought of readiness in this use of the expression.

So I think that we can say that when the Apostle Paul said, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,” he was indicated that we need to be prepared for the battle, and ready to act quickly.

But what did he mean by the “truth”? It seems to me that every part of the armor has to do with the Word of God. Some expositors say that the definite article *the* is not used before “truth,” and so it can’t apply to the Word of God. And so they say that it speaks of the way we have appropriated the truth of God’s Word into our living, and what the truth has done to us. My response to that is, what is the difference? Obviously if we are to be girded with the truth, it has to mean not just that we carry a Bible, or have a New Testament in our pocket, but that we don’t know what is in it. We need to know the Word or it is not going to mean anything to us. So we are to stand prepared for quick action by as thorough an understanding of the Word as we can possibly have.

The girdle was a band that went around the waist, as I have said, and made it possible for action to be as swift as it needed to be.

I would remind you that the NT speaks of the Bible as “the word of truth. Listen to these two verses. First James 1:18:

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

And then 2 Tim. 2:15:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But our verse has a second part of the armor: “the breastplate of righteousness.” The girdle went around the waist and extended below the belt line and often down to the hips. The breastplate obviously was for the upper part of the body. Both would provide protection for the vital organs of the body.

In Hebrews 5:13 we read about the Apostle’s rebuke of those Hebrew Christians because they had not grown in the Lord as they should have. And one thing he said to them was this: “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”

We know that when we are saved, we are declared righteous before God because we are in Christ. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21, and reading from the NKJV:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The Bible is not only the truth, but the Bible also has the stamp of righteousness upon it from Genesis to Revelation. And as “the word of righteousness,” it brings righteousness to us, and produces righteousness in us. So the only one who could possibly have on “the breastplate of righteousness” would be a true child of God. The word of righteousness is our defense against the fiery darts of the Wicked One. And one of the darts that he throws at us to disable us is the dart of doubt concerning our salvation. But it is in our hearts that the

Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God.

— So you see, in all of these the Word is prominent, but we are also concerned about how the Word prepares us to face the enemy. The person who resists doctrine, which is teaching, is the person who will not be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.

But let us move on to verse 15.

6:15 (Read.)

Here the Apostle Paul was speaking of the Christian soldier's footwear, and footwear is extremely important for every soldier. The idea continues in this verse that we have to already have this footwear on.

"The preparation of the Gospel of peace" is a strange expression, isn't it? What does it mean?

Well, we certainly know that the Gospel is all through Scripture, and that there is only one Gospel! It is only through the Gospel that we can have peace with God, and only through the Gospel can we enjoy the peace of God in our hearts. But what did Paul mean by, "the preparation"? This is the only place that this word is used in the NT.

It goes without saying, doesn't it, that what we have on our feet is what we stand on. And it is also what we walk in. "The preparation of the Gospel of peace" means *a readiness* with reference to the Gospel. And this means *a readiness to use it, a readiness to proclaim it*. I'm afraid that when we think of the spiritual warfare we all are involved in, we are inclined to think more of defending ourselves against the Devil. But this word readiness suggests an aggressiveness that should characterize our involvement in the conflict. There is a word in the prophecy of Isaiah that applies here. It is found in Isaiah 52:7:

— How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! It is not that we are preaching the Gospel to the Devil, or to the demons who make up his army. There is no salvation for angels. But we are not in this conflict just for ourselves. We must stand together in our opposition to Satan. And even when we see what the Devil is doing in the lives of people who do not know the Lord, we move our feet to take us to them with "the Gospel of peace." It is often in the conflicts that unbelievers have, that their hearts are prepared by the Holy Spirit to listen to the message of salvation, and there must always be in us a readiness to proclaim it.

6:16 Now we come to "the shield of faith." But where does our faith come from? Romans 10:17 says that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Paul was actually saying that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing, and hearing, and hearing, the Word of God.

Do you know that the Apostle Paul called the Bible, "the word of faith"? He did, and you will find what he said in the same 10th chapter of Romans which tells us how faith comes through hearing the Word. Listen to Romans 10:5-10:

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of

faith, which we preach;

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Bible is our shield of faith. We believe it is the Word of God. We believe its teachings, we trust in its promises. We live by faith in the Word of God. It is by the Word that the Holy Spirit enables us to trust the Lord, and there is never a time when we need to trust Him more than when we are under attack from Satan. In the Garden of Eden Satan directed his attack upon Eve, first by questioning the Word of God, and secondly, by denying the Word of God. But faith in the Word is our shield against the Devil's "darts." The word for "darts" can mean arrows, or spears, as well as darts.

Here is what Charles Hodge said about "fiery darts":

As burning arrows not only pierced, but set on fire whatever they pierced, they were doubly dangerous. They serve here, therefore, as the symbol of the fierce attacks of Satan. He showers arrows of fire into the soul of the believer, who is unprotected by the shield of faith would soon perish. It is a common experience for God's people that at times horrible thoughts—unholy, blasphemous, doubting, malignant—crowd on the mind, which cannot be accounted for by any ordinary law of mental action, and which cannot be dislodged. The stick like burning arrows and fill the soul with agony. They can be quenched only by faith, calling on Christ for help. These, however, are not the only kind of flaming arrow, nor are they the most dangerous. There are others which ignite passion, inflame ambition, excite cupidity [lust, greed, an inordinate desire to be wealthy—like people who play the lottery and go to gamble at the casinos], pride discontent, or vanity—producing a flame which our deceitful heart is not so prompt to extinguish and which is often allowed to burn until it produces great injury and even destruction (p. 218).

Bishop Moule says that these "burning . . . missiles of his [the Devil] . . . can enflame the heart with anger, or with lust, 'set on fire of hell'" (p. 329).

The Apostle John taught us that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4b).

Matthew Henry made this comment:

Our enemy the devil is here called the wicked one. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called darts, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and the deep wounds that they give to the soul; fiery darts, by way of allusion to the poisonous darts which were wont to inflame the parts which were wounded with them, and therefore were so called, as the serpents with poisonous stings are called fiery serpents. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts which Satan shoots at us. Faith is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts, wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us.

Faith, faith in the Word and faith in the God of the Word, is our shield. In ancient times shields were often four feet long and two and one-half feet wide, yet light enough to be very maneuverable. So, "above all," meaning, *in addition to everything else. No soldier in those days would dare to go into combat without his shield.*

But we are not through.

- 6:17** “And take the helmet of salvation.” The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:8-10,
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.

Paul probably had the same aspect of salvation here in Ephesians when he spoke of salvation: “the hope of salvation.” In Romans 15:4 Paul linked our hope with the Scriptures when he wrote,
For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The helmet has to do with the head. And our heads have to do with our minds, what we know, what we understand, what we believe. And the Bible is the source of all that we know, and believe, and understand. And our hope gives us confidence when we face the enemy because we know that while the Devil can hurt us in many ways if we are not really trusting in the Lord, yet he cannot destroy our hope, nor keep us from realizing the fulfillment of that hope. Paul told the Philippian believers,

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

And he also said to the Roman believers,

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13)..

How wonderful it is to know that we have a salvation that we can never lose. We didn't get it because of what we did, and so we can't lose it by what we do. It is ours eternally in Christ.

In the latter part of this verse we have our weapon, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

November 2, 1999

While this is not the first time we have been made to think in terms of offensive warfare, yet this is the first part of the armor which Paul has mentioned which is definitely for aggressive use against our Enemy.

Again the reference is to the Bible. It is “the sword of the Spirit.” It belongs to Him. It was given to us by the Spirit. He is the Author of all Scripture. And He is the One Who teaches us what the Word means. For us to “take the sword of the Spirit,” means that we are to understand it, and to apply it to our lives. When weapons are given to our men in the military, it is not sufficient that they have one; they must learn to use it. And so it is with the Scriptures.

In Hebrews 4:12 we are told this about the Scriptures:

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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is a living Word. It is a powerful Word. And it is always in the peak of condition, sharper than any other sword. What a tragedy it is that we are led to think today that we need the Word of God, plus other things. It is a testimony that we do not believe that the Word of God is enough, enough for us and our lives, and sufficient for this warfare in which we are engaged. And so in the church today people have added psychology. They have added all kinds of worldly methods. Many pastors have turned from the exposition of the Word of God to stories that they think people will be interested in. Preaching has become more of a means of entertainment than a means of edifying people who know the Lord, and of bringing the conviction of sin to those who do not

know the Lord. If the Apostle Paul were to come into many of our churches today, he would not understand what was going on. In many places he would find idolatry, the use of images, and ritualistic forms of worship which have nothing to do with the Word of God. He would listen to prayers that are performed by rote, and the repetition of words and phrases which our Lord warned the Jews about when He was here on earth. Music has deteriorated so that it appeal to the feelings, the emotions, but does not minister to the heart.

Now there is one difference between Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17 in the way they refer to the Word of God. In Hebrews 4:12 it is ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ. In Ephesians 6:17 it is ῥῆμα θεοῦ. Both are correctly translated, “the Word of God,” but there is a different emphasis in these two words, although grammarians are not always clear as to the difference. But I will tell you how I understand the difference between these words after have read what a number of Greek authorities have explained it. It seems that λόγος identifies the whole Bible as a message that has come from God, and that applies to every part of it, every detail, every word. But ῥῆμα indicates that He speaks through His Word today. And we must use the Word just as God has given it. As Lenski has said, “Any alteration takes the power and the edge off [of] this sword” (p. 674). So even when we use the Word, God speaks as we speak.

So when we “take the sword of the Spirit, which is the ῥῆμα θεοῦ, we can expect that God will speak to those who are listening. But a word of warning is in order here. This does not mean that when we speak the Word, God uses it the way we want it to be used. Instead, He uses it to accomplish His own will, as Isaiah said so long ago, giving the very Word of God. This is the verse that I am referring to: Isaiah 55:11:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

We are to use the Word like the prophets used it, and like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself used it, and like the apostles used it. The prophets said, “Thus saith the Lord.” The Lord Jesus said, “It is written.” The Apostle Paul said, “For I received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you” (1 Cor. 11:23). And Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 would apply here:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Let all of this be our confidence when we use the Word of God. It has come to us from God, all of it, word for word. And when we preach it, we preach it as the Word which God not only gave by His Spirit to the writers of Scripture, but it is the Word by which He speaks to us today, and speaks to others through us when we proclaim that blessed Word. We dare not change it, but give it to others just as God gave it at the first, and as we have it written down in our Bibles. This is when we see the power of the Word of God at work in our hearts, and in the hearts of those to whom we give God’s Word.

It is truly a mighty Word. It breaks down the oppositions of men. It brings light to darkened souls. It reveals to us the living triune Godhead. It exposes the sinfulness of our own hearts, and it gives us the one and only way that sinners can be forgiven, and find perfect and eternal acceptance with our holy God.

Now, having said all of this about our armor, having given us all of this wonderful truth about our Bibles, the Scriptures, Paul adds a most important statement about PRAYER. Prayer always has been, and always must be, that which accompanies the proper use of the Word of God. We have this report of what the apostles said in the early days of the church as the work of the Lord began to grow and to spread. We have their words in Acts 6:1-4:

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the

Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Charles Hodge made this significant statement regarding the armor and prayer:

It is not armor or weapons which make the warrior. There must be courage and strength—and even then he often needs help. As the Christian has no resources of strength in himself and can succeed only as helped from above, the apostle urges the duty of prayer. The believer is to avail himself of **all kinds of prayer**; he is to **pray** on every suitable occasion; he is to **pray in the Spirit**; he is to be alert and persevering in the discharge of this duty; and he is to **pray . . . for all the saints**, and the Ephesians were urged by the apostle to **pray** for him (p. 220).

6:18 “Praying always” – “Praying” and “watching” which comes a little later in the verse, are both in the present tense, and they indicate that the “praying” and the “watching” are to be what grammarians call *durative*. That means that these are to be done constantly. There is to be no letup. Since we are weak in ourselves, once having put on “the whole armor of God,” we continually seek the blessing of God by prayer. Prayer always must be addressed to God. There is never a single aspect of our lives, but what it needs to be brought to God in prayer. We are to pray in our closets. We pray with our families in our homes. We pray with one another when we meet with the church. We pray audibly. We pray silently. We can pray for extended periods of time, or we can offer what are called ejaculatory prayers, which may be only a sentence of just a few words. We are to form the habit of bringing the Lord into every detail of our lives through prayer.

“With all prayer,” meaning *all kinds of prayer*. May I remind you that generally speaking there are *five kinds of prayer*: *the worship of God, the confession of our sins, thanksgiving for blessings received, intercession for the needs of others (family, relatives, friends, other believers, even people we do not know, government officials), whether they be spiritual needs, or physical needs, or material needs, and finally, as we petition God for our own personal needs*. And the way to learn to pray is by studying prayer in our Bibles. Most of us have learned to pray by listening to other people pray. That is OK if we have learned from people who have learned from their Bibles how to pray. Many, many prayers are recorded for us in the Bible. And there are passages which are designed especially by the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray. Wonderful books by godly men and women have been written to help us pray, but always take what you read in books and examine it by what the Bible says about prayer.

The other night I read to Lucille from a book on prayer some statements which are really amazing. This is why I say that we need to check what we read in books with what God has given us in His Word. I will read you a portion of what this man had to say. Here are his words. I am sorry to have to tell you that E. M. Bounds was the writer. His book is called, *The Weapon of Prayer*, and the particular chapter is entitled, *Putting God to Work*. Here is what he said:

When we say that prayer puts God to work, it is simply to say that man has it in his power by prayer to move God to work in His own way among men, in which way He would not work if prayer was not made. Thus while prayer moves God to work, at the same time God puts prayer to work. As God has ordained prayer, and as prayer has not existence separate from men, but involves men, then logically prayer is the one force which puts God to work in earth’s affairs through men and their prayers.

Then after a short paragraph he continued with these words -- and this is the part I want you to notice in

particular::

If prayer puts God to work on earth, then, by the same token, prayerlessness rules God out of the world's affairs, and prevents Him from working. And if prayer moves God to work in this world's affairs, the prayerlessness excludes God from everything on earth, and leaves man on earth the mere creature of circumstances, at the mercy of blind fate or without help of any kind from God. It leaves man in this world with its tremendous responsibilities and its difficult problems, and with all of its sorrows, burdens and afflictions, without any God at all (pp. 19-20).

That is so extreme that really makes God out of man, and is so extremely man-centered that most Arminians would put the book down in amazement that anybody could write anything like that. We all believe in prayer. You can't be a Christian and not believe in prayer. But we don't believe that our prayers determine what God is going to do in this world. Mr. Bounds needed to read 2 Tim. 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

But let us go on in the verse.

"And supplication" – Paul mentioned "supplication" as though there were something different, or something additional, that the word "supplication" is to bring to our minds. Many just take the word to be just another word for prayer, but the very idea of supplicating God seems to speak of persistent, importunate prayer, until God in His own way and time answers us according to His will. But, as many of us saw Sunday night in 1 Tim. 2:1, "supplications" is a word which can be translated *petitions*, the idea being petitions that we present to the Lord *for ourselves*. In 1 Tim. 2:1 Paul used the same words for "prayers" and "supplications" that he used here.

So this leads me to say that the first part of verse 18 has to do with praying for ourselves; the latter part, "for all saints."

"In the Spirit" – that is, in dependence upon the Spirit. This means that our prayers must be in harmony with the Word which the Holy Spirit has given to us and preserved for us. We need the Spirit to teach us the Word, and as He teaches us the Word He will be teaching us to pray. We need the Holy Spirit to prompt us to pray, and He alone can keep us faithful in prayer.

The other verses in Scripture which speaks of prayer and the Holy Spirit, are Jude 20 and 21:

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,
21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

November 8, 1999

Now for the second part of verse 18.

"And watching thereunto" – As I mentioned before, this, like "praying" at the beginning of this verse, is a present participle, meaning *constantly watching*. Actually it means *to stay awake, to be vigilant*, continuing to pray, but praying with the expectation that God will answer.

This is the word which the writer of the book of Hebrews used when he was exhorting the believers to be submissive to their leaders. This is what he said:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you

(Heb. 13:17).

He was evidently saying that true spiritual leaders pray for the people of God who are under their care, becoming aware of their needs, and bringing those needs to the Lord in prayer.

“With all perseverance and supplication for all saints” – We need to be persistent in prayer. It may very well be that we do not see the answer to many of our prayers because we stop short. But Paul was not thinking here about how pastors and elders were to pray for the people; he was thinking about how we as believers are to pray for each other. Christian fellowship is a fellowship in prayer! Let us seek to be just as burdened and just as faithful in prayer for “all saints” as we are about our own needs. Remember that “the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends” (Job 42:10).

It is easy for us to talk about these things, and to seek to understand each word which the Apostle Paul wrote in verses like we have been covering, *but it is another thing to do what he said here that we are to do*. Paul wants us to know that *prayer is spiritual warfare!* It is easier to do almost anything else than it is to pray. And that is probably one reason that more believers do not pray, and that when we do pray we are not as persistent as we need to be. This is where we need to be thankful for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our prayers.

6:19 As we move on to this verse, and verses 19 and 20, we realize that the writer of this epistle was a prisoner of war. But we also see that he considered himself to be on active duty. And he was not asking that they pray for his release, but for his ministry while he was there in prison. Paul believed in the sovereignty of God, and he knew that the Lord had a purpose for his being there. He was constantly with two kinds of people – other prisoners, and their guards. And Paul knew that he was in just as much of a mission field in jail as he ever was when he was free to travel throughout the Roman Empire. And the interesting thing was that his fellow prisoners were prisoners in a twofold sense, and his guards, although free to come and go, were prisoners of sin. And so Paul was not concerned about his release, but about their release. When we study the epistle of Paul to Philemon, we will learn that it was while Paul was in prison, that Onesimus, a runaway slave, was in prison too, and it was there that the Lord saved him as he heard the Gospel from the Apostle Paul. We know that the Philippian jailor and his whole family were saved as a result of the ministry of Paul and Silas while they were in jail.

We need to see the hand of the Lord when doors are closed to us as well as when doors for ministry are opened to us. Judges and jailors can shut us in, but they can't shut the Lord out. Let's just be careful that we are not in jail because we are evildoers in some way. Peter spoke about this in his first epistle. Do you remember what he said? Here are his words:

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (1 Pet. 4:14-16).

And so the Apostle Paul said, “And for me.” That is, “As you are praying for yourselves, and for all of the people of God you pray for, pray for me.”

People need to remember that men who are in the position like the Apostle Paul was in (and I am not thinking now of jail, but of his position in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We might feel that he was above and beyond the need for prayer just because he was an apostle. But that is not true. That is never true. The most prominent of Christian leaders are actually in special need of prayer. The Devil can boast great victories if he

can bring them down. They have their spiritual problems as well as their physical problems. They have their frustrations, their disappointments, their failures, and, unfortunately, sometimes, their sins. Even the Lord Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him into the inner part of the Garden of Gethsemane so they could pray with Him and for Him. They did not actually pray with Him, but they prayed for Him while they were separated from Him for a short distance. Do you think the Lord was just saying something that really wasn't necessary when He told them to watch with Him for that hour? Do you think for a moment that He did not need their prayers? Remember that He was a Man, compassed about with the same kind of infirmity that we experience, except that He was without sin. But He had to be careful around His enemies. He got tired and hungry. He was touched with all of our infirmities. And so He asked for those three disciples to pray for Him.

When Satan came demanding that he be able to sift Peter as wheat, Peter did not ask the Lord to pray for him, but the Lord said that he already had prayed for Peter. I hope that those of you who were here Sunday night will never forget the words of 1 Timothy 2:1, "First of all, prayers." Pray, and then read your Bibles, and then pray some more. We always need to be praying, and we need to be very careful about any activity that makes it difficult for us to get back to prayer.

Paul's special request was "that utterance may be given unto me." The word translated "utterance" is the Greek word *λόγος*. This means that he wanted prayer so that he would know what to say, that the Lord would give him the right message at the right time for the right person. This certainly is a rebuke, and more than a rebuke, against any "canned approach" when presenting the Gospel. Those who always give "the four spiritual laws" don't need to pray for that "utterance may be given" to them because they already know what they are going to say. We need to depend upon the Lord to show us how to approach people with the Gospel.

Some of you will remember Dr. Walter Wilson. He was a medical doctor who lived, I believe, in Kansas City. He was a man greatly used in personal evangelism. He was asked on one occasion to conduct a funeral service. After the service he rode out to the cemetery with the funeral director in the hearse. And as they were riding along, he was silently praying that the Lord would lead him to say the right thing to the funeral director who was driving the car. And so he felt that the Lord was leading him to ask this man, "What do you think the Lord meant when He said, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Well, the man who had never heard that before said, "The Bible doesn't say that." Dr. Wilson assured him that the Lord had said that, and that the words were to be found in Matthew 8:22 and Luke 9:60. And as they were riding along Dr. Wilson explained to that funeral director about spiritual death and physical death, and he told him that the Lord had died to give us spiritual life, eternal life. And Dr. Wilson said he had the privilege of leading that man to Christ that day.

Also Christ with the Samaritan woman - John 4.

We need to pray for utterance.

But that wasn't all that Paul asked prayer for. He asked for prayer that he would open his mouth, open it to speak. How often have we been in a position where we knew that we had an opportunity to speak to someone about the Lord, but we just couldn't get our mouths open?

But that was not all. Twice, once here in verse 19, and again in verse 20, Paul asked prayer for *boldness!* Thayer in his Greek lexicon says that boldness is "fearless confidence" and "cheerful courage." It doesn't mean that we are brazen and offensive as we often think of when we use this word. To be bold is to have the Lord's help in getting our mouths open, and then to say what we ought to say, "to make known the mystery of the Gospel."

We have had this word "mystery" before right here in Ephesians. Look at it in 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32, and here in 6:19. And in Eph. 3:3-5 Paul explained what a "mystery" is in the NT. (Read.) It is very clear from these verses that Paul taught when he was witnessing to those who needed Christ. He taught them about Christ. He

showed them how the Gospel was revealed little by little all through the OT and that now we have the completed revelation from God as to how people are saved from their sins. Paul wanted and needed prayer to do what he had done probably hundreds of times before. But he knew that he was in a battle for the souls of men, and so he was seeking his orders from his Commander-in-Chief. There is something very endearing about such words coming from a veteran missionary. He knew how much he needed to trust the Lord when seeking to win people to Christ.

His prayer request continued in verse 20.

6:20 Paul called himself “an ambassador in bonds,” in chains. What is an ambassador?

The only other time this word is used in the NT is in 2 Cor. 5:20. I am going to read the verse in its context.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

CHAPTER 6

1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 5:17-6:1).

By definition an ambassador is a minister of the highest rank officially appointed to go to a foreign land to represent the head of his own government. This would mean that Paul was under appointment by his King to represent his King and the interests of the Kingdom of God in this world. What greater honor could be bestowed upon anyone in this world?

So even though he was in chains, he was an ambassador, and he was to be like his Lord, “about my Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). *And the same is true of you and me.* “We are ambassadors for Christ,” and our mission in this world is to beseech people to be reconciled to God!

This is really the end of the epistle, but Paul went on to make some concluding remarks.

6:21 The believers in Ephesus were concerned about the Apostle Paul, how he was doing, was he well, did he have any needs, did he have food to eat, and any other information that Paul might pass on to them because he did not want them to be worried about him. And so he was sending Tychicus to them for that purpose, to tell them how Paul was doing.

Tychicus was from Asia, according to Acts 20:4, and so he was very likely a Gentile. He is mentioned five times in the NT: there in Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12. Paul’s words about him in Colossian are almost identical to what he said in Ephesians. Read Col. 4:7-9. There we see that he was the one who accompanied Onesimus back to Philemon who was a member of the church at Colosse. Tychicus was a dear brother who was happy to minister to Paul in any way that he could. It seems that Tychicus delivered Paul’s letter to the church at Colosse on the same trip that he carried the letter to the church at Ephesus. He

was evidently with Paul during both of his imprisonments, and a great bond of affection existed between the two men. He was Paul's ambassador, "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord." He was a loving man, and was ideal for going to the early churches to tell them how Paul was doing, and to comfort their hearts. The Lord had blessed Paul richly in the faithful co-workers he had, who stood by him faithfully through all of the difficult days of his ministry, and they are certain to share in the rewards that will be given to the Apostle Paul in that day. Any pastor knows that men like Tychicus and Timothy and Titus and Luke are hard to find.

6:22 I have commented on this verse above.

6:23 The last two verses of the are Paul's concluding prayer for the believers at Ephesus. His prayer here included a petition for peace, love with faith, and grace.

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of this epistle in his characteristic way Paul prayed for grace and then peace. Here at the end we have just the reverse, peace and then grace. And it seems also that in connection with faith and love, faith precedes love, but here his prayer is for love with faith. Paul must have had some reason for reversing these four great characteristics of the people of God in their relationship with each other.

"Peace" is always most desirable, not only for every believer, but for every church. And if a church is to be peaceful, the people who make up that church must be enjoying the peace of God in their hearts and lives individually as well as in their families. Living in a world like we live in, and faced with all of the trials and temptations that come to us daily, we stand in constant need of God's peace, that quietness of heart often in the midst of troubles which speaks of real rest in the Lord.

"Love with faith" is an interesting expression. These two words are brought together in several verses in the NT, even in a couple of other verses here in Ephesians. Cf. Eph. 1:15 and 3:7. These are actually the two initial evidences that a person has really been saved. Cf. Col. 1:4. Perhaps Paul was indicating here that it is continued faith which sustains our love. Faith is toward God, love is also toward God, but also toward each other.

Since Paul concluded this verse by indicating that peace and love and faith all come to us "from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ," we know that the supply is unlimited, but also that these qualities of life which make living a blessing, do not originate with us, but with our heavenly Father and with our Savior.

6:24 And the last verse of this Ephesian letter reminds us of our constant need of the grace of God. We all can say with Paul that it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. And we all need to be growing continually in grace, which means growing in the knowledge of our Savior. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18.

The words "in sincerity" would be better translation *in incorruption*. So that the reading in the NASB is the preferred reading: "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with {a love} incorruptible" (Eph. 6:24 - NASB). A Christian is one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ with a love that will never die.

So each of us starts out as a child of God with grace and peace, and with faith and love. But all through life we have a continuing need for each of these gifts from God. And we will need them all as long as we live. But we need to pray continually for each other, as Paul has emphasized at the conclusion of this epistle, that these characteristics will be prominent in our lives so that we may live to glorify God not only by what we say and do, but by what we are!

November 15, 1999

Concl: As we come to the conclusion of our study of Ephesians, I thought that it would be profitable for us to review the main themes which Paul taught in this marvelous epistle. Perhaps this will help us to get these truths more firmly established in our minds and hearts so that they will have a deep and abiding effect upon our lives. A spiritual understanding of the great doctrines of Scripture will always have a transforming effect upon the way we live, and, after all, that is the purpose for which God has given His Word to us. The Bible is not just meant to be informational, but transformational! (My computer didn't like that word "transformational," but I think that you know what I am trying to say.) One dictionary definition of *transform* is "to change in nature, disposition, heart, or the like; [to] convert" (Webster's Collegiate, Fifth Edition, p. 1061). The word which the dictionary suggests is "transformative," but that doesn't rhyme with informational, so I think I will stick with transformational. So let me say it again, *the Bible was not just meant to be informational, but transformational*. Knowing the truth of God's Word is good, but it is not truly known unless it changes our lives..

Well, what are the great themes in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians?

The first is **PRAYER**.

- A. 1:2 – his customary prayer at the beginning of his letters.
- B. 1:3-14 – his thanksgiving to God for some of the blessings we have in salvation.
- C. 1:15-23 – the first of two intercessory prayers which Paul included in this epistle.
- D. 3:13-21 – the second of his intercessory prayers. Each of these intercessory prayers follows some of his teaching.
- E. 5:20 – an exhortation to be thankful.
- F. 6:18-20 – the praying that is so vital in our spiritual warfare.
- G. 6:23-24 – Paul's concluding prayer.

The second great theme is **SALVATION**.

- A. The first is in his prayer of worship to God for the blessings we have in our salvation. But this is teaching also. Cf. 1:3-14.
- B. Salvation is the theme also in all of chapter 2.

The third great theme is **THE CHURCH**. And this is one of the main reasons Paul wrote this epistle.

- A. He touches upon it in 1:22-23.
- B. He comes back to it again in 2:20-22.
- C. His main treatment of this theme is in 3:1-12.

The fourth great theme is **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**. And Paul approached it from three points of view:

- A. Personal Christian character and life in 4:1-5:21. And the word which describes what we are to be and how we are to live is the verb, "walk." See it in 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15. He referred to the way we used to walk in 2:2, and how we now need to walk in 2:10.
- B. Life at home (5:22-6:4).
- C. Life at work (6:5-9).

The fifth theme is **CHRISTIAN WARFARE**. This is seen in 6:10-20.

We all need to go back over these six chapters, noticing these **FIVE GREAT THEMES**, and think about them and pray about them, asking ourselves about how well we understand the doctrines, and how well we are

obeying the exhortations as they relate to our lives. I trust that the months we have spent in this epistle will result in greater delight in the Word and greater conformity in all of us to the holiness of character and life which the Apostle Paul has so clearly presented for us in this epistle as the Spirit of God led him to write.

– The End –