

I, PAUL

Scripture reading: Eph. 3:1-12.

Intro: Prov. 10:7 says that "the memory of the just is blessed."

One of the most profitable types of reading for a Christian is Christian biography. Nothing can be more instructive (if it is written accurately), nothing can be more inspiring!

The Scriptures provide us with many examples of the value of knowing the lives of men and women of God -- both in the OT and in the NT. If anything, the history of God's deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt is overshadowed by the history of God's dealings with Moses.

We can struggle with the prophecies of Daniel, but revel as we turn the pages of his history.

As chapter 3 of Ephesians begins, we cannot but be impressed with the manner in which the writer of this Epistle says, "I, Paul."

In the verses which follow we have some very interesting details concerning the Apostle Paul himself and the work which God had called him to do.

I want us to consider this morning from these verses what Paul says about himself, bringing in one passage at the beginning of this letter, and one passage also toward the end.

Next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will look at his message.

And then we may take a third Sunday to see the far-reaching implications of his message.

Therefore, I would like for you to read these 12 verses over and over until they are written upon your heart. There is wonderful truth here which we trust the Spirit of God will be pleased to show us.

Let me suggest three points in this passage which I want us to consider:

- I. AN EXPLANATION OF GOD'S WILL FOR PAUL.
- II. AN EXAMPLE OF GOD'S WAYS WITH PAUL.
- III. AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S WORK IN PAUL.

I. AN EXPLANATION OF GOD'S WILL FOR PAUL.

Taking the Epistle from start to finish, Paul uses 5 words

to depict what he understood to be God's will for his life and ministry. Here they are:

- 1) He was an apostle.
- 2) He was a steward.
- 3) He was a minister.
- 4) He was a preacher (or we could say, a teacher).
- 5) He was an ambassador.

The first is in chapter 1,
the fifth is in chapter 5,
the other three are in chapter 3

Let us look at each one briefly.

A. He was an apostle. Cf. 1:1.

In 9 out of Paul's 13 or 14 epistles he begins by calling himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ":

in Romans,
in 1 Corinthians,
in 2 Corinthians,
in Galatians,
in Ephesians,
in Colossians,
in 1 Timothy,
in 2 Timothy,
and in Titus!

Always this indicates his authority. He belonged to that small, select group of 13 men (see 1 Cor. 15). As they died, there were no more replacements. They are the men who, for the most part, have given us the NT, and they are the men Paul had reference to in Eph. 2:20.

This is the reason for the "I, Paul," in our text.

See also how it continues through the passage in vv. 3, 4, 7, 8, and then in 4:1.

Note the majestic wording in the first part of Eph. 1:1. He was sent forth from (lit.) the Lord Jesus Christ. No greater honor could be conferred upon any man!

But let us go on.

B. He was a steward. We get this from Eph. 3:2, in the word, "dispensation."

A related statement is found in 1 Cor. 4:1,
"Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of God."

What is a steward?

He is a servant who has been entrusted with his master's goods. As a steward he was to be faithful in the execution of his mission.

You would not find the Apostle Paul looking around for the current trend among servants of the Lord so that he would know which way to go and what to do. He had gotten his orders, and his mission was clear to him.

Oh, to be able to say what he said in 2 Tim. 4:7.

C. He was a minister. See Eph. 3:7.

This is another word for a servant. We get our word, deacon, from it. But it is used here to indicate that the work that Paul was called upon to do was WORK -- HARD WORK!

In fact, it was WORK that was warfare!

Paul would have amended Isaac Watts great hymn:

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?"

D. He was a preacher, a teacher. See Eph. 3:8.

Read his messages in the book of Acts, and read his Epistles -- and you will see how he opened his mouth and with boldness and power made known the message that had been placed in his care.

Finally, as to God's will for his life,

E. He was an ambassador. See Eph. 6:19, 20.

What is an ambassador? He is a man who is sent from his country to represent his government in another country. His main reason for being there was to represent the one who sent him.

When you take all of these together (and more expressions could be added from other epistles), what a tremendous place of honor and authority was given to Paul.

No wonder he said, "I, Paul"!

But wait just a minute. Is it possible that we are reading what

we find as we come to the beginning of chapter 3? Note:

II. AN EXAMPLE OF GOD'S WAYS WITH PAUL: "the prisoner."

See also 4:1, and then 6:20.

Have you noticed this in Paul's writings -- the trials, the opposition, the physical troubles, the imprisonments?

How did he face this and answer those questions which had to come to his mind? How could God allow such a thing to happen to him?

Note well how he writes in both 3:1 and 4:1. He was "the prisoner of Jesus Christ . . . the prisoner of the Lord" -- not of Caesar, nor of Rome, BUT OF THE LORD!

Do you remember how he wrote from the same confinement to the Philippian Church in Phil. 1:12?

He saw the Lord in it all, and he saw that it was "for you Gentiles." See also Eph. 3:13 -- "my tribulations for you."

How amazingly the Lord gets the job done -- not as we would think, but according to his own plan and purpose.

But we have one other thing to consider -- which to a great extent results from the first two. Remember that it is all what Paul is saying about himself -- which is very indicative of the spiritual condition of any child of God.

III. AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S WORK IN PAUL.

You could hardly have a greater contrast than we have seen this morning in the first two points -- God's will as compared with God's ways.

But what did this do for Paul?

Note v. 8 -- "less than the least of all saints."

Notice also: ". . . is this grace given . . ." See the same in v. 7.

The Corinthians Church had not yet learned this important lesson. Read 1 Cor. 4:7b,

"And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

What did John the Baptist say when men wanted to know who he was? Cf. John 1:23, "I am the voice . . ."

Concl: What do you think would be Paul's advice to us if he were living in this 20th century with all of its sin and godlessness?

Would he have some new ideas? Do you suppose he would want to add a supplement to the Word of God?

Absolutely not! Times may change, but the hearts of men are just the same, and the way God reaches them is just the same.

What do we need? WE NEED THE SAME THREE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN IN EPHESIANS THIS MORNING:

- 1) We need to understand the high and holy calling which God has given to every single one of us.
- 2) We need to expect God to lead us through bewildering experiences which seem to be in contrast with what He has called us to do -- experiences which often seem to limit us instead of helping us.
- 3) We need to realize in ever-increasing ways the nothingness of ourselves that we may see that God is the One who is doing the work, and the power to do it is HIS -- and so is the glory!

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

(Second in a series of three messages on Eph. 3:1-12.)

Intro: These twelve verses could be considered a parenthesis, or an elaboration. At first it might seem like Paul is digressing, but we soon realize that this passage is absolutely necessary if we are to understand the glory, the tremendous importance of the work which God called the Apostle Paul to do!

Last week we noticed what Paul had to say about himself -- that he was:

- 1) An apostle (1:1),
- 2) A steward (3:2),
- 3) A minister (3:7),
- 4) A preacher, or teacher (3:8),
- 5) An ambassador (6:20).

But, in spite of these grand titles, he was also a prisoner, as we see in 3:1; 4:1; 6:20.

All of this was necessary for Paul so that he would not be exalted even in his own heart because of the high calling he had received -- and so he had come to the realization that it was not because of anything that God saw in him because he was "less than the least of all saints."

And so we got acquainted with the messenger.

This morning we want to look at the message.

Next Sunday -- at his mission.

In looking at the message . . . we must not overlook the obvious enthusiasm Paul manifests for the work that God had called him to do.

To some people, even to some believers, it might appear strange that he would be so enthused over such a work. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THIS WAS A MAN OF GOD WHO HAD HAD HIS SPIRITUAL SIGHT SHARPENED ACCORDING TO EPH. 1:18 ff.

If Paul's words do not thrill and excite us, it is a sad testimony to the need that we have in our hearts! How we need to seek from the Spirit of God a true insight into the Word of God. Then we will know why Paul felt in his heart as he did. This calls for reading, for meditation, and prayer.

But let us notice, first of all, the three expressions Paul uses to describe:

I. THE GLORY OF HIS MESSAGE.

The first is the word, "mystery," which is found in vv. 3,

4, 9. We had it first in Eph. 1:9. It is found twice more in the Epistle -- once in ch. 5, and once in ch. 6.

The second is the expression I have taken as my subject this morning: "the unsearchable riches of Christ" -- as found in v. 8 of our text.

The third and last is in v. 10 -- "the manifold wisdom of God."

Let us look at each of these expressions for a moment.

- A. "The mystery." What is a mystery in the NT? As you read the NT Scriptures which have to do with our own day you will learn that this is one of the most important doctrinal words in the NT.

The definition is given in v. 5.

How did Paul learn about it? It was given to him as a "revelation" from God. Why a "revelation"? Because God was the only One who knew anything about it. (More about this next week, the Lord willing.)

- B. "The unsearchable riches of Christ."

Three things:

1. The message centers in Christ.
2. It is called "riches" because of:
 - a. Its abundance.
 - b. Its wealth.
 - c. Its fulness -- like so many other things mentioned in Ephesians.
3. It is "unsearchable" because:
 - a. It cannot be fully comprehended.
 - b. It cannot be searched out.

God has revealed what He wants us to know, but we can never exhaust that -- to say nothing of the aspects which God has not revealed!

- C. "The manifold wisdom of God."

God is infinitely wise. The Psalmist tells us that "the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth" (Psa. 9:16) -- a reference to His work!

"Manifold" means that there are so many aspects to the wisdom of God, as revealed in His will, as revealed in

His dealings with us, His people, that it is like Joseph's coat -- variegated with all of the glorious colors which can be seen.

These words show us something of the glory of Paul's message.

II. THE NATURE OF GOD'S WORK.

For this we need to go back to the last 4 verses of chapter 2 -- otherwise we cannot understand the full import of the expressions we have just considered.

What is it that has Paul so excited?

It is this: GOD IS BUILDING "AN HOLY TEMPLE . . . AN HABITATION" for Himself!

But why should we get so excited about this when He did the same thing in the OT -- with the Tabernacle, and later with the Temple?

For two reasons:

- 1) We should never get over the amazing fact that the Lord wants to dwell with us.
- 2) There never has been a temple like the one He is now building.

Where is it?

It is all over the world.

Ridiculous, is man's first reaction. How could this be? (Remember the expressions we had under our first point.) BECAUSE GOD IS MAKING THIS TEMPLE OUT OF PEOPLE -- HIS PEOPLE!

Solomon asked about his temple,

"But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?" (1 Kings 8:27). Should ^{not} this question be even more on our lips and in our thoughts?

- ## III. THE MESSAGE WHICH PAUL WAS TO PROCLAIM -- as seen in v. 6.
- This indicates even more about the nature of the work that God is doing.

Note first in this verse the words,

- A. "That the Gentiles."

Paul would never have planned it this way. If he had

been the architect of this plan, you can be sure that only Jews would have been included.

But here he says, "That the Gentiles . . ."

Peter had trouble with race prejudice against the Gentiles, too, but probably no one had to overcome a stronger hatred of Gentiles than Paul did! He was not eliminating Jews, but he was including Gentiles -- because God had included them!

To what extent?

All three of the words that appear here in v. 6 in the original Greek begin with the prefix which means with. This means that all of the people of God have the privilege of sharing equally in the work that God is doing.

Note what they are:

- 1) "Fellowheirs."
- 2) "Of the same body."
- 3) "Partakers."

These look at things from the divine point-of-view. Let us reverse them that we may see how men actually are taught by Paul to enter in to the plan and purpose of God.

B. The message for all men -- whether Jews or Gentiles:

1. "Partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

Though the door is open to all, yet not all are included in what God is doing. There is only one way to become a part -- and that is by being saved through the Gospel.

Are you saved? You can only be saved through faith in Christ.

2. "Of the same body."

This is the Church. There is only one. It is spread throughout the world. It includes every Jew and every Gentile in this dispensation who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

It speaks of the most intimate relationship to our Lord. No member of the body is any closer to the Lord than another.

3. "Fellowheirs." Cf. Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 3:7.

There may be an emphasis on the present in this word (that is, what we already have in Christ), but it certainly does not exclude the future.

But the point is that, just as our relationship is equal, so is our inheritance!

Will you dwell on these until your heart begins to burn with praise and with anticipation and with hunger like the Apostle's heart was burning?

Concl: What should a proper understanding of these truths do to us? What effect should they have on our lives?

The answer is in the word "holy" in Eph. 2:21.

See also 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1. V. 16 shows its relationship to our text in Ephesians 3.

FOR EARTH AND HEAVEN
Eph. 3:1-13

The third in a
series of three
messages on
Eph. 3:1-13

Intro: This is our third Sunday on this passage.

- We have seen the emphasis upon:
- 1) Paul, the man, the writer of this Epistle.
 - 2) We have seen, at least in part, the message:
 - a) Which was divinely revealed to him -- never before made known.
 - b) Which he was commissioned to preach and teach.
 - 3) And we have anticipated what we want to see in this final message: the mission -- how far-reaching it was.

To begin, let me briefly summarize the passage so that the message of these verses may be clear to each one of us -- if the Spirit of God is pleased to give us understanding.

The summary:

V. 1 - connects chapter 3 with chapter 2 -- Paul's attitude toward his imprisonment and its purpose.

V. 2 - Paul, the steward -- received from God -- again (as in v. 1) specifically for the Gentiles (a purpose which shows the depth of God's work in Paul's heart).

V. 3 - the particular stewardship mentioned in v. 2 is now shown to be a message never before known, revealed to Paul -- "afore" probably referring to chs. 1, 2, not to a previous letter from Paul.

V. 4 - "when ye read" = while you are reading -- "understand" with with the mind, as compared with the feelings -- "knowledge" speaks of being able to put it together.

V. 5 - the definition of a mystery -- "by the Spirit" as the member of the Godhead who is specifically concerned with the revelation of the Word of God.

V. 6 - "the mystery" itself with still greater emphasis on its provision for "the Gentiles."

V. 7 - to v. 11 we see the various aspects of Paul's ministry -- here, his gracious appointment and the divine enablement.

V. 8 - Paul's evaluation of himself: "less than the least," "very small, quite unimportant, insignificant" (A & G, 248) -- to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

V. 9 - a textual problem -- not κοινωνία, but οἰκονομία -- correctly rendered in the NASB: "and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery" -- so Paul was not only given the knowledge of the mystery, but he was to show how the plan would be carried out -- a plan which the Crea-

tor planned before creation -- as Creator, He had this right.

V. 10 - one of the present purposes, heavenly in nature -- "principalities and powers," see 1:21; 6:12 -- mentioned separately from "angels" in Rom. 8:38 -- even used of human leaders in Titus 3:1 -- so to be taken here in its widest sense: of men and angels (probably with a special emphasis upon the godless in both cases) -- an explanation as to why many things happen to the people of God which seem pointless to us.

V. 11 - "purpose" and "purposed" are from two separate roots -- the latter could be translated, made, referring to the plan, not how it is to be accomplished -- all "in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

V. 12 - all again related to Christ: "In whom" -- "boldness" is freedom to speak, "access with confidence" is freedom of access -- "by the faith of Him" is by His faithfulness, placing the emphasis upon the sufficiency of Christ.

V. 13 - a word of encouragement for the readers who were concerned about Paul -- even his "tribulations" were a part of the divine plan to bring these Gentiles to "glory."

What amazing truth! Who can possibly comprehend it all?

But, when we think of the far-reaching implications of this message, what do we have in mind?

Four things:

I. THE ABSOLUTE AND TOTAL SUFFICIENCY OF THE GODHEAD -- FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

It was God's plan.

It was to be completed by God's power.

II. THE NOTHINGNESS OF GOD'S SERVANT.

The Lord has used some men in a most outstanding way: Abraham, Moses, David -- to mention just a few in the OT. John the Baptist, Peter, John, and Paul -- to mention just a few from the NT.

BUT -- it is very doubtful if there were any one who was more important than Paul (remembering from 2 Cor. 10:12 that such comparisons "are not wise").

But what does he say about himself? See note under v. 8 above.

We are not even beginning to see how completely sufficient God is until we see that He can get along perfectly without us!

But there is another aspect of this truth.

III. THE IMPERATIVENESS OF TEACHING THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

They need to get their minds turned to the Lord.

They need to know what He is doing, and how He is going to accomplish His purpose in the earth.

They need to see how the work of God extends from eternity to eternity.

They need to know what part they have in it -- absolutely the same place and privilege that any other child of God has. See v. 6 in particular.

Ill. One of the great men of the Puritan period was Richard Baxter. He wrote The Saints' Everlasting Rest and The Reformed Pastor. In the latter work he deplores the sin of the pastors of his day: their failure to teach their people.

The same rebuke and warning is needed for today. It would be hard to find a clearer passage on the ministry of the pastor and the church than the one we have here in Eph. 3.

IV. THE EFFECT OF GOD'S WORK UPON MEN AND ANGELS -- BOTH THE GOOD AND THE BAD OF GOD'S CREATED BEINGS.

"In heavenly places" puts special emphasis upon angels.

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12 (especially the last statement of v. 12).

Let us never minimize the far-reaching implications of what God is doing with us at this very moment.

Concl: Our comfort in these things. There are two which Paul emphasizes:

- 1) Our twofold freedom -- to speak to God and to approach God. See v. 12.
- 2) Our assurance that God's purpose includes everything. Cf. "all" in Rom. 8:28. Then note in the same ch., vv. 35-39.

NOT FAINTING, BUT FULNESS
Eph. 3:13-19

Intro: There can be no doubt from what we find in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians but that he was a man who gave a great deal of time to prayer!

We could actually say that the passage before us this morning gives us the fourth prayer in the Epistle:

- 1) Eph. 1:2.
- 2) Eph. 1:3-14 -- worship.
- 3) Eph. 1:15-23.
- 4) Our text.

There is no doubt about how Paul felt about prayer. He placed it on a par with the ministry of the Word of God!

His prayers give us some of the richest passages in the NT. They can be extremely valuable in teaching us how to pray.

This prayer (in chapter 3) is interesting not only because of what it contains, but also because of its location in the book.

Note:

- 1) Paul has completed the doctrinal section of the book, and is ready for the practical.
- 2) He (in chapter 3) has just spoken of two things:
 - a) The greatness of his ministry.
 - b) His own insignificance. The work can never be done without the blessing of the Lord in answer to prayer.

But there is another suggestion as to why this prayer is found here, and it is easy to miss it:

- 3) Eph. 3:13. From the reading of the Epistle there does not seem to be any major problem in the Ephesian Church such as Paul faced in writing to the Corinthians, or to the Galatians, or to the Colossians! But there was a particular need which the Ephesians did have: It was a tendency to be discouraged, to lose heart, to give up!

And, at the present time, it seemed that the reason for their discouragement centered in the fact that Paul was a prisoner of Rome. They were evidently asking, "If the work of the Gospel is so important, and if God is almighty, then why is Paul in jail. And, if that can happen to the Apostle Paul, what hope is there for us?"

These are good questions!

But note again: Paul does not try to explain. He prays. And in his prayer his concern is that this might become a time of great spiritual growth for the whole Ephesian Church.

In view of these things, how significant are the words (found also in 3:1, "For this cause . . .")

All that God is doing with Paul is a part of what God is doing

for the glorification of the Ephesian saints. (How often we need to go back and read Isa. 55:8-11, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord . .")

Now let us look at the text.

I. THE ONE TO WHOM THE PRAYER IS ADDRESSED (Eph. 3:14, 15).

It is to "the Father" -- and there can be no greater appeal to the heart of God. Cf. our Lord's words in Luke 11:2a.

It is not "every family" as the NASB renders it, but "the whole family" as we have it in the KJV. God has only one family. It does not include angels. The word for "whole" is exactly the same that we have in Eph. 2:21, "all the building," or, as the NASB has it, "the whole building." It would destroy the teaching of Eph. 2 to say, every building.

God is our Father, and we are the members of His family. Stay right in these two verses until the wonder and glory of these truths really gets into your heart!

II. THE FOUR REQUESTS (Eph. 3:16-19).

This is brought out in two ways in the original:

- 1) By Paul's use of conjunction, in order that.
- 2) By his use of infinitives.

It is important to see that the four requests have to do with all three members of the Godhead.

A. The first request: Eph. 3:16.

Fainting is not basically a problem of our external circumstances, but of our inner spiritual condition -- not of the outer man, but of the inner man.

That need is not going to be met entirely by instruction (although teaching is a vital part). We must recognize the need we have for the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.

How does He strengthen us? Basically in two ways (as our Lord indicated in the Upper Room:

- 1) Through the Word.
- 2) Through pointing us to Christ in the Word.

This is not what we do for ourselves in reading or hearing the Word, but we must keep it in mind that this is a definite work of the Holy Spirit which only He can do!

Is this going on in your life? Are you praying this re-

quest for believers you know who are in danger of fainting?

The first request leads to the second.

B. The second request: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17a).

First, let us be clear on one thing: Christ dwells in every believer. Cf. 2 Cor. 13:5b. So this is not a prayer for His indwelling.

Bishop Moule in his *Ephesian Studies* (pp. 137-139) has stated the whole issue very clearly:

"That Christ may take up His habitation in your hearts! What, has He not been in residence before? Can the Ephesian be a Christian indeed, with Christ still absent out of him? Is it not at Ephesus as at Corinth, where 'Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be counterfeits, castaways' (ἀβέβαιοι; 2 Cor. xiii. 5)? Well, all that side is vitally true, but there is another side. The Lord must, for our salvation at all, be so in living union with us that we are in Him, and He in us. But His presence in us has its degrees and advances, its less and more, its outer and inner. To drop metaphor, a life may be truly Christian and yet far from fully Christian; the man may have come really to Christ, and have really cast anchor on Him, and have really confessed Him, and be really seeking to serve Him, yet be keeping back, perhaps quite unconsciously, whole regions of the life from Him. He may be living rather as His ally than as His vassal. He may be rather treating Him as an august Visitor in His servant's house than behaving as the loving bondservant in a house where Christ is always the Master at home. And St Paul cannot rest about the Ephesians till they have, all of them, accepted the Lord simply on His own terms in this matter. They will never satisfy their Apostle for they cannot possibly satisfy the Lord, if they do not welcome the blessed, the beloved, the adorable Indweller to the heart, not only to the convictions, or even to the conduct, but to the heart. He must be inducted into the central chamber, for it is His proper place. And He must always be there. . .

"There let Him sit, supreme and at the centre. In many a Christian's experience it is as if the Christian life began anew, and in an almost heaven, when the will is 'with power made mighty' deliberately and without reserve to seat Him there."

Undoubtedly this is where most of our problems come from. We have not placed the Lord in complete control.

Our problem is not ignorance as much as an unwillingness to let the Lord be our Lord.

Do you pray about this for yourself -- for others?

C. The third request (Eph. 3:17b-19a).

This request has to do with "the love of Christ." The knowledge of His love and the enjoyment of His love is the evidence that we have made Him Lord.

A Christian is one who, in making Christ Lord, will be "rooted and grounded in love."

But our knowledge of the love of Christ will be a growing experience.

- 1) We need to "comprehend" it, i.e., lay hold of it so as to make it our own.
- 2) It has four dimensions -- which we will explain in a moment.
- 3) "And to know" has reference to personal experience.
- 4) "Which passeth knowledge" means that:
 - a) it is beyond our ability to understand, and
 - b) that it is infinite in the sense that we can never understand all that can be known about it -- but we must keep growing in it.

Think of the dimensions as it relates to you -- and to "all the saints" -- because this is not just for you, or just for a few, but for "all."

- 1) The breadth.
- 2) The length.
- 3) The height (in Gk comes third).
- 4) The depth.

This explains, "For God SO loved the world . . ."

D. The fourth request (Eph. 3:19b): "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Can you take in such a thing? Do you believe that it is possible? How different things would be for you and for me if this were descriptive of our experience as the children of God.

All that we need is in God. And all that He is and has is ours IF we take it in this way.

Concl: There are just four things that are absolutely essential for us as the children of God:

- 1) The Word -- strengthening us inwardly.
- 2) Christ must be Lord.
- 3) A growing knowledge and experience of Christ's love.
- 4) Prayer.

FOUR-DIMENSIONAL LOVE

Eph. 3:14-21

Intro: We need to go back to Paul's prayer again in Eph. 3 to finish looking at these grand requests.

Paul would have us know that:

- 1) The Christian life is primarily a work of God! This is evident from the very beginning of this Epistle.
- 2) We do not experience it all when we are saved although we do have at that moment ALL spiritual blessings in Christ.
- 3) In considering his two prayers (in chs. 1 and 3), we have a twofold need:
 - a) The need to know spiritual truth (his first prayer).
 - b) The need to experience spiritual power and love (his second prayer -- which we are now considering).

To this end, Paul in chapter 3 teaches us that we need, consequently:

- 1) To be taught.
- 2) To be prayed for, and to pray for others.

Here we are walking on the highest ground possible -- and it is in preparation for the instructions which we are to receive in chapters 4-6.

Let us review the first two requests which we considered last week, and then go on to look at the last two requests of this wonderful prayer:

- 1) The first request (Eph. 1:16).

Do we know that we need this?
Do we believe that God can do it -- by the Holy Spirit?
- 2) The second request: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 1:17a).

The Spirit's strengthening is all with this in mind.
Christ indwells every believer, but He does not reign as Lord in every believer's heart.
Imagine the changes that would take place in all of our lives IF we were to give ourselves to the Lord, to fellowship with Him, and to obedience to Him. How different we would immediately become. Instead, we seem to be afraid of Him.
Obviously, one way in which we would all be different has to do with the love of God -- the greatest of all because it renders everything else worthwhile useful. And this leads us to the third request.

I. THE LAST TWO REQUESTS (Eph. 3:17b-19).

A. The third request (Eph. 3:17b-19a).

As to space, this occupies most of the prayer.

Note the development in the request:

- (1) Our roots, our foundation, is in love.
- (2) Our need is to make it our own.
- (3) That our experience might be characterized by love:
 - "and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" -- meaning that:
 - (a) It must be divinely revealed to us.
 - (b) It can never be exhausted. We can always know more about it -- and experience more of it!

The four dimensions:

1. "The breadth."
2. "And length."
3. "And height" -- comes third in the Greek text.
4. "And depth."

All of this leads to:

- B. The fourth request: "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Cf. Eph. 3:19b.

Can we really believe that such a thing is true?

Would man, in his wildest imaginations, ever have conceived of a salvation like this?

What kind of changes would this make in you -- and in me?

Such requests explain why Paul closes this second with the doxology that we have in vv. 20, 21.

- II. THE DOXOLOGY (Eph. 3:20, 21). *MATTHEW HENRY (VI, 700): "It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour has taught us to do so."*

In the light of such truth (not only in the prayer, but in these first 3 chapters), who but God could possibly be worthy of the glory?

- A. For how long should He be glorified?

For a long time -- lit., unto the age of the ages, i.e., FOR ALL ETERNITY!

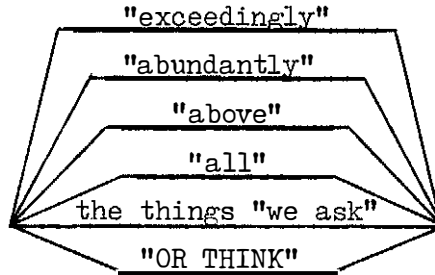
- B. Why?

Because of:

- (a) What He has done.
- (b) What He can do.
- (c) What He will do.

What can He do?

Picture it this way:



COULD THIS BE
CALLED
SIX-DIMENSIONAL
POWER?

The Lord can far exceed even what we have asked, but also those things which we have thought about, but have never asked Him to do!

These truths were emphasized with:

- 1) David in 2 Sam. 12:7, 8.
- 2) Solomon in 1 Kings 3:13.
- 3) Jeremiah in Jer. 33:3.

Concl: What is threatening you with fainting this morning? See Eph. 3:13.

This is where our greatest need is -- asking God to do the things in our lives that really need to be done.

Take these verses and

- meditate on them.
- pray them.
- make them your own.
- begin now to glorify God as you will throughout all eternity!

A CHRISTIAN'S FIRST STEPS

Eph. 4:1-6

Intro: Eph. 1-3 make it clear that two things enter into the establishing of a child of God:

- 1) Teaching.
- 2) Praying.

When we compare chapters 1-3 with 4-6, we realize that:

- the foundation must have a building on it,
- the Word produces a walk,
- creed leads to conduct,
- precept must be followed by practice,
- the standing we have before God must be manifested by the way we live before men.

The two sections are incomplete without the other.

You cannot have a true experience without correct doctrine. Nor is doctrine alone sufficient; it has to lead to a godly walk.

This inter-relationship is brought out further by the fact that there is doctrine in the latter part of the book, as there is practical truth in the first part.

But predominantly the emphasis in chapters 1-3 is on doctrine; in chs. 4-6, on practice.

The word that Paul uses for the life of a child of God is the word, "walk."

It is a word that he has taken from the OT. See:

- 1) Enoch in Gen. 5:22, 24.
- 2) Noah in Gen. 6:9.
- 3) Abraham in Gen. 17:1.

We have already had it twice:

- 1) Eph. 2:2.
- 2) Eph. 2:10.

We are about to see it 5 more times -- and it is around these 5 usages that we lead up to what Paul has to say starting with 6:10 about our warfare. These are:

- 1) Eph. 4:1.
- 2) Eph. 4:17.
- 3) Eph. 5:2.
- 4) Eph. 5:8.
- 5) Eph. 5:15.

This morning we want to begin looking at the first of these.

Notice the order that we have in these verses. Paul would have us have us look first:

- 1) At God, i.e., in connection with our calling.
- 2) At ourselves.
- 3) At our circumstances, and at people as they are involved in our circumstances.
- 4) And finally at God again -- with reference to "the unity of the Spirit."

I. PAUL'S PRIMARY CONCERN (Eph. 4:1).

- A. It is that we walk.
- B. It is that we walk "worthy of the vocation wherewith," or to which, "ye are called."

This looks back to the beginning as far as our salvation is concerned (which we will do more in detail tonight), and it looks ahead to the goal, or purpose, behind the calling of God.

It places the emphasis in salvation where it needs to be -- with GOD!

- C. It is written in circumstances worth noting.

Paul is a prisoner, lit., in the Lord. He immediately becomes an example of what he about to write.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCH A WALK (Eph. 4:2).

Notice that Paul is moving us toward his statement in v. 3, which, in turn, leads to vv. 4-6.

If there is to be "peace," then it must grow out of our "unity" -- "the unity of the Spirit." And "unity" is dependent upon each individual believer's personal relationship with the Lord.

In v. 1 our thoughts were turned toward God; now, toward ourselves and our circumstances. (Keep in mind where Paul was as he was writing.)

- A. "With all lowliness."

We have these same three characteristics in Col. 3:12, 13.

The first two are mentioned by our Lord about Himself in Matt. 11:29 (but in the reverse order from that which we have here.

What is "lowliness," or lowliness of mind?

It is not making ourselves small, or humble, but it is to recognize that we are small, and then to act accordingly.

If we have really seen the truth of chapters 1-3, we will understand this.

- What do we have that we did not receive -- especially when you talk of salvation?
- God has forgiven us what Bishop Moule calls, "a hopeless debt"!
- We are nothing, and we have nothing, except what we have in Christ. Cf. Gal. 6:3,
"If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

"All" indicates:

- 1) Always.
- 2) Excluding anything contrary to it.

Remember Paul's statement about himself in Eph. 3:8.

A Christian has nothing to be proud about!

B. "And meekness."

There can be no "meekness" without "all lowliness."

Both are a product of the Spirit's work in us -- what Trench calls, "an inwrought grace of the soul." It is not a part of human nature.

What is "meekness"?

Trench (p. 152 in his Synonyms): "It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting."

Our Lord was "meek" (Matt. 11:29).

This is what the Lord was doing with Job.

We see this quality in David -- both in his relationship with Saul, and with Shimei (2 Kings 16:5-14).

This is illustrated also in Isa. 53:7 in the statement, "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" -- prophetically speaking of our Lord!

This involves our relationship with people, and with circumstances. Who are they, and what are they for you?

But this leads to a third thing:

C. "With long-suffering."

Remember the first statements in 1 Cor. 13:4 by which love is described:

"Love suffereth long, and is kind."

It means to be able to endure with suffering when it goes on and on for a long time.

It involves a refusal to retaliate even when it is in one's power to do so -- awaiting God's time of deliverance.

This was David's attitude toward Saul -- and our Lord's toward Pilate, and the mob!

D. "Forbearing one another in love."

The ideas of enduring and restraining are in this. We can almost consider it as an elaboration on the preceding phrase, "with long-suffering."

We do this because of "love":

- 1) For the Lord.
- 2) For others -- especially our fellow-believers. We know what the Lord has had to do for us, and we know that their needs are just like ours!

Note: Please keep in mind that Paul is not concerned just about our actions. He is talking about our character -- that our outward behavior reflects what God is doing in our hearts.

III. THE REASON FOR SUCH A WALK (Eph. 4:3-6).

We are not trying to make something; WE ARE SEEKING (by the grace of God) TO KEEP SOMETHING WHICH WE ALREADY HAVE, AND WHICH HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO US TO "keep."

There can be no "peace" without "unity" and there can be no "unity" if there is pride!

But what is this "unity" based on?

It is based upon seven cardinal doctrines of the NT. ANY UNITY WHICH IGNORES DOCTRINE, NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE, IS NOT TRUE, BIBLICAL UNITY!

Note what these doctrines are:

- 1) "One body" -- the body of Christ. Cf. 1:22, 23. This is not a local congregation, but all believers in this present dispensation. There is only "one body."
- 2) "One Spirit" -- the Holy Spirit.
- 3) "One hope" -- that we will be like Christ. Cf. 1 John 3:2, 3.
- 4) "One Lord" -- the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5) "One faith" -- a term used to speak of all Biblical truth. Cf. 4:13. It would include all truths not specifically referred to here.
- 6) "One baptism" -- certainly not water baptism, but the baptism of the Spirit. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:13.
- 7) "One God and Father of all, who is above all (in His sovereignty and superintendence), and through all (expressing diffusion), and in you all."

THUS, MY WALK DEVELOPS OUT OF THE WORD, AND, IN TURN, PROTECTS THE WORD!

Concl: Isn't it interesting that Paul's first concern in our walk has to do with the preservation of the Word in our generation?

This explains why his first prayer in Ephesians has to do with what the people of God should KNOW!

— This is the main purpose in the ministry of the local church -- the teaching of the truth to believers, explaining it to them, and seeing it incorporated into their lives as each one learns to submit to the ways of the Lord in his life.

May God enable each one of us to "walk worthy of the vocation to which" we "are called." The other four characteristics of our walk are dependent upon this first one!

HOW DO WE KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT?

Eph. 4:1-13

Intro: We are living, as far as the program of God is concerned, in what we call the Dispensation of Grace.

It can also be called, the Dispensation of the Church, because this present time period, from Pentecost in Acts 2 to the Rapture as described in 1 Thess. 4, is the only period in all history when God deals specifically with the Church, the body of Christ.

But it can also be called the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord in the Upper Room and on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane made it clear that this present Dispensation was to be characterized more than any other by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 4:3 is not the first time the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Ephesians. Note: Eph. 1:13,

1:17,

2:18,

2:22,

3:5,

3:16.

And then we come to Eph. 4:3, which is followed by Eph. 4:4,
4:30,
5:9,
5:18,
6:17,
6:18.

So, it becomes very apparent that you cannot deal with the Church -- its character, its origin, its purpose, its ministry -- without dealing with the Holy Spirit.

In our text this morning we are talking about keeping the unity of the Spirit.

Before we can understand how we are to do this we need to be sure that we know what it is.

So, first, let us ask ourselves the question,

I. WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE TO KEEP -- WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT?

Quite obviously, from our text, it has something to do with our calling. See v. 1 of chapter 4.

Paul had mentioned this back in Eph. 1:18 in connection with his prayer for the Ephesians. We have it again in 4:4.

"Hope" in Scripture has to do with the future, a future purpose, goal, or destiny. It is a guaranteed future (as are all the works of God), but it is necessary for us to understand what this is so that our present walk will have that goal in mind.

What is that hope for the individual believer?

We have it in such passages as Rom. 8:28-30 and 1 John 3:1-3.

BUT WHAT IS THAT HOPE FOR THE CHURCH?

We have it in Eph. 1:10.

Even unregenerate men in the professing church as well as those who know the Lord but who are untaught in Scripture have the idea that it is wrong for the Church, even the professing Church, to be divided -- and it is!

God's purpose is that there should be UNITY among His people -- and it is a unity already established by the Spirit which we are to "keep."

This is what alarmed the Apostle Paul about the Corinthian Church. They were divided over their leaders. There was envying and strife. And James tells us that

"where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." See James 3:16. 33).

And Paul adds that "God is not the Author of . . ." (1 Cor. 14: How can the Church, even a local church, keep this from happening? Let us now take our text this morning and ask,

II. HOW CAN WE KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT TODAY?

The answer is found in our text this morning.

There are six parts to the answer.

A. By the estimation we place upon ourselves.

We had this last Sunday in v. 2. There can be no unity where there is pride -- and the Scriptures leave no room for us to be proud of ourselves.

Paul said he was "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8).

He raised the question with the Corinthians and then answered it:

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave

the increase. SO THEN NEITHER IS HE THAT PLANTETH ANY THING, NEITHER HE THAT WATERETH: BUT GOD THAT GIVETH THE INCREASE."

And he wrote to the Galatians in Gal. 6:3,
 "For if a man think himself to be something, WHEN HE IS NOTHING, he deceiveth himself."

If we don't believe this, the Lord has ways of showing us that it is true. I remain a vital part of what God is doing in the world only as long as I keep this clearly in mind.

But our text makes it clear that it not enough to know it.

B. By walking so as to manifest our lowliness.

This is the whole emphasis in verse 1 of chapter 4.

After our Lord gave His disciples a lesson in humility when He washed their feet, He commanded them to do the same -- and added these words:

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

C. BY OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUTH.

There can be no unity of the Spirit that ignored the great doctrines of Scripture.

Doctrine may divide. That is not the reason for ignoring doctrine. That is the reason for bringing our doctrine into harmony with the doctrine of Scripture.

The Bible does not teach any and everything. Read Eph. 4:4-6. What could be more basic than the truths that are mentioned here?

D. By our understanding of the sovereignty of our Lord in the life and ministry of the Church.

Note: It is "the unity of the Spirit."

On the Father, cf. v. 6.

And note the emphasis on what our Lord has done in v. 7-11 -- all that HE has done, or is doing!

Remember Eph. 2:10 and Phil. 2:13 and many, many other passages. There is altogether too much emphasis today on what man is doing to the exclusion of the fact that man can do nothing that will glorify God that is not the outworking of what God is doing in his heart.

E. By our understanding of spiritual gifts.

The Church is ONE, but THE GIFTS which the Lord has given to the Church are MANY!

And yet the Corinthian Church is not the **only** church that has taught that every church should do the same thing and that all believers should seek the same gifts.

Different gifts and the different ministries which go with it are as essential in the body of Christ as it is for our human bodies to have eyes and ears and hands and feet and everything else that goes to make up our bodies.

F. By our understanding of the ministry of the Church to itself.

I want to spend more time on this, but look for a moment this morning at Eph. 4:11-13.

Note especially vv. 12b and 13a:

" . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ:
Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man . . ."

What does the Church need today?

It needs edification -- a building up, growth, strength, vitality.

Numerical growth without a corresponding growth in the edification of each individual believer is a dangerous thing -- and only leads to greater problems.

Concl: Do you see how this passage starts out with each of us individually, goes on to the Word, and then to what the Lord has done for us, so that we will know what He wants to do with us?

BUT BEFORE ALL OF THAT IS THE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT LONG BEFORE YOU AND I CAME ON THE SCENE, GOD HAD DECIDED WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO, AND HAD BEEN DOING IT! Therefore, for you and me today is the blessed task of learning what that work of God is, and then yielding ourselves to Him so that He can use us as He sees fit for the accomplishing of those purposes.

May God grant that it will be so.

THE WORK OF GOD TODAY

Eph. 4:11-16

Intro: The passage we have this morning is an extremely important passage -- one which every child of God today should know, and, if possible, memorize!

It tells us what God's main work is today.

When we studied Hebrews, we learned what our Lord is doing in heaven. John 14:1-3 gives us another aspect of our Lord's present work in heaven. BUT OUR PASSAGE THIS MORNING SPEAKS OF WHAT GOD IS DOING ON THE EARTH TODAY.

We know that this is the most important because this is the only work which will have to be finished before our Lord returns.

This is not true of world evangelism -- because that will not be finished before the Lord returns.

Nor is this true of peace among the nations -- because that will not be accomplished before the Lord returns.

Nor is this true of poverty, or famine, or crime -- because these will continue (and get worse) after the Lord returns for His Church.

THE ONE THING THAT HAS TO BE COMPLETED IS HIS WORK IN THE CHURCH -- THE BODY OF CHRIST!

Our passage this morning deals with this subject -- about who is doing the work, what it is, how it will be accomplished, and so on.

And we must remember that vv. 11-16 are a part of vv. 1-10 -- so, if we are to "walk worthy of the vocation to which" we "are called," we need to have these verses from 11 to 16 in our minds and in our hearts.

What do we have here? Five things:

I. THE MEN THE LORD IS USING, OR HAS USED (Eph. 4:11).

Note at this beginning point that the Lord's work in the Church is the Lord's work -- something which He is doing, which He is overseeing, over which He is and always will be sovereign.

But as to the men, they fall into four categories. (Explain.) Two no longer exist; two do exist.

"Gave" is from v. 8, which is from Psa. 68:18. These are

God's gifts to His Church.

II. THE WORK DEFINED (Eph. 4:12).

"Perfecting" is used for mending nets,
equipping,
preparing for service.

Principles:

- 1) Only "saints" can be perfected. God does not use others in His work.
- 2) God's work starts with individuals.
- 3) A person is a saint when he is saved, but he is not immediately ready for service.
- 4) The Lord expects to use all of His people in "the edifying of the body of Christ."
- 5) This is a work that goes on both in and out of the local church.

III. THE RESULT THAT GOD IS AFTER -- AND THE MEANS HE EMPLOYS (Eph. 4:13). This is the positive side; v. 14 gives us the negative side, i.e., that which the Lord is seeking to change.

Here we have the goal toward which the Lord is moving, the object for which everything is being done.

The first two phrases really describe two parts of the same thing. You cannot really have the one without the other.

Do we really believe that this will ever be accomplished -- "the unity of the faith" -- unanimity, complete agreement on every point? YES! It is what God is doing.

Principles:

- 1) There can be no "perfecting" or "edifying" except through the knowledge of the Word of God.
- 2) There can be no real teaching apart from "the knowledge," i.e., full knowledge, deeper knowledge, knowledge which is precise and correct, "of the Son of God" (the only time Paul uses this title for our Lord in Ephesians).
- 3) All differences in doctrine are basically due to inadequate knowledge of or to disagreements about Christ. The term, "the Son of God," shows that we need to believe that:
 - a) Our Lord is uniquely related to the Father.
 - b) He is Deity.

"A perfect man" refers to the Church corporately, not individually, and is in contrast with "children" in v. 14.

The object: "Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness

of Christ." It used to be that, if a man wanted to be in the U.S. Marines, he had to be 6' tall. The moral pattern for our growth is Christ.

IV. THE SITUATION THAT GOD IS REMEDYING (Eph. 4:14).

Principles:

- 1) The problem of the Church is and always has been spiritual immaturity. We have too many spiritual babes -- often in places of leadership.
- 2) Whenever you hear someone minimize the importance of the doctrines of Scripture (which includes both precept and practice), you can be sure that you are listening either to a spiritual babe, or to one who does not even know the Lord.

How can you tell one who spiritually a child in the faith? He is "tossed to and fro . . ."

Note the description of the false teachers -- their subtlety, their willingness to gamble with the souls of men, etc.

More principles:

- 1) False doctrine is called "wind" because of:
 - a) Its force.
 - b) Its variableness.
 - c) Its emptiness.
- 2) The only way to be able to detect error is by knowing the truth.

V. THE WORK AS IT IS GOING ON, OR AS IT IS EXPERIENCED, IN THE CHURCH (Eph. 4:15, 16).

If the Church is to make progress, we must be "speaking the truth in love."

The Greek expression includes more than just "speaking." It means to adhere to the truth in our teaching and in our living, to deal truly, i.e., in accordance with the Word.

"In love" -- repeated in v. 16, and already emphasized in Paul's prayer in Eph. 3. This is extremely important.

Note the emphasis upon our Lord here: "into Him" and "From whom."

Note: This is just as vital part of the work of edifying as is the teaching of the Word. A breakdown in the body can hinder its growth. Every part has to be functioning as God has planned for it to function. When this takes place, the whole body is edified.

Concl: We can see from this the direction that the ministry of
CBC must take, and the needs that we face:

- 1) Our greatest problem is spiritual immaturity.
- 2) The remedy begins with the ministry of the Word of God.
- 3) It does not end with just the ministry. Everything depends then upon how it is understood, and what the people of God are doing with it in their own lives.
- 4) We can never lose sight of the facts that:
 - a) God is the One Who is directing the work of His Church -- a fact which comes down to apply to every saint.
 - b) Christ must always be given the place of preeminence and glory.

THE FORBIDDEN PATH

Eph. 4:17-24

Intro: No one can get this far in the book of Ephesians (if the Lord has been enabling him to understand what he is reading) without realizing to a great extent what God is doing in the lives of His people, the saints.

In order to understand the present, we need to see where we are going. In order to find the way, we need to see the goal.

Paul has done this in the first part of chapter 4 in particular, but it can really be seen from the very beginning of the epistle.

The emphasis is placed on the verb, to walk.

How important it is that we understand this word!

One writer has described it in this way:

"To walk, in Scripture language, includes all the manifestations of life, inward and outward, seen and unseen. It does not express merely the outward, visible deportment. Men are said to walk with God, which refers to the secret fellowship of the soul with its Maker, more than to the outward life. So here the walk, which the apostle enjoins us to avoid, is not only the visible deportment characteristic of the Gentiles, but also the inward life of which the outward deportment is the manifestation" (Hodge, An Exposition of Ephesians, p. 87).

The goal is to be reached by walking.

This is the second time Paul has used it since we got to the practical section -- although it is the fourth time in the book. Our text this morning really parallels Paul's first use of the word in Eph. 2:2.

IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS TO ALL OF US THAT, IF THE LORD HAS A SPECIFIC GOAL IN MIND, THERE ARE WAYS THAT WE CANNOT GO. This is the main point in our passage this morning.

Let us notice these ideas in what we have before us:

- I. THE WAY WE ARE NOT TO WALK (vv. 17-19).
- II. THE REASON WE ARE NOT TO WALK IN THAT WAY (vv. 20, 21).
- III. HOW WE CAN BE KEPT FROM IT (vv. 22-24).

I. THE WAY WE ARE NOT TO WALK (Eph. 4:17-19).

There are two reasons for this prohibition apart from the goal we have in view:

- 1) This is the way we have all walked in the past.
- 2) This is the way the people of this world walk -- and we are still in this world!

Note:

- A. Who says this, and with what authority. See v. 17a.

It is Paul speaking just as the Lord would speak.

- B. It is negative: "walk not as other Gentiles walk" -- as is most of the remaining part of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5!

Cf. Psa. 1:1. It is negative too.

"Gentiles" is used here of people in the world who do not know the Lord.

- C. The description, direction, and potential of an ungodly walk (Eph. 4:17b-19).

Notice the emphasis upon the mind and upon understanding at the beginning of this description.

Not every unregenerate Gentiles goes to this limit, but this is the possibility for all.

II. THE REASON WE ARE NOT TO WALK IN THAT WAY (Eph. 4:20, 21).

The world knows nothing of Christ. We are learning Him. We are hearing Him. We are being taught by Him. We are to be like Him.

Cf. Eph. 4:15. Also Phil. 3:10.

Our spiritual life and growth is all in the hands of the Lord. Cf. John 16:12-15.

See also John 10:14, 16, 27, 28.

The trouble with most of us is that we spend more time listening to the world than we do listening to the Lord and so we know far more about the world and its way of life than we do about the Lord and the way He wants us to live!

"As the truth is in Jesus" -- linking together the Lord and the Word, dispelling our ignorance, and placing emphasis both upon "Christ" in v. 20 and upon "Jesus" in v. 21.

III. HOW WE CAN BE KEPT FROM IT (Eph. 4:22-24).

There are three main verbs in these two verses:

- 1) "Put off."
- 2) "Be renewed." -- one in each of the 3 verses.
- 3) "Put on."

Two are things that we do; the second one is something that is done for us. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT EVEN IN THE THINGS WHICH WE DO WE MUST HAVE DIVINE ENABLEMENT.

As a background for all of this we need two other passages where "the old man" is mentioned:

- 1) Rom. 6:6.
- 2) Col. 3:9-11.

What is "the old man"? What is "the new man"?

And note: As our problems before we were saved stemmed from our ignorance, so the remedy of those problems is rooted in the things that we need to learn -- and these things are all centered in Christ.

The "mind" includes thinking,
willing,
feeling,
deciding, or judging.

The whole new life is designed with three things in mind:

- 1) "After God," or according to God -- that is, to make us like Him.
- 2) "In righteousness" -- to make our relationship with men pleasing to God.
- 3) "And holiness in the truth" -- to make our relationship to God what He demands that it should be.

THE WHOLE PICTURE IS OF A PERSON CHANGING CLOTHES AS A RESULT OF AN INNER RENEWING OF THE MIND. Cf. Rom. 12:1, 2.

Concl: Therefore, to this point we have learned that if we would walk with God,

- 1) It must be in humility.
- 2) It cannot be like the world walks.

The question now is: What are we going to do about it?

The answer must begin and continue in each of our hearts.

THINGS TO PUT OFF AND TO PUT ON
Eph. 4:25-32

Intro: We are seeing Paul move from the broad, general principles of truth to specific details.

Our passage this morning is concerned with details.

They are details that have to do with our daily lives -- how we are to live!

We probably are not going to get through all of these this morning because there is too much here. Besides, we need to spend some time this morning going into the background of how it is possible for us to "put off" certain things and to "put on" certain other things. In fact, we need to understand the way in which the child of God does anything that is pleasing to the Lord.

Two facts we need to recognize:

- 1) That the Christian life is a humanly impossible life. Who among us has not realized that?
- 2) That even as Christians we have a much easier time doing evil than we have doing good -- that which is good in God's sight.

This means that we need help in two ways:

- 1) We need to know how we can be kept from doing the wrong things.
- 2) We need to know how we can be strengthened to do the right things.

Paul is concerned with both of these things in the passage which is before us. This is what he has in mind when he speaks of putting off and putting on.

Paul deals with them together because they go together. God deals with them together. Our ability to "put on" is related to the possibility that we can "put off."

The background. There are four points in time that we need to be acquainted with:

- 1) We need to understand what happened when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross.
- 2) We need to understand what happened to us when we were saved.
- 3) We need to understand the necessity of committing ourselves completely to the Lord.
- 4) We need to see the necessity for dealing with sin in a personal and practical manner.

We have Scripture for each one of these.

- 1) What happened at the cross of Christ? Read Rom. 6:6.
- 2) What happened when we were saved? Read Col. 3:9, 10. Whenever Paul speaks of truth that applies as something already done for all believers he is usually talking about that which took place when we were saved.

— Thus far, every believer has come. The difference between us is to be seen in connection with these last two points.

- 3) What happened if we have really committed ourselves to the Lord. Read Eph. 4:22-24. This is like Rom. 12:1, 2.
- 4) What must happen over and over again in our experience.
This is the emphasis in our passage this morning.

This explains why a person who is not a Christian may be able to reform himself in many ways, but not really change. No true, lasting deliverance from sin will ever take place apart from the work of Christ or apart from the effect of that work on our hearts through the application of His work in our hearts.

But how do we do it? These are practical instructions addressed to US! And yet trial and failure is the common lot of all of us who know the Lord. We can understand Paul's words in Rom. 7. This whole passage begins with,

"This is say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, and yet in some ways all of us have been walking like the unregenerate this week instead of like the people of God. How can we be different?"

This is the answer: We need the help of God moment by moment. Do you remember:

- 1) Paul's prayer in Eph. 3:13-21?
- 2) Paul's teaching in Eph. 2:8-10?
- 3) What Paul wrote in Phil. 2:13?
- 4) What the Lord said in John 15:4, 5?

These are just a few of many passages which we could cite.

This is one reason for Paul's reference to the Holy Spirit in the passage before us. See v. 30.

Before we go any farther, we need to know where we stand with the Lord:

- 1) Are you saved? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?
- 2) If you can answer the first question in the affirmative, then how would you answer this question: Have you ever really committed yourself to the Lord, making Him the Lord of your life? If not, then this is where the trouble is. If you have, then how are you dealing with the practical problems that you have in your life. Are you trying to change them? That is not the answer. They must be exchanged! The old belongs to you; the new, to Christ.

ONLY GOT
THIS FAR
on 11/30/75

Now we are ready for our text. Let us seek, with the Lord's blessing, to get through 3 verses this morning.

I. WE NEED TO PUT AWAY LYING (Eph. 4:25).

This is really as old as the 9th commandment. See Ex. 20:16.

Isn't it interesting that Paul would start here? The big problem with the Gentiles is that they are liars. We all are -- incurably so!

What is lying?

Well, it comes from the Greek word which gives us our English word, psuedo. Psuedo means false, pretended, counterfeit. It means that he is a person who is not what he wants you to think that he is. He is covering up. He is putting on an act. To use another very familiar Greek expression, he is a hypocrite.

And the member of our bodies which we use more than any other to put up the front, so to speak, is our tongue. That is why Paul says, "Speak . . ."

This is why Adam covered up in the Garden of Eden.

This is our major problem today. There would have been no Watergate without the use of this characteristic of man. You could trust everybody if man were not like this.

BUT WE ARE TALKING THIS MORNING ABOUT HOW CHRISTIANS LIE.

Sometimes we are guilty of not telling the truth -- an outright lie. What a tragedy that this is so!

But perhaps we do more lying in trying to make people think that there is more to us spiritually than there really is.

Note some of the following passages:

- 1) 1 John 1:6.
- 2) Rom. 9:1-3.
- 3) Gal. 1:20.
- 4) 2 Cor. 11:31.

How wonderful it is to know that God cannot lie. Cf. Heb. 6:18.

Man will change the truth of God into a lie (Rom. 1:25); we must put away lying, and speak the truth. And remember what James teaches us about the tongue. Cf. Jas. 3:2.

What does all of this mean -- concerning the body of Christ?

It means that God is at work to make us outwardly and inwardly what he wants us to be so that there will be no need for lying -- nor even the possibility!

Remember that this is how we have defined the word, "WALK."
It is both inward and outward conformity to the will of God.

II. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT ANGER (Eph. 4:26).

This is not a command to be angry, but what might be called a permissive imperative. It means, When you are angry, be careful that it does not lead to sin.

In other words, there are times when it is a sin not to be angry.

One writer says, ". . . nor can there be a surer and sadder token of an utterly prostrate moral condition than the not being angry with sin and with sinners" (Trench, p. 134).

But the principle is this: Sin in one person often leads to sin in another person. One wrong does not justify another. Two wrongs do not make a right!

The key to this verse is the two different words which are used for "angry" and "wrath."

- 1) Anger can be something which remains. It is most often used (whether good or bad) for something permanent.
- 2) "Wrath" points more to that which caused the anger -- and to the effect that it has had on a person by way of irritation, exasperation, embitterment.

The one may remain; the other cannot.

Our Lord was angry. See Mark 3:5.

God gets angry. See Deut. 1:37; 4:21; Psa. 103:8.

See also Eph. 2:3, "children of wrath."

III. WE NEED TO STAND OUR GROUND AGAINST THE DEVIL (Eph. 4:27).

Notice the three ways in which sin can be provoked:

- 1) From within ourselves (v. 25).
- 2) By responding to sin in others (v. 26).
- 3) By the Devil (v. 27).

To "give place" to the Devil means to get out of his way so that he can do what he wants to do. We do this when we persist in sin.

So we learn the following things from this verse:

- A. Sin does not need to be initiated by the Devil now.

Genesis 4 and the story about Cain teach us this. There would still be sin if the Devil were already bound and in the bottomless pit. Cf. Jas. 1:13-15.

What he does is to take a bad situation and make it worse. Have we not all seen how one sin is usually followed by many others?

- B. Why is he called, "the Devil"?

The term literally means one who throws things against someone else. That is where we get the term accuser, or slanderer.

Where does he throw them?

- 1) He throws them at us.
- 2) He throws them at others, or about others. It is either at us but against others, or against us and at others.
- 3) He throws them at God. Cf. Rev. 12:10.

- C. The opposite of giving the Devil room is to stand our ground against him.

See Eph. 6:11, 13, 14;
Jas. 4:7;
1 Pet. 5:6-9.

We will learn more about this later, but for the present let us stand our ground on the things that we have learned. E.g., Eph. 1:7, etc.

Concl: This is as far as we can go this morning.

But do you notice that we have in these three verses:

- 1) The flesh (v. 25),
- 2) The world (v. 26),
- 3) The devil (v. 27)?

Thank God we do not have to understand how we are able to do these things if we understand that it is all because of what the Lord has done and continues to do to meet our needs.

WATCH YOUR STEPS

Eph. 4:25-32

Intro: Our Lord's prayer in John 17 leaves little doubt but that the great burden upon our Lord's heart for His people was that they be one! See v. 11:

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me, that they may be one, as we are."

And then in vv. 20, 21 we read these words from His prayer:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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 has sent me."

He was, and continues to be, concerned about their oneness, their unity, their harmony, their fellowship.

This is not a oneness that ignores doctrine, but a oneness which recognizes, believes, and acts upon the full scope of truth which God has given us in His Word.

This is not a oneness that tries to be like the world as much as possible, but it is a oneness which recognizes that the world and the Church can never be the same and that God's will for His people is something distinctively different.

The more you begin to notice this in the New Testament, the more you will see of it.

Do you want to know why the Day of Pentecost was the kind of a day that it was? Luke tells us one of the main reasons in Acts 2:1,

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

There was unity among them.

Nor is this something which is confined to the New Testament only. In Prov. 6:16-19 Solomon tells us,

"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:"

and the last of these in v. 19 is this:

"he that soweth discord among brethren."

Even in Abraham's day when the herdmen of Lot and the herdmen of Abraham were having troubles over the pasture land, Abraham said to Lot,

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and they herdmen, for we be brethren" (Gen. 13:8).

Read Ephesians with this in mind. You will find it in every chapter. The Lord wants unity, fellowship, oneness of heart and life among His people. For us it cannot be anything less than one of our greatest concerns!

— Unity is what we have. See Eph. 4:3. We must keep it. But it can be disrupted by:

- 1) Pride.
- 2) Ignorance.
- 3) Indifference.
- 4) Worldliness.
- 5) Carnality.
- 6) Sin of any kind.
- 7) Prayerlessness.

These things may overlap, but these and things like them will illustrate what we as the people of God need to be concerned about.

There is nothing like this unity, this fellowship in the world. Therefore, if we live like people in the world live, we shall share in their disunity. This is the reason for the present section we have in Ephesians: chapter 4, vv. 17-32.

And this is the reason for vv. 25-32, a section where Paul is talking about specific sins. Note the latter part of v. 25,

" . . . for we are members one of another."

— In almost every verse Paul is indicating that we as Christians do one thing when we should be doing just the opposite.

Notice first:

I. THE SINS WHICH CAN DISRUPT OUR FELLOWSHIP.

He mentions 4 specifically, and then summarizes by repeating some and adding others in v. 31.

- A. Lying (Eph. 4:25).
- B. Anger (Eph. 4:26).
- C. Stealing (Eph. 4:28). (Explain each of these briefly.)
- D. Corrupt speech (Eph. 4:29).
- E. The summary: Eph. 4:31.

— II. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

- A. All of these sins are possibilities for any one of us. If this were not the case, there would be no point in mentioning them.

This is a solemn thing for all of us to keep in mind.

- B. All of these sins show how inclined we are to be self-centered.

We get along fine until someone gets in our way.

This is evident even in little children! Have you ever noticed what happens when one child wants what another child is playing with?

- C. Of practical importance -- each one of these sins is conquered by replacing it with something completely different, and better!

1. Replace lying with the truth.
2. Replace stealing with working.
3. Replace corrupt speech by saying something that will edify.
4. Replace the sins of v. 31 with kindness and forgiveness.

Note: We do NOT try to change these; we exchange them -- putting them off!

III. THE GREAT ISSUES WHICH SIN MAKES US OVERLOOK.

- A. Our relationship to each other: " . . . for we are members one of another" (v. 25b).
- B. The constant opposition of "the devil" (v. 27).

We used to do what he wanted us to do. See 2:2. He is looking for any opportunity to enslave us again (as our text shows). Failure to comply leads to open warfare. See 6:10 ff.

Satan will always be seeking to (lit.) throw things against us to make a bad situation worse! We cannot afford to give him room to work in!

- C. The needs that others have (vv. 28, 29). These are of two kinds:

1. Material needs (v. 28).
2. Spiritual needs (v. 29). How wonderful it is to be used of God to say the right thing at the right time to build up a fellow-believer at a special time of need.

D. The Holy Spirit (v. 30).

Have we forgotten Him? Do we know that nothing will succeed if the Spirit of God is being grieved? Do we know that He is grieved by any sin?

E. The forgiveness we have from God because of Christ
(vv. 31, 32).

If you and I will only remember how much the Lord has had to forgive us, and the sins which He has forgiven, it will leave us without a leg to stand on when we get irritated with others because of their sins against us.

This is one reason why it is good for us to come to the Lord's table -- in remembrance of our Lord and all that He has done for us.

IV. A FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT -- from v. 30.

In spite of the potential that there is in each child of God to displease and dishonor by disobedience our precious Savior, He has committed Himself to save us eternally. And so we have been "sealed unto the day of redemption."

The doctrine of security makes us secure in daily life, and is one of the greatest factors in our holiness which in turn preserves our unity!

Charles Wesley wrote the great hymn, Depth of Mercy, in which he tried to express the words that a sinner would bring to God as he seeks forgiveness for his sins. But sometimes it seems that the hymn is good for believers, too -- especially that verse which reads,

"I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face,
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls."

Concl: What are we going to do about all of this?

Do we really love the Lord? Do we really want to please Him? Are there others we are concerned about who need to know Him? THEN we must "henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk."

The story is told of a young servant of the Lord who went to hear an older servant of the Lord preach -- the latter being a man well along in years who had walked with the Lord and served Him faithfully and with great blessing. The younger man was greatly impressed with the way the older man seemed to move the hearts of the people who were there. At the close of the service the younger man went up to the older man and said to him, "Sir, I would give everything in the world to be able to preach like

you can." The older man turned to him with a smile, and said, "That is exactly what it cost me -- everything in the world!"

If we are going to see God's blessing in these days, we must walk together with each other in the closest possible fellowship. This is oneness, unity. But there can be no unity as long as we live and act like the "other Gentiles."

May the Lord grant that as we come to the Lord's Table this morning there may be a turning to the Lord in each of our hearts that will be greater than anything any of us have ever known before -- that every day may be lived for His glory and the blessing of all who are around us.
