

Study in Ephesians

by Sandy Simpson

Predestination and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

(1) Ephesians 1:1-14

History of Ephesus. The city of Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and the greatest city. The temple of the demon god Artemis was located there, and it was home to many magic arts and mystery cults. As a great center, it was visited by the Apostle Paul, who founded the church and labored there more than three years (Acts 18:19, 19:1). Afterwards he addressed the Epistle to the Ephesians to them. Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos also labored there. At a later period, Paul placed Timothy there and addressed two epistles to him. All early church tradition declares that John, from about A.D. 70, made this city his home until his death. Today not one single house is standing on the site of the ancient city, though there are many ruins there. The Turkish village of Agasalouk, upon the Smyrna and Aidan R. R., is about two miles away.

Those who remember our study of the letters to the seven churches (available in my book called *Letters to the Church* at <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/7churchesbook.html>) will recall that five out of the seven churches were told of their good points and bad points, blessings and warnings of judgment. The other two were only given their good points and rewards. It appears from history that all five churches which were rebuked ended up no longer existing past the first few centuries. This is evidently because they did not heed the rebuke of the Lord indicating that He would remove their candlestick if they did not repent and obey the Lord. History shows that this happened to the church at Ephesus.

One other note: The letter to the Ephesians may have possibly been written to the church at Laodicea because the words “in Ephesus” are not found in three of the earliest manuscripts, as some church historians note. There is a lost letter of Paul mentioned by the early church fathers that was supposed to have been written to the Laodiceans. This letter to the Ephesians may be that letter. In any case, Paul’s letter to the Ephesians or Laodiceans has a lot for Christians and the Church to learn. All the letters of Paul were passed from city to city and Christian gathering to gath-

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ering in the early church.

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

The word “Paul, an apostle” is Paul’s standard opening from his other letters. But notice a few important things we are taught in this short opening.

First of all, Paul says that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus. Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples. However, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, on the road to Damascus, added him to the list of the foundational apostles. In Acts 26:12-18, we read that Jesus appeared to Paul from heaven. Paul saw a bright light, which blinded him, and heard a voice from heaven. Jesus told him that He was the One Paul had been persecuting. Paul believed on the Lord Jesus Christ that day on the road, and later went out to tell the good news to the Gentiles. Paul stated that he was the last of the foundational apostles.

*1 Cor. 15: 7-8 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and **last of all** he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

The word for “last” means last in a sequence, such as if you were counting from one to ten—ten being the last number. So this passage, among others, shows clearly that Paul, being one of those who saw Jesus Christ in His resurrection body, was the last to see Him. Paul was the last person to see Christ in the flesh, and he saw Him in heaven, because that is where He is—at the right hand of the Father in His glorified body until He returns to earth. Paul was the last to see the REAL Jesus, not a vision, but in His glorified body in heaven. Jesus had also appeared earlier to Stephen when he was stoned.

*Acts 7:55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, **looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus at the right hand of God.***

Remember that Stephen also saw Jesus bodily in heaven, but that was before Paul saw Him bodily for the last time. Please notice that Stephen, then Paul, saw Jesus Christ. They did not see Him in a bedroom like where Benny Hinn claims he sees Jesus all the time, but where He actually is, at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Jesus Christ is not roaming around the earth. He does not appear to people like Paul Yonggi Cho in a fireman’s helmet. When He returns, He will then be back on earth—and only then. Until then, claims of “Christ” being here or there are false according to the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. 24:26).

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This opening also shows that, to become an apostle, one must be called by God, by the will of God. Paul was an apostle by direct authority from Jesus Christ. No one alive today can claim that apostolic authority. But God does call those who believe in Him both to believe, then to do what he wants them to do in the way of serving Him. As we will see, this calling is the theme of the first part of this letter. Paul first tells about his call, then he confirms that the Christians in Ephesus were also called.

The opening to this chapter also defines who the saints are. Saints are those who are **faithful** in Christ Jesus. It is not enough to simply say you are a Christian. Those who are truly born again have committed themselves to Jesus Christ and are faithful to that commitment. We have studied many passages about being faithful (Rev. 14:12), persevering (Heb. 10:36), remaining in the Vine (John 15:4), keeping the Faith (1 Timothy 3:9), holding firm until the end (Heb. 3:14) and overcoming by faith (Rev. 21:7). Today many seem to think that all you need to do is name the name of Jesus and claim to be a Christian to be considered one. But God is looking for faithfulness.

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians who are faithful to the Father and the Son have experienced, and will continue to experience, God's grace. As they live out their lives in Christ, they will continue to depend on the grace of God.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

The forgiveness we have because of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross in paying the penalty of death for the wages of our sin in our place, is the ultimate meaning of grace. There is no greater gift we have been given than the grace we have because Jesus laid down his life for us.

John 15:12-14 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

If we love the Lord Jesus Christ and live in His grace, we will do what He commands. When we do what He commands, we will also experience the peace that passes all understanding that the world knows nothing about.

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Phil. 4:7-9 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

We must put into practice what God has commanded of us because of His grace toward us. Then we will have the peace of the Father and the Son.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Praise is something that comes from the heart. It is not something that can be forced. It comes from a right understanding of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. When we understand that, praise to the Lord comes forth from our lips and from our lives. God has blessed us with everything we need: Life, our daily needs, protection, the help and counsel of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life and rewards to come. God has blessed us from where He is, in the heavenly realms, in the third heaven, in Paradise. Notice what He has blessed us with—“every SPIRITUAL blessing in Christ.” Word-Faith false teachers on TV like to quote verses like this out of context to mean we will get material wealth from God. But that is not what it is talking about. It is talking about spiritual blessings. What are they?

The most important spiritual blessing is that we, as Gentile Christians, have been made to share in the blessing of God’s people, Israel, by being part of the covenant God made with Abraham.

Romans 15:27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

Gentiles are no longer outside of salvation, but have salvation through Jesus Christ. God’s people are now those who put their faith and hope in Jesus Christ for salvation. Because we are now blessed as sons of God as Israel was blessed, we now share in the blessings of abundant life here and eternal life later. The spiritual blessings of abundant life come through the Holy Spirit molding us through the Word of God to be more and more

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like Christ each day. Instead of living in darkness and sin, we now live in the Light and are learning the blessings of righteousness.

Gal. 5: 19-25 **The acts of the sinful nature are obvious:** sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

To experience the spiritual blessings from God above, we must keep in step with the Spirit who is here with us. That means we must listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, and to us individually through the Word of God, and we must walk with the Lord daily in prayer. We must put into practice those things the Spirit teaches us. Then we will truly experience all the spiritual blessings God has prepared for those who love Him.

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

Did you know that God knew about you before the world was even created? What an amazing thought. Not only did He know about you, He planned to create you in your mother's womb. If you are a Christian, He chose you. There is a false notion today that churches need to be "seeker friendly." Carnal human beings do not naturally seek the Lord. Paul quotes from the Old Testament in writing a stinging indictment against the human race:

Rom. 3:10-18 As it is written: **"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."** "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

It is rather God who seeks those He foreknew and chose.

Romans 10:20 And Isaiah boldly says, **"I was found by those who did**

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not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”

*Luke 19:10 For **the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.**”*

Why did God choose those He foreknew from before the foundation of the world? “To be holy and blameless in his sight in love.” The words “in love” can either be added to the beginning of the next verse or are part of the end of this verse. Either way it works. God chose us to be holy and blameless in His sight. How can we be holy and blameless in His sight? Not by works, lest any man should boast! There is only One Way to be holy and blameless in the sight of the Father and that is to be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. There is a famous hymn that reminds us:

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
This is all my hope and peace,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
(Robert Lowry, 1876)*

To be covered by the blood of Jesus means to share in His death. We die to our sins in Him. We, then, take up our cross daily and die to sins in Christ. We claim His sacrifice as the only perfect blood offering that can wash away our sins.

*Galatians 2:20 **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.** The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

5 He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

Because God foreknew us, He predestined us, called us, justified us, and glorified us. Paul does not mention foreknowledge here, but that is the progression Paul gives the justification process in Romans 8:29-30, Rom. 11:2, and Acts 2:23. Peter also mentions foreknowledge in First Peter 1:2.

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It is important to mention here that God did not just decide in eternity past to create some people for heaven and others for hell. He gave the angels a choice and Satan, along with one third of the angels, sinned against God and they were thrown to earth. God gives us a choice whether or not to believe in Him and follow Him. Because God foreknew all who would believe or not believe in Him, He predestined, called, justified, and glorified those who would believe. It is interesting that the first two, foreknowledge and predestination, happened in eternity past; calling and justification happen in the present; and glorification is guaranteed to happen in eternity future when we are resurrected and live with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom, and then the new heaven and new earth. But God sees it all as one event. God is not bound by space and time. He is outside His creation. He is above all.

John 3:31 **“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.”**

6 ...to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Again, why did He predestine us as His sons? To the praise of His glorious grace. Everything originates with God and everything goes back to God.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 **...and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.**

Job 1:21 **...and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”**

God will receive back that which belongs to Him. God has given every believer into the hands of Jesus Christ, His Son, for the glory of the Father. The grace given to us through the Incarnation (the birth) of Christ, His death, and His resurrection is a free gift. We did nothing to deserve it, and we can do nothing to save ourselves. The only thing that is up to us is to respond when God calls. If we respond in faith, and continue in that faith, we return to God and will be with Him forever. If we do not respond in faith by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be cast out forever from the presence of God with the devil and his angels.

Colossians 1:22-23 **But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without**

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blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.
2 Thess. 1: 8-9 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power...

God the Father loves the Son. Through a relationship with the Son, the Father loves us also.

John 14:21 “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. **He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.**”

John 3:16 “**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace...

Only through Jesus Christ do we have salvation.

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, **for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**”

Because Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, we can appropriate (take to ourselves, claim) that sacrifice by committing ourselves to Jesus Christ. He has, on the basis of the cross and His love for us, promised to forgive our sins if we confess them and repent of them.

1 John 1:9 ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

Acts 3:19 ***Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,***

Paul repeats again the basis upon which we may be saved. It is the **grace** of God. Paul has repeated the basis for salvation three times already. It is grace, His love, His care for His creatures, and His desire that all will be given the opportunity to be saved.

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slow-*

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*ness. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***

But what God wants, we must also want. We have a freedom to choose—free will. If we choose to disregard the grace and love of God, then we condemn ourselves.

*1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.** The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

8 ...that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Why would God send His only Son to die in our place? What would prompt God to care about us that way? Aren't we merely made from the dust of the earth? Aren't we almost nothing compared to God? All that is true.

*Psalms 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?***

David and all those who placed their faith in the Lord recognized that man is nothing compared to God. Who can even say that God must pay for our sins? God Himself said in Job:

*Job 41:11 **Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.***

Yet God chose to pay the price when we could not. He gave us a free gift of salvation. Not only that, but He lavished on us all wisdom and understanding. He went above and beyond salvation to make us His children, His bride, His friends, His Body. Lavished means: To give with extravagance and profusion (without limit) such as when someone gives a lavish feast. It means giving or bestowing without regard to the amount, to give or bestow in abundance, to shower down gifts like rain. God has given us everything we need beyond salvation including wisdom, understanding, our daily needs, abundant life, peace, and hope. We clearly have every spiritual gift in Christ Jesus as believers.

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9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...

There is a mystery that the Old Testament saints yearned for but did not fully understand. God had revealed bits and pieces through the prophets, but when Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was revealed, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, this mystery was finally revealed. We will look at this later, but while Jesus was in the tomb, He went in His spirit to Hades—to the Bosom of Abraham—where the Old Testament saints were waiting, and told them the mystery that we all know now. He then took them with Him to Paradise, to the Third Heaven, where all believers who are asleep are with Him now.

***Luke 23:43** Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today **you will be with me in paradise.**”*

The first heaven is our atmosphere. The second heaven is the universe. The Third Heaven is Paradise, where God dwells.

***2 Cor. 12: 2-4a** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the **third heaven**. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know— God knows. And I know that this man— whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was **caught up to paradise**.*

This mystery was never a mystery to God. He had purposed it in Christ from before the foundations of the universe in eternity past.

10 ...to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

The mystery of Christ and His Atonement brought all things in heaven and on earth together under the Son. The Father gave the Son all authority, power, and glory—which the Son always had as God—but had made that even greater by submitting to the Father, even to death on a cross. Because of His obedience, the Father brought everything in line with the “center point” of all creation and the universe, that is Jesus Christ. Everything—all truth, everything that is created—is now summed up in Christ. The glory of the Lord God was made greater by what the Son did.

Revelation 4:11** “You are worthy, our Lord and God, **to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they

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were created and have their being.”

Revelation 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”*

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...

Paul repeats again what he stated in verses 4-5. God chose us and predestined us according to His plan and foreknowledge. God’s plans cannot be stopped or thwarted. God will work out everything to line up with the purpose of His will. We need to remember this everyday. When you are going through tough times, remember, if you are a child of God by being born again, God has plans for you that are for your benefit.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Jeremiah 29:11 *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

Remember that this is not talking about material blessing, though God sometimes does that for the purposes of building His Kingdom. It is talking about spiritual blessings as we learned in verse three. If you lean on the everlasting arms, rest in His will, and leave the driving to Him, you will experience His peace. If you worry about tomorrow and fret about the things of this world, you show that you do not understand the character and plans of God.

12 ...in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

The first to hope in Christ were the foundational Apostles. They saw first hand what Christ accomplished. The Apostles became the praise of His glory by laying down their lives for others in order to spread the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The first century churches were also the first to hope in Christ. We would do well to follow their example as well as learn from their mistakes.

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

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14 *who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

These two last verses are very important to memorize. This is because it gives us the progression of what happens when a person truly believes and commits to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. First, you must hear the word of truth. That means someone has to preach it.

Romans 10:14 **How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? **And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?****

You cannot be saved without hearing. Hearing is good, but you cannot just hear, you must also understand.

Acts 28:27 **“For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, **hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.**”**

The Holy Spirit is the One who opens our darkened sinful minds to be able to understand the message of the Gospel. The Gospel message is that we are sinners, destined for hell, without hope, and desperately wicked. Jesus Christ is our only hope of salvation because He was the perfect blood sacrifice for us, being that He was God. If we confess our sins, believe that Jesus Christ is LORD, believe that He rose from the dead, and commit our lives to Him, He has promised to save us. When a person truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ what then happens is that the Holy Spirit marks him/her as a believer destined for heaven. The Holy Spirit immediately indwells the new believer as a “deposit.” When you make a deposit at a bank, you put money in the bank. When God makes a deposit in us, He puts the Holy Spirit in us. This is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:13 **For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**

Col. 2: 11-15 **In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, **having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful****

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*nature, **God made you alive with Christ.** He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Water baptism is a sign of something that happens in the spiritual realm—the baptism of the Spirit. We symbolically (not actually) go into the water a sinner, are washed of our sins, and come up clean and new. Spiritually, we go to the Lord Jesus Christ as sinners, He washes us in His own blood, and we then become clean in the sight of the Father. Water baptism is a symbolic sign of dying with Christ and rising to new life. In the spiritual realm, we go to the cross and crucify our sins there with Christ, then He promises us new life here, as well as eternal life later.

A born again Christian is therefore **sealed** (Eph. 1:13,4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22) and **baptized** (1 Cor. 12:13) by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is **working** (1 Cor. 12:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2) **within us** (John 7:38; 1 John 3:24,4:13; James 4:5; 2 Tim. 1:14) **convicting** (1 Thess. 1:5; John 16:7-8), **empowering** (Eph. 3:16), **sanctifying** (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2), **bestowing grace gifts** (1 Cor. 12:4-11), and **producing fruit** (Gal 5:22). The Holy Spirit, in this age, immediately indwells all who believe (Eph. 1:13-14) which does not necessitate the laying on of hands.

Through the wonderful work of Christ, we are guaranteed our inheritance. What do we inherit as children of the King of kings? We will share in everything the Son has been given by the Father. Just as an earthly child inherits what the earthly father has, we also inherit the blessings of the Son from the Father. We inherit eternal life, a new heaven and new earth, treasures in heaven, crowns, and an eternity of love that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have shared from eternity past to eternity future.

Study in Ephesians

Jesus Christ Rules and the Problem of Sin and Salvation

(2) Ephesians 1:15–2:10

Thankfulness seems to be a lost art today. Warren Wiersby illustrated this problem in his commentary on Colossians. He told about a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois, who was part of a life-saving squad, a lifeguard. In 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and Edward Spencer waded again and again into the freezing waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever thanked him (Our Daily Bread, February 20, 1994).

Paul is not like these ungrateful people. He is thankful to the Lord and thankful for the body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Paul, after encouraging the believers at Ephesus with the words of the opening of this letter about predestination and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is overjoyed because of the faith he has heard about in the Ephesian Christians. They have shown their faith in Jesus and love for the saints. This is the simplicity of what God expects of His followers. It is the Ten Commandments fulfilled in the law of Christ, in love.

*Luke 10:27 He answered: “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind**; and, **Love your neighbor as yourself.**”*

But Paul does not stop there. He prays for them. He thanks the Lord for them and remembers them in His prayers without ceasing. We ought to do the same for one another. We need to thank the Lord for one another. If you are thanking the Lord for a person you are much less likely to be criticizing them. If you are praying for that person in a spirit of thankfulness, you will be praying for their good. The Lord tells us to pray for all the saints.

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*Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and **always keep on praying for all the saints.***

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Didn't the Lord already say that He gave us the spirit of wisdom in verse eight? Why then would Paul pray for us to have wisdom? Because we now have access to all wisdom in Christ even though we do not yet possess it. In fact, we will not know everything until we see Him face to face, but we will eventually see clearly (1 Cor. 13:12). We are continuing to learn, but the point is we would not have any real knowledge without salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is our Teacher.

*John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things** and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

So we have access to all wisdom and knowledge now through Jesus Christ, but we are still in the process of learning those truths. This is why it is good to pray for the saints that they will be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. You cannot pray this for unbelievers. Pray for their salvation. But, for the saints, you can ask God to help them understand, to be discerning, to grow to maturity in Christ so they will know the difference between good and evil, to gain wisdom so they can help others, and to understand the revelation of Jesus Christ in His written Word. Why? Because then we will know our Lord better. If we know Him, better we will trust Him more. If we trust Him, more He will be able to use us more effectively to reach others for Christ because our faith in Him is strong and our knowledge of Him is secure.

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...

This is also a good prayer to pray for fellow Christians. Sometimes, in the difficult times in life, we tend to forget the hope to which God called us and the rich inheritance we claim as His children and His bride. That hope is what can sustain us through the rough times, as it did those who came before us, laying down their lives for the Gospel. Keep your eyes on Jesus and your mind on the things of heaven, and you will not despair.

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**19 ...and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,
20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms...**

We, as believers, have the power of Christ to sustain us. We have the same power that raised Christ from the dead! Think about it. We are not powerless. We have not been left as orphans here all alone in a hostile world.

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

We have the power of the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ who is sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven making daily intercession for us.

Rom. 8: 34-39 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died— more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The resurrection power of God is ours so that we will be more than conquerors. We can conquer sin, death, the devil—anything—because we are in Christ. His power is our power. This is not talking about power to do anything we want, or power over other people. It is not talking about power to fall down backwards and act like an animal. It is not talking about power to get people to follow us, power to make money, power to get guaranteed health, or power to command God. It IS talking about power to live, power to resist the devil, and power to do the will of God. The same power God the Father used to raise Jesus from the dead, and the same power that overcame death, Satan, and sin is ours through Christ. Think about that and you will see that often we just don't realize what God has done for us, and because we don't realize it, we don't understand it and make use of it to obey His will.

21 ...far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one

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to come.

Christians have been given fullness in Christ who was given authority far above anything created.

Colossians 2:10 ...and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

He was given authority, for now and eternity, in the Father. Because He has that authority, we as His children can be assured that the enemy no longer has power over us, that sin no longer has power over us, and that death no longer has power over us.

One of the key things to understand and claim in dealing with demonic activity in people's lives is that we have the fullness of Christ, and He has all authority. If we truly understand our position in Christ, we understand that there is no demonic force that can stand against us. The enemy can attack us. But we can then rebuke demonic activity in Jesus' name. The enemy, then, cannot gain a foothold in us, not because of certain words we say, but because we understand our relationship to Him and the privileges it affords us.

***22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,
23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.***

The Father appointed Christ to be Head of His Church, the body of Christ. Those who believe in Christ unto salvation are included into Christ Himself. We become part of Him. We are not the Head—He is the Head. But we are His body, not the personal glorified body of the God-man Jesus Christ, but in Christ and through Christ we are His representatives on earth—light and salt. One of the most important things about the body of Christ is that He has given us the work of preaching the Gospel and discipling all nations, bringing people to the reconciliation that Christ offers with the Father.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Matt. 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

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*2 Cor. 5:18-19 All this is from God, **who reconciled us to himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And **he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.***

Jesus Christ is the fullness of His Church. This is what Paul means in stating that Christ "fills everything in every way." Don't be fooled by New Agers and false teachers. They will sometimes use Ephesians 1:23 to try to teach that God is an imminent God, in other words that God not only created everything, He IS everything. God is not His creation. That is pantheism or panentheism. This is how the New Age and many cultures such as the American Indians view God. But God is distinctly separate from His creation. He is **separate from the world**: Isaiah 40:22; Acts 17:24. He is **contrasted with the world** (different than the universe He created): Psalm 102:25-27; 1 John 2:15-17. He **created the world**: Gen. 1:1; Psalms 33:6; 102:25; Isaiah 42:5; 44:24; John 1:3; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 1:2; 11:3. God is omnipresent, but He is not imminent. God is not His creation.

However, there are many ways in which Christ fills all in all. He filled the world with inhabitants. He fills all places with His omnipresence. He fills all creatures with proper food and sustenance. He fills our every need. He fills all His Church with His gracious presence in the Holy Spirit. He fills the various churches around the world with those who can lead them, those with the gifts and graces of His Spirit. He fills all and every one of the saints with His Holy Spirit. He fills believers hearts with joy; their minds with knowledge; their consciences with peace; their wills with spiritual desires, submission, and resignation; and their affections with love to Himself and people. He fills them with all grace and goodness, and the fruits of righteousness; and so He makes them of use to Himself, and for happiness in eternity.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Paul reminds the Ephesians and us about what we were like before Christ called us to salvation. We were dead. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Everyone is destined to death, physically and eternally. Every sinful man is destined to die physically and, after death, to inherit eternal judg-

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ment instead of eternal life. Every sinful man is destined to live forever apart from God tormented in hell, which is worse than death. Why were we dead? Because of our sins. We are dead because of the sin that we are born into, and the sin we choose. We are dead because of both. Because we were dead and blind without hope, we lived our lives under the control of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the prince of this world—Satan. People may not realize they are serving the devil, but in reality they are. Everyone who is not born again is serving Satan because they are living in obedience to the temptations of Satan and their sin nature. You cannot serve two Masters, but you will serve one of them. Bob Dylan wrote a song where he sang “Everybody’s got to serve somebody.” This is true. You either serve God or you serve the devil. There is no in-between. There is another spirit other than the Holy Spirit at work in those who are living in sin. That does not mean everyone who is a sinner is possessed by a demon. What it does mean is that Satan has free access to the lives of people who live in sin, and they have no way to live a life pleasing to God. In the same way, false teachers, false prophets, false apostles, and false christs also have another spirit.

***1 John 4:1** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

We need to be careful of people who teach false doctrines and make false prophecies. They do so because they have another spirit. Why? Because they do not have the spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit. They are still living in sin and serving their master, the devil. It is useful to remember that when you are testing false prophets.

***John 14:17** ...the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

***1 John 4:6** We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.*

False prophets and false teachers have another spirit. That is the spirit of falsehood or lies. Their father is the devil who is the original liar.

***John 8:44** You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

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Those who teach lies and prophesy lies are of another spirit, and that spirit is demonic. Christians must realize how important it is to get away from false teachers and false prophets who are liars. They are not our brothers in the Lord. They are sons of the devil. Jesus spoke these words to the religious leadership of His day, and we must realize that nothing is ever new under the sun. We still have religious leadership today on TBN, Daystar, on the covers of Time Magazine, Christianity Today, and Charisma Magazine who are of another spirit. When you say this and prove it, people will hate you. They hate me for proving it, and they will hate you for getting away from these people. So be prepared to be persecuted for your faith by others who claim they are Christians, in fact, claim they are the most important Christians of our day. When people are proven to be liars, they either repent or become hateful and vengeful.

3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Those who are in the world, as we were, have nothing else to satisfy them than to follow their sinful minds into wicked things. They do many things the devil tempts them to do, and even more things which they **invent** from their own sinful minds. Don't be fooled. Satan can only tempt. We are the ones who make a choice whether or not to give into temptations, which is why we are guilty of the wages of death, without hope, if we are without Christ. We all know the things we did before the Holy Spirit convicted us of our sins after we had heard and believed the Gospel message. So we need not talk about them or list them here. Suffice it to say, we were all under God's wrath. This is what we need to remember about others who are still sinning. We need to have compassion on them and warn them of their sin and the penalty they will pay because of the holiness of our Righteous Judge.

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

God loves us so much that, because of His mercy, we who were dead in our sins and without eternal life were made alive with Christ who was raised from the dead. We are made alive in Him just as God raised Him from the dead. Also, because Jesus was resurrected from the dead, we also will someday be resurrected into eternal life. You have heard the saying: "Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone." The end of this verse states that salvation is by grace.

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GRACE ALONE!

Titus 3:5-7 **He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.**

Rom. 11:6 **And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.**

FAITH ALONE!

Rom. 3:28 **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.**

Rom. 4:4-5 **Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.**

CHRIST ALONE!

John 14:6 **Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

Acts 14:12 **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."**

Jesus Christ did all the work to save us from our sins. This is summed up nicely in what is called the "Romans Road," which is a good thing to memorize to explain the Gospel to the unsaved.

ROMANS 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one..."

ROMANS 3:23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

ROMANS 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

ROMANS 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

ROMANS 10:13 ...for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

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***6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,
7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

When God raised us to new life in Christ, He set us in the heavenly realms with Jesus. This doesn't mean we are physically there, though someday we will be there after the resurrection. It means that positionally the Father views us as being with Christ—in Christ—seated beside Christ. This is our position—our place in the eyes of the Father. This means that He has saved us, and views us as being with Christ, and our sins are under the blood of His Son, no longer to be counted against us. Our sins, when they are repented of in Christ, are now positionally viewed as no longer existing, being removed away from us as far as the east is from the west.

Psalm 103:12 ...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

This is an interesting statement. If you stated that our sins are as far as the north is from the south on the earth, that would be a finite distance, a measurable distance. But if you say as far as the east is from the west you could travel around the earth forever, and east would never meet west. Where does the east start and the west begin? This is one way of saying that our sins will no longer be counted against us for eternity if we are in Christ. We also share in the fullness of Christ, in His riches in glory. This was the plan of God the Father from the beginning, that “He might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” The love of God for us is amazing, and our position in Christ is a place of victory and spiritual riches—not defeat and spiritual poverty. The sooner we begin to live in this knowledge, the sooner we will be of real use in His Kingdom.

***8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
9 not by works, so that no one can boast.***

Most of you know these two verses by heart, even if you might not know the reference. But these verses are extremely important. We are saved by grace alone, not by our works. If works could save us, then God would not be needed. But our works cannot save us because, before we are saved, we are sinners without the will to do God's will. The Bible states that our thoughts are continually evil before we are saved.

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Psalm 10:4 *In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in **all his thoughts there is no room for God.***

Believers in Christ have been saved by grace through faith. That faith is our response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel. If we respond by placing our faith in Christ, we will be saved by His grace. If we respond by rejecting Christ, we are left in our wicked state. Please be aware that some groups falsely claim that grace AND faith are the “gift of God” talked about in these verses. But here and in other verses it is clear that the gift of God is grace. Faith is a response to God after God gives us the opportunity to respond. He then will build us up in our faith if we continue to obey, follow Him, and add to our faith.

Heb. 12:2 *...simply fixing our gaze upon Jesus, **our Prince Leader in the faith**, who will also award us the prize. He, for the sake of the joy which lay before Him, patiently endured the cross, looking with contempt upon its shame, and afterwards seated Himself— where He still sits—at the right hand of the throne of God. (Wey)*

Jude 1:20 *But you, dear friends, **build yourselves up in your most holy faith** and pray in the Holy Spirit.*

But God never forces anyone to have faith or gives it to people as a gift. It is their choice, and continues to be their choice until the day they die. Without faith, there can be no salvation.

1 Peter 1:9 *...for you are receiving **the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.***

Salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. It can never be by works because that would make man his own savior.

Illustration: I read about an instant cake mix that was a big flop. The instructions said all you had to do was add water and bake. The company couldn't understand why it didn't sell—until their research discovered that the buying public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water. Apparently people thought it was too easy. So the company altered the formula and changed the directions to call for adding an egg to the mix in addition to the water. The idea worked and sales jumped dramatically.

That story reminds me of how some people react to the plan of salvation. To them it sounds too easy and simple to be true, even though the Bible says, "By grace you have been saved through faith...; it is the gift of God, not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). They feel that there is something more they must do, something they must add to God's "recipe" for salvation. They think they must perform good works to gain God's favor

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and earn eternal life. But the Bible is clear—we are saved, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5). Unlike the cake-mix manufacturer, God has not changed His “formula” to make salvation more marketable. The gospel we proclaim must be free of works, even though it may sound too easy. (R.W.D. Daily Bread, June 2, 1992.)

But most false religions in the world are based on works, causing a person to be good enough to go to heaven, become a better person, etc. They try to become like God through works. They try to be accepted by God or go to heaven or be reincarnated ever upwardly mobile on the evolutionary chain based on works. Any religion that adds to salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is a false religion and is, in fact, demonic. Paul says that anyone who adds to the salvation message is accursed, and is on his or her way to hell.

*Galatians 1:8-9 **But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

The most frequent “other gospel” in the world today is the gospel of works salvation.

10 For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

When God saves us by His grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then when we obey Him, our works count for something. They do not save, but they will count for our reward in heaven. In fact, God created us for the purpose of doing good works in obedience to Jesus Christ. God prepared those He foreknew, who would believe in His Son, in advance to do good works. Remember that grace comes first, then faith, then works—not the other way around.

“[According to a recent poll] 88% of Catholics and a majority of Presbyterian and Methodist evangelizers [those who actively try to share their “faith”] believe that “if people are generally good, or do enough good things for others during their lives, they will earn a place in heaven.” National and International Religion Report, August 23, 1993.

We have a situation in the churches today that is very serious. It is obvious by these kinds of polls that the message of the Gospel is not coming through. I have videotape where Catholics coming out of an RCC cathe-

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dral were asked on what basis God would accept them into heaven. Only one person knew that the answer was by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The rest gave the same answer as the poll I just mentioned. Those of us who know the truth have an obligation to tell people the truth about the Gospel today, even those who claim to be Christians. If they meet Jesus Christ on judgment day and are not “in Christ,” they will not go to heaven.

Study in Ephesians

A Building of Peace

(3) Ephesians 2:11-22

Ephesians 2:11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—

12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

I am a Gentile as well as most of you readers of this book. We must remember that we were outside the covenant of the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We were excluded and destined for damnation. Our works would judge us, and we know that works can save no man.

Psalm 143:2 Do not bring your servant into judgment, **for no one living is righteous before you.**

Romans 3:10 As it is written: "**There is no one righteous, not even one...**"

We were separated from Christ and, because of that, we had no access to the Father.

Ephesians 4:18 **They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God** because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

We were without hope and without God in the world.

13 **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.**

Those who were outside the old covenant with Israel are now brought in through the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:15 For this reason **Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.**

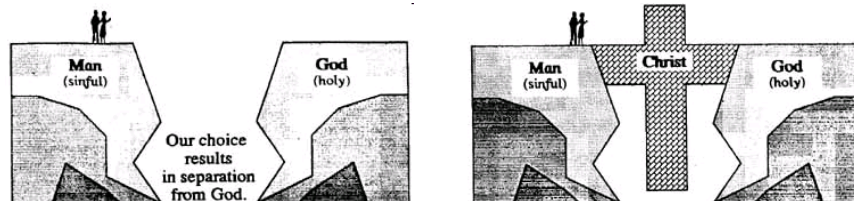
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Through the blood of Christ, we have access to the Father as only Israel had before.

Rom. 5:1-2 Therefore, **since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.**

**14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,
15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,
16 ...and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.**

Jesus Christ made peace for us with the Father by His death on the cross. The perfect sacrifice He made satisfied all the requirements of the Law and paid the penalty of death for our sins. Jesus destroyed the barrier men had to a relationship with God. Here is a popular graphic that illustrates this.



The Father's purpose in this plan through Christ, other than salvation, was to bring together in one body, Jew and Gentile. The body of Christ is now made of up those who believe in Jesus Christ through faith, both Jew and Gentile. The hostility between the chosen people of God—Israel—and the Gentiles is put to rest forever in Christ. Notice that this new body, unified by Christ, is IN Christ. Christ created in Himself the Church. The Church is the body of Christ.

17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

Both Jew and Gentile can now know the peace of Jesus Christ. There is no more separation between people. We are all precious in God's eyes.

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1 John 4:9 ***This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.***

Rom. 16:25-27 *Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, **so that all nations might believe and obey him**—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

As Christians, we are to no longer view fellow believers or even the world in terms of separation of races or cultures. We are to no longer view people with bigotry, but in the love of Christ. But, unfortunately, there is still a lot of bigotry and ethnic hatred among Christians. It is even being promoted sometimes by Christian organizations. When we become believers, our main focus is no longer culture and traditions, but on the body of Christ, building it up, and taking our new traditions from the Scriptures. This is a radical statement in the current world atmosphere of putting so much focus on culture and tradition, but Paul says he counted it all as rubbish—garbage.

Phil. 3:4-9 ***If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.***

The fact is the traditions of men are often in opposition to the will of God and what He wants of us.

Mark 7:8-9 ***“You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.” And he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!”***

Colossians 2:8 ***See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.***

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Be careful about those who try to trap you in human tradition and culture.

The Gospel is the message of peace to the world, not plans for global unity, not unity among the different religions, and not the effort to stop wars. The Gospel is what has made peace with God and gives us peace within.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Both Jewish and Gentile believers have access to the Father through the Spirit. This is only possible if one is born again of the Holy Spirit, which is only possible by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

There are two criteria for admittance into heaven. The first one every person has. Every man and woman is born of water. As a baby, God brings you to birth by spending nine months in water. When you are born, you come out of the water. We are all born of water. That is the first birth. But that is not enough to enter the kingdom of heaven. We must also be born of the Spirit—born again.

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household...

Those who are true believers of any people group, nation, background, income level, or color, are now part of one household—the household of God. If you are a member of God's family in His house, then you have a place to live. You have fellowship. You have brothers and sisters you would not have had in this sinful world. When you become a citizen of a country like the U.S.A., you are then entitled to all the privileges of that country. But someone who is, say, a Brazilian citizen does not have the same privileges in the U.S.A. They cannot collect social security, welfare, get food stamps, get a job, or even stay indefinitely because they do not belong to the "household" of the U.S. In the same way, those who are

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members of God's household are entitled to the privileges of being in that house. We are no longer foreigners, but citizens, entitled to all God has to offer. What are we entitled to as citizens in God's household? Life, joy, peace, hope, love, glory, fulfillment, growth, security, wisdom, and eternal life.

20 ...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

What is God's household built on? Jesus Christ, the Rock and Cornerstone, obviously. We have been discussing that. But it is also built on the foundation Christ has laid as the Cornerstone, which is that of the Apostles and prophets. This is not talking about new apostles and modern prophets. It is talking about the Foundation, the beginning, and the basis for the building of the Church being laid down by those to whom God gave the revelation of the mystery of Christ. The foundational apostles and prophets are dead and gone. We, as the Church, are a building moving toward completion—the household of God on earth based on the teachings of Christ as passed down and interpreted for us by the Apostles and prophets. These are contained in our Bible. Beware of those who would try to steal the authority of the Apostles and prophets and the Word of God today by claiming they have the same authority. We will continue to go into that subject, but those who claim to be equal to, or greater than, the apostles today are what Paul called “false apostles.”

2 Cor. 11:12-15 And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Be very careful of those who claim to be apostles today. There is a type of “apostle” left today, but they are not foundational to the Church. The only type of “apostle” we have today is a church-planting missionary, and we call them that so that they will not be confused with the foundational Apostles. However, many churches are confusing people by calling those in authority over them “apostles.” There are no more apostles like Paul. We will study this later in Chapter 4.

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

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In Christ the whole building of the Church is in unity and is rising day by day as a holy temple to the Lord. There is no Temple in Jerusalem anymore, and if one is built, it will be used by the enemy and become an abomination to the Lord. Why? Because the Church is the temple of the Lord today. The Church is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The individual Christian has access to the “holy of holies” in the body of Christ, and in the Holy Spirit who indwells them personally.

Heb. 10:19-22 **Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.**

Notice that Jude uses the same word “most holy” to describe our faith—our relationship to the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

Jude 1:20 **But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.**

22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The Church is the dwelling place of the Spirit as well as the individual Christian.

2 Corinthians 1:22 **...set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.**

We will study these two passages later, but they show that the Spirit is in the individual Christian, and in the Church as a whole.

Ephesians 3:16 **I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being..**

Ephesians 4:4-6 **There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

Study in Ephesians

A Mystery Revealed

(4) Ephesians 3:1-13

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

Paul was made a prisoner many times in his life because of his preaching the Gospel and telling people that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Paul suffered and was persecuted, beaten, thrown out of towns, and finally martyred for the Gospel.

From *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* we read about Paul:

Paul, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labors in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in the first persecution under Nero. Abdias, declares that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They came to Paul while he was teaching the people and asked him to pray for them so that they might believe and be saved. After Paul had done this with them, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where, after Paul had prayed, he gave his neck to the sword.

We learn from this that Paul made a willing sacrifice of his life for Christ. In a sense, the prison Paul was confined in was a prison of his own making, and the prison Warden was Jesus Christ.

There is a story about a wealthy builder in New York City. Not long after this wealthy contractor had finished building the Tombs prison in New York, he was found guilty of forgery and sentenced to several years in the prison he had built! As he was escorted into a cell of his own making, the contractor said, "I never dreamed when I built this prison that I would be an inmate one day." (Today in the Word, July 12, 1993.)

But the prison Paul is talking about in verse one is not a prison made by men, nor is it a prison he built, but a prison he allowed himself to be incarcerated in by Jesus Christ. Paul was made a servant, a prisoner, to the Gospel message by Jesus Christ Himself. Paul consented to this, so this was a prison that Paul wanted to be in! Paul had dedicated his life to Jesus Christ for the sake of the Gentiles. There was no one preaching the Gos-

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pel to the Gentiles until Paul and some others went out and proclaimed the good news to them. It was because of Paul that the whole Gentile church believes in Christ today, including you and me.

**2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,
3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.**

Have you ever heard of a person being given a gift in prison? God gave Paul a great gift, and that was the understanding of the mystery of Christ. That mystery was that Christ's death on the cross was not just to forgive the sins of the Jews, but to bring all people to the cross.

John 12:32 *"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."*

John 1:7 *He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.*

1 Timothy 2:4 *...who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

This mystery was not apparent to the disciples at first, as it was to Paul. Later, Peter finally realized that Jesus Christ was reaching out to all men in fulfillment of prophecies given to Abraham long ago.

Genesis 22:18 *"...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

The nation of Israel held the promises of God and the commands of God in trust for the whole world. But God had already promised long ago to bless the whole world through the offspring of Abraham—that is Jesus Christ. But the Jews were blind to this, and even the disciples had to be reminded of what Jesus had told them.

Mark 13:10 *And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.*

John 10:16 *I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*

Jesus Christ had other sheep, not of the sheep pen of Israel, that He was going to reach and save. This mystery was shown to Paul, and then later it was shown in a vision to Peter.

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Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: **"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."**

Later, Peter had to stand up for the Gentiles so that they would not be required to follow the laws of the Jews, and Paul was there to testify to what God was doing among the Gentiles to whom he had been preaching the Gospel for some time.

Acts 15:5-12 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, **Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.**

Now Paul describes the revelation of this mystery of Christ given to him.

**4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,
5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.
6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.**

The mystery, not known to former generations of Jews, was that God would be reaching out to the Gentiles with His free offer of salvation. The Gentiles would be equal heirs to the inheritance of Israel by virtue of their belief, being grafted into the Vine as children of God. It had always been this way in Israel, as faith in God had always been a requirement for a relationship with God. But now all nations would hear the Good News and would have the opportunity to believe.

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7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

Now we see that Paul is a prisoner of Christ by his own choosing. He is a servant of the gospel by the grace of God. God demonstrated His power to Paul, and Paul believed. What is that power?

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

***8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.***

Paul is humbly admitting that he is the least of the apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Today those who call themselves foundational apostles, who are really false apostles, would have bragged about seeing God and all the power they had if they lived in the 1st Century. In contrast, Paul and all the other true Apostles were very humble men. They were humble because they realized they truly ARE humble and lowly in the sight of God. They were men who had lived lives of sin, and even opposition to Jesus Christ, as in the case of Paul. Yet God has a way of choosing those who have been sinners and have repented to do His work. He also chooses humble servants to reveal His mysteries to. God had kept the mystery of Christ hidden, though it was clearly foretold even in the Old Testament. The promises to Abraham indicated that the whole world would share in the blessings accorded to Israel alone for centuries.

Psalms 86:9 All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

This is talking about the Millennial Kingdom, but we also know that the gospel will go out to all the nations and they will hear of salvation in Jesus Christ before the Millennial Kingdom comes.

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Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, on the surface of these verses, they are hard to understand. We know that the purpose of the Church is to preach the gospel and disciple all nations. But what does Paul mean when he states: “The manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”? Don’t the angels already know about God’s plan? Yes, they do, and they did. What this is talking about is that now the Gospel message has been given to the Church to proclaim. So “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” are observing the working out of that Gospel message of love. The angels of God understand the holiness and purposes of God, but they are still learning of the love of God as it unfolds through individual Christians and the Church. The mystery of Christ now belongs to the Church, and it is the Church that owns it, so to speak. We are the ones who will do with it what we will in accordance to the will of God, which is that we preach it to all peoples and disciple all nations. The angels of God, not the evil angels, knew the eternal purpose of God. But now since that purpose has been revealed to the Church through the Apostles, we are the ones who proclaim that eternal purpose to the world in the sight of the heavenly realms, both good and evil. To understand this idea better, let me quote from a sermon by Ray Stedman on Ephesians 3:7-13 called “Secret Riches.”

The last thing the apostle says is that his ministry had the effect of demonstrating of a unique wisdom: “That through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.” This is to go on now, while the church is being formed. It is a revelation in which these “principalities and powers” are learning something by observing the church. What does he mean? Well, this is one of the instances in which Scripture clearly states that we are surrounded by an invisible spiritual kingdom made up both of demons and angels. In Ephesians 6 Paul says, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in the heavenly places -- wicked spirits from the very headquarters of evil itself,” (Ephesians 6:12). But we also learn from other passages that angels are watching us. It is as if we are on stage in a great theater, with the angels gathered around in rows and rows, watching us, learning from what is happening here in the lives of believers.

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This is why, in First Corinthians 11, Paul says to women that their dress and their demeanor toward their husbands teaches the angels something. He says it ought to be correct “because of the angels,” (1 Corinthians 11:10). Angels are watching and learning. What are they learning? Let me share with you a quotation from Dr. Custance: “The key to the existence of such a universe as this lies, I believe, in the fact that God wished to show forth that aspect of his being which the angels have never comprehended, namely his love, without at the same time surrendering that part of his being which they do comprehend, namely his holiness.” So the revelation of the mystery is essentially the revelation of the love of God—in ways that make the angels amazed and startled as they learn the tremendous secrets of God’s love. This is why the Apostle Peter says in his first letter that our salvation is so tremendous that the angels longed to look into these things. A great cloud of witnesses in heaven surrounds us. We would do well to remember this.

12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

An amazing aspect of becoming children of God through our faith in Jesus Christ is that now we may approach the Father with freedom and confidence.

Heb. 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We may make our requests known to the Father so that we may receive mercy and grace for our every need. This was all made possible by the mystery of Christ revealed to us. There is no other way to approach the Father without the Son.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

There are many in our world today who want to approach the Father, but they are trying to do so on their own merit without the Son. God the Father does not accept anyone without coming through the Son. The only way to come through the Son is to accept the Son, believe on the Son, and commit to the Son. With this in mind, Paul writes to the Ephesians not to be discouraged about Paul’s sufferings because the greater glory of God is

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involved in the message he was sent to proclaim. In fact, when anyone suffers, it is to their glory and the glory of God.

*James 5:10-11 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. **As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.** You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

*Rom. 8:35-39 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?** As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*1 Pet. 1: 6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though **now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.** These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Study in Ephesians

The Prayer and the Calling

(5) Ephesians 3:14-4:10

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Paul prays a prayer that is a good pattern prayer for us to emulate. He starts by bowing down his heart to the Father. He recognizes right from the beginning who is the Father of all. Now, let's not make a mistake in thinking that God is a Father to all. He is the Creator of all, so in that sense we are born into this world because of the Father. But He is not our Father unless we come to Him through His Son and are born again in His Spirit. When we are born in the Spirit, we become His children and He becomes our Father. We become part of the family in heaven and on earth. The family in heaven is the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and the angels. The family on earth is the Holy Spirit and the Church. That Church bears His name. That name is the name of Jesus Christ. We are called "Christians" which means "followers of Christ."

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...

The Holy Spirit is in the inner being of every believer. From there the Spirit empowers us to live according to the will of the Father. He counsels us, He helps us, He convicts us, He rebukes us, He leads us, and He causes us to focus our attention and keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. Now some who call themselves Christians have taken to praying for "power" to come on them. This is not the prayer that Paul prayed. There is no place in the Bible where we are told to pray for power. Therefore, this is a very dangerous prayer. We also should not summon the Holy Spirit to meetings because He is already present where two or three are gathered together (Matt. 18:20). Summoning or invoking is sorcery or spiritism. The Scriptures do show us what to pray for. Here are some examples:

- Pray for the people of your nation (Num. 21:7)
- Pray for your city (Jer. 29:7)
- Pray for peace in Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6)

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- Pray for your persecutors (Matt. 5:43-44; Luke 6:28)
- Pray for children (Matt. 19:13)
- Pray for escape from judgment (Luke 21:36)
- Pray you will not fall into temptation (Luke 22:40)
- Pray for Christians (Job 17:9; 1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18)
- Pray for boldness in proclaiming the gospel and for God to do miracles in people's lives (Acts 4:29-31)
- Pray all the time, be alert, and pray for the saints (Eph 6:18)
- Pray for fearless preaching (Eph. 6:20)
- Pray to be filled with the knowledge of His will (Col. 1:9)
- Pray for open doors for the gospel (Col. 4:3)
- Pray that the Word of God may be glorified (2 Thess. 3:1)
- Pray for deliverance from evil men (2 Thess. 3:2)
- Pray for everyone—kings, authorities, peace, quiet, godliness, and holiness (1 Tim 2:1,2)
- Pray for life for dead sinners (1 John 5:16)

There are other things we are taught to pray for in Scripture, but the point is that we need to follow the Scriptural model of prayer.

There are only two places where the words “prayer” and “power” are mentioned. *“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith” (2 Thess. 1:11).*

Notice that Paul was not praying for them to get power, but that God “by His power” would fulfill “every good purpose” of theirs and “every act prompted by your faith.” This is by the sovereign will of God, which, if followed, will produce good works. If God's will is not followed, it can only produce fleshly or even demonic fruit.

The second reference is the one we are looking at, Ephesians 3:16: *“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:16-19).*

Here again Paul is praying for the Ephesians, not for himself. He prays

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that the indwelling Holy Spirit will show them how much Christ loves them so they may be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” This speaks of empowerment to have love and faith and to understand Christ in a deeper way, not power to perform miracles or for an ecstatic experience. **There is no prayer for “power” to be found in the Bible.** Christians need to pray according to the will of God, and leave empowerment up to the Holy Spirit in His time and for His purposes.

*17 ...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,
18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,
19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

This is the reason Paul was praying that the Ephesians would be strengthened by the power of the Spirit. First, so that Christ would find a permanent place in their hearts—would come to live with them. Secondly, that the saints would be rooted and established in love. Love is something that the Holy Spirit teaches us, but we must also work at. Love does not come naturally. We naturally love ourselves, but to love others beyond ourselves is beyond us. Without the Spirit teaching us how to love, our love will grow cold. Third, the power Paul is praying for is the power to realize fully and experience the love of Christ. The love of Christ is beyond our total ability to comprehend, but the more you allow the Spirit to teach you through the Word of God, the more you will know the love of Christ. Fourthly, Paul is praying that we will be filled with the fullness of God. When you are full of God through the Spirit you overflow. A fountain that overflows waters the surrounding fields. Paul prays that the Christians at Ephesus will overflow with the fullness of God so that many others will come to know the Lord.

*20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,
21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

I have always loved this last part of Paul’s prayer that is used as benediction in many churches. There is a song: “Nothing is impossible with God.” God’s ways are far above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts.

Isaiab. 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are

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your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We can fully trust in God because He loves us and His ways are far beyond what we can understand. The amazing thing is that God will do amazing things “within us.” The power of God is at work in those who trust Him. God changes our lives. He does miraculous things because He is a God of the miraculous. We simply need to trust Him every day and every hour. There is a famous hymn called “Channels Only” that says:

*Channels only, blessed Master,
But with all Thy wondrous power
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us
Every day and every hour.*

Because of the wonderful work God is doing in us, and because of our love for Him, we give Him praise. He deserves all the glory and honor in the Church forever. The Church sings with the twenty-four elders in heaven:

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

The Calling

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

As we have studied up to this point, God has called us. He called us, chose us, justified us, and will glorify us. But we must live a life that is consistent with God’s call on our life. Paul was an example for the churches because of his stand for the Gospel and the truth, and because Paul did this, he was persecuted and imprisoned. Remember, though, Paul was a willing prisoner for Christ and of Christ. Living a life that is worthy of the calling of God can only be accomplished by submission to the Word of God and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Notice that humility is the first fruit that proves God has called a per-

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son. When you see people strutting up and down on TV like proud roosters ready for a cockfight, you are seeing people who do not have a calling from God. Those who serve God are humble servants, not proud braggarts. They do not walk around in public, doing and saying things to be noticed and glorified by men (Mark 12:38). They are not like the Pharisees whom Jesus Christ rebuked and condemned. Where you see a lack of humility and gentleness, you are not seeing the work of the Holy Spirit. Bear that in mind the next time you are tempted to think that TV preachers like Benny Hinn and others are filled with the Holy Spirit. They cannot be by biblical definition, and prove they are not by their attitudes. The enemy in the churches has stirred up pride, and false teachers take many people away, being deceivers who look like they are authoritative and sure of themselves.

2 Peter 2:18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

We also need to be patient. We need to realize that God has his time for everything.

Ecc. 3:1-8 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

I am a firm believer in this. Many times we rush into things, or we lag behind the Lord. We need to learn to wait on the Lord.

Psalms 27:14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

I like this verse because it repeats something the Psalmist thinks is of special importance. Wait for the Lord. Wait for His timing. Be aware that, if people are slow to change, perhaps the Lord is still working on them. On the other hand, be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit because opportunities are often lost because we do not have time or do not want to obey.

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We also need to learn to bear with one another. This does not mean we become bears and roam around in the woods. It doesn't mean we become nudists. It means that we are patient with fellow believers. We need to try to help people instead of getting angry with them. We need to learn to be longsuffering, putting up with people for a long time, before we think we should lash out at them in anger. There is a time and place for righteous anger, but our attitude toward fellow Christians should be one of patience.

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

An important thing to notice here is that we have to make an effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. Sometimes it truly is an effort. But we need to make the effort to be in unity with those who are true believers.

Romans 14:19 ***Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.***

There is a balance here. While we must make every effort to be at peace, especially among our brothers in the Faith, we must, at the same time, reject heretics and false believers and not associate with them.

Rom. 16:17 ***I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.***

2 Corinthians 6:17 ***“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”***

Titus 3:10 ***Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.***

The word for “divisive” is also the word meaning “heretic.” We will study about the unity of the Faith later in these lessons. We have to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit through striving for unity of the Faith. If we cannot come to unity of the Faith, then there is really no unity of the Spirit. Only God knows who His true saints are. We must be sure we are yoked to true believers, and that we are striving for unity in the Spirit with them.

4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

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We learn two important lessons here. The first one is unity. We are one body of Christ in the Holy Spirit. That one body has one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. The second thing we learn which is tied to the first, is that there is only one reality. There are no shades of gray in terms of Truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth; His Spirit is Truth. Therefore, there is only one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Father. There is no other Body. There are many religions and cults of Christianity that claim to be the way to God, but there is only one Body of Christ, and it holds the keys to the mystery of Christ. There is only one hope—the hope of the resurrection and glory. There is only one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is only one Faith, that of belief and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord. There is only one baptism in the Spirit, that of being born again and receiving a new self. Don't let people try to fool you into believing that being born again and receiving the Holy Spirit are separate issues. They are not and cannot be.

God is over all, through all, and in all. The God of the Church of Jesus Christ is over all because He is Lord. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the all-powerful Almighty God who created everything that exists. God is through all. This can also be translated “taking care of all.” God's attributes will be lived out in His Church as He guides it and takes care of it. God is not everything. He is not His creation. He stands apart from what He created. This does not mean He is not omnipresent. It means His substance is not part of what He created because He is eternal. But His Spirit works in the Church corporately and in individual Christians. Never forget that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not an impersonal force. That is not what this means. It means that God is at work in and through His Church. God is in all who have believed in His Son. Remember this is talking about the Church, the body of Christ, not every man. The Holy Spirit is in every believer. Therefore, God is everything to the Church and to the believer. How often do you think about God being over you, through you, and in you? How often do we grieve the Holy Spirit by what we say and do? May we not grieve the Holy Spirit of God over, through, and in us, but, instead, walk with Him.

7 But to each one of us grace (charis) has been given as Christ apportioned it.

The amazing thing is that though God is over, through, and in His Church and Christians, we do not become robots. We are individuals. When people meet to fellowship together, they sometimes have their different ways. God has given each Christian and fellowship grace to be and do

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what He wants us to do. He has given us different gifts. All Christians do not have the same gifts, and don't listen to people who tell you that all Christians must speak in tongues, for instance. To each of us grace (*charis*) has been given. Why do I say that grace is talking about gifts (*dōma*)? Look at the next verse.

8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts (dōma) to men."

God has given His followers many spiritual gifts. With those spiritual gifts we can encourage one another and build up the church.

1 Cor. 14:12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, **try to excel in gifts that build up the church.**

The Lord Jesus, when He has risen from the dead and spent some time preparing His disciples, ascended into heaven. But it says He led captives in His train. Who are these captives?

9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?

10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

It is important that we understand what this is talking about. Jesus descended into the lower earthly regions upon his death. He did not descend into hell. Hell is the lake of fire. No one is in hell until judgment day. Jesus descended into Hades. The Bible indicates He went to Hades, to the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19-31) where the Old Testament saints were waiting for Him. In Luke, it is sometimes translated as "hell," but the actually Greek word is "Hades"—the holding place. Jesus then told the saints in Hades with Abraham about His death and resurrection plan (1 Pet. 4:6). He then took the Old Testament saints to heaven with Him (Ephesians 4:8). The Bible also states that the others, those who were in the other part of Hades (Luke 16:19-31) to be held until judgment day, also heard the Gospel (1 Peter 3:19) so that they would have no excuse on judgment day, but would stand condemned. It was too late for them because they had no faith in God while they were alive like the Old Testament saints did.

Jesus Christ has been there, done that! He finally ascended into heaven to guarantee our resurrection and to intercede for us, His children. But what does it mean that He did this in order to "fill the whole universe"?

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Actually this verse is better translated “to fulfill all things.” Jesus Christ did everything the Father told Him to do, and thereby fulfilled the Word of God through the prophets. He fulfilled every type that was a picture of Him in the ordinances of the tabernacle and temple, in Melchisedek, and every other allusion to Christ. Everything God set out to do in Christ has, or will be, fulfilled. In the omniscient mind of God, it has actually already fully been fulfilled. It is just a matter of history playing out, the end of this world, and the beginning of eternity. Jesus Christ has been there, done that!

Study in Ephesians

Why Were the Grace Gifts of Servant Leadership Given?

(6) Ephesians 4:11-13

Sometimes ministers and their congregations don't get along. In one church things had gotten so bad that the Elders arranged to meet with the minister and ask him to go. The minister, however, refused. "I'm the servant of Jesus" he said. "When Jesus tells me to go I'll leave but until Jesus gives the word, here I stay." So he did. Week by week his congregation groaned through the services. Finally one Sunday morning the minister announced Jesus had given the word—he was moving to another church. As one the congregation rose to their feet and began to sing "What a friend we have in Jesus." (Source: unknown. Reported in Simon Townsend, Times Preacher of the Year, 2001, winning sermon.)

To avoid ending up like this poor church leader Paul has set down the criteria to be a good leader.

*Ephesians 4:11-16 It was he who gave some to be **apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (NIV).***

WHAT ARE THE GRACE GIFTS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP TODAY?

The grace gifts of leadership, or more accurately servant leadership, are listed as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, or pastor-teachers, depending on your interpretation. First, we must define to whom this list is referring.

The gift of foundational Apostleship is no longer around today as no one in our day fits the criteria to be a foundational apostle. The teachings of

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the foundational Apostles and prophets are what the Church is built upon (Ephesians 2:20), Christ being the chief Cornerstone and Foundation (1 Cor. 3:10-11). The Apostles were those who saw the Lord while He was on earth before he ascended into heaven (1 Cor. 9:1) or in the case of Paul who saw Jesus at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The Lord did true signs, wonders, and miracles through them to authenticate their ministries (2 Cor. 12:12). They wrote Scriptures (Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, etc.). They were persecuted and, all but one, John, were killed/martyred for the Faith, and this included Paul. You can find this information in 1 Cor. 4:9, the Pre-Nicene Fathers' writings, and Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Paul said that he was the last, in sequence, of the original foundational Apostles (1 Cor. 15:7-8). The word he used for "last" in 1 Cor. 15:8 is "eschatos" in Greek, which is the word used for the last number in a sequence such as 10 would be in the numbers 1-10. Finally, we are to use the Word of God, through Jesus Christ, taught to us by the Apostles and prophets, as the basis for our Christian life (2 Peter 3:2; Jude 17).

There is no one today who can meet the biblical criteria to be a foundational Apostle. But there are "apostles" in the Church today, "sent out" ones, messengers, mainly church planting missionaries, but they are not foundational to the Church.

There are also no longer any "foundational" prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Again, they wrote Scripture (Samuel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.). They were often martyred for the Faith (Luke 11:47-48; Rev. 18:24). The Church has its foundation on the apostles and prophets (2 Pet. 3:2) and in Christ, the Foundation and Cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:6). Now, there are prophets today. They are those who preach from the written Word of God, through which the Holy Spirit still speaks to His Church. The Scriptures are living and active (Heb. 4:12) and we are not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). Modern day prophets are to be held up to the same standards as any biblical prophet. What they prophesy must be biblical and what they predict must come true, if they are saying it is a word from the Lord (Deut. 13:1-3, 18:20). Otherwise they are to be considered false prophets and the Church should not listen to them (Jer. 23;16; Matt. 7:15; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1). This criterion also applies to any of the grace gifts. If evangelists are preaching a false gospel (Gal. 1:9), they are under condemnation and the church should reject them. If pastors and teachers are not teaching sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1), they are to be regarded as heretics and rejected after a few admonitions if they do not repent (Titus 3:10).

Today the main role of a prophet is to exegete—pull out what God is say-

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ing—from the written Word. Jesus Christ speaks to us through His Word via His Spirit (Heb. 1:1-2) to instruct and edify the Church (1 Cor. 14:31). The modern prophet does not rely on his own interpretations (2 Pet. 1:20). The Holy Spirit speaks through the living written Word, which we are not to go beyond, and out of that comes the guidance of the Lord for the Church. As a prophet elaborates upon the Word, prophecy for the church today often comes forth. The Lord can and still sometimes does speak through dreams and visions (Acts 2:17). But, again, dreams and visions must be tested by Scripture (1 Thess. 5:21). The written Word is our highest authority because the Holy Spirit breathed the words through men—the very Word of God (2 Timothy 3:15-16). I would also add that you can be sure that those who give themselves the title of apostle or prophet today, blowing loudly their own horn before men, are false apostles and false prophets (2 Cor. 11:13; Mark 13:22).

The roles of evangelist, pastor, and teacher continue today as they did in the first century.

Now that we have established who modern day apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are, let's move on to the main reason why these grace gifts of servant leadership were given. Let's step through the passage above.

Verse 12 ...to prepare God's people for works of service...

First, the purpose of the grace gifts of servant leadership is to prepare God's people for works of service. If a person is not a servant himself, he will not know how to train others to be servants. Servants serve, they are not there to get others to serve them. We serve God first, then we serve others. On the other hand, false teachers are full of pride. They are self-absorbed, self-proclaimed leaders. They claim gifts from God, yet take advantage of people. They give themselves big titles and they lord it over men. They have no idea how to be servants themselves. Therefore, they cannot prepare anyone for works of service in the body of Christ, or teach them how to preach the Gospel to the world. In fact, they prepare them to be carbon copies of themselves. True apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers use their grace gifts to serve in humility.

Verse 12 ...so that the body of Christ may be built up...

This is not talking about numbers, church size, or "salvation" statistics. It is talking about the spiritual body of Christ being built into a house.

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow

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*citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.***

This passage is talking about the same building, the Church. It is a spiritual building, not a physical temple. The Holy Spirit now dwells in the temple of the individual spirit of the true believer, and in the body of Christ as a whole. As leaders, we are not to be concerned as much with quantity (numbers) as with quality (disciplining Christians to maturity). We care what people believe, that they believe the right thing, and that what they do and act like is in line with that belief. The reason for the grace gifts is not to build big churches but to build upon the foundation of Christ taught by the Apostles and prophets. This means that those who have the grace gifts of servant leadership will be teaching sound doctrine as a basis for true unity.

Titus 1:9 He (the overseer) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Titus 2:1 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

Verse 13 ...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God...

So then, “unity” is not referring to ecumenical unity, or unity for the sake of making friends. It is not talking about interfaith dialog, or coming to unity with other religions. It is not even talking about the unity we already share in the Holy Spirit by because we are born again in the Lord Jesus Christ. We already have that as the body of Christ. So what kind of unity is this talking about? It is talking about unity in doctrine, unity in the knowledge of Jesus Christ! The whole purpose of the gifts is to bring about unity in the core doctrines of the Faith and in the knowledge of the character and will of God. Heretics—the divisive ones—can break unity in the Faith. This is why we are to reject divisive heretics because they cause disunity in the body of Christ.

Titus 3:10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

The word for “divisive” in Greek is “*hairetikos*” from which we get the word “heretic.” A heretic is a person who teaches against the core doctrines of the Faith.

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2 Peter 2:1 *But there were also **false prophets** among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you. **They will secretly introduce destructive heresies**, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

Romans 16:17 *I urge you, brothers, to **watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.***

Heresy causes divisions over the core doctrines, and puts obstacles or roadblocks in the way of people becoming mature in the Faith. We have seen this happen time and again in Micronesia, and it is happening all over the world because the churches are unwilling or unable to reject false teachers.

Verse 13 ...and become mature...

How can someone with the grace gifts teach someone else to be mature if they themselves are not? They cannot. So what does becoming mature mean? It means growing from an infant to an adult spiritually. It means going from milk to solid food. It means growing in wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore **let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity...***

Colossians 1:10 *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, **growing in the knowledge of God...***

Heb. 5:13-14 ***Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

Notice that those who are mature eat solid food, and that solid food trains them to distinguish good from evil. Infants cannot tell the difference between good and evil. The other day I was driving and came around a corner and there was a little two-year-old child right in the middle of the road. He just stood there. I drove up alongside and told him to get out of the road. Finally his mother came running out of the house and grabbed him. You see, little children don't know what is good or bad for them. That's why many baby Christians can be so easily led astray by heretics. It is very important for those in servant leadership to prepare the body of Christ to eat solid food so that they can tell what is right and wrong, and then stand against false teaching, false prophecy and false "anointings."

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Verse 13 ... attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ ...

Can any Christian be exactly like Christ? Certainly that is our goal. But while we are here on earth, we still have our old sin nature in the flesh and mind, and the temptations of the enemy to contend with. Jesus Christ was in the same situation as we are, but never sinned. We will never be able to make that claim. Fortunately, as we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Jesus Christ, the perfect God-man, died in our place to pay the wages of death for our sins. When we are under the blood of Christ, God the Father no longer sees our unrighteousness, but sees the righteousness of His Son through the blood He shed for us. However, that doesn't mean we are sinless, and it certainly doesn't mean we don't continue to grow to maturity in Christ, to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. To do that we must be crucified with Christ daily.

*Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.***

*Galatians 2:20 **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

*Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."***

We no longer live for the desires of the flesh, but we "live by faith in the Son of God." The perfect measure of the fullness of Christ will have its ultimate fulfillment when we are resurrected to eternal life. But there is also a fullness, an abundant life to be experienced now as we are crucified with Christ and follow Him.

*John 10:10b **I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***

But we will not experience that life unless we grow to maturity in Christ. He will help us grow, but we must submit to His Holy Spirit teaching us.

*Ephesians 3:20-21 **Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.***

We are saved by grace, and it is also the power of the Holy Spirit working in us who can bring us to the fullness of Christ. We cannot do that on our

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own. What we must do is to submit to the Spirit, study and obey the Word and stay in sound doctrine.

Verse 14 ...Then we will no longer be infants...

Babies or small children cannot swim in a rough sea. They will drown. Mature adults know how to swim. How? They have studied swimming, practiced swimming, and know how to survive. Spiritual babies have little understanding and so the seas of doctrinal confusion can swallow them under. Those with the grace gifts are to bring spiritual babies to maturity by teaching them sound doctrine and giving them the tools to survive on the oceans of life. This is the **MAIN REASON FOR THE GRACE GIFTS!**

Verse 14 ...tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching...

The winds of false teaching today are greater than ever before in the history of the Church. Many “Christians” have abandoned the truth for teachers that tell lots of stories, but have no wisdom from the Scriptures to impart.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

They are false leaders, and though a few of them may even have natural gifts which they mistake for spiritual ones, they are using those gifts for greedy gain and to become famous. Their followers no longer have a love of the truth, and are baby immature believers, if they are believers at all. Those who are true leaders in the body of Christ will prevent Christians from being tossed about by every wind of doctrine, by being watchmen. A shepherd not only feeds the flock, but also guards it from wolves.

Ezekiel 33:6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Acts 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

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Verse 14 ...and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming...

Here we find that those who teach false doctrine are also those who are schemers. Their cunning and crafty ways show that they have another spirit. Satan is the father of lies, not the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they are often after people's money, a following, fame, and power over people. They teach the things that people most want to hear because they know they will reap the rewards of fame and fortune. They claim to be sheep, but they are wolves that eat sheep for breakfast. It is these very schemers that those with true grace gifts of servant leadership must steer people away from. The Apostles, and even the prophets of the Old Testament, did that by naming names. We can do no less.

Verse 15 ...Instead, speaking the truth in love...

Now we move on to how to accomplish bringing Christians to maturity and unity in the Faith once for all delivered to the saints. We must speak the truth. We must love people. We must speak the truth in love.

The most loving thing you can do for a **non-Christian** is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

The most loving thing you can do for a **Christian** is to teach him the truth so he can grow.

The most loving thing you can do for a **deceived Christian** is to show him the truth and warn him away from false teachers.

The most loving thing you can do for a **deceiver** is to rebuke him sharply, once or twice, then if he refuses to repent (which he almost always does) reject him—turn him over to Satan for the destruction of his body so that his spirit may have the opportunity to be saved (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20). If he repents, then accept him back in the body. If he does not, warn others away from him, don't let him near the flock and continue to pray for his salvation. But do everything out of love.

I love how Jude described our duty:

Jude 20-25** But you, dear friends, **build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the

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clothing stained by corrupted flesh. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Verse 15 ...we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ...

We are to grow up and mature. We are to grow up to be like Jesus Christ. He is our Head. We are not the Head; He is the Head. We are the body and must continue to grow spiritually. It is the responsibility of those with servant leadership grace gifts to be sure Christians are growing into the likeness of Christ. That can only be done through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the correct application of the grace gifts.

Verse 16 ...From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament...

We are one body in the Faith. A body cannot live without the Head, but it also cannot function properly without a thumb, an eyeball, a leg, etc. Try running without your legs, or seeing without your eyes. The body of Christ is not joined together by some kind of ecumenical or interfaith unity, but by the Holy Spirit. That unity is then strengthened and brought to maturity by the unity we have because of our common belief in and obedience to the commands of God in His Word.

Verse 16 ...grows and builds itself up in love...

As we grow in the unity of the essentials of the Faith, we will grow in love. As we become mature, stay away from false teachers, reach out in love to those who are falling—we build ourselves up in love. Love is more than saying you love someone or something. It is action. Love is not afraid of being persecuted or hurt for the sake of the truth. Love is not the sickeningly sweet romantic ideas of love we see and hear so much about these days in the movies and even in the churches. True love consists of sacrifice, even to the point of death. Are Christian leaders willing to suffer persecution for their stand for the truth? If not, then the body of Christ cannot be built up in love.

Verse 16 ...as each part does its work.

The main problem today in the churches is that each part is no longer doing its work. Many “Christians” have been convinced that their main goal in life is:

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- to do spiritual warfare in the heavenlies
- to bind territorial spirits
- to spend time on the carpets of churches laughing and acting like animals
- to be “drunk in the spirit”
- to make a big Pharisaical show out of giving money
- to travel to where the newest Christian show is being put on to get another “anointing”
- to pretend to worship God when they are singing with arms uplifted in churches while they live like the devil during the week
- to be in unity with anyone who simply says they “believe in Jesus” no matter how wrong their theology is or how weird they act
- to build huge mega churches that spend all their time thinking up programs and none of their time preaching the gospel
- to be afraid to be discerning while judging in all the wrong ways hypocritically...

These are the signs of leadership in churches that have forgotten their role to bring Christians to maturity and get them away from false teaching. They have lost **THE MAIN REASON FOR THE GRACE GIFTS** according to Ephesians 4.

It is my prayer that more Christian leaders will rediscover the reason they have been given grace gifts of servant leadership. I pray they will use these gifts in line with the will of God as given us in the written Word of God. Those who love the Lord obey His commands!

Study in Ephesians

Put on the New Self

(7) Ephesians 4:17-32

On November 25, 1895, a cornerstone of ice was laid in Leadville, Colorado, the beginning of the largest ice palace ever built in America. The town was not doing well financially; the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893 had ended its glory days as a silver-mining center. In an effort to keep their city alive, the citizens staged a winter carnival. On New Year's Day, 1896, the town turned out for the grand opening. The palace, which cost more than \$40,000 and measured 450 feet long by 320 feet deep, covered more than three acres. The towers that stood at the entrance were 90 feet high. Inside was a 16,000-square-foot skating rink. But there was no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow. The thousands of visitors who came to see the spectacle spent very little money because the ice palace and the hopes of the town melted away in a spell of warm weather. (Today in the Word, July, 1995, p. 7.)

Most of the time the thinking of man is futile, but we don't recognize it until it becomes obvious. As Christians, we now understand that our thinking was futile until we were introduced to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Going back to the last lesson, Paul continues by saying that the grace gifts of servant leadership were given to build up the body of Christ to maturity so that they would not be blown about by every wind of doctrine, but would be brought to unity of the Faith. This was taught to them and us so that we will no longer live like we did when we were sinners. Those who are living in sin without believing in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord have their minds darkened.

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

This is talking about the universal human condition. The evidence of God is everywhere in creation, but people refuse to acknowledge God. Even

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further, they refuse to acknowledge His Son. But the problem Paul is addressing here is people who claim they follow Christ but live like the unsaved. This is particularly a problem today in the churches. Because many churches no longer preach the true Gospel and certainly don't bring people to maturity in Christ, there are many who call themselves Christians who are not really saved to begin with. There is also another group according to the Bible. There are those who began as believers, but fall away in the time of testing or due to having their faith chocked out by the worries of this world.

*Luke 8:13-14 Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. **They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.** The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.*

They fall away. They do not mature. This is the problem Paul is addressing.

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Unrepentant sinners in the world do not understand reality. They are separated from God. Why? Because they have hardened their hearts. Even if God has convicted them of their sins they still choose to go their own way. We have free will and can choose to either repent or harden our heart toward God.

*Hebrews 4:7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: **"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."***

God is not willing that any should perish, but they perish because they refuse to hear His voice, and instead harden their hearts. We need to be careful as believers that we do not return to the state of unbelief through hardening our hearts. That can happen and that is what Paul is warning against.

19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

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Those who harden their heart have lost the sensitivity of their conscience that God gave them. Their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron.

1 Timothy 4:2 *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

When you burn your finger or any part of your body badly, you lose the feeling in that part for a time until the body can repair itself. But if you sear your conscience, there is no repair for it because how do you get back a good conscience? The only way is to repent and turn to Christ, but if your conscience is not operating you will never hear His voice.

Those whose consciences are seared don't care about holiness or what is right, so they give themselves over to every disgusting sin that enters their minds. Not only that, they lust for more and more. This is always true for unbelievers, but those who claim to follow Christ can also give themselves over to sensuality. One way that is pervasive in our time is through looking at pornography on the Internet. I believe that this is a huge problem among the younger generation today. But indulging in this sin causes people to lust for more. It takes them further and further away from the Lord until there is no turning back. There are other enticements. Alcohol, drugs, sex, dirty movies, gambling, partying, fighting, sinful thinking, gossip, slander, false teaching, the love of money, and the need for power. These are all deadly traps of the enemy that cause people to lust for more.

20 *You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.*

When we come to know Christ, we come to know righteousness. It is not that we experience complete righteousness in ourselves immediately, but we come to know what righteousness is in Jesus Christ, and he imputes (credits, deposits, puts) his righteousness to our account. He then begins a process of sanctification, setting us apart to righteousness through the teaching of the Holy Spirit in our lives in very practical ways. We learn to avoid the traps of sensuality and follow the example of Christ.

21 *Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.*

22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;*

When we gave our lives to Christ, he taught us truth about ourselves. He continues to teach us truth. The first truth is that we are sinners saved by grace. We must immediately begin the process of putting off our old

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self. Our sin nature we are born into because of the sin of Adam and Eve that is passed down genetically and spiritually to every human being, is continually being corrupted by sensuality—our deceitful desires. Why are desires “deceitful”? Because our desires fool us into thinking they are good, when they are really evil. This is probably the biggest area of temptation and deception of the devil. The devil never tempts people by making them feel bad. He tempts by making people “feel” good. But feeling good is not necessarily a good thing. All the things I listed above make people feel good. There are even things that have crept into the churches that make people feel good that are really deceitful desires—things like being slain in the spirit, falling down, and experiencing all kinds of weird manifestations in your body. This feels good and is why many keep going back over and over again to experience it. But since “slain in the spirit” is not biblical, it is an opportunity for the devil to fool people who have given themselves over to their old self which is being corrupted by deceitful desires. Always keep in mind that the enemy tempts because he knows we have deceitful desires. He uses that avenue to gain control over us and take us away from the Lord, if we are believers. Guard against that. How do we guard against that? By putting on the armor of God. Paul covers that at the end of this letter.

***23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;
24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.***

If you are saved you have been made new in the attitude of your mind. That is the gift of God. We cannot do that on our own. He has to renew us, give us the new self. But notice that we must “put on the new self.” We must accept and wear that new self because as long as we live we still have the old self to contend with. There will be a constant struggle between the old self and the new self from God. So we must put that new self on daily. We must take up our cross daily and follow Christ, dying to the old self.

*Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”**
Romans 8:13 **For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...***

Your new self, created by God, is created to be like God who is righteous and holy. We must put that new self on each day as we struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil. But the Holy Spirit is there to help us and

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give us the strength to resist the devil, our sinful old self, and the temptations of the world.

25 *Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

Now Paul gets to the practical ways to put on the new self. Stop telling lies. This is a universal problem, and has become a problem in the churches. Christians pass around stories all the time that they have heard without checking to be sure they are true. They exaggerate and fabricate. They lie. But the Bible is quite clear that if you consistently live a life of lying, you will be judged.

Revelation 21:8 ***But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.***

Lying is listed last. This is significant. That is because every sin is usually tied to lying in some way. Lying to our neighbor, lying to God, lying to yourself. We need to put on the new self that is in the Spirit of truth and deal truthfully with everyone, especially those in the body of Christ.

26 *“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,*

This is a lesson I learned early in my marriage. A few times when I was younger I used to go to bed angry after an argument with my wife. What that did was weaken my relationship with her. The Lord taught me that I needed to not go to bed angry. It can affect your relationships, your health, and your spiritual life. Learn to forgive, tell the person you are sorry, and agree to work things out the next day. There is a place for righteous anger, especially when it comes to injustice, false teaching, others being hurt physically, emotionally, or spiritually. There is a time where it is right to be angry at what the devil is doing, angry for the sake of Christ. But it is not good to go to bed angry. Calm yourself. God will take care of the problem His way. Don't be controlled by anger, especially if you find yourself hating people because of it. We are not to even hate our enemies.

Luke 6:27 ***“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...”***

27 *...and do not give the devil a foothold.*

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You can give the devil a foothold in your life through unresolved anger. But you can also give the devil a foothold in other ways. Anger is only one way to give the devil a foothold. What is a “foothold”? The best way to describe it would be in terms of a mountain climber. When you climb up mountains or cliffs you are constantly trying to find a good place to put your feet to hold you firmly in place. A bad foothold will crumble and maybe even send you to your death. A good foothold will keep your foot in place so you can continue to climb. It is the same with the devil. If he gets a good foothold in climbing your life, he can then continue to “climb.” You can give him that foothold by harboring unconfessed sins.

28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Paul gives very practical advice. To stop the devil from getting a foothold in your life through stealing things, get a job. Then you can pay for the items you used to steal and even share with others. My daughter worked for a time at Macys. She told me how much stealing was going on at their store. People were just walking out of the store left and right with merchandise, but the employees were not allowed to stop them. By the time they got word to the security people, the thief had usually already left. Shoplifting is a very big crime in the islands. But kids would be much less likely to shoplift if they had a job. It would take up their time and they would have money to spend.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

This may be the #1 problem in the churches. Gossip. If you are talking about someone, check to see if you are doing so to put him or her down. If you are talking about someone, or someone shares with you, then it should be for the purpose of prayer or helping that person in some way, not to slander him or her behind his or her back. Slander behind people’s backs does not work for long in a small island because it isn’t long before what was said gets back to the person you were talking about. The problem is that by the time it gets back it has usually been blown out of proportion or changed. Did you ever play the game of telephone, forming a long line of people and having the first person whisper in the next person’s ear something like, “John is going down to the river. Meet him there at his boat”? By the time this message gets whispered from person to per-

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son it usually comes out different on the other end...something like “Joan is running a fever. Greet her with a note.”

Be careful that what you say about others is for their benefit, not to tear them down. If a person needs rebuke for private sins, then speak to that person yourself, if that is what God leads you to do. Public false teaching is another matter. We are to reject it and warn people publicly away from those who are documented as having taught false teaching or of giving false prophecies. That is not gossip; it is obeying God’s Word. But talking about people behind their backs hypocritically can only give the enemy a foothold.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

By doing these kinds of things we not only give the devil a foothold, we grieve the Holy Spirit living in our new self. I believe that if we kept this in mind always, it would keep us from sin. Next time you are about to do something you know is sinful, **think about the Holy Spirit living in you.** We have to understand that the Spirit of Christ lives in us. We strain that relationship when we disobey Him. This is not something you want to do. The Lord is long suffering but there is a limit to His patience. I don’t know where that limit is, but I have seen it in the lives of characters in the Bible, as well as people I have known.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

So these are the types of sins we need to rid ourselves of. Yes, Christ will forgive our sins if we confess them. But we must confess them and repent of them—turn away from them. That is our job. He doesn’t say that God automatically gets rid of all our sins if we continue to commit them. Our sins are forgiven in Christ if we repent, but we must still turn from continuing in them. We must get rid of bitterness toward people. Bitterness leads to revenge. We must get rid of rage and anger. Anger that has turned to rage is not good anger. We must get rid of fighting. We must stop slandering people by gossiping about them. We must get rid of every form of malice. What is “malice”? The dictionary defines it as:

- *The intention or desire to cause harm (as death, bodily injury, or property damage) to another through an unlawful or wrongful act without justification or excuse.*
- *Wanton disregard for the rights of others or for the value of human life.*

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- *An improper or evil motive or purpose; a deep-seated meanness.*

Malice is, then, the end product of bitterness, rage, anger, and brawling. What happens is we can end up planning or carrying out harm against others. This is a big problem all over the world, and it all starts with bitterness and anger. If you continue in bitterness and anger you will give the enemy a foothold where he can get you to proceed to malice.

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

So how can we put on the new self and avoid the pitfalls of those sins we just covered? By being kind and compassionate to one another. By forgiving one another just as Christ has forgiven us. One thing that struck me one time when I was listening to people in church pray the Lord's Prayer was how dangerous it is to repeat that prayer without thinking. Think about it. We pray without thinking about these words: *Forgive us our debts (or sins) as we forgive our debtors (or those who sin against us)*. This is a dangerous prayer. We are giving God the condition that He can forgive us as we forgive others. I think we need to think clearly before we just easily pray this prayer without thinking. How many times do we not forgive others and yet expect God to forgive us? We need to practice what we preach. We need to do unto others what we expect God will do for us.

Study in Ephesians

Don't Be Deceived

(8) Ephesians 5:1-20

A fox once saw a crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree. "That's for me, as I am a fox," said Master Reynard the fox, and he walked up to the foot of the tree. "Good-day, Mistress Crow," he cried. "How well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds." The crow lifted up her head and began to caw her best, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Master Fox. "That will do," said he. "That was all I wanted. In exchange for your cheese I will give you a piece of advice for the future. Do not trust flatterers." (Source: Aesop's Fables)

The purpose of becoming mature in Christ is so we will gain discernment with regards to truth and error. Jesus Himself warned us not to be deceived. He foretold of deception coming on the world that was so tricky to discern that even the elect may be deceived.

*Matthew 24:4-5 and 24 And Jesus answered and said to them: "**Take heed that no one deceives you.** 'For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'" ...**For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.** (NKJV)*

I used this verse from the NKJV because I think the NIV is quite far away from a true translation of the verse. In fact, every English translation of this verse is not as accurate as it should be. The only words used at the end of this verse in Greek are "*dunatos*"=possible "*kaì*"=and "*ho*"=the "*eklektos*" elect. So the last part of verse five should be translated "possible and the elect." "If possible even" is a stretch in the NKJV. "If that were possible" in the KJV and the NIV is not even in the original at all. The stress is not on whether or not the actual elect can be deceived. Only God knows who the elect are. For the time being we have to make a commitment to follow and obey the Lord. So the Lord's emphasis is not on the argument on whether the elect can be deceived, but on the fact that the coming deception is so severe that even the elect could be fooled.

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If we put on the new self, then we will not be deceived if we remain in tune with the Holy Spirit and in His Word.

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children

2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Love is a central theme of Christianity. God loved us enough to send His Son to die for us. He sent His Holy Spirit to be our Helper. God dearly loves us as His children. He takes care of us more than earthly parents take care of their children. In turn, our lives need to be lives that show the love of Christ. We need to give ourselves to the Lord and to others as an offering and sacrifice to God just as Jesus Christ did for us. He is our example. The Apostles are our examples. At this point, I think it might be beneficial to read the “love chapter” which is 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Cor. 13:1-13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

Unfortunately, the Ephesians were involved in a number of things they should not have been. So Paul addresses some of these. These are still our problems today. Christians are to be salt and light to the world.

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Matt. 5:13-16 ***“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”***

Because of our witness in the world, the lives we live must be consistent with what we say we believe. Therefore, we need to keep away from any hint of sexual immorality. Of course, this covers blatant sexual sin, but it also covers the appearance of sexual sin.

1 Thess. 5:22 ***Abstain from all appearance of evil (KJV).***

This is why, for instance, I don't believe that male pastors should counsel females alone in their office behind closed doors. The only time when it would be permissible is if their husband is present, or the pastor's wife is present. This avoids the "hint" of immorality even if no sin is ever committed. I have seen more ministries destroyed by male pastors counseling married or unmarried women alone.

In the same way, we are to avoid impurity and greed. Impurity can mean lustful ideas, wrong motives, impure thoughts, and rebelliousness of many kinds. Greed covers the areas of covetousness (lusting after other people's things) and the love of money. Why are we not to engage in such things? Because God says they are improper for God's holy people, and because our God-given conscience tells us they are wrong. Remember that we already studied that the Holy Spirit abides in us. We must keep in step with the Spirit and reject the old man.

4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Obscenity is coarse talk, vulgar speech. It can be talk about sex, or it can be dirty language. Along with obscenity, foolish talk and coarse joking are mentioned. What comes out of your mouth betrays who you are. I can tell if a person is a believer or not almost immediately by how they talk. Believers, on the other hand, are careful about what they say. They would rather use their mouths to praise God and thank Him than to use it to try to fit in with the world. Worldly people talk dirty, and they expect their friends to do the same. It is the same everywhere in the world. I have often heard people who claim to be Christians talking dirty when they get

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away from the church. This is not how true believers should act. The Bible tells us that the tongue is like the small rudder of a ship or a small spark that can start a destructive fire.

James 3:4-8 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Only God can change a man's tongue. Those who are true followers of Christ are those who are allowing Jesus Christ to keep their tongues in check.

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

How serious is it for a Christian to ignore the prompting of the Holy Spirit to holiness, and instead engage in immorality, greed, and filthy language? Anyone, believer or not, who consistently sins in these ways, without repentance, is in danger of hell. Don't deceive yourself and don't let others deceive you into thinking that you will escape God's wrath by engaging in these things. Often repeated is the phrase "let no one deceive you." People who claim that God will accept wickedness and allow people entrance to heaven can deceive us. There are many false teachers in the churches today who claim this very thing. "God loves the wicked." "God loves and accepts you as you are." If God accepts you as you are, why did He have to send His Son to die in your place? Why do you have to recognize you are a sinner, repent, and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved? Don't be deceived by those who say immorality (like homosexuality), greed (like building huge churches so you can make and spend lots of money) and filthy language (mocking, coarse talk) are just fine with God. Here are some things God does not want Christians to be deceived about. The reason I say Christians is because worldly people are already deceived about reality and have no hope of understanding without Christ. But Christians can be deceived. The following passages were writ-

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ten to Christians.

*James 1:13-16 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.***

A false teaching today in the churches is what is called "the devil made me do it." Christians either lay the blame for what has happened to them on the devil or God. The fact is that our sin nature and our giving in to it is to blame completely. We are tempted, not by God, but by the devil and our own evil desires, but in the end we have the choice to make. We choose to either sin or not to sin. We can deceive ourselves by believing people who blame God or the devil for our own sinful choices.

*Gal. 6:7-8 **Do not be deceived:** God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows.** The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

Another false teaching in churches is called "Universalism." It teaches that everyone will be saved in the end, no matter if they believed in Jesus or not because "God is a loving God" and will not send anyone to hell. This idea is becoming very popular. But the biblical facts are that a man reaps what he sows. If he sows to his fallen nature, he will reap destruction. If he sows to the Spirit, he will reap eternal life. Don't deceive yourself by thinking you can do whatever you please now and be granted eternal life.

*1 Cor. 6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.***

Many churches have ignored what the Bible clearly states about the sin of homosexuality and sexual immoralities of all kinds. A number of "Christian" denominations are even ordaining homosexual and lesbian pastors. This is an abomination. None of those who practice the lifestyles mentioned above without repenting and turning to Christ will be saved.

Luke 21:8 He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time

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is near.' Do not follow them."

Matt. 24:4-5 *Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you.*

For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, 'and will deceive many."

Mark 13:22 *For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible.*

There have been many false teachers who have gone out claiming they have seen Christ in visions or in their homes. They claim He is going to show up in public in meetings. They even claim that they themselves are little Christs. They claim they are the anointed ones, meaning little Messiahs. Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, Kenneth Hagin, and many others have claimed this. There will be so many false Christs and false prophets in the end times that they will even deceive, possibly, the elect.

2 Timothy 3:12-15 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

We have to understand that there are evil men posing as true believers who are going from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. That is how it works. If you hang out with deceivers you have a very good chance of being deceived. When deception has taken hold, you then pass on your deception to others. Then you go find other deceivers and get more deceived. It is a downward spiraling process that can only be halted by complete renunciation of any ties to deceivers and their deceiving doctrines and practices. This is why it is almost impossible for a person to repent once they have started down the road to deception. The only way is if they listen to the convicting of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and Christians who are trying to bring them back to the truth, repent of their sins, and walk away from deception.

1 Cor. 3:18-20 *Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."*

Colossians 2:4 *I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by*

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fine-sounding arguments.

There are many today who claim special revelation from God, or that they have special insight into the things of God. They may even seem wise by the standards of this age. Rick Warren recently published an article in the Ladies Home Journal, the title of which was “Learn How to Love Yourself.” This sounds wise by the standards of this age, but the Bible tells us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ. We need to realize that the wisdom of this age is foolishness and allow God to change our thinking, our belief system, and our worldview through His Word. To get out of deception, you have to ask God to change your worldview.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

Another deception that is being taught in the churches is that Jesus Christ is not coming back until after the Church takes control of the world. These people also often mock the Rapture. They say Christ is not coming back soon. We have lots of time. They teach that there is a great revival taking place where the whole world will be saved. Even here in Hawaii, some churches have been passing around a prophecy for years that every person in Hawaii will be saved and that Hawaii will be the first entirely Christian State. But they foolishly forget that the rebellion, the falling away, and the antichrist will come first. We are in the middle of a falling away—an apostasy in the churches—yet many have deluded themselves that we are in revival. This is a great deception. There can be no revival without the clear preaching of the Gospel and sound doctrine, which is, by in large, not happening. They are simply setting the stage for a world church under a world government led by the antichrist.

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Many churches teach that when you become a Christian you actually become perfect and holy. This comes from a movement called the “Holiness” movement that is one of the catalysts behind the modern day Third Wave. But a believer is only holy because they are in Christ. Christ has substituted His holiness for their sin in the eyes of the Father. We still live here and struggle against our sinful nature. This is why we need to take up our cross daily and die to sin. This is why we must put on the armor of God and stand against Satanic attacks. The Holy Spirit is in the process of changing obedient believers to be more like Christ in holiness,

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but we will not attain holiness on this earth. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

One of the biggest deceptions in the churches is that people can go to church, listen to preaching, sing, and fellowship, and yet not put into practice what they have learned. This is deception—one of the biggest modern deceptions in the churches. The idea of “worship” has been redefined to mean the time where Christians in churches sing songs, clap, jump up and down, raise their hands, and act like they are truly worshipping God. Then they go out during the week and live just as they want to live without regard to Christian witness and obeying His Word.

7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

So don't associate with people who are teaching and doing what I have mentioned above in the churches. Don't associate with those in the world who are sinning, and don't be deceived by so-called Christians who are teaching false teachings. Don't partner with people who are not obeying the Lord, inside or outside the churches. You should witness to unbelievers, but don't join in their sinful activities. You can rebuke those who are deceiving people in the churches, but don't join in with them just because they say you have to be in unity. Remind them that Christians are brothers because of unity of the Spirit AND unity of the Faith. Without unity of the Faith, you cannot be a brother to those who are deceiving and being deceived.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)...

As I stated before, we are salt and light. We were once in the darkness. Don't go back to the darkness by following the world or deceivers in the churches. Live in the light. Be honest and truthful. If you live in the light, you will exhibit the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Be good to others, be righteous in your actions and motives, stand up for the truth, and speak it boldly.

10 ...and find out what pleases the Lord.

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Instead of finding out what pleases you, like our modern culture tells us to do and people like Rick Warren write articles about, find out what pleases God. A old evangelist was once asked the question: “What is the meaning of life?” He answered, “To please God.” Such a simple answer and yet so profound. When you think about it, you find it is true. The meaning of life is ultimately to please the One who made us, sustains all life, redeemed those who believe in Him, and will take those who please Him to be with Him. How do you please God? By being found by the Father in Jesus Christ. God has done it all.

Isaiah 46:4 *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

Our response to His grace is to bow down our mind, body, and spirit in obedience to Him.

11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

We are to expose those who are deceiving people. We are to bring to light the lies and deception they are fooling others with. We are to bring their sinful deeds to light. This is so that we can help others to not be deceived. But we must first expose these things in ourselves. We must expose them to the light of the Word of God and to the Holy Spirit. We do that by recognizing them, confessing them, repenting or turning from them, and obeying what the Lord wants us to do. How do we know what? By constant use of the Bible and asking the Holy Spirit to expose the darkness within us. Only when we do that, can we expose the darkness in others and perhaps help them to the light.

12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

***13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:
“Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”***

You need to be careful about exposing private sins in public. We need to follow the instructions of the Bible in exposing shameful private sins.

Matt. 18:15 *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault,*

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just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

The idea is that private sin needs to be exposed in such a way that gives the sinner a chance to repent. If they are immediately exposed in public, they will be alienated from the church and the chances of them being redeemed are rare. As to public false teaching and false prophecy, that can be dealt with in public. It is a good idea to try to reason with a false teacher, but if they refuse, then there is a mandate to bring those things to the attention of the churches as the Apostles did. Sin, when it is exposed to the light, either takes root and grows or it dies. If it remains in the dark, it can grow to the point where it can affect many people. Only the light of Christ will expose sin and deception.

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

We need to take the opportunity to expose sins in ourselves to the Word of God, expose sin in the world, and in the churches. A wise Christian is one who does this. A foolish Christian allows sin to continue and, thus, becomes deceived himself. We need to make the most of every opportunity to preach the Gospel and expose evil because we live in evil times.

17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Many Christians do not understand that it is the will of God to expose evil. They have been deceived by our age into thinking that it is God's will to be tolerant and understanding of sin. That is not how we are to be. We are foolish if we do not understand God's will in this.

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

The Bible states that a little wine is good for your health.

1 Timothy 5:23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

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But a lot of alcohol causes people to get drunk, and the more they drink, the more they want to get drunk.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

We are not to get drunk on wine, but desire to be filled with the Spirit. Now this passage is not comparing the work of the Spirit to alcohol. This idea is a contrasting idea. Alcohol and the Spirit are opposite ideas. Yet we see false teachers all over the world teaching that being “drunk in the spirit” is a good thing.

<u>Drunk</u>	<u>Filled With The Spirit</u>
Out of control	In control
Lose ability to reason properly	Clean and clear mind, discernment
Careless, who you are with	Careful, who you are with
Easily angered/violent	Peace loving, can be angry and not sin
Worried about your feelings	Focused on Christ and others
Escape from problems	Deal with problems

This is why the teaching in Third Wave churches that we need to be drunk in the Spirit is so foreign to what the Scriptures teach us—to be Spirit-filled believers. Let’s look at some of the observed effects of being “slain in the spirit,” also called “drunk in the spirit”:

Laughing, crying, shaking, running around the building, fast dancing, running followed by collapse; barking-howling, trances, drunkenness, falling out, oinking, being “hot,” fanning self or blowing, walking like chickens, high pitched whine reminiscent of a lively horse, mooing and crowing, swimming in the spirit on the back and also breast stroke style, women going through imaginary birth pangs, loss of consciousness, trying to soar like eagles, hissing and moving like a snake, inability to speak and involuntary body spasms, kung fu-like stances, vomiting in the spirit, holy head-banging, and stripping.

These are actions observed in these churches as a result of being slain or drunk in the spirit, and these churches claim it is the Holy Spirit and it is a blessing from God. But, when you look at the Bible, you find that these things have more to do with being drunk on alcohol or being possessed of a demon than the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry

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Matthew 8:28 *When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. **They were so violent that no one could pass that way.***

Matt. 17: 15 *“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. **“He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.***

Luke 4: 33-35 *In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, “Habakkuk! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God!” “Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” **Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.***

Luke 8: 27-29 *When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, **he cried out and fell at his feet**, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. **Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.***

Luke 9:42 *Even while the boy was coming, **the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion.** But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.*

The Holy Spirit causes people to be just the opposite of drunk.

Gal. 5:22-25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.***

**19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,
20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Instead, what do we find in the gatherings of the saints? Encouraging one another with psalms. The Psalms of David and others have always been a great encouragement to Christians, especially during hard times. Christians are to sing spiritual songs, not worldly songs. Christians are always singing in their hearts to the Lord, and that comes out in the way they treat oth-

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ers. The reason we give thanks to the Lord for food at our meals is that we should always be giving thanks. I love to do this. I love to spend much of my time thanking the Lord, not just for what He has done for me, but what He has done and is doing for others. I trust Him that He is taking care of those who love Him, so I thank Him for that often. We thank the Lord in the name of Jesus Christ because it is only because of Him that we came to know how thankful we are to God the Father. This is likely why many end their prayers with “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is not mandatory that we do that, but we just naturally thank the Father in the name of the Son for all He has done for us.

Study in Ephesians

Submission and Love

(9) Ephesians 5:21-6:9

When I was younger, I used to sing a childhood song in Palau to try to make it stop raining, which had its genesis in superstition and the old religions of Palau. The song went: “A chull a bekeu, a sils a medakd.” This means: “The rain is courageous and strong, the sun is afraid.” I sang this song until one day I was singing it and it stopped raining right where I was and the sun came out while it continued to rain all around me. That scared me and I stopped singing that song. But there is an old fable that talks about the wind and the sun.

The Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger. Suddenly they saw a traveler coming down the road.

The Sun said: “I see a way to decide our dispute. Whichever of us can cause that traveler to take off his cloak shall be regarded as the stronger. You begin.”

So the Sun retired behind a cloud, and the Wind began to blow as hard as it could upon the traveler. But the harder he blew the more closely did the traveler wrap his cloak round him, till at last the Wind had to give up in despair.

Then the Sun came out and shone in all his glory upon the traveler, who soon found it too hot to walk with his cloak on. (The Wind And The Sun, Aesop’s Fable)

This fable teaches us two things. (1) Power can’t force submission. The wind blew with all its power, but sometimes displays of power can have the opposite effect. (2) Love can earn submission. The Sun was just doing what it did best and, through this act of love, it won the contest. This is similar to what we will learn about submission in this passage.

Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The basis of submission in marriage and in the Church is our reverence for Christ. If you reverence Christ (love Him, respect Him, adore Him) you will place yourself in submission to Christ. If husbands are in submission to Christ, wives will submit to their husbands, husbands will love their wives, children will submit to parents, and servants will submit to those over them. God’s creation is brought into perfect order by submis-

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sion.

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

God created an order to the universe. Everything has its place and everything has its significance. Nothing is chance or random in God's plan. God created everything, and His crowning achievement was man. After He had made man from the dust of the ground, He made a woman for him, taking one rib from the man. This is significant because man was made first, then woman was made out of man. From the beginning God made one man for one woman. The woman was made from the man to be a helpmate for him. The man was to love his wife and cleave to her alone—flesh of his flesh. This relationship was a picture of God's own nature. Marriage and family is a picture of the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, so the Father sent Jesus. The relationship of the Church to Christ is also a picture of bride and bridegroom. So, to have the picture correct, you must have one wife for one man, just as there is one Church under one Jesus Christ. Wives are to submit to their husbands as head over them and their household, just as the Church is to submit to Christ. To have the correct nature of things, the husband must be the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. Wives have just as important a role to play in life and marriage as the body of Christ does in life. But the Church must be in submission to Christ. In the same way, the woman must be in submission to the husband.

But this picture has been ruined by the world. On one hand, you have the Muslims who lord it over their women and force them to submit. On the other hand, you have many Western societies that tell the woman she should not submit to anyone, least of all her husband. But these false worldly ideas only take us further away from understanding the nature of God. When women and men have a right relationship they will begin to understand the divine order of things in heaven and on earth.

Submission is not a negative thing. Jesus was always submissive to the will of the Father, and look what He accomplished. A wife should always be submissive to the will of her husband. This does not mean she should submit to unlawful things. Husbands and wives should always discuss all matters pertaining to their lives. But someone has to make a final decision on

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important matters, and that is the role of the man. The man, who we will get to in a moment, should not use his role as a way to dominate his wife and exert his will at all times. He must love his wife and respect her opinions because many times she will be right, especially if she is a godly woman.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

By the way, wives are to love their husbands also, not just submit to them. In the same way, the husband should love his wife just like Christ loves His church. That means being willing to lay down your life for your wife. Christ laid down His life to bring salvation and righteousness to His Church. This is the picture a good husband should keep in mind in how he should treat his wife. You will help your wife to be holy by loving her, studying and discussing the Word together. People naturally love themselves. Don't be fooled by those who say we need to learn to love ourselves like Rick Warren. Ephesians 5:28 says that we love our own bodies, and this is the measure by which husbands should test to see if they love their wives. Our problem, both male and female, is not that we don't love ourselves enough. The human condition is that we naturally love ourselves from when we are little children, thinking mainly of how we feel and what we want. We then become both too selfish and prideful or, on the other hand, too self-pitying. Either way these are both extremes of the same thing—self-love. Husbands need to respect their wives if they want respect FROM their wives. If you love your wife, emulating the way Christ loves His Church, then you will show that you love yourself in the right way. Submission and love are all wrapped up together. You cannot love and submit to someone unless you trust them. Those who are saved trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have solid Christian marriages trust one another. The wife trusts the husband and loves him, so she submits to him. The husband trusts and loves his wife, so he submits to Christ. This is the order which God created. When we go against that order, we will not be living a fulfilled life and subsequently show that we do not love the Lord enough to obey His commands.

29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares

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*for it, just as Christ does the church—
30 for we are members of his body.*

No one hates himself. Yet psychology, both secular and Christian, says people tend to hate themselves and need to learn how to love themselves. The emphasis is on what the self wants and needs. The emphasis of the Bible is just the opposite. It says we love our own bodies. In fact, it is hard to think of anything else. We worry more about food, health, sex, and every other fleshly indulgence more than any other generation before us. The Bible tells us to deny ourselves, yet our world today says to deny ourselves nothing.

*Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, **he must deny himself** and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

If we think all the time about feeding and caring for ourselves, then we need to learn to focus that caring and feeding on our spouses, just as Christ cares for and feeds His Church. The picture is the body of Christ. Christ cares for His body. Husbands should care for the bodies of their wives instead of themselves all the time, because they are one flesh. Not only should they care for their bodies, but they should care for their souls.

***31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."
32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.***

When a husband and wife get married, they become one. Therefore they are a new family unit and no longer have the same bond with father and mother. What Paul is addressing here is not so much the earthly meaning of this saying, but the picture it makes concerning Christ and His body. When we become married to Christ, we become part of a new family unit. We are no longer part of the world of the flesh, but we have become the children of Christ in the Spirit. This is another reason marriage is such a holy thing. It is a direct picture of the mystery of Christ and His Church. When you leave the world and become part of Christ, you also submit to Christ. You must not divorce Christ. You must love Christ as He loves you.

33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

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This is summing up what Paul is teaching. The picture of marriage is that the husband must love his wife, and the wife must respect her husband as the head. The Lord established these institutions so that we would think about them and understand better our relationship to Christ in the His body.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—

3 “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

The same picture is carried forward to the children. They are, in turn, to obey their parents as the wife submits to the husband (and to God), as the husband loves the wife, and as the husband submits to God. Note that the first of the Ten Commandments is to love the Lord thy God and not have any gods before Him. Actually the fifth commandment is to honor your father and mother. But when you look at the commandments in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 you will find, in most Bibles, a paragraph marker there. Here is the reason: It is the first commandment that has a specific promise with it.

Exod. 20:12 “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

The facts are that children who do not obey their parents often end up living short lives. They end up on drugs, abusing their bodies, getting into trouble and fights, sexual sins, and ruining their lives in any number of ways. This is because they refused to obey their parents and listen to them. Most of my early childhood friends in Palau are either dead, crazy, in jail, or Christians. In many cases of young childhood deaths, you will find that they are due to the fact that the child was disobeying their parents and doing things they were warned not to do. So this promise in Exodus was not only true for the children of Israel, who it is directly addressed to, but true for any children.

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

On the other hand parents, especially fathers, need to be careful that they are instructing their children in such a way that the children will respect them and listen. Many fathers simply yell at their children and give them

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punishment instead of explaining the situation in love. Punishment is good and needed in a number of circumstances, but the child needs to understand that he/she has made a wrong sinful choice, and that consequences for small sins are a way to learn to avoid being judged by God later. Fathers should stress biblical solutions and training for their children. Don't just yell at them because they will grow up thinking you don't really care about them, and they are just getting in your way. If you expect your children to obey you, then you need to train them the right way and don't cause them to give up.

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

The third picture of Christ and the Church is one of slaves and masters. Today fewer and fewer places on earth have slaves, but there was a time when most places allowed for slavery. But we do have a modern day situation that is similar. It would be in the workplace. You have bosses and employees in businesses, presidents and membership in organizations, principals and teachers in schools, etc. Now these situations are not exactly the same because most people today have a certain amount of choice as to whom they will work for. Slaves often did not. But those under leadership should also submit to that leadership because it is also part of submission to Christ. We choose to submit to Christ, so also we choose to submit to leadership. The only time we do not submit to earthly leadership is when it conflicts with submitting to God. Then a choice has to be made, and the most important person to submit to is Christ. But God has told us to submit to earthly leadership because He is the one that allows it to continue.

Romans 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

This does not mean that every governing authority is godly. It just means that God has established authorities to keep the peace and establish order. Some societies do that well, others do that poorly. Again, we must submit to governing authorities unless it conflicts with submitting to God.

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

If you serve well, you are being salt and light. You are a living witness for

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Christ in the workplace and in life. So we should serve those over us with our whole hearts as long as they do not ask us to say or do things that are against our submission to Christ. As Christians, God will reward our works of obedience to Him. This does not just apply to slaves but to everyone. Slaves and masters, bosses and employees, principals and teachers, in prison or free, we must realize that God has established His order on earth to help us understand Himself. If we obey Him, He will reward us. If we disobey Him, He will not reward us but will try to bring us to repentance. If He cannot bring us to repentance, we prove we do not love Him by not obeying Him (John 14:15).

9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Notice that the same type of command for the husband who is the head of his wife and children is true for the master who is head of his slaves. Masters must also treat their slaves, not with threats, but with understanding. This goes for bosses, principals, presidents, etc. God will judge the lowly servant the same way he judges the master. God shows no favoritism to certain types of people based on their lot in life. God views women and men the same, employer and employee the same, master and slave the same.

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter began to speak: ***“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”***

Everyone has a role to play in life, and we should accept that role as the Lord gives it to us in life. Sometimes we have a choice, as in an employer/employee situation. Sometimes we do not have a choice, as in man/woman or master/slave circumstance. We need to accept our lot in life and trust the Lord because He is the rewarder of those who serve Him and obey His commands.

Heb. 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**

1 Samuel 26:23 **The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness.** The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed.

Study in Ephesians

Put on the Armor

(10) Ephesians 6:10-23

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

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

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Satan will tempt you and defeat you if you don't accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and then follow that up by putting on armor of God. Our fight is not against flesh, but against the devil and his fallen angels.

Who is the devil?

- (1) Satan's existence is mentioned in 19 of the 27 New Testament books; in the gospels 29 references are given to Satan, 25 of these by Christ.
- (2) Satan's origin is found in Ezekiel 28 and he is referred to as "the anointed cherub" and his rebellion is found in Isaiah 14 in the five "I will's." According to Revelation 12:4, a third of the angels

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in heaven followed him at that time. Satan is mighty, but *not* almighty, wise but *not* all knowing. Satan is not equal with God or Jesus Christ; he is a created angel of the highest rank.

- (3) There are as many as 40 different titles given to him in Scripture; i. e. *Devil* means “accuser,” because he accuses God’s people day and night before the throne of God (Rev. 12:7-11). *Satan* means “adversary,” because he is the enemy of God. He is also called the *tempter* (Matt. 4:3), and the *murderer* and the *liar* (John 8:44). He is compared to a *lion* (1 Peter 5:8), a *serpent* (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9), and an *angel of light* (2 Cor. 11:13-15), as well as “*the god of this age*” (2 Cor. 4:4). God has already dealt with some of the fallen angels.

2 Peter 2:4-5 For God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment, and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly...

Jude 6 ...And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

A.E. Dickason writes about Satan's wiles or strategies:

“God is light, Satan is darkness and desires to keep light from others. God is love and promotes love, Satan is hateful and promotes hate. God is life and creates life, whereas Satan operates in the realm of death. Satan's counterfeit system may be irreligious. He may deny the existence of God or His control. To explain the world, he substitutes evolution for creation, uniformitarianism (the theory that all geologic phenomena may be explained as the result of existing forces having operated uniformly from the origin of the earth to the present time.= evolution) for (God's) providence (creation), human progress for divine salvation, and man's utopia for God's Kingdom on earth. Atheism, agnosticism, pragmatism, existentialism, and relativism are his substitutes for truth.”

Satan also promotes counterfeit religions through doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1) and false teachers (2 Cor. 11:13-15) with twisted scripture.

In verse 12, we also learn that Satan's army is described in various terms. We don't know for sure how the enemy arranges his angels, but the Bible does seem to give us some clues.

- (1) **Principalities** - perhaps demons who have the oversight of nations.

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- (2) **Powers** - perhaps the privates who are the demons wanting to possess human beings
- (3) **Rulers of darkness of this world** - perhaps demons who have charge of Satan's worldly business.
- (4) **Spiritual wickedness in high places** - perhaps demons in the heavenlies who have charge of religion.

False spiritual warfare teachers teach that we can bind Satan, cast down territorial spirits, and spiritually replace them in the heavenlies, and that we can do spiritual mapping to discover the names of demons so they can be commanded and cast out. None of these ideas are from the Bible and, in fact, these concepts are from the world of the occult and witchcraft. Stay away from “Christians” who claim we should do spiritual warfare in those ways. They need to read what the Bible actually teaches about spiritual warfare. We are told to pray for boldness to proclaim the Gospel and for protection from the evil one, but we do not command God or claim we can get rid of demons, with the exception of casting out demons from individuals. Territorial demons, if there is such a thing, are there until God judges them at the great white throne judgment.

Let me tell you a little story about real protection of God, just because people were living in obedience to Him. In the Bible, there is a story about Elisha and his servant. A huge army surrounded the city they were in. The servant was very afraid. He came running to Elisha, but Elisha said that the armies of the Lord would protect them. The servant said, “Where are the armies of the LORD?” So Elisha prayed and the servant’s eyes were opened and he could see that the mountains surrounding the armies of Syria were full of the armies of God with chariots of fire. This is an amazing story.

But let me tell you a story that relates to this one from my own life. My father was a missionary in Palau, and there was also a man who had worked for the mission for a long time. But this worker had a severe drinking problem and he beat his wife and children many times and threatened everyone. So my father asked him to clean up his act or he would not be able to work for the mission any longer. Well, the man did not clean up his act but kept right on doing the same things. So my father called him in before the other workers and missionaries and fired him, as he said he would. From then on, until my father was lost at sea, this man was very angry at him and tried to kill him many times. My father, mother, and those in Bethania spent many nights in prayer that this man would not harm the girls at the school, his family, or our family. One night, while the school was watching a film strip about Elisha and his servant and the ar-

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mies of the LORD, this former worker got very drunk and decided he was going to finally and truly kill my father and burn the school down. He set off from his village many miles away and told people along the path that he was going to kill my father and burn the school down. As it happens, there is a little bridge over a small creek right before the school campus in Ngaraard. This creek is only about 5 feet wide. It was there that this man stopped and would go no further. The magistrate from the village had heard that this man was going to kill my father and was coming down the path from the opposite direction by the school to stop him. When he got across the small bridge, he noticed that the man had stopped and had a terrified look on his face. The magistrate asked him what was wrong. The man said "Look, can't you see? The whole school is covered in water. It is all ocean now." Well, guess what? When the magistrate looked back he saw it too. The whole campus no longer existed. It was covered in water. So they both ran back to the village very afraid.

This story is true and really happened. The Lord was protecting my family and everyone at the school, and this was not the only time. It is very likely that we could not have protected ourselves that night. But Jesus was protecting us with unseen miracles simply because He protects those who are faithful to Him.

I would like to briefly go through each piece of armor the Lord tells us to wear in this chapter. First, in verse 14, it mentions the BELT OF TRUTH. This needs to be buckled around our waist. You know, the waist is usually very close to the middle of our body, and in biblical times it was thought of as the seat of the emotions. Some waists are bigger than others, as you may have noticed. Usually our pants (or skirts) are held up by our belt, and our shirt (or blouse) is tucked in and held in by it. Without a belt, our pants would fall down and our shirt would fly in the wind. There are even belts to protect our insides. In Germany, they make a belt that is supposed to keep the kidneys and spleen warm during the winter. So belts hold together, and they also protect. This is what truth does. Truth holds things together in harmony. Lies tend to break things apart eventually, and everything falls down.

One time I remember when we were little kids, my sister decided to color on the table in my room. When my parents saw the marks, they immediately suspected me, since I was usually the culprit, and asked me if I had done it. I told them I didn't do it. When they asked my sister, she said, "No." Well, there were only four people who could have done it, and two of them were my parents, so that left only my sister and me. And I was somewhat beyond the writing-on-table-tops phase, and was not in the

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room at the time of the crime, so that really only left one possible suspect. But my sister continued to claim that she didn't do it. It took a whole afternoon to get the truth out of my sister. It was such an ordeal that I think it taught my sister a lesson she never forgot. To this day, she is one of the more truthful and honest people I know.

Lies eventually get found out, but truth eventually wins out. The BELT OF TRUTH allows us to keep our lives together. It gives us what they call integrity. If you have the Holy Spirit living in you, the Spirit of Truth, then He will convict you when you lie, you will confess it, and once more put on the BELT OF TRUTH. Where can you find the truth? Go to the source of ultimate truth, the written Word of God.

*John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth.***

If you profess to be a Christian, but are either denying the voice of the Spirit through God's Word or you are not a true believer, then you will continue to live a life of lies and deceit—deceiving and being deceived. Those who have the Spirit of truth will live in the truth. What is one of the most important truths?

*John 3:16-21 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. **But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.**”*

Next is the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is located around the chest and protects one of our most vital organs—the heart. The heart can be broken or pierced through if we don't have this protection on, if we are following our old sinful nature. When we follow our own nature and are sinful, this weakens our heart. We lose the desire to accomplish great things for Christ and, instead, choose to compromise. We lose the desire to live within the law, and this makes us hurt inside. When we are hurting inside, we do things on the outside that are hurtful to others.

I remember many times in my life before I gave my life to Jesus, where I was doing things outwardly because of the hurt I was feeling in my heart. I

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got into many fights because of this. I would even go looking for fights, both physical and emotional, to somehow make that awful pain go away. I thought if I hurt other people and made them feel my pain, that somehow my own pain would be a little less. But it never worked that way. It just got worse. One of my oldest friends that I grew up with in Palau went out and killed a police detective one night. I was asleep in my house and woke up to hear his awful drunken screaming coming from his house. I thought that I should go over and see what was wrong, but then I thought he was just drunk and would soon go to sleep. But those screams come back to haunt me sometimes because they were screams of pain and hurt—heart hurt. The next morning I woke up to find policemen taking him away to prison. I learned a lesson because of this and other events, that what we were created for, what our conscience desires but can never attain, and what God wants for us, is righteousness and justice. Something deep inside of us is empty, hurting, and yearning to be healed, but we don't know how on our own. We don't want the pain. But, through Jesus Christ, that yearning for things to be made right in our hearts can come to life—abundant life. There is only one way to be righteous; that is to be found IN Christ by the Father. To be found IN Christ, we must believe in Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

***2 Cor. 5:21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The next armor is called FEET FITTED TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. Are your feet quick to spread peace? There are two gospels: The gospel of peace and the gospel of conflict, contention, fighting, anger, and hostility. Do we run to conflict and gossip or do we run to peace? Feet that run to conflict are always getting into trouble. Gossiping, talking about people behind their backs, putting people down, or trying to start fights will all help us to run away from Christ. Peacemaking, on the other hand, leads us and others closer to Christ.

I think especially of one man when I talk about this. If you have seen the movie or read the book about Nicky Cruz, I'm sure you would agree that David Wilkerson was a very brave man. His feet carried him into a battle zone. But his feet were fitted with the gospel of peace. He introduced peace to those gang members, probably for the first time in their lives, and they found the freedom that Jesus gives through the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that he bravely brought. David Wilkerson was a great peacemaker. It takes an extraordinarily brave person to be a peacemaker like that. The Gospel message preached, as it should be preached, is the ONLY thing that will bring peace to a world of conflict and hate.

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Paul and Silas in prison could have been angry, contentious, and ready to lay blame. They could have stood there with a cup in their hands banging it across the bars demanding that they were innocent. Instead, they were at peace, and they remembered that every situation gives us an opportunity to spread the Gospel of peace.

Acts 16:25-34 **About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.** Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."** Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

The next defense is the SHIELD OF FAITH. If we have faith to protect us, we can deflect aside all the lies and ugly things that Satan throws at us every day to try to make us not believe in Christ anymore and to cause us to go back to our sinful nature. We need to use this shield of faith and keep it strong with no holes or rust, with no chink in the armor. To do this, we need to read our Bibles every day and pray. This keeps us in close contact with the Lord, and Bible reading helps us to see, understand, and carry out God's plan for the world. It helps us learn about Him, and teaches us what we need to know to follow and obey Him. You know, even though I am a preacher and missionary kid and heard many things in the Bible all my life, there are many truths that I am still discovering today, and this will never end. This is because we worship a God who is greater than we can ever be. If we continue to build up the shield of faith, it will become strong and tall enough to even cover our whole body.

I remember seeing a movie about Alexander the Great once. An army, many times greater than his, surrounded him. They had numerous horses and also foot soldiers. Alexander knew that his men on foot would be killed by the soldiers on horses before they could even fight with the men on foot. So he devised a plan. His men had full body-length shields. They

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got in a square and put their shields side by side. When the army charged them and the men on horseback tried to kill them, they found that they couldn't penetrate the wall of shields. This gave enough time for Alexander's army of foot soldiers to get there, causing the opposing soldiers on horseback to give up trying to assault his foot soldiers. Then Alexander had his men break out of the square and fight the soldiers on foot. The men on horseback couldn't get in to kill them anymore because there were too many people fighting. Alexander won this war because of this clever use of his men's shields.

We need to build up our shield of faith and then use it against the enemy when he tries to sling his arrows at us. We must remain in the faith, keep the faith, and Christ has told us that we will live with Him forever.

***Rom. 10:17** Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

There are three more pieces of armor that we need to complete the full array. The HELMET OF SALVATION—without this, of course you are dead. The head is one of the first things a soldier will go for if he wants to kill his adversary. It is very vulnerable to many things. Our mind is a main battlefield of the enemy. If he can corrupt what we believe, he has won the battle. If he can get us to sin in our minds, the next step will be outward sin. The first thing we must do is to be saved and put on the helmet before we can expect to survive against Satan and sin.

***Romans 12:2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by **the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

This is the first item of armor a Christian warrior puts on. Otherwise, the rest of the armor is useless.

I remember hearing about an actor in the States who was very much against wearing a motorcycle helmet until he had a crash himself, hit his head, and was in the hospital for a long time. Now most States have a law that you have to wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle. Without a helmet, an accident can happen anytime.

Satan can rob you of your joy, your sanity, your family, your job, and your life if you do not have the HELMET OF SALVATION on your head. We must be sure we believe the truth about Jesus Christ and salvation with our minds. What you believe is the most important thing about you, and

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Satan will try to attack your belief system every chance he gets. This is because he knows that if he can get you believing in another Jesus, another Spirit, another Gospel, he has made you believe in vain. Be careful that false teachers and false prophets do not deceive you. Protect your belief system—your mind—with the HELMET OF SALVATION. Remember that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Next is the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. This is the Word of God—the Bible. We need to know God's Word to ward off Satan's attacks. It would be good to commit to memory passages from the Bible to have in mind when Satan tempts you. Even Jesus used Scripture to ward off Satan's attacks (Matt. 4:1-11). When He was tempted in the desert after fasting for 40 days, He used verses from the Bible each time to answer Satan's attacks. "It is written, it is written, it is written." Why did He do this? Because the Bible is the eternal Word of God, the all-powerful Word of God the Father, that is completely true and cuts down to the bone. Christ was showing us that the written Word of God is eternal and powerful. Remember what God has promised and claim those promises when Satan attacks. Satan cannot stand against the Word of God. The words of the Bible are not magic against Satan. It is the content of what they mean, the promises of God, the protection of God. Jesus Christ won the battle with Satan on the cross. We simply need to claim His protection and promises.

Last, but not least, we are asked to complete this armor by PRAYING ALWAYS. Prayer is keeping in contact with God. If the team is not in contact with the coach, if the army is not in contact with the general, then they will surely be defeated. We need to keep in contact with our leader.

Matt. 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

1 Timothy 2:8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

Prayer also protects. I try to pray for my children every night. I have found that sometimes, when I forget to pray for them for awhile, they may begin to have nightmares and wake up screaming or crying at night, or they begin to drift away from the Lord in their lives. Prayers cover them and protects them.

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*John 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you **protect them from the evil one.***

So put on armor of God. Be a soldier for God. Sometimes being a soldier is hard. We have to be brave. To stand up for what you believe is very hard. It takes work and discipline. It takes having your armor in place and ready at all times. It also takes submitting to God. To tell Him that we will be His servants no matter what happens. And if we serve Him, God has promised that He will be faithful to give us the reward of eternal life and a crown of glory.

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,
20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

This is a good prayer to pray. Many people pray all kinds of unbiblical prayers today to bind Satan, cast down territorial spirits, and all such things. But here we have a true spiritual warfare prayer in the context of one of the premiere teachings on spiritual warfare. We know that the true power to change people is in the Gospel message:

*Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, **because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.***

A very important prayer for fellow Christians is that they will have the boldness to proclaim the Gospel. Witnessing is not easy. It takes guts—supernatural guts. God can give you the supernatural guts to proclaim the Gospel if you really desire it as Paul did. Paul was in prison simply for preaching the Gospel. This could have made him fearful to continue. But because people were praying for him, he continued until he was finally put to death. Because of Paul, among other foundational Apostles, we have the Gentile church today, and countless Christians through the ages who are products of their witness. We owe them a great debt, but we also owe that debt to Christians who did spiritual warfare by praying that Paul would be fearless in his proclamation of the Gospel message.

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.
22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may

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know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

23 Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love

Paul sends his personal greetings to the church he is writing to. Tychicus would explain more to them when he delivered the letter. One of the ministries of Christians is encouragement. We don't see enough of that in the churches today. We are to encourage by preaching the Word and holding to sound doctrine.

*2 Timothy 4:2 **Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction.***

*Titus 1:9 **He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.***

We are to encourage young men to be self-controlled.

*Titus 2:6 Similarly, **encourage the young men to be self-controlled.***

We need to encourage people to be busy about the things of the Lord and to help the timid and the weak.

*1 Thessalonians 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, **warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.***

Leadership in the church is to teach the Word to encourage and rebuke.

*Titus 2:15 **These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.***

We are to encourage one another to live holy lives so that we will not be caught in sin.

*Hebrews 3:13 **But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.***

We should not give up meeting together, but continue to do so as an encouragement to each other as we wait for the return of Christ.

*Hebrews 10:25 **Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another— and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

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1 Thess. 5:11 Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing.

Notice one other thing in the wonderful salutation at the end of this chapter. Paul says: “Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” This is important. There are those who claim to love the Lord, but only do so when it is convenient, or for a little while. There are those who fall back into worldly things and attitudes because of the worries of the world. Paul says that the grace of the Lord is poured out on those who love Him, and keep on loving Him. As I have stated before, most of the time when the Bible says, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” it really means “keep believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Believe (*pisteuo*) is an active verb meaning to be believing, to commit. It is not a one-time belief or commitment, but a lasting commitment—a growing thing. To experience the grace of God and eternal life, we need an “undying love” for the Lord.