

WRITER

According to the statements of the writer in 1:1 and 3:1, it is affirmed that the apostle Paul was the Spirit-directed writer of this epistle (See "Writer" in intro. to Rm). The letter has the same literary style as other letters that were written by Paul, and thus, there are few who would dispute the authenticity of the Pauline authorship of the letter. It is a letter that was written to disciples whom Paul personally knew, for he had been in Ephesus many times, especially on a visit to the area when he met with the shepherds of the Christians in the region of Ephesus (At 20:17-38). We would assume, therefore, that there are some personal notes in this letter.

DATE

Ephesians is considered one of the prison epistles. It was written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment around A.D. 61-63 (See At 28:30). With the writing of the letter to the Colossians (3:1; 4:1; 6:20), Paul wrote this letter with a letter directed to Philemon and another letter to the church in Philippi. Therefore, Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon and Colossians are all called prison epistles because they were written by Paul from Roman imprisonment. It is possible that Tychicus, with other brethren, carried this letter, as well as the other three epistles, to the Asian churches (See 6:21; Cl 4:7-9).

THEME

The emphasis of this letter is on the global church (1:22,23). In this letter Paul speaks of the church of the Christ, while in the letter to the Colossians he emphasizes the Christ of the church. These two letters are related in their themes and purposes by connecting the sovereign head of the body to the disciples as a global organism of believers. Many of the verses in both letters convey similar thoughts. The doctrinal similarity of the two letters can be seen by a comparison of key thoughts in both letters (Compare 2:12; with Cl 1:21, compare Ep

2:14 with Cl 1:20, compare Ep 3:2 with Cl 1:25, compare Ep 3:5,6 with Cl 1:26,27, compare Ep 4:16 with Cl 2:19, compare Ep 5:20 with Cl 3:17, and compare Ep 6:9 with Cl 4:1). It is necessary for the biblical student, therefore, to study these two letters together when considering Jesus and the identity of a disciple of Jesus. Each letter complements the other in defining the nature of the body.

PURPOSE

It was Paul's primary purpose in this letter to emphasize the oneness of the organic function of the body as a result of the blessing of Jesus' redemptive work and present headship over all things. Jesus redeemed the body and is the head of the body of which all obedient believers are members. Paul writes to those who are older in the faith. He has two purposes in mind. (1) He reminds the Ephesian disciples of God's eternal redemptive purpose through the church (*ekklesia*) (1:4,5,9,11,13,20; 2:4,6,10; 3:11). (2) He reminds the predominantly Gentile disciples in Ephesus of their blessings that they have in Christ as a result of God's grace (1:3; 2:1-10). God's redemptive plan of salvation, therefore, is summed up in the church which He will bring into eternal dwelling when Jesus comes again. Those who would be called out of the world for eternal dwelling when King Jesus comes again, therefore, must be a part of the body of Christ.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ephesus was the chief city of a Roman province in western Asia. It was a center of trade and Roman government during Paul's day. It was located at the mouth of the Cayster River, and thus, became a center of trade for western Asia. It was also a center of religion, for it was the location of the temple of Diana (Greek, "Artemis"). Because of the grandeur of this temple, it was referred to as one of the seven wonders of the world. The temple was 130 meters long (425 feet) and about 68 meters wide (220 feet). Its roof was supported by 127 marble columns that were about twenty meters high (60 feet). Today, this temple lies in ruins, as well as the entire city of ancient Ephesus. It was also in Ephesus that a great stone the-

ater for the entertainment of the people was constructed. The theater seated almost 25,000 people.

Paul first visited the city of Ephesus on his second mission journey. It was on this visit that he left the husband-wife evangelistic team of Aquila and Priscilla, and then, journeyed on to Jerusalem (At 18:18-20). It was on this first visit to Ephesus, in Acts 18, that Paul preached in the synagogue of the Jews (At 18:19-21). However, after a brief visit, he had to go on to Jerusalem in order to be present during the Passover/Pentecost feast in Jerusalem. Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus in order to preach the gospel and establish the disciples in the faith. Apollos later arrived in Ephesus sometime after Paul's departure (At 18:24-28). He nurtured the existing disciples, as well as preached in the synagogue of the Jews.

On his third mission journey, Paul returned to Ephesus (At 19:1ff). It was during this visit that he remained in the city and area for a period of two years. During these two years he taught in the school of Tyrannus (At 19:8-10). As a result of his teaching in this school, all Asia heard the word as men went out from Ephesus, throughout the two years, to preach the gospel (At 19:10). Disciples in Laodicea, Colosse and Hierapolis may have resulted from this two-year stay of Paul in Ephesus.

The total amount of time Paul spent in Ephesus was about three years (At 20:31). Paul later left Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tm 1:3). Timothy was left in order to correct some false teachings that had arisen by the time Paul wrote the letter of 1 Timothy (1 Tm 1:3). However, after a brief stay of two to three years, Timothy went on to other places. It was several years later when Jesus directed a specific message to the disciples of Ephesus through the apostle John in the Revelation, at which time they had lost their first love and were in danger of having the candlestick of their influence removed from the area (See comments Rv 2:1-7). Ephesians, therefore, is an admonition to delay this turn from their first love.

The Purpose Of God Through The Church

(1:1-14)

Outline: (1) Greetings (1:1,2), (2) Blessings in Christ (1:3-14)

Chapter 1

GREETINGS

1:1,2 *Apostle of Jesus Christ:* Paul was a Christ-sent apostle because he was personally called into apostleship by Jesus (See comments At 9:1-16; 2 Co 12:12; Gl 1:1,2). No man today can fulfill the qualifications of a Christ-sent apostle simply because Christ no longer personally appears to men to call them into apostleship. The purpose of the early Christ-sent apostles has been fulfilled. There is no need today for special men as the apostles through whom God must reveal truth (See Jn 14:26; 16:13). We no longer need those who were special witnesses to the life and resurrection of Jesus because the testimony of these witnesses has been recorded in the New Testament for all men of all history (See Lk 24:48; At 1:8). Our faith in the cross and resurrection of Jesus must be built upon the inspired record of the New Testament (Jn 20:30,31; see Rm 10:17). ***Will of God:*** It was in the plan of God to call Paul into apostleship (2 Co 1:1). His calling was not an arbitrary calling without purpose. God had a special work for Paul, a work that would lead him to the Gentiles (At 9:15,16). ***Saints:*** This is a typical reference to living Christians who have been sanctified by the blood of Jesus (Rm 1:7; 1 Co 1:1,2). All who have been washed in the waters of baptism (At 22:16), are saints of God. ***At Ephesus:*** Some of the early manuscripts of this epistle do not have this phrase. It is because of this that many Bible students believe that Paul did not originally direct this letter exclusively to the disciples in Ephesus. It is believed that he may have directed the letter to all Christians in the region around Ephesus. This region would include the disciples in the city of Laodicea, as well as, other disciples in cities throughout the western area of Asia Minor (See Cl 4:16). At least by the time this letter was written, the number of disciples in Ephesus had grown far beyond the limits of the city of Ephesus. There were fellowship groups of saints meeting in homes throughout the region. When Paul called the elders of the church in Ephesus together on the island of Miletus three to five years before the writing of this letter (At 20:17ff), there was more than one house assembly of disciples in the re-

gion of Ephesus (See At 19:1-6). We would assume, therefore, that the elders he called to Miletus were the elders of all the disciples through the region of Ephesus that were meeting in different homes (See comments At 14:23 and Ti 1:5,6). **Faithful in Christ Jesus:** Not only is the letter to be read by all the saints who were in Ephesus, but also by those who were in the region of western Asia Minor. The word "faithful" is a general term that would refer to all Christians, and thus the content of this letter deals with some problems that all the disciples were having concerning the nature of the body of Christ. **Grace ... peace from God:** This was Paul's typical greeting and one evidence that he wrote the letter. In all his letters he greeted the ones to whom he wrote with the theme of the gospel of grace. This theme is the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through Jesus Christ (Ti 2:11).

BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

In the following three chapters Paul uses the first person plural pronouns "we" and "us" to refer to the global community of Jewish disciples who had received the blessings of the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose that was promised through the fathers of Israel. He uses the second person "you" to refer to the Gentile disciples who were brought into Christ in order to partake also of the blessings (2:11-13). He thus speaks universally as the one universal church, not just locally in reference to the disciples who were in the region of Ephesus.

1:3 Every spiritual blessing ... in Christ: The metaphor "in Christ" refers to a spiritual relationship one has with Christ as a result of what Christ has done for us. In this relationship with Christ, Paul first mentions that all blessings that relate to one's salvation are for those who are in Christ. All that God did in order to reconcile man unto Himself through the cross is granted to those who are in Christ. In Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:26,27 Paul wrote that one is baptized into Christ. Therefore, in order to come into contact with all spiritual blessings that originate from the heavenly realm, one must act on his faith by obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Gl 3:26,27).

1:4 Chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world: Before the creation of the world (See 1 Pt 1:2,3,20), God planned and predestined that the church would be chosen out of the world for eternal dwelling at the end of time. Therefore, it would be this group (the church) that would be purified through the sacrificial offering of the incarnate Son in order that all within the group be cleansed of sin (5:27; Ph 2:15; Cl 1:22). In God's foreplanning of the church, and thus foreknowledge of the church, He viewed Himself in the future in final judgment. He viewed Himself choosing the purified church out of all the inhabitants of the world. In this way, therefore, those who are of the church are chosen because God foreplanned to choose the church out of all those of the world at the end of time (Rm 8:28). In order to be chosen, one must voluntarily and individually choose to become a part of the chosen. Once one becomes a part of the church through obedience to the gospel, he is of those who will be elected out of the world for eternal dwelling.

1:5 Predestined us to the adoption: Before the creation of the world, God foreordained that the church would be the collective group of all those of the world who would be His adopted sons (Jn 1:12; see comments Gl 4:1-7). Therefore, all those who believe and obey the gospel become a part of this assembly of sons of God. As sons of God, they are destined to heaven. The fact that God determined this plan of redemption before the creation of the world, affirms that the plan was predestined. Therefore, one is destined to heaven as a member of the church because he has conformed to God's predestined plan that the church be cleansed by the blood of Jesus and called out of the world for eternal dwelling when Jesus comes again. God foreknew that the church would exist because He knew that men and women would voluntarily submit to His will. He did not individually predestine that individuals be obedient to the gospel. He only predestined that the plan of redemption through the cross would be revealed. It would be to the cross that men would respond, and thus, by responding to the cross men and women would become a part of the predestined plan. The election and

predestination of which Paul here speaks has direct reference to the destiny of the church as a group. In a secondary sense, reference is to individuals who have free-morally chosen to be a part of the group by immersion into Christ for the remission of sins. We must keep in mind, therefore, that it is the church that is predestined. Individuals fall under the election and predestination of the church insofar as they voluntarily make a free-moral choice to become a member of the church.

1:6 *Glory of His grace:* When man was created, God knew that it would be impossible for him to so live as to save himself from the condemnation in sin. Therefore, the cross of Jesus was always in the plan of God to save man from that which he could not save himself. God's grace was revealed through the cross (Ti 2:11), and thus, God is praised because of His deliverance of man from sin. Man is delivered from that which he could not have been delivered through his own obedience to law, for man cannot keep law perfectly. Therefore, because God has extended His unmerited favor to undeserving sinners (Rm 3:24; 5:8; 11:5), He deserves all praise and glory (2 Co 9:15). ***By which He has made us accepted in the Beloved:*** We could not be made acceptable to God through the merit of our own obedience, for we all sin. All of us sin, and thus, all of us are worthy of condemnation (Rm 3:9,10,23; 6:23). We are unacceptable to God because of sin. However, through the grace of God that was revealed on the cross, those who have chosen to respond through obedience to the gospel, are made acceptable to God through the blood of Jesus (Rm 3:24,25). All those who are in Christ, therefore, are reconciled to God through Jesus.

1:7 *Redemption through His blood:* The metaphor "redemption" refers to being bought out of that from which we could not deliver ourselves. Israel was redeemed from the slavery of Egyptian captivity (Ex 6:6). The slaves of the Roman society could be redeemed out of slavery with a set price that could be paid for the purchase of their freedom. Paul's metaphorical use of the word "redemption" here refers to our purchase out of a situation from which we could not deliver ourselves. We have thus been

purchased by the blood of Jesus out of the slavery of sin from which we could not deliver ourselves by works of law or meritorious deeds (Cl 1:14). Jesus paid the ransom price in order to redeem us from that which we could not deliver ourselves. We have been delivered from condemnation by Him (Rm 6:23; 8:1). The price that had to be paid was the cross, the blood offering of the incarnate Son of God (Mt 26:28; At 20:28; Rm 3:24-26; 1 Co 6:20; Cl 1:14,20; Hb 9:12; 1 Pt 1:18,19). Only when one comes into Christ by baptism—obedience to the gospel—does he come into contact with the redemptive blood of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6). **Forgiveness of sins:** The forgiveness of sins always comes with redemption by the blood of Jesus. One receives the forgiveness of sins when he is baptized (At 2:38; 22:16). Therefore, the spiritual blessings of God that come as a result of His grace, are made applicable when one responds to the cross through obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When one fulfills this condition in response to faith in the grace of God, he receives the result of the riches of God's grace.

1:8 God poured out the riches of His grace. Grace was sufficient to save us from sin and deliver us out of the condemnation that we brought on ourselves through sin. **In all wisdom and insight:** It was in the wisdom and understanding of God that His plan of grace was revealed to men (Compare 1 Co 1:24,30; 2:6-16; 12:8; Cl 1:9; 2:3). It was God's initiative, not man's work, that brought about the revelation of the plan of God's grace through the cross.

1:9 The mystery: The plan of redemption was hidden from men until its revelation through Jesus (1 Pt 1:10-12). It was revealed on the cross and written for all history in the inspired documents of the New Testament (3:1-5; 5:32; 6:19,20; Cl 1:26). The fact that the plan of redemption was determined before the creation of man is evidence to the fact that grace was not earned by the obedience of men. On the contrary, the fact that God foreplanned the cross is evidence that He knew that men would sin, and thus, would be in need of the grace of the cross. **He purposed:** The death of Jesus on the cross was

not an accident. It was the predetermined work of God to reconcile men to Himself through the blood of Jesus (Rv 13:8). Paul wrote that God's grace "was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Tm 1:9).

1:10 In the dispensation of the fullness of times: We are now living in the dispensation that is bringing to a close the history of this world. It is God's plan to sum up all earthly and spiritual things in this dispensation through Christ (3:10; Gl 4:4; Cl 1:27). Therefore, God has determined that this dispensation of grace through Jesus, which began with the establishment of the church in Acts 2, and will conclude with Jesus' final coming, will complete His plan of redemption for those He desires to dwell with Him in eternity. **All things in Christ:** Christ is the consummation of all things. It was for Him that all things were created (See Cl 1:16). Separation from God had come into the world as a result of the sin of man (Gn 3:22-24; Rm 5:12; 1 Co 15:20-22). However, in Christ we have been reconciled again to God through the blood offering of the cross. Jesus has now ascended to reign over all that exists (1:20-23; 1 Pt 3:22). He is now King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15; Hb 8:1). Therefore, all things have been summed up in Him (Compare Ph 2:6-10).

1:11 Obtained an inheritance: As opposed to the physical inheritance of the land of promise that national Israel received, both Gentile and Jewish Christians now have an inheritance in heaven. **Having been predestined:** It was the inheritance that was predestined. All those who free-morally come into a covenant relationship with God in Christ are thus destined to receive the predestined inheritance of heaven (vs 3). **The counsel of His own will:** God is working all things according to His plan. It is not that things in reference to the Christian's salvation are happening by fate. All things are being unfolded according to the predetermined mystery of God that has now been revealed to all men through the cross and the church (See Is 46:10; Rm 8:28).

1:12 We who first trusted: Those who were the Israel by faith were the first to accept Jesus as the Messiah. They accepted the good news of His death for their sins

and resurrection for their hope (See Gl 2:15,16; 2 Th 2:13; see comments 1 Co 15:1-4). From the Jews went forth the message of the gospel to all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15).

1:13 *The gospel of your salvation:* The event of the gospel is here identified as the reason to believe in the One who made it possible. Therefore, the gospel event refers to the historical work of Jesus who died for our sins on the cross, was buried, and then rose again the third day (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). Because of what Jesus has done, we have trusted in Him for our salvation. The Ephesians had only heard this “word of truth” concerning the event of the gospel, for they had not personally experienced the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. As a result of the report of the gospel event, they believed in Jesus. ***You were sealed with the Holy Spirit:*** They were sealed with the Holy Spirit after they had heard, believed and obeyed the gospel. They were sealed in the sense that as a result of their obedience to the gospel they were stamped with divine ownership by the Holy Spirit (See 4:30; 2 Co 1:22). ***Of promise:*** Not only were the Ephesians stamped with the approval of God through the indwelling of the Spirit upon their obedience to the gospel, they also experienced the blessings of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were given as a result of the promise of Joel 2:28. The Ephesians had received a visual manifestation of the sealing of the Spirit when they were given the miraculous gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of Paul's hands (See comments At 2:38,39; 8:18; 19:1-7; Rm 1:11).

1:14 *Guarantee of our inheritance:* Earnest or guarantee money was given with the promise that the full payment was to come later. The Holy Spirit was given as a guarantee, or assurance that there was the possession yet to come of all that God had promised (Rm 8:18,23; 2 Co 5:5). ***The purchased possession:*** Christians have now been purchased. However, the finality of their purchase will not be complete until they have come into eternal glory in the presence of God. God's giving of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is the guarantee of something greater that is yet to come. The final goal of the Christian is not

the present fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The final goal is the final habitation of heavenly existence in the presence of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8; 2 Pt 3:13).

The Power Of God Through The Church

(1:15 - 2:10)

Outline: (1) Prayer for the church (1:15-23), (2) Alive in Christ (2:1-10)

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

1:15,16 *I heard of your faith:* The discussion Paul had with the shepherds of Ephesus in Acts 20:17-38 had taken place three to five years before the writing of this letter. He had not heard anything concerning their spiritual growth since that meeting. Since word had now come to him of their steadfastness, he here expressed his encouragement by hearing of their faith in action (Compare Rm 1:9; Ph 1:3-6). Disciples should so live that others speak of their faithfulness. ***Love for all the saints:*** The loving fellowship of these disciples extended beyond the city of Ephesus. The Ephesian disciples understood the oneness of the universal fellowship of believers as a result of individuals throughout the world submitting to the one head and Lord Jesus Christ (See 1 Co 12:12; Cl 3:14; 1 Jn 4:9-11). Disciples are not denominated from one another when they assemble together in different groups throughout a city. All Christians are members of the one universal church that assembles in different locations throughout the world. They are members of the one church to which God has added them upon their obedience to the gospel (At 2:47). Christians, therefore, are not identified as such by where they assemble, or ceremonial acts they perform during their assemblies. They are identified as Christians because they have obeyed the gospel and established a covenant relationship with Jesus. Where one assembles does not validate whether or not he is a disciple of Jesus.

1:17 *A spirit of wisdom and revelation:* Paul made a similar statement as this verse to the Colossians. "*For this cause we also ... desire that you be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Cl 1:9).

It may be that Paul here prays that both the Ephesian and Colossian disciples develop an attitude of learning in order that they have greater insight and knowledge of the revelation of God (See comments Hb 5:11,12). Because the Corinthians were thinking carnally, Paul could not write to them with “solid food” (1 Co 3:1,2). Carnal thinking certainly affects the ability of the child of God to understand God’s word. And when we ask for greater wisdom from God, that wisdom will help us apply the word of God to our lives and teach it to others (Js 1:5-8). However, in the historical context of these words we must not forget the miraculous gift of prophecy that was possessed by those among these disciples on whom Paul or other Christ-sent apostles had laid hands (At 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11). When Timothy was left by Paul to correct certain errors that prevailed among the disciples in Ephesus, he was discouraged in his work of teaching because there were those who “quenched the Spirit” (1 Th 5:19). Even while Paul writes to the Ephesians, there were the beginnings of those among the disciples who “grieved the Holy Spirit” by rejecting what the Spirit had to reveal through the Spirit-inspired teaching by their prophets (4:30). In the religious environment of western Asia Minor where these disciples were located, there was present those who were religiously arrogant and haughty. During the 2nd century, formalized Gnosticism would permeate this region and would lead astray many of the disciples. The beginnings of this movement of religious arrogance through a supposed inner awakening of special knowledge, would begin in the areas of Paul’s mission journeys. It would be among the disciples in western Asia Minor that such would begin. It could be in this historical setting, therefore, that Paul mentions several times in the Ephesian and Colossian letters warnings concerning this imminent apostasy that the Holy Spirit knew was coming (See comments At 20:29-31). The beginnings of these “grievous wolves” had motivated the writing of both the Ephesian and Colossian letters, for in both letters Paul deals with misconceptions concerning Christ and the church. We would thus be naive interpreters if we did not assume that Paul in these letters is

urging the Ephesian and Colossian Christians to listen to their inspired teachers in order that they not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine that he knew was coming (4:11-15).

1:18,19 *Be enlightened:* The Gnostics affirmed that one's enlightenment came through knowledge of one's inner self. This special awareness of one's inner self supposedly gave one a superior advantage in spiritual growth and enlightenment. But here, Paul takes the focus off oneself and places it on understanding the hope of God's calling and the riches of His glory in the saints (See At 26:18). Paul prays that their understanding in spiritual matters increase in order that they might fully comprehend three things: **(1)** They must comprehend the hope of heaven that God has revealed (2:12; Cl 1:5; Hb 6:18,19; 2 Pt 1:11). **(2)** They must comprehend the riches of the inheritance that God has made possible through His grace (vs 14; Rm 8:18; Cl 1:12). **(3)** They must comprehend the greatness of God's power toward the Christian (vs 21; 3:7,16,18,20; 2 Co 13:4). ***Working of His mighty power:*** Emphasis is on the work of God, not the accomplishments of the individual. The Gnostic focused on the spiritual awareness of the individual in the form of a spiritual humanism. In this sense the Gnostic focused on himself as the source of spiritual enlightenment. In contrast to such self-centered religiosity, the Holy Spirit here reveals that men must focus on the power of God through the cross.

1:20 *That He worked in Christ:* The same power of God that worked in raising Jesus from the dead (At 2:24; Cl 2:12) also works in the lives of Christians. The Christian is "*strengthened with all power, according to His glorious power*" (Cl 1:11). ***At His own right hand:*** The "right hand" of the king on earth was a place of authority and power. The Holy Spirit metaphorically uses the phrase "right hand" to explain the present position and power of Jesus. Jesus now reigns at the right hand of the Father as King of kings and Lord of lords (Ps 110:1; 1 Tm 6:15). He has all authority over all things (Mt 26:64; 28:18; Rm 10:9; Cl 3:1; Hb 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 1 Pt 3:22; see comments 1 Co 15:24-28). ***In the heavenly places:*** The reign of Jesus was never

intended to be upon this earth. His reign, as well as His kingdom, were never meant to be as carnal reigns and kingdoms that are confined to this physical world (See comments Mt 16:18,19; Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38). In the statements of these passages to the Ephesians, the Holy Spirit wants us to understand the totality of the reign of Jesus in the heavenly realm that far exceeds the limits of earthly kingdoms. He wants us to understand the unlimited realm of Jesus' reign that extends far beyond this world and the church. Jesus' kingship and kingdom are not limited to either this world or the church of those who are obedient subjects of His kingdom reign. All the church is under the kingdom reign of Jesus, but not all the kingdom reign of Jesus is confined to the church (See comments Mt 16:18,19).

1:21 Far above all: We must not miss the point that is emphasized here. Colossians 1:16 states that Jesus was the creator of all that exists. Since all things in both the physical and spiritual realm were created by and for Jesus, Paul now says that He is above all that which He created. Since Jesus is God, then certainly this is not difficult to understand. From His state of incarnation, Jesus has now ascended to that position of authority that only the Creator would naturally have over what He created. **Principality and power and might and dominion and every name:** This would certainly include all who would presume to possess authority. We must keep in mind that Paul is not simply discussing those powers and dominions that are of the physical world. He has in the text gone beyond this world. All the powers that God has allowed angelic beings and Satan to possess are now under the kingdom reign of Jesus. In His preeminence, Jesus has absolute authority over every power (See comments Ph 2:9,10; see Rm 8:38,39; Cl 2:8,9,15; 1 Tim 6:15; Hb 2:5; 1 Pt 3:22). Therefore, every Christian must firmly believe that Jesus has everything under control. He is "*upholding all things by the word of His power*" (Hb 1:3). The control of all things by Jesus gives confidence and boldness to the Christian who knows such (See comments Rm 8:37-39). **Age ... which is to come:** The word "age" is from *aion* and not *cosmos* (world). Paul seems to look forward to

the continuation of the reign of Jesus beyond the time in which we now dwell. Some students believe that the age about which he talks is the time beyond the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, it seems that he is revealing something that is far beyond the time of this world. We might consider the fact that the extent of Jesus' reign is now over Satan and his limited realm of power that has been designated by God. However, when Jesus comes again, Satan and his angels will be destroyed in a fiery hell (Mt 25:41). Jesus will then return kingdom reign to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1 Co 15:28). He will thus continue to be over His people after His coming, but in the capacity as a part of the Godhead who will continue throughout eternity as head over all things. In this way as part of the Godhead, Jesus would continue beyond this present age (time) with His people and into that realm of existence that will be beyond this world.

1:22 He put all things under His feet: In this present time, all that exists has been subjugated to Jesus. This does not mean that all free-moral beings have voluntarily subjected themselves to Jesus. Satan, his angels, and the masses of the unbelieving world have refused the kingship of Jesus. From our perspective on this earth, we do not see that all things have been subjected to the reign of Jesus (Hb 2:8). However, from His heavenly perspective, all things are subject to Him, for He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3; see comments 1 Pt 3:22). The church is composed of those who have voluntarily submitted to Jesus. The members of the church are those who have allowed the will of the Father to be done on earth in their hearts as it is done in heaven (See comments Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). However, Satan and his hosts have deceived the masses of the world. The deceived go about not knowing their King and the authority their King has over all things. Therefore, we must not allow our observations of the masses who are not in subjection to Jesus to lead us to believe that the masses have not been put in subjection to Jesus (See Hb 2:7,8).

Head over all: There is nothing that has not been subjected to the authority of Jesus in His present position of authority at the right hand of God. "Head" refers to

center of reference, and thus, control. Jesus is the source of power from which all things now maintain existence (Hb 1:3; see Hb 2:7; Cl 1:18; 2:19). **To the church:** Jesus is the center of reference and controller of all things for the sake of the church. His headship extends unto all that is created. He is controlling all things for the purpose of sustaining the church in this world environment. It is a comforting thought for Christians to know that their Savior is holding all things together, not only in the physical realm, but also in the spiritual. He is doing such for the purpose of preserving the church for eternal dwelling. Jesus' authority of kingdom reign, therefore, extends far above all things in order to preserve those who have voluntarily submitted to His kingship.

1:23 Which is His body: The body, the universal church, is inseparably joined to Jesus as her King because of the submission of the members to His kingdom reign. The metaphor "body" clearly portrays the necessity of the obedient subjects of the kingdom to maintain their connection with the head of all things (See 5:23; Cl 1:18; 1 Co 12:27). The body remains alive because the head is alive. The members of the body are alive because they are connected to Jesus. They live because He lives. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, then there would be no reason for the church to exist. **The fullness of Him:** The church composes the completeness of Jesus' relationship with the world He created for His eternal purposes (Cl 1:16-18; 2:9). The church completes the plan of salvation on earth to bring obedient subjects into eternal dwelling in a heavenly realm. The church thus completes the lordship of Jesus on earth in that it is through the church that Jesus' lordship is proclaimed throughout the world. The proclamation of the lordship of Jesus is God's attack against the principalities and powers of Satan. When the power of the gospel is unleashed on the kingdom of darkness, Satan is crushed under the feet of those who obey the gospel (Rm 1:16; see comments Rv 20:1-6). The church is the called out assembly of those in the world who have submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus on earth. They are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and thus, they are looking forward to the final home of the

saints in heaven with God (2 Pt 3:13). The purpose of the church, therefore, is to be a witness of the kingdom reign of its Head before the world in order to call people out of the world for eternal dwelling (See comments 1 Pt 2:9).

Chapter 2

ALIVE IN CHRIST

In this chapter Paul explains the result of the grace of God in the lives of the Ephesians. He begins by explaining the nature of the unregenerate life of the Ephesians before their obedience to the gospel in response to God's grace (vss 1-3). He concludes by explaining the grace of God that leads to our oneness in Christ as the temple of God (vss 4-22).

2:1 *Dead in trespasses and sins:* It is not possible for one to live without sin. All have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23). The wages of sin is spiritual death (4:18; Rm 6:23), for sin separates one from God (Is 59:1,2). One is not born a sinner (Ez 18:3,20). He free-morally chooses to sin against God when he reaches the age of accountability, that is, the age at which one can make a rational free-moral decision concerning right or wrong in reference to the law of God. "Trespasses" and "sins" refer to one making decisions that are not according to God's law. Because we transgress law we fall short of justification because sin spiritually separates us from God. Therefore, one becomes dead in trespasses and sins as a result of choices that conflict with God's law.

2:2 *Walked according to the ways of this world:* In this context Paul is speaking of the general conduct of the Gentiles. The Gentile disciples lived in rebellion against God's will before they obeyed the gospel (Cl 1:21; 2:13). They lived in this state of rebellion by following after the desires of the flesh in order to live according to the behavior of this world (See 6:12; Rm 12:2; 1 Co 1:21; 3:19). They were living as though this present world was all there was. They had no feeling of accountability before God in reference to their behavior. ***Prince of the power:*** Satan is the ruler of those who have given themselves over to follow after the lusts of the world (6:12; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Co 4:4). Those who make decisions, and

live without considering the will of God, are often living and making decisions according to the will of Satan. They are thus being directed by Satan. **Sons of disobedience:** They behaved as the Jewish religious leaders, about whom Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (Jn 8:44; see Mt 13:38; 1 Jn 3:8). They had set themselves against the will of God and given themselves over to serve the will of Satan. We must keep in mind that the Jewish religious leaders, and the Gentiles about whom Paul refers, were not people who were without religion. They were religious. However, they had constructed religious beliefs and behavior that were after their own desires and traditions. Satan's greatest power is to deceive religious people into believing that they are religiously right. However, the religion that they practice is not according to the revealed truth of God (2 Th 2:10-12; see comments Mk 7:1-9; At 17:22-31).

2:3 We all: Paul now brings the Jews into the picture of disobedience. Both Jews and Gentiles were under condemnation because all had sinned (See comments Rm 1,2; see Rm 3:9). **Lusts of our flesh:** They allowed the desires of the flesh to be satisfied without feeling consciously guilty of sin against God. Their conscience was not controlled by belief in God before whom they would have to give account for their behavior (Gl 5:16; 1 Jn 2:15). **Lusts ... of the mind:** What sin they conceived in their minds they carried out in their lives. Their mentality was set in opposition to the will of God. They were morally out of control for they had no standard by which to conduct their lives. **By nature the children of wrath:** The word "nature" (*phusis*) here refers to their behavior of life, not to a spirit they received at birth that was inclined to sin. Paul emphasizes the demeanor of their lives before they became Christians. The word *phusis* is also used in 1 Corinthians 11:14 where it refers to a custom or common practice of society. Before their conversion, the Ephesians were dead through their own sins (vs 1). They walked according to the way of the world (vs 2). They lived after the lust of the flesh, doing the desires of the flesh. Therefore, what Paul states here in verse 3 is that

it was their habit or life-style to live in sin, and thus, contrary to the will of God. By such living, they were headed for destruction that would result from the wrath of God being poured out on them because of sin (Rm 6:23).

2:4 Rich in mercy ... great love: The justice of God stands on the fact that He has extended mercy to those who have sought Him by faith (Rm 9:23; 11:31,32; 15:9ff; Ti 3:3-7; 1 Pt 1:3). God's mercy has been extended toward man because of His great love for all men (Jn 3:16; Rm 5:8; 8:39; 2 Pt 3:9; 1 Jn 4:9,10). Those who sin against God will reap the consequences of their sin if they do not respond to the love of God (Rm 6:23). The problem with being human is the fact that we cannot live in a manner that is sinless before God. Therefore, we cannot live in a manner that would merit the mercy of God. Mercy is not given out of debt, but out of love and grace. God's mercy is not something that we merit according to law. It is given out of love and not on the basis that it is legally earned. Man can be saved from condemnation in sin only by the grace of God wherein God reaches forth with mercy to redeem those who cannot legally justify themselves through perfect keeping of law or meritorious deeds. When we realize how far God had to reach to bring us out of sin, we realize how far we were in sin and how hopeless our situation was in sin. However, regardless of our sinfulness, God loved us to the extent that He sent His Son to die for our sins (Jn 3:16).

2:5 Even when we were dead: *"But God manifests His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rm 5:8). No man can righteously live in a manner to earn the mercy of God (Rm 3:9,10,20,23). We have been made alive with Christ because of God's grace, not because we have legally earned or deserved God's love, grace, and thus, His mercy. Paul here emphasizes the fact that the provision that was necessary to revive man from his death in sin was totally based on the initiative of God. God's grace, therefore, was undeserved and unmerited because no man lived flawlessly in reference to God's law in order to demand grace and mercy (See Rm 5:6-10). Therefore, when one thinks of the plan of salvation that has been extended to man, he must under-

stand that such was made possible by God without any obligation on the part of God to do such. No matter how righteously any individual might have lived on earth, he could never have put God in debt to extend to him grace and mercy simply because there is no man on earth who can live without sin (Rm 3:9,10,23; see Js 2:10). **Made us alive together with Christ:** By obedience to the gospel in response to God's loving act of grace, one is raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Gl 3:26,27; Cl 2:12). It is God who makes alive. We are not made alive by legal acts in response to grace. In other words, our obedience never puts God in debt to save us. This is true because we can never obey God without breaking His law in some way. Therefore, when one comes forth from the grave of baptism, he is not saved by the legal act of baptism, but by God who makes one alive at the time we are raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rm 6:5). Baptism, therefore, is not a legal act or meritorious work that puts God in debt to save those who submit to obedience to the gospel (Mk 16:16; At 2:38; 22:16). It is a response to the grace of God. And since it is a response to the grace of God, God has promised that we are made alive together with Christ. Baptism, therefore, is necessary for salvation in the sense that one must respond to the grace of God by loving obedience to His commandments (Mk 16:16; At 2:38). When one so responds to the grace of God, God washes away all sin at the time of baptism (At 22:16). It is for this reason that one is washed of sin in the waters of baptism. **By grace you have been saved:** There is no other way to be saved (vs 8; Rm 5:1,2). Salvation comes to man as an unearned gift of God who has loved man. This favor of God did not come because we lived in a manner to earn or deserve the cross of Jesus. By our obedience to the gospel in response to God's grace we have been saved. The Greek verb here is perfect tense. A past action of grace on the cross is thus stated with emphasis on the continued results of that action. Therefore, our baptism in response to the grace of God has continued results throughout our lives as we walk in the grace of God. Our baptism is a point of reference in time concerning the

beginning of God's saving grace in our lives. Since men could never flawlessly keep law, then he could only be saved by grace. Since men could never do enough good works to merit the reward of eternal life, then it is only by the grace of God that salvation and eternal life are offered. This does not mean, however, that there are no conditions. Without the condition of obedience, grace would profit no one in reference to eternal life. Conditions for salvation are given in order that one step into the realm of God's continued grace through the cross. It is for this reason, that grace and salvation are never defined in the Bible without the obedient response of man to grace.

2:6 Raised us up: Christians were raised from the grave of baptism to reign with Christ (Rm 5:17; see comments Rm 6:3-6; Cl 2:12,13). In baptism one is buried with Christ in order to be raised with Him (See comments Rm 6:4). Therefore, in order for one to reign with Christ in the heavenly places, it is necessary that he be crucified and buried with Him. Without a burial, there can be no resurrection and reign.

2:7 The ages to come: From the time of Jesus' coming, and throughout earth's history and into eternity, God's expression of love to mankind through Jesus (Ti 3:4) will be a continual testimony of His mercy and grace. The justice of God stands on the basis that He offers man a way of escape from sin. Since God created us free-moral individuals, and placed us in an environment that demands choice, He can stand just in the condemnation of any man because He has offered man a way out of his dilemma of sin. The cross is the answer to man's sin problem and the proclamation of God's justice. No one who is condemned in final judgment can blame God for not providing a means by which to be saved. God has provided the means. The cross proclaims the justice of God, for by the cross redemption has been offered to all those who would walk by faith (See comments Rm 1:17).

2:8 By grace you are saved through faith: The plan of salvation was initiated by God without any meritoriously devised good works of man or perfect keeping of law (2 Tm 1:9; see Rm 3:24; Ti 2:11). Because men could not live

in a manner to save themselves, salvation had to be by grace in conjunction with man's faith response. God extended grace to man regardless of the sin of man (Rm 5:8). In this way, therefore, grace is a gift (See Jn 1:12,13). It is a gift because it was not given as a payment of debt by God to those who demanded such through their meritorious keeping of law and good works (Rm 11:6). The condition upon which the grace of God is made effective for the salvation of man is that one must receive or accept the free gift. For this reason, the effect of God's grace in reference to the salvation of man must be conditioned on the response of man. If grace was without condition toward all men, then all men would be saved without having to respond. All humanity would thus be saved while living after the course of this world. Therefore, the application of grace in one's life must be based on some condition. The condition is obedient faith, and thus, we are saved by grace through obedience of faith (Rm 1:5; 4:16; 5:1,2). Our obedient faith is our response to the grace of God (See comments Js 2:14-26). Paul here states that the Ephesians "are saved" by God's grace. The Greek verb is perfect tense, thus emphasizing the continued result of God's grace that was activated in their lives at the time of their obedience to the gospel. God's grace was sufficient at the time of their baptism into Christ. It was sufficient at the time he wrote. Grace, therefore, is not subsidized by our works. It is not perfected or completed by our works. Works are the response to grace. Christians work, not in order to be saved, but because they are saved (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

2:9 Not of works, lest anyone should boast: If men could be saved on the merit of works, then there would be the occasion for one brother to boast against another (Rm 3:27). One would even have occasion to boast before God if he believed that he could put God in debt to save him simply on the performance of law and good works. If salvation were based on the merit of works, then those who were more gifted in works would gain more grace, and thus, be favored in the sight of God over those who could not so perform. Such would make God a respecter of persons (See At 10:34,35). Therefore, if salvation were

regulated by the works of man, then grace would not be sufficient. Paul's point is that grace does not need to be subsidized by the works of men. No man can accomplish enough good works that would earn God's grace.

2:10 His workmanship: The Christian owes all that he is to God who gave him a reason for transforming his thinking and life (Rm 12:1,2). Through the manifestation of God's grace, Christians have been driven by faith to conform their lives to the will of God (See comments Rm 3:31). They do good works in thanksgiving of the grace of God (2 Co 4:15). Credit for the transformed life, therefore, must go to God for His gift of grace that gives reason for hope by focusing our lives on God. **Created in Christ Jesus for good works:** Christians have been created anew in Christ by obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:4,5). They have been so created, not by good works, but for good works. The Christian is not saved by works of merit that he has devised according to his own desires. He is saved for the purpose that God might work through him. Christians thus work in response to what God has done for them (1 Co 15:10). It is their works that manifest their response to the grace of God. Their works are not meritorious conditions upon which they will be judged. They are indications of their thankful response to God for His gift of grace (2 Co 4:15). Final judgment will be based on our deeds because our deeds proclaim what sort of heart is within us (See Mt 7:20-23; compare Jn 9:4; 2 Co 5:10; Ph 1:12,13; Cl 1:10; 1 Th 1:2; Ti 2:14).

The Church As The Household Of God

(2:11-22)

Outline: (1) Unity of mankind in Christ, (2:11-18), (2) The holy temple of God (2:19-22)

UNITY OF MANKIND IN CHRIST

Since we are saved by the grace of God, then all who have responded to the grace of God are created one man in Christ. The church is the one universal body of Christ that organically functions throughout the world. She is the one body into which all ethnic groups of people have come in order to manifest the glory of God to the world.

2:11 Paul now calls on the Gentiles to remember where they were spiritually before they responded to the grace of God. The Jews (“the circumcision”) referred to the Gentiles as the “uncircumcised.” The designation was given to the Gentiles by the Jews for the purpose of maintaining the Jews’ separation from the Gentiles who were not in a national covenant relationship with God as were the Jews. However, this culture of being separate from the Gentiles was dissolved in Christ.

2:12 In this verse Paul explains the deplorable situation one is in when he is outside the grace of God. He explains the situation of the Gentiles who were outside the covenant that God had established with Israel. ***You were without Christ:*** When one is outside Christ, he is without hope. Being without Christ means that one is outside the mediatory work of Jesus before God (See comments At 4:12). ***Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel:*** The Gentiles as a whole had no citizenship with the people with whom God had established a covenant relationship. They were thus separated from Israel because they were not included in the covenant that God established with national Israel. They were separated from God because of sin (Is 59:1,2). ***Strangers from the covenants:*** The Gentiles had no part in the covenants of God that He had established with the fathers of Israel and the Israelite nation itself (Rm 9:4,8; see Gn 12:1-3; 26:1ff; 28:13ff). ***No hope:*** Because the Gentiles were without a covenant relationship with God, they had nothing upon which to base their hope. Therefore, they had no hope for a Deliverer that would deliver them from sin (1 Th 4:13). ***Without God:*** The Gentiles were in a world wherein they created gods after their own imaginations. Such gods could never be a substitute for the one true God. Therefore, if one conceives of a god in his mind that is not according to God’s definition of Himself in His revealed word, then such a one is “without God.” He is without the one true and living God (4:17-19; Rm 1:30; Gl 4:8; see comments Jn 4:24,25).

2:13 ***Afar off... brought near:*** Because of sin, the Gentiles were spiritually separated from God and without hope in a world of sin (See Jn 10:15,16; At 2:39). However,

through the grace of God that was manifested by the sacrificial blood of Jesus on the cross, they have the opportunity to come near through obedience to the gospel. Through obedience to the gospel they are brought near to God and His people. Paul thus reminds the Ephesian Gentiles that they are now in a covenant relationship with God through the blood of Jesus.

2:14,15 Our peace: Jesus is the medium through which cultural peace is established between Jew and Gentile. Since both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God through the blood of Jesus, then they are also reconciled to one another through the cross (See Gl 3:26-29; Cl 1:22; 3:11). **Broken down the middle wall:** A wall of partition was built in the temple area in Jerusalem in order to establish a point beyond which the Gentiles could not go in the temple courtyard (See At 21:28ff). Paul's metaphorical use of this wall illustrates the division that once religiously and culturally separated Jews and Gentiles. By breaking down the wall that separated the Jews and Gentiles, the symbolism is that all men are spiritually brought together in Christ. There is now no barrier between Jew and Gentile. It is the nature of the church, therefore, to bring all men together in Christ. **Abolished ... the law of commandments:** In the context of his discussion concerning Jews and Gentiles, Paul's reference to the commandments here would refer to the Sinai law of commandments. The law was Israel's condition for maintaining their covenant with God. Because a new covenant has now been established (Jr 31:31-34; Hb 8:7-13), there was also the necessity of establishing a new law, the law of Christ. The Sinai law was thus nailed to the cross. It no longer presents itself as an obstacle to the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile into one body (See comments Rm 7:4; Cl 2:14; Hb 9:16,17). Jesus removed that which religiously separated Jew and Gentile. He has brought all men together under the law of Christ, and by doing such, created a brotherhood of all those who come into Christ (Gl 3:26-29). **New man:** The new man is the one community of global believers who have all submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus (See Gl 6:15). The body of Christ is the new man because it is washed in the blood

of the Lamb (At 22:16; Rv 1:5; 12:11).

2:16 In one body: All who would be reconciled to God must be in the one body. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks" (1 Co 12:13). Therefore, all who would be reconciled to God must obey the gospel by immersion (See comments At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6).

2:17 He came and preached peace to you: Jesus did not personally preach to the Gentiles in Ephesus. It was through the person of Paul that Jesus came and preached reconciliation to the Ephesians. When the messenger of Jesus preaches the word of Jesus, then it is as if Jesus is preaching. Evangelists are the mediums through whom Jesus preaches the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). It is through the preaching of evangelists that the nations have an opportunity to hear the gospel (Is 57:19-21; At 15:7-9; see comments Rm 15:14-20).

2:18 Our salvation is dependent on the work of the three manifestations of the eternal Godhead. In this one verse Paul mentions that through Jesus we have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit. It was the work of the Spirit to reveal that truth which was necessary for men to obey in order to be reconciled to God (Jn 14:26; 16:13; 2 Pt 1:20,21). God has revealed all truth in order that men know what He requires of men (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3). We would know nothing concerning these matters if it were not for the very words of this letter of Paul that were inspired by the Spirit to be written. In the Ephesians' case, they would not have known anything about the cross if it were not for the evangelists who preached the gospel to them. In our case today, we would know nothing concerning the cross if we did not have the inspired word of God (See comments Lk 1:1-4). Therefore, it is through the instrumentality of the inspired seed of the kingdom, the word of God, that men are brought forth into one body (Js 1:18; 1 Pt 1:23; compare 1 Co 12:13).

THE HOLY TEMPLE OF GOD

Verses 19-22 emphasize an important fact of the global community of God's people. It is not a family that is broken into individual autonomous groups that are in-

dependent of one another. It is a global household of individual members who are free in Christ and whose citizenship is registered in heaven.

2:19 *Members of the household of God:* The Gentiles were no longer afar off (vss 12,13). They too were now fellow citizens and saints in the body. They were members of the church of Christ, the household of God (Gl 6:10; 1 Tm 3:15; Hb 3:6; 1 Pt 4:17). The Gentiles have not come into the household of God as second class citizens. They are fellow citizens. They are joint members of the one body of Christ.

2:20 *The foundation of the apostles and prophets:* The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets because of the work of inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Through inspiration of the apostles, all truth was revealed (3:1-5; Jn 14:25,26; 16:13; 1 Co 3:10,11; Rv 21:14). Through the inspired teaching of the prophets, the truth was taught to all the churches. ***The chief cornerstone:*** In the construction of ancient buildings, the cornerstone was first laid from which all measurements of the building were then aligned. And so it is with the church. All measurements are aligned in reference to Jesus (Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Rm 9:33; 1 Pt 2:6). The lives of the members of the church are focused on Jesus, and thus their behavior is aligned by His word.

2:21 The whole church of Christ is continually fitted together according to the spiritual measurements that proceed from Jesus. The apostles and prophets revealed and preached the truth. However, the foundation upon which the household of God stands is the person and power of Jesus. It is in Him that the members grow into the holy temple (1 Co 3:16,17; 2 Pt 3:18).

2:22 *Being built together:* The Greek verb tense here indicates a continual process of growth and building. The building takes place within the spiritual relationship the members have with Christ (See 1 Pt 2:5). It is a building process that continues on throughout one's life. In this spiritual temple in Christ, God dwells through the Spirit throughout the world. The Ephesian disciples were not autonomous or independent from the body of disciples throughout the world. The church is a global body to

which every member is connected through their common obedience to the gospel (See comments Jn 15:1-9; Jd 3).

Revelation Of The Church

(3:1-13)

Outline: (1) Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (3:1-7), (2) The eternal purpose (3:8-13)

Chapter 3

PAUL'S MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES

3:1,2 Paul was called to be a Christ-sent apostle for the specific purpose of opening the door of preaching the gospel of reconciliation to the Gentiles (At 9:15; 22:21; Rm 11:13; Gl 3:9). **Prisoner of Christ Jesus:** At the time Paul wrote this letter he was in a Roman prison (6:20; At 21:33; 28:20; Cl 4:18; Pl 13). He was there, however, not as the result of crimes he had committed against the State, but for the purpose of making a case for Christianity (See comments in intro. to At). God was using the false accusations against him as an occasion to put him on trial before the court of Rome. This historical work of God in the life of Paul was accomplished in order that Christianity be defended before the world. **The stewardship of the grace of God:** We are living in what Paul here identifies as a "dispensation of grace." "*The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (Jn 1:17). God has worked through grace from the beginning of time unto the cross. He continues to work through grace unto this day. He has always worked through grace, for without the grace of God no man could be saved. We live in a dispensation of grace, for it is in this time that we have knowledge of the grace of God that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). This grace had been preached throughout the Roman world by the time Paul wrote this letter (At 20:20,31). This dispensation is a time when God's favor that is extended to all men of every nation has been manifested through the cross (At 9:15; Rm 1:5; Ti 2:11). The disciples of Jesus, therefore, have been entrusted with the message of grace in order that it be proclaimed throughout the world. As the stewards of God's grace, it is the responsibility of every disciple to preach

the grace of God to the world (See 2 Co 4:15).

3:3 By revelation: Paul received the mystery of God directly from God (Gl 1:11,12,16; see At 26:16-18). He did not receive it through men. *“For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Gl 1:12). In this statement Paul reassured his readers that the concept of the grace of God did not originate from men. ***I wrote before in few words:*** It may be that Paul here refers to what he has already written in this letter in chapters 1 and 2. Some believe this refers to a previous letter Paul had written which could possibly have been the Colossian letter or one of his other inspired letters. The point was that the Ephesians had no excuse for being ignorant of the grace of God. They had previously been informed through his personal preaching, as well as a previous written document.

3:4 The mystery of Christ: The mystery was the eternal plan of redemption that God has now revealed through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (6:19; Rm 11:25; 16:25; Ti 2:11). It was not revealed in times before the coming of Jesus (See 1 Pt 1:10-12). It has been revealed in these times in order that men might understand God's plan that all men be reconciled to Him through Jesus (See comments 1 Co 2:10-13).

3:5 In Galatians 3:8 Paul affirmed that the gospel was preached to Abraham. He does not contradict himself here in affirming that it was not made known in times past. What was revealed to Abraham was that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gn 12:3). The specific blessing of the death of Jesus for our sins, and His resurrection for our hope, was not revealed to Abraham. Though the prophets were given hints of the “blessing” that was to come (See Ps 22; Is 53), they did not fully understand the nature of the gospel that God had in store for all mankind (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). ***Revealed by the Spirit:*** By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament apostles and prophets received the truth of the gospel (Jn 14:26; 16:13; 1 Co 2:10-13; 2 Tm 3:16).

3:6 Fellow heirs ... partakers of His promise in Christ: Paul wants his Jewish readers to know that the Gentiles are not to be considered as proselytes in the church as

they were considered in the past when Gentiles converted to living under the Sinai law. Both Jew and Gentile are now equal in every way in Christ (At 10:34,35; Gl 3:28,29). The Gentiles, as the Jews, received the promise of justification by grace through faith. They are fellow heirs of the Holy Spirit (See comments At 2:38,39), as well as the eternal heaven that is to come. Therefore, in the one body, the church, the Gentiles have all the blessings that were promised to the Israelite fathers that would come through Israel.

3:7 It was by the grace of God that Paul was given his ministry to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (1:19; 3:20; Rm 1:5; Cl 1:29). **Working of His power:** Paul worked miraculous signs among the Gentiles in order to confirm that he was a messenger of God (Rm 15:18; see Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). He not only proclaimed the gospel, he also had his proclamation confirmed by the working of God through miraculous signs. When he preached the gospel in Ephesus, special signs were given to him by God in order to counter the trickery of deceptive men who led the city astray (See At 19:11ff). As a result, a great many people in the city believed.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

3:8 Least of all saints: It seems that Paul never forgot his former persecution of Christians. He was forgiven by God, but the memory of what he did evidently lingered with him throughout his life. *“For I am ... not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God”* (1 Co 15:9; see 1 Tm 1:13). Regardless of his background, however, he fulfilled his ministry to preach the gospel of grace to the Gentiles because he had been granted so much grace (Compare 2 Tm 1:8-12). The one who was stern in his legalistic persecution of Christians was chosen by God to be the messenger of grace to the Gentiles. **Unsearchable riches of Christ:** Those things that Paul and the evangelists preached were not conceived in the minds of religious men who sought to devise a system by which to be acceptable to God. The riches of the grace of God were revealed to man by God (1:3; 1 Co 2:10-13; Cl 1:27; 2:2,3; 2 Pt 1:20,21).

3:9 Stewardship of the mystery: This would be the administration of the gospel to all men. Anyone who would obey the gospel is reconciled to God, and thus, brought into fellowship with all others who have obeyed the gospel throughout the world (1 Jn 1:3). God establishes fellowship among all who have obeyed the gospel. He does this by adding them to the global family of believers (At 2:47). One's membership of the global body is in heaven with God, not with any one local assembly of members. When one becomes a member of the family of God, he is entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the world. The disciple is a steward of that which he has received in order to deliver it to others. **Hidden in God:** The fact that Paul emphasizes that the plan of redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus was concealed from man until its revelation, is evidence that the gospel was not a plan that was invented by religious thinkers. God's eternal plan to save all men by the sacrificial offering of incarnate Deity was beyond the ability of religious men to conceive. In fact, the death of Jesus on the cross would have simply been the crucifixion of another Jew if God had not revealed that the crucifixion was for the redemption of man's sins. The disciples witnessed the event of the crucifixion. However, they were unable to understand the significance of the event until God revealed it to them (Compare Lk 24:21). **Created all things:** The mystery was hidden in God, that is, in the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through the work of the Son, all that exists was created by the Son (Jn 1:1,2; Cl 1:16). The Son was the representative of the one God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—whose work it was to create. He was not the agent of creation. He was that manifestation of God whose work it was to create on behalf of the Godhead. It is human thinking to conceive of God as three personalities or three parts. The terms "personalities" or "parts" assume that there is division in the Godhead. Such terms manifest our efforts to make God exist in a manner by which we can understand Him. But the Bible student must be careful about using humanly defined words to define that which is beyond the comprehension of our finite minds. God is one, though

He has manifested Himself in history to man through the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He could have manifested Himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to accomplish His destiny for man. God's manifestation of Himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was all that was necessary in order to bring about His eternal plan of redemption. But His manifestation as the three would define the One to be three in existence.

3:10 Satan and all angelic beings did not know of the mystery that God had in store for the coming of the Son of God. Though prophets spoke of these things, they did not understand what they wrote (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). Though Satan knew that something was up concerning the fulfillment of the prophecy that God had made concerning his crushing (Gn 3:15), he did not know the full story until Jesus was resurrected from the dead. If he had known, then surely he would not have deceived the religious leaders of Jerusalem to take Jesus to the cross.

3:11 *The eternal purpose:* The plan of God to redeem man was accomplished in Christ (1:4,11). The church was God's foreordained plan to accomplish His eternal goal of reconciling all men together and unto Himself through the incarnate Son (1:5; Rm 8:28,29). However, there is one last thing to be accomplished in reference to the purpose of our existence. It is for us to transition into the new heavens and earth for which God planned our creation (2 Pt 3:13). It is the church that will be called out of this world into that realm of existence that is yet to come. The cross of Jesus now adds meaning to the creation of all things (vs 9). All that exists was created for the purpose of bringing the redeemed into the presence of God in heavenly dwelling (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). The purpose for the creation of the world was to populate heaven. We would assume, therefore, that once this world has completed its purpose, it will be pass away.

3:12 *We have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of Him:* The phrase "faith in Him" of some translations would better be translated "the faith of Him" since the article is present with the word "faith." Therefore, our confidence of salvation is not in ourselves

or our faith. We have not merited the grace of God with obedient faith in order to partake of the eternal purpose of God. It was because of the faithfulness of Jesus in going to the cross on our behalf that we have confidence and boldness (Gl 2:16). Because of Jesus' faith, mediatorship was provided for all men who would submit to obedience of the gospel (1 Tm 2:5). It is because of Jesus' work of mediatorship and advocacy on our behalf that we can have confidence and boldness (Hb 4:16; 1 Jn 2:1,2). It is our faith in His faith that obediently responds to the faithful work of Christ who worked on our behalf for our salvation. Our obedient faith is necessary for our salvation, for without any obedient faith on our part, the work of Jesus on the cross was in vain as far as our individual salvation is concerned. **Of Him:** The literal translation of the Greek objective genitive of this verse should use "of," not "in." "Faith" in the statement of both Gl 2:16 (see comments) and here is in the possession of Jesus, not only ourselves. In other words, it is our faith in the faith of Christ Jesus our Lord that empowers us to *"have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of Him."* The Greek text of 3:12 reads "of" Him (Christ) because Paul was focusing on the work of Christ to reveal the righteousness of God through His Son. This is in contrast to our often weak faith to claim some righteousness for ourselves that would be based on either our presumed perfect law-keeping or meritorious good works. There is a vast difference between the use of the words "of" or "in" in the statements of Gl 2:16 and here in 3:12. The word "of" focuses our attention on the faith of Jesus, whereas the word "in" focuses our attention on our ability to make ourselves righteous before God because of our own faith. Specifically, the word "in" moves us to focus on the performance of our personal faith in order to be justified, and thus, righteous before God. This understanding is subjective, that is, we make our own determination concerning whether we have faithfully performed in order to earn our justification, and thus stand righteous before God. But this is an effort to marginalize the gospel of Jesus Christ, who, through His own faith, took Himself to the cross to be God's righteousness for us

(Jn 10:15-18; see comments Rm 1:17; Gl 2:16; Ph 3:9).

3:13 It was Paul's desire that the Ephesians not become discouraged because of his imprisonment and the persecution that he suffered for the name of Jesus. His hardships were not an indication that God was working against him and the church. The Ephesians, as well as all Christians, must understand that living the Christian life will incur hardship and persecution (See comments At 14:22). "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tm 3:12). The fact that the righteous life of Christians intimidates wicked men who refuse to submit to God affirms the fact that there will always be persecution against Christians (Jn 15:18-25).

The Fullness Of God

(3:14-21)

Outline: (1) Prayer for the church (3:14-19), (2) Doxology of God's power (3:20,21)

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

3:14,15 In this section Paul continues the prayer that he began in verse 1. ***I bow my knees:*** Paul worshiped God in the truth that he here states (See 1 Kg 8:54; Mt 6:5; Lk 5:12; 18:11-13; 22:41; At 9:40; 1 Tm 2:8; see comments Jn 4:24). ***The whole family:*** All obedient beings that exist, whether on earth or in the heavenly realm, are of the family of God (Compare 1:10). They are not outside God's headship and protection. Paul gives worship to the Father after whom all who are in the heavenly realm and on earth are named.

3:16 *Be strengthened with power:* Paul realized that his audience will be persecuted for their faith. He was in prison during the reign of Nero. Nero's personal vendetta against Christians would increase until his death in A.D. 68. After this death there would be a cessation of direct persecution until the reign of Domitian in the latter part of the 1st century. Therefore, Christians throughout the Roman Empire would suffer in the coming years, but specifically those Christians in the area of Asia Minor where Roman imperial worship would later be instigated by Rome. There were hard times coming for the breth-

ren in Asia Minor, and thus, in these words Paul wanted to encourage his readers to be strong for the time would come when they will have to endure unto death (Rv 2:10; see comments in intro. to Rv). **Through His Spirit in the inner man:** Since Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that God grant them strength, then surely God is able to do such in the hearts of His children. We would assume also that through these very words would come strengthening thoughts that would encourage them. However, one work of God through the manifestation of the Spirit is to strengthen the saints. In view of the trials they were possibly enduring at the time he wrote, or the trials into which they were headed, Paul prayed that they be able to endure these trials and persecutions (Compare 6:10; 2 Co 1:8-10; Ph 4:3; 1 Tm 1:12; 2 Tm 4:17). We must believe that those things for which the Holy Spirit instructs us to pray, God is able also to answer. **The inner man:** As opposed to the outward, carnal man, the spiritual man that is within the mind and heart is the part of man that needs strength (Rm 7:22; 2 Co 4:16; 1 Pt 3:4). The inner man is the part of man that is nourished by the word of God (Rm 10:17; 1 Pt 2:2). Nourishment of the word of God spiritually builds one up in order to stand against the wiles of the devil (6:10-18; At 20:32; 1 Th 2:13). Strengthening in the Lord is not a onetime event in the Christian's life. It is a continual process. The more one grows in the faith and knowledge of God's will, the stronger he becomes. Paul had encouraged the Ephesian elders a few years before he wrote these words that they be strong by allowing God and His word to work in their lives (At 20:32). He is here encouraging them again.

3:17 So that Christ may dwell in your hearts: Unfaithful Christians do not allow Christ to reign in their hearts. Christ dwells in one when he is obedient to the commandments of God (Jn 14:23; compare Rm 8:10; 2 Co 6:16; Cl 1:27; Rv 3:20). Those who are not obedient are not allowing the will of the Father to be done on earth in their hearts as it is done in heaven (See comments Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). Therefore, Christ does not dwell in the heart of the one who has given up on Christ. Christians must allow Christ to dwell in their hearts through their

submission to the will of Jesus (Cl 3:16; see comments Cl 1:1-9). One may believe the right teachings, but unless one's life is transformed into a living image of Jesus by godly behavior, Christ is not dwelling in him. Christ dwells in us when a correct knowledge of Him is coupled with godly behavior. **Being rooted and grounded in love:** The only way one can understand the love of God is to love (1 Co 3:1,2; 1 Jn 4:7,8). Every man has the emotional capacity and ability to act out of love. However, such love is limited to the extent of the emotional abilities of man. God's love far exceeds the ability of man to love. But in order to begin understanding the fullness of God's love, we must manifest love toward others. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be established firmly in that by which all men know that we are the disciples of Jesus, that is, by our love of one another (Jn 13:34,35).

3:18,19 Only through a strong fellowship of love can we begin to understand the magnitude of the love of Jesus. "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). It is impossible to understand the love of God without loving one's neighbor as himself. It is only through love that we can understand those things that are beyond this world (See 1:18; Mt 5:8; 6:22; Jn 7:17). **The fullness of God:** The word "fullness" is translated from the Greek word *pleroma*. This was a significant word that was used in Gnostic circles to explain the realm of God's dwelling and His attributes. It was believed among some Gnostics that God could have nothing to do with the material world because of the holiness of His existence. He was supposedly separated from the material world, and thus, could not in any way be connected with that which was material and evil. God dwelt in the *pleroma* and was completely separate from that which was material. However, in opposition to Gnostic heretics who said that only the select elite could attain unto one's inner spiritual knowledge that connected him with God, Paul argues that every faithful Christian can be filled with the fullness of God (See 4:13). As Christians are transformed into the image of Jesus, they are being filled with all the fullness of God (Rm 12:2; 2 Co 3:18; compare Ph 3:20,21; 1 Jn 3:2). It is through the transformation of our minds

that we are being filled with the attributes of God (Rm 12:1,2). Since we are the household of God, God indwells us through the Spirit.

DOXOLOGY OF GOD'S POWER

3:20,21 Paul concluded the first section of the letter to the Ephesians with a praise of God's power. God's power and essence are far beyond man's imagination (Compare 1:19; 1 Co 2:9; 2 Co 13:4). If men supposed that they could conceive in their minds the fullness of God, then the god they conceived would not be the God about whom Paul here speaks. ***Exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think:*** Any god we can figure out is no god at all. We must not be frustrated by not understanding all that God does in relation to His work to bring us into eternity. We must not be frustrated simply because the God of the Bible is beyond the intellectual capacity of finite men to fully comprehend. God has revealed Himself to man through His work of creation (Rm 1:20). He has revealed Himself through His work with the patriarchs. He has revealed Himself through Jesus. However, we must not assume that all that God is or does has been revealed to us (See Dt 29:29). The only way we could understand God is that we be God. But since we are not God, then we must not be frustrated with our lack of understanding the fullness of God. God is not confined to the definition of the words of our dictionary, for our words are defined by the experiences and events of man. God is beyond and above the definition of the words of our dictionary. ***To Him be glory in the church:*** Since God is beyond our full comprehension, then He is worthy of our worship. It is through the obedience and worship of the church that God is glorified (Compare Ps 45:17; 72:17; Rm 11:36; Rv 5:13). It is not the church that is to receive glory. It is the church that is to give glory to God. When men seek to bring glory to the church, they are misdirecting the minds of men from all glory that is to be directed to God. It is the work of the church to direct all men to give glory to God. When men see the work of God through those who are living the life of Jesus, their natural response should be to give glory to God.

Chapter 4

In the first three chapters of the letter of Ephesians, the Holy Spirit concentrated on fundamental teachings that are essential to believe. These are fundamental teachings upon which Christianity is based. If these teachings are not true, then there is no foundation upon which the Christians can stand. The fact that they are true gives hope to the Christian concerning what he is and where he is headed. In these last three chapters of the epistle, the Spirit concentrates on the moral response of Christians that results from a belief in the fundamental teachings of the first three chapters. Why Christians are what they are depends on what they believe. The Spirit has focused on the mystery of God's grace in the first half of the letter. He now discusses the response to God's grace in the lives of those who have believed in the mystery of God. Chapters 1-3 are the cause of Christianity and chapters 4-6 are the effect. The cause is Christ and the effect are disciples of Jesus in their behavioral existence in the world.

Behavior Of The Disciples Of Christ

(4:1 - 6:9)

Outline: (1) Unity of Christians (4:1-6), (2) The diversity of gifts (4:7-16), (3) Living in the light (4:17-24), (4) Exhortation against sin (4:25 - 5:7), (5) Walking in the light (5:8-14), (6) Exhortations for Christian living (5:15-21), (7) Christian families (5:22 - 6:4), (8) Master-slave relationships (6:5-9)

UNITY OF CHRISTIANS

4:1 Prisoner of the Lord: Paul was in a Roman prison because he believed in and preached that which he has just written to the Ephesians (3:1; Pl 1,9). His imprisonment was evidence of the sincerity of his beliefs. Such should motivate the Ephesians to respond in like manner to God's grace (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). **Walk worthy of the calling:** The conclusion to one's realization of the grace of God must be conduct that is in harmony with what God has done to save us (See comments Rm 12:1). Christian behavior is the natural response to one's realization of the saving grace of God (2:10; Ph 1:27; 1 Th 2:12; see Cl 1:10; 2:6). The grace of God should bring the Chris-

tian's conduct into harmony with the honorable nature of God's redemptive work to bring us into eternity.

4:2,3 Humility and gentleness: Our response to the grace of God should affect our character. We should be changed to a spirit of humility. God's mercy toward us should encourage us to be merciful to others. God's forgiveness of our sins, for which we could not possibly justify ourselves, should spark humility of mind and mercy toward others (See comments Mt 18:21-35; Js 2:13). We thus love because God so loved us (1 Jn 4:19; see comments Cl 3:12-14). Humility, gentleness and love in the life of an individual is evidence of the individual's recognition of the God who showed such toward us when we legally deserved wrath (Jn 3:16; Rm 5:8). Haughty and unloving Christians are not of the nature of the One who called them. They will be rejected in the judgment because of their lack of response to the loving grace of God who gave His only begotten Son for our salvation. If one maintains an arrogant spirit, while at the same time believing that he knows the truth, then he has deceived himself. He does not know the truth. The truth of God's grace does not produce arrogant spirits. On the contrary, when one realizes the extent to which God went in order to save us from our condemnation in sin, he should be humbled before God and his fellow man (See comments Mt 5:3-9). **Eager to keep the unity of the Spirit:** True Christians are identified by their zeal to maintain unity among believers. Jesus prayed that His disciples be one (Jn 17:20,21). Those who are of the nature of the one true God and His Son Jesus Christ will seek to maintain the unity for which Jesus prayed. Divisive behavior has no place among the saints of God, for such manifests an unloving spirit that is haughty and arrogant (See 1 Co 1:10; Ph 1:27). Christians should be known for their forbearance of one another, not their division among themselves (Ph 4:6; compare 1 Co 13; Ph 3:1-3; Pl 9).

4:4-6 The Holy Spirit here sets forth seven fundamental truths upon which unity can be maintained. The motivation for unity is the loving action of God's grace that the Spirit revealed in chapters 1-3. The guiding principles upon which unity is founded are revealed in the fun-

damental teachings that are listed here. Therefore, all men must forsake those teachings that would contradict these fundamental principles. They must do so for the sake of maintaining unity among those who believe in God and His Son Jesus Christ. The single principle that is maintained throughout the following list of fundamental principles is the one that does not need listing since it is an obvious conclusion to the revelation of the mystery of God. This principle is oneness. Christians are universally one body because of the oneness of what the Spirit here reveals. Any thinking or theology that would attack the oneness of the members of the body of Christ must be rejected as contrary to the very nature of the fundamental teachings that the Spirit here reveals. **One body:** There is only one body. This is the global church of our Lord Jesus Christ (5:23; Cl 1:18). It is this church for which Jesus died in order to purchase her with His blood (1:4; At 20:28). It is this body over which He is now head (Cl 1:16). It is for this church of believers that Jesus will return in order to call them into eternal glory (5:23; see Cl 1:23; 2:16; Rm 12:5; 1 Co 12:12-27; Cl 3:15). In a world of religious division and man-made religions, men must seek to identify this one body. All those who respond to the grace of God must seek God on the basis of His word. Therefore, all those who respond to the grace of God by obedience to the gospel, are added to the one universal body of Christ (At 2:47). All baptized believers compose the one body because God adds them to the body. They are not added because men have devised a systematic theology around which all must conform in order to be considered a part of a specific religious group. It is God who has produced the one body. He has produced such because there is only one revealed gospel to which all men must respond. When one responds to the one gospel anywhere in the world, he becomes a member of the one universal body because God adds him to the body (At 2:47). The fact that there is only one body means that we do not have a choice concerning the church of which we would be a member. Upon obedience to the gospel one becomes a member of the church of God's choice. We must conform to His instructions and not create a reli-

gious body after our own desires. **One Spirit:** There is one Holy Spirit who has inspired the written standard of unity, the word of God. The written word is the foundation for the unity of the body (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21). The Spirit did not work in order to cause division among members in the 1st century. Neither does He so work today. The same inspired truth that was preached, and subsequently produced one church in the 1st century, will produce the same today. The Spirit has revealed the unified message of God to writers He inspired in order to produce among all men the one united body of those who respond to God's grace. The body is thus directed by the word of God to be united as one (2:18; 1 Co 1:10; 12:13; Ph 1:27). Because the Holy Spirit is one, it is erroneous to conclude that He works today in a manner to cause confusion among religious people. He does not work in the lives of individual Christians to cause division. To affirm that He does is to accuse the Holy Spirit of a divisive function in reference to His work (See comments 1 Co 12:4-12). Those religions, therefore, that are supposedly led by the work of the Spirit, and yet, function in confusion of belief and behavior, are not being directed by the revealed word of the Spirit which is the New Testament. They are being directed by the misguided emotions or traditions of religious people who have long forsaken the direction of the Spirit through the word of God. The religious heritage of the adherents of these religions has been made the religious authority of the religions, and thus, the members have forsaken the medium through which God always intended that His saints be directed in unity, that is, by the Spirit-inspired word of God. **One hope:** Believers are called into unity by the one hope of heaven that is set before them by God. This one hope unifies them together because they are headed for the same destiny (See Hb 6:18,19). It is because God has revealed one hope, that all those who obey the gospel are brought together into one body. The brotherhood of humanity, therefore, can happen only when men obey the gospel in order to be directed by the one revealed hope. Diverse hopes send men's minds wandering in different directions. A single hope gives motivation for men to

maintain singularity of belief and behavior in order to acquire the one hope. The fact that Christians believe that they will dwell together in the one heavenly realm in the future motivates them to behave in a unified manner in this world. **One Lord:** There is one Lord Jesus Christ of all things who has all authority over all things (1:20-22; Mt 28:18; At 2:36; 10:36,43; Rm 10:12; 1 Pt 3:22). All those who submit to the one Lord are thus brought together into one global body. It is erroneous to believe that one has a right to maintain his own beliefs when he submits to the one Lord. The fact that we make Jesus the one Lord of our lives necessitates the fact that our beliefs and behavior be subjected to His will. In the Master-slave relationship that is established between Jesus and the saint, it is the obligation of the saint to be directed by the wishes of the Lord. The lordship of Jesus in our lives, therefore, drives us to His word. Those who are not driven to the directions of the Lord (the word of God) cannot claim Jesus as their Lord, for they are not listening to the Lord. One has no right to claim Jesus as his Lord if he refuses to listen to the word of the Lord (Jn 6:45; 12:48). All those who listen, and thus submit to the one Lord, are drawn together into the same fellowship of saints. The church is the community of believers who have submitted to the word of the Lord Jesus. **One faith:** Believers are brought together into one body because of their common faith. The one faith is produced by a unified message of God to His saints (Jd 3). It is upon this message that the believers base their beliefs, and thus, maintain unity among themselves (vs 13; Rm 10:8; Cl 2:7). There can never be many faiths simply because there is only one Lord from whom the Holy Spirit has revealed all truth that is necessary for Christians to maintain unity. **One baptism:** The word "baptism" is from the Greek word *baptizo* which means "to dip," "to plunge," or "to immerse." There is therefore, no such thing in the Bible as baptism (immersion) by sprinkling. There is only one immersion by which repentant believers have been buried with Jesus into His death and united with Him in His resurrection (See comments Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4; Cl 2:12). Through this one baptism all repentant believers

have come into a covenant relationship with Jesus wherein they have received all spiritual blessings (1:3-14; Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). As a result of their obedience to the one gospel, God has added repentant believers to the one body, and thus, He has brought them into a covenant relationship with Him. The one body is the result of all repentant believers submitting to the one baptism. Today, there are not two baptisms, one of water and the other of the Holy Spirit. At the time the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this letter from prison in A.D. 62, the Spirit taught through these inspired words that there was only one baptism. This baptism is immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins (At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 12:13). If one teaches that there is another baptism today other than the one about which the Spirit here speaks, he is believing and practicing something that is contrary to the unity that is based upon these fundamental truths. The Holy Spirit here teaches that there is only one immersion. This is immersion in water in order to come into a covenant relationship with God in Christ who is the Lord of all things. **One God and Father of all:** There is only one God to whom all men must give worshipful allegiance (Dt 6:4; Ml 2:10; 1 Co 8:6; 12:6). Men have no right to create a god after their own image. They have no right to create a god who behaves according to the desires of men. The creation of such gods has led to idolatrous confusion throughout history. Unity among men can be realized only if all men seek the one true God through His revelation. If we seek God through our own imaginations and worldly desires, humanity will continue with a diversity of religious beliefs until Jesus comes again. Since most men seek to please themselves concerning their religion and beliefs in a higher power, religious chaos in the world will continue. Christians, however, have been united in this life because they have believed in the one true and living God (See 1 Th 1:9,10). They have hope of a new heavens and earth wherein all present will believe in only one God in whose presence they will reside. **Of all ... above all ... through all ... in all:** *"In Him [God] we live and move and have our being"* (At 17:28). The totality of the presence and being of God is

beyond the comprehension of mortal man. These things that are here stated in words by the inspired Paul come to us in words that are limited by the definitions of our dictionary. The definitions of our earthly words cannot possibly reveal the exhaustive being of the One who created all things. God is the indigenous source of all supernatural power. There is no supernatural power that exists separate and apart from His being. Satan is only allowed some power. All that is and will come originates from only one source. That source is the eternal God. Paul's conclusion emphasizes an important point. Since God is above, through and in all, no man has a right to create either his own god or his own religion. All must conform to the fundamental beliefs Paul has just stated. One cannot divert from or change these beliefs in any manner and still claim to be of Christ (See comments Gl 1:6-9; Rv 22:18,19). Since these words are written, then we must conclude that no man can come to a knowledge of the one true and living God without coming to His revealed word. No man can understand God who refuses to approach God through the Bible. Disciples of Jesus, therefore, are driven to the word of God in order that their understanding of God not be distorted.

THE DIVERSITY OF GIFTS

4:7 Each one of us: Emphasis here seems to be on each member of the body having and exercising his part and function in the body. Therefore, the context goes beyond the ministry of the miraculous gifts of the 1st century church, and thus, beyond the purpose of the miraculous gifts in the 1st century. Herein is revealed the perpetual organic function of the body. **According to the measure of Christ's gift:** In this context Paul affirms that Jesus is the one who gives the gifts. It is not the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts that are mentioned here. Reference, therefore, is to gifts of ministering the word that are set forth by Jesus in His body, not the miraculous gifts that the early Christians received by the laying on of the apostles' hands (At 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11). In the historical context of the Ephesian church, the miraculous gifts for the building up of the body were in the process of

vanishing away (1 Co 13:8-12). These gifts would also be included in the function of the ministries of the word that are mentioned here among the Ephesian disciples. The gifts (ministries) that Jesus here gives refer to organic ministries that would carry on throughout the history of the church, yet without the miraculous gifts that came through the laying on of the apostles' hands (vss 11,12).

4:8 He led captivity captive: Paul here quotes from Psalm 68:18 where the prophecy was made concerning Jesus' defeat of His enemies. The prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus defeated the powers of Satan on the cross and led into captivity Satan's power over man through sin and death. Through the power of the gospel one is delivered from sin and death, and thus, set free (See comments Rm 6). Through His resurrection, Jesus delivered, by the power of the gospel, those who suffer from the fear of physical death in life and the second death at the end of life (Jn 17:4ff; Cl 2:12; Hb 2:14,15; compare 1 Co 15:24-28). Spiritual death and physical death were introduced into the world through the sin of Adam. Spiritual life in this world and eternal life to come were introduced into the world through Jesus (See comments Rm 5:12; 1 Co 15:20-22). Jesus thus led into captivity all the work of Satan that would deprive one of both spiritual life and eternal life.

4:9,10 He also first descended: This would certainly refer to the incarnation of Jesus (Jn 1:1,14; 3:13). However, Jesus went beyond the incarnation by participating in the journey of our spirit after physical death. He descended into the hades realm (At 2:27; see comments 1 Pt 3:18-22). He did such in order to assure us that He has journeyed where we would go on our journey after physical death. No matter what realm into which we would go, Jesus would be with us. **Ascended far above all the heavens:** The incarnation and sacrificial death of Jesus gave Him the right to sit at the right hand of the Father with authority over all things (1:20-22; Mt 28:18; Hb 8:1; 1 Pt 3:22). His victory over sin by the cross, and over death by the resurrection, made Him worthy to judge the nations (See comments Rv 5). His kingdom reign now ex-

tends to all things that are in heaven and on earth (1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22).

4:11 The gifts of ministry that Jesus gave are specific functions in the global church. They were given for the purpose of building up the members throughout the world. It is not necessary to limit these gifts of ministry to the 1st century. However, in the 1st century it is assumed that many of those who carried out these ministries also had the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit if they had had the opportunity to come into contact with a Christ-sent apostle who would have laid hands on them (See comments At 8:18; 19:1-6). It was not that the ministries were inspired ministries in the early church. What was inspired was the truth that was taught through the ministries. Today, therefore, the message of these ministries is the written word of God. We must also keep in mind that these ministries defined the function of the global church. The church in every area did not have the benefit of all the ministries. There were not apostles with every assembly of the church, though the global church had the benefit of the apostles. **Apostles:** In the early church context, reference here would be to both Christ-sent and church-sent apostles. Christ-sent apostles would be the original Christ-sent twelve apostles who were personally called by Jesus and commissioned to be special witnesses of His resurrection (Lk 24:48; At 1:8,21,22; 1 Co 15:5-8; 1 Pt 5:1). Paul would be added to this group, though he affirmed that he was a child born out of the season when Christ-sent apostles were naturally called, that is, during the ministry of Jesus (1 Co 9:1; 15:8). It was to these original apostles that the Holy Spirit revealed all truth that was to be delivered to the church (Jn 14:26; 16:13). And it was to these apostles that special signs were given in order to defend their apostleship (2 Co 12:12). However, the student must keep in mind that the Greek word *apostolos* is also used in a generic manner in the New Testament in the sense that others were considered apostles after the ordinary manner of being sent out by churches (See At 14:14; 2 Co 8:23; Ph 2:25). These were church-sent apostles, or missionaries, who were sent by churches to accomplish specific missions for the church, specifically

world evangelism. In the case of Paul and Barnabas, they were apostles who were sent to accomplish the mission work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (See Gr. in At 14:4,14; Rm 16:7; 2 Co 8:23; Ph 2:25; 1 Th 2:6). Church-sent apostles, therefore, functioned for the purpose of going forth from the church to preach to the unbelieving world. **Prophets:** These were inspired preachers and teachers in the early church who ministered to local disciples in order to instruct them in the word of God. There were no written Bibles among the early churches. These ministers (prophets), therefore, functioned in order to continually remind the disciples of the truth that was revealed through the Christ-sent apostles. Teachers function today in a similar manner. However, their source for edification of the church comes from the inspired word of God, not a direct revelation from the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 4:2). **Evangelists:** These were itinerant preachers who traveled about preaching the gospel to the lost (At 21:8; 2 Tm 4:5). To do the work of an evangelist means that one's work is to proclaim the gospel to those who have yet to hear the gospel. **Shepherds ... teachers:** Depending on one's translation, these men are also referred to in the New Testament as elders, bishops, overseers and pastors. There was a plurality of shepherds designated for the church in each city (At 14:23; 20:28; see comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:5-9). Their primary work was spiritual leadership and teaching the word of God. In the Greek text these two functions are qualified as one function because the word "some" is not used separately to refer to the teachers. These were shepherd-teachers in the body of Christ. These were those members who were gifted with the ability to communicate to others in a teaching situation (Rm 12:7). All apostles, evangelists and shepherds were teachers. But in this specific function, emphasis is on the ability of certain members to function locally as shepherding teachers. Shepherd-teachers thus function in the church as diligent students of the word of God in order to communicate the will of God to the local disciples. They functioned as shepherds of the flock through teaching.

4:12 For the equipping of the saints: The work of the

above ministries is to be directed toward equipping or preparing the members to function organically to the glory of God. It is Jesus' plan through the preceding ministries to instruct the saints in order that their spiritual lives be molded into His image (Rm 12:2; 1 Co 12:7). Through the evangelistic ministries, the organic function of the church is to fulfill the mission of Jesus to preach the gospel to the world. **Work:** Disciples must work (See comments Ti 3:8). There is no such thing as a lazy Christian. One is simply not being Christian if he is not moved by thanksgiving for the grace of God to serve (See comments 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). **For the edifying of the body:** "Edifying" refers to spiritually building up. The purpose for equipping the saints is to edify the church as a whole in order that each member be trained and encouraged to work (1 Co 14:26). Christians are to be equipped in order to be able to minister to the needs of every member (Gl 6:10; see Ep 6:21; Cl 4:17). Therefore, the purpose of the gifts of ministry is for the benefit of the body of Christ (Compare 1 Pt 2:5). All the ministries were relational in the sense that ministries were to reach out to others, whether the world or fellow believers.

4:13 Until we all come to the unity of the faith: The gifts of educational ministry and spiritual leadership function in order to grow the universal body. The church is to be grown in unity that is based on common beliefs and behavior concerning fundamental teaching. Emphasis in this context is on teaching and maintaining truth. It is the acceptance of and belief in this truth that guards the disciples from the world of doctrinal error in which they live. The truth of God's word not only guards the body from being tossed to and fro with every sort of teaching, but also, the truth is the foundation upon which the body maintains its unity.

4:14 No longer ... tossed to and fro ... with every wind of teaching: Paul now comes to the purpose of the ministries of teaching through the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers. The church at any one time in history resides in a world of twisted religious beliefs. It is the nature of the religiously unstable person to be swayed by every sort of religious belief that is pro-

moted by religious people who seek validation for their faith in anything but the word of God. It is the work of those who minister in teaching, therefore, to preach and teach the revealed truth of God in order that every disciple be firmly established upon the foundation of God's word. A principle point Paul is affirming here must not be missed. The church must be founded upon correct beliefs. The only way this can be accomplished is if the membership feeds on the word of God (1 Co 14:20; 2 Pt 2:2). A disciple that is not founded upon the word of God is a disciple that will be tossed to and fro with every sort of religious heresy that men may conceive. Biblically ignorant leaders always lead religious people into confusion (See Hs 4:6). Biblically ignorant disciples are always led astray by those who do not love or know the truth (See 2 Th 2:10-12).

4:15 *Speaking the truth in love:* An arrogant teacher cannot speak the truth in love for his life does not conform to that which he speaks. He may make true statements. However, if the demeanor of his life is arrogant in reference to what he preaches or teaches, then he is speaking from a hypocritical life. Christians must live by the truth in order to promote the unity of the church. In an atmosphere of Christian love, the church can spiritually grow in the unity of the faith (Compare 2 Co 4:2; Cl 2:10). ***The head, even Christ:*** Christ is the universal center of reference of the body (5:23; Cl 1:18). He is such because He is the center from which all authority and direction for the church originates (Jn 12:48). Those who have submitted to His headship are directed in the abundant life by His word (Jn 10:10). When individuals submit to the headship of Jesus, they are drawn together as the body of Christ. Jesus is thus the head of the church because each individual member has personally submitted to His headship. The way to Jesus is direct, not through the church. Church is the serendipity of those who have voluntarily subjected themselves to the headship of Jesus. There can thus be only one church, for all the members have submitted to the one head of the church.

4:16 When each disciple is personally connected to the head through obedient submission to the word of the

Head, then there is growth. A body without a head is dead. A disciple without the headship of Jesus is dead in reference to his relationship with God. Men who will not allow Jesus to control their beliefs and lives are out of control, and thus, subject to every wind of teaching that is in the world. **What every joint supplies:** Every member of the body is needed for the growth of the body (1 Co 12:12-31). A member that is not functioning in order to perform his or her work causes the rest of the body to falter. The purpose of the gifts of ministry, therefore, must be directed toward equipping every member to function as a vibrant part of the body. Growth of the body, therefore, depends on much teaching and equipping in order to encourage every member to use his or her skills to glorify God. Every member of the body must be functioning. One cannot neglect his ministry by hiring it out to others. Spiritual growth comes through exercising one's ministry in service to others. If we are preaching the gospel, it is inherent in this ministry that we are living the gospel.

LIVING IN THE LIGHT

4:17 Paul contrasts the lives of Christian Gentiles with the futile behavior of the unbelieving Gentiles who persist in walking after the lusts of the flesh (Compare Rm 1:21-32; Cl 3:1-17). **Vanity of their mind:** By walking after the lusts of the flesh, one wastes his mental powers and ability on the things of the world (See At 14:15; Rm 1:21). That which he accomplishes in the world will have no value in reference to eternal life (Compare comments of 1 Co 15:10).

4:18 Understanding darkened: When one walks in a manner that is directed by worldly thinking, his thoughts are not directed toward or controlled by God. Those philosophers and scientists that give up a knowledge of God are thinking with darkened understanding. They can never come to a knowledge of what is real and true without the knowledge of God in their thinking (At 26:18; Cl 1:21; 2 Pt 3:1). Their great knowledge of facts concerning the physical world has given them a false sense of security. Their knowledge of the physical world has led them

to ignore the spiritual world. Therefore, those who live after the flesh in this manner have their minds morally darkened. Their ignorance of God perverts their minds, and thus, their thinking and behavior (Rm 1:21-23; see 1 Th 4:5; compare At 17:30). They have left themselves without any moral standard by which to direct their thinking and behavior.

4:19 Given themselves over to lewdness: Those who have given up a knowledge of the will of God give up any moral standard above man himself by which to conduct their lives. By giving themselves over to their own lusts, their consciences are hardened against moral living that is directed by the word of God. They thus give themselves over to lasciviousness (“licentiousness” or “debauchery”). They morally corrupt their lives by following after hardened consciences that have given up the direction of their Creator (Mt 7:22; Rm 13:13; 2 Co 12:21; Gl 5:19; 2 Pt 2:2,7,18; Jd 4). **To work all impurity:** The unsatisfied greed of men who have no moral standard will lead to the wreck of their own lives. In the process, they will not only wreck their own lives but the lives of those they use to satisfy their lust for money.

4:20,21 In contrast to the worldly life he has just explained, Paul exhorts the Ephesians concerning the nature of the Christian life they accepted when they came into Christ. He exhorts them not to behave as unbelieving Gentiles who refused to have God’s moral authority in their lives. He had not taught them the immoral behavior of the Gentiles. Because he had instructed them in the principles of Christian behavior, he now expects them to conduct themselves accordingly.

4:22,23 Put off ... the old man: When one obeys the gospel, the old man of sin is put to death (Rm 6:3-6; Cl 3:7). “For you died ... your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Cl 3:3). The Ephesians must now live according to the commitment they made when they crucified the old man at the time of their conversion (See comments Rm 6; Ph 1:27; Cl 3:1-11). Since the Ephesians had formerly made the mental decision to live according to righteousness, they must now continue to struggle to put to death the desires of the flesh. The Christian life is an endless

struggle to be morally led by the will of God (Cl 2:11; Js 1:21; 1 Pt 2:1). It is a continual struggle to renew one's mind (Rm 12:2; 8:7; Cl 3:10).

4:24 Put on the new man: Through righteous thinking and holy living one puts on the new man (See 2 Co 5:17). When one is immersed into Christ he becomes a new man, having been washed of all sins (At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:4). However, though one is washed of sin, he still must bring his life into conformity with conduct that is directed by the word of God. As a new man one must maintain his commitment to follow after the example of Jesus' life and teachings (1 Co 11:1; 1 Pt 2:21; 1 Jn 2:6).

EXHORTATION AGAINST SIN

4:25 Paul now instructs all disciples concerning specifics of the moral behavior that must be characteristic of those who are putting on the new man. He begins by stating that disciples must live lives of integrity. They must deal honestly with one another and with those of the world among whom they live (Zc 8:16; Rm 1:25; Cl 3:8ff; Rv 21:8; 22:15; see comments Mt 5:33-37).

4:26,27 When one's anger is allowed to turn into wrath, then sin follows (See Ps 4:4; 37:8). One should not allow his anger to carry over into another day. If he does, his anger can develop into inward hate and bitterness. Those who give their personalities over to hate will destroy not only themselves, but also the lives of many with whom they have contact. Thus anger can easily lead to a heart that can be used by the devil for evil works (1 Pt 5:8,9).

4:28 Steal no more: Stealing can become a behavioral pattern of life to those who live in a world where there is no love of one's neighbor. Theft is a personal psychological dysfunction that manifests one's lack of loving his neighbor as himself (Gl 5:13,14). Paul thus gives two solutions for correcting the problem of a thief's thinking. **(1)** Disciples must work in order to correct a thief mentality (See 1 Th 4:10,11; 2 Th 3:10-12). **(2)** Disciples must work in order to give to others (At 20:35; Rm 12:18; Ti 3:14). In working to provide for others, one reverses the thief mentality of thinking only of himself. Instead

of taking his neighbor's things, he works in order to give his neighbor things. No Christian can be a thief because Christians have committed themselves to love their neighbors as themselves.

4:29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth: Paul uses the same solution for evil speech as he did for the mentality of theft. Evil speech must be replaced with speech that edifies one's fellow man. Christians must always be on guard concerning their speech (5:4; Mt 15:11; Cl 3:8; Js 3:10). Wicked speech will always damage the relationship between individuals. It will damage the unity of the body (See 1 Co 1:10; Js 4:1,2). Therefore, Christians should make a special effort to control their tongue in order to speak those things that encourage others (1 Th 5:11; Cl 3:16; Js 3:1-12).

4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit: Paul here refers to Isaiah 63:10 where reference was to Israel's rebellion against the instructions of God (See Ps 78:40; 95:10,11; Is 7:13; At 7:51). The context of Isaiah, therefore, gives us the interpretation of the "grieving of the Spirit" in this context. The Spirit is grieved when men rebel against God's word that is revealed through the Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17). In the case of the Ephesians and other 1st century disciples, the Spirit was grieved when men despised the preaching of the truth (See 1 Th 5:19,20). The Spirit is grieved when disciples disobey God. **By whom you were sealed:** The Holy Spirit was given as a guarantee of the greater reward they will receive when Jesus comes again (See 1:13,14). In the context of the early church, the miraculous presence of the Spirit in the work of the disciples was evidence that God was with the church (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Such evidence was God's guarantee that there were greater things awaiting Christians when this present world is done away. When Christians today pattern themselves after the same beliefs that were maintained by the early disciples, they also have the same guarantee of a future dwelling that is yet to come.

4:31 Bitterness: Disciples should not harbor evil feelings toward others (See Cl 3:8). If they do, such feelings will inevitably lead to bitterness and evil actions. **Wrath:** Disciples should not allow their anger to become uncon-

trolled. **Anger:** The best way not to allow anger to turn into wrath is not to become angry in the first place (vs 26). However, if one becomes angry, he should not retain an angry disposition over any length of time lest it turn into bitterness and wrath. **Clamor:** One who has harbored anger will give himself over to emotional outbursts of uncontrolled yelling. **Slander:** Slander is the wickedness an individual portrays through lies that are meant to intentionally harm the character of another (Js 4:11). One who slanders often rails with false accusations against another. He does so with the intent of inflicting emotional hurt or defamation of another's character (See 3 Jn 10). Those who slander in order to defame their brothers will not inherit heaven (Rv 21:8). **Malice:** All of the preceding sins that Paul mentions fall under the umbrella of malice (Ti 3:3). A person who has a spirit of malice often takes delight in inflicting harm on others. He is a person who has violated the second law of God concerning sociological behavior, that is, to love one's neighbor as himself (See comments Mt 22:37-40; Gl 5:13,14). He has violated the new commandment of Jesus that we love one another as He loved us (Jn 13:34,35).

4:32 Be kind to one another: This statement depicts all that is contrary to the character of the one who would portray any of the sins that have been previously mentioned (See Mt 6:14; Gl 5:22-26). In this one statement, the Holy Spirit explains the demeanor of Christians toward one another. Such a demeanor of spirit is in complete contrast to those who have given themselves over to the ungodly living that has been previously described (See 2 Co 2:10; Cl 3:12-14). **Forgiving one another:** Christians must kindly forgive one another as God has forgiven them through Jesus (See comments Mt 6:12-15; 18:21-35; Mk 11:25). There is no sin one Christian can commit against another that one should not forgive (See Js 2:13). No unforgiving spirit will enter into the heavenly realm of those who have been forgiven such a great debt against God. It is difficult for Christians to forget those sins that are committed against them. However, if they are to be of the nature of the One who spoke from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk 23:34),

then they must forgive all sin that is committed against them (See At 7:60). The nature of those who will dwell in the heavenly existence to come will be after the nature of God. God is forgiving, and thus, unforgiving people will not inherit heaven. Forgiveness is for the benefit of the one against whom sin has been committed. Forgiveness releases one from feelings that can digress into bitterness, and subsequently the destruction of one's spiritual health. In order for one to remain spiritually vibrant and free, he must have a forgiving spirit toward all those who have inflicted harm upon him.

Chapter 5

5:1,2 Be imitators of God: In order to imitate God one must look to Jesus (See Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36; compare 1 Co 4:16; 11:1; Gl 4:12; 1 Th 1:6; 2:14; 2 Th 3:7-9). It is the nature of children to follow the example of their father. As children of God, therefore, Christians seek to follow the nature of their Father. In order to do this, they must walk in love. *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 Jn 4:7,8; see Jn 13:34,35; Cl 3:12-14; 1 Th 4:9). We must love one another as Christ loves His body, the church (Jn 15:9; Gl 1:4; 1 Jn 3:16). **A fragrant aroma:** The Sinai law animal sacrifice was metaphorically sweet-smelling because God could smell the submission of His people in making the offering. And so in the sacrifice of Jesus, God could also smell the obedience of an obedient Son (See Ex 29:18,25; 2 Co 2:14,15; Hb 5:8,9).

5:3 Fornication: This is a generic word that refers to all sexual sins such as adultery, homosexuality and lesbianism (Rm 6:13). **Uncleanness or covetousness:** Paul here links uncleanness or impurity with covetousness (greed). The soul that is covetous after the things of the world has an unclean nature (See Rm 1:27-32; Cl 3:5-7). Any unnatural fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh would be considered uncleanness and greed. Paul says that the preceding things should not only be unheard of practices in the Christian community, but such should not even be the subject of Christian thought and conversation (vs 11).

5:4 Filthiness: This would be coarse or obscene speech and conduct (See Mt 12:35; Js 1:19-21; 3:5ff). **Foolish talking:** This would be silly, frivolous or senseless talk. Those who have their mouths running without engaging their minds usually bring all sorts of grief upon themselves by speaking those things that they ought not (1 Tm 5:13). Whether communicating in the context of assembled disciples, or in personal encounters with other disciples, disciples should not be involved in foolish and uncontrolled speaking. **Coarse joking:** This would include dirty jokes and sacrilegious speech that is contrary to the spiritual nature of the Christian.

5:5 Paul now states the results of the preceding behavior. No fornicator or sexually immoral person, or covetous person who has idolized things of the world (Cl 3:5), will inherit that realm of godly existence that is yet in the future (Gl 5:19-21; Rv 21:8). They cannot inherit heaven simply because they are not of the spiritual character of those who will inherit heaven. Paul's instructions concerning the relational behavior of Christians identifies the purpose of the church. Church is the opportunity for disciples to prepare their characters for eternal dwelling.

5:6,7 Those who lead immoral lives that are contrary to the truth of God seek like-minded companionship in their sin. Society often accepts that which is morally contrary to the will of God. In this way, society establishes its own moral code of conduct, and then intimidates all in society to conform to its conduct. Paul thus exhorts Christians not to allow those of the world to deceive them into believing that their immoral conduct is acceptable to God (See Jr 29:8; Rm 7:11; 16:18; 1 Co 3:18; 2 Th 2:3). The moral culture of Christianity is not to be determined by the culture of the world. On the contrary, Christians are to be the salt (culture) of the world. **Empty words:** These are the words of deceptive arguments by which those of the world would seek to deceive Christians into conforming to their manner of life. **The wrath of God:** Before a Christian allows himself to be carried away with the deceptive wicked behavior of the world, he should reconsider the fact that God will pour out

wrath on those who live a life of disobedience (Rm 1:18; Cl 3:6; 2 Th 1:7-9). It is because of the intimidating power of Satan through the commonality of sin that Christians should seek fellowship with one another (1 Co 10:21,30; 2 Co 6:14). Those Christians whose best friends are those of the world, have put themselves in a situation where they can be influenced by the thinking of the world (See Hb 10:24,25). Christians, therefore, cannot live isolated from one another. They need close relationships and to associate with one another in order to encourage mutual moral behavior that conforms to the will of God..

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

5:8 *Light in the Lord:* Because Christians have accepted the light that shines through Jesus in their lives (Jn 1:4; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35), they are a light of hope to a world that is lost in darkness (2 Co 3:18). Their living after Jesus, who was the light of the world, identifies them to be of God (Mt 5:13-16; 2 Co 4:4-6; see Jn 8:12).

5:9,10 *Fruit of the Spirit:* The fruit of the Spirit is generated in the life of the one who lives after the principle of loving God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself (See comments Mt 22:37-40; Gl 5:14,22-26). ***Finding out what is pleasing:*** It is by the direction of the Spirit-inspired word of God that the Christian discovers what is acceptable to God (Rm 12:2; see 2 Co 13:5; 2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3).

5:11 Christians should guard themselves against being influenced by the thinking and ways of the world. It is their work to expose erroneous thought and behavior by the preaching and teaching of the word of God (2 Tm 4:2). Those who would conform to the world have lost their influence in exposing the evil of the world.

5:12 In order to guard against the infiltration of wickedness into the community of God, Paul instructs Christians to refrain from speaking the filthiness of the world. Evil jokes and conversation have no place in the Christian community, as well as viewing such evil that is portrayed through the media of modern-day entertainment.

5:13,14 It is the light of the truth of God that brings to light the evil of the world (See Jb 24:13; Jn 3:20,21).

Those Christians who are slipping into the behavioral pattern of darkness must awaken to the seriousness of their apostasy. They must awaken to the light that was initially manifested in them through their obedience to the gospel (See Is 26:19; 60:1; Rm 13:11; Rv 2:5). Also, those who are in the darkness of sin and have not yet obeyed the gospel must allow the light of the gospel to shine upon them. They must awaken out of the sleep of death in sin in order to allow the gospel light to shine in their lives (See Jn 5:25). They can do this by allowing the truth of the gospel to change their behavior.

EXHORTATION FOR GOSPEL LIVING

5:15,16 Disciples should conduct their lives in a manner that is characteristic of the One after whom they call themselves (See Mt 7:24ff; Cl 4:5). They must guard themselves against being influenced by the ways of the world that Paul has previously explained in this chapter. They must, therefore, take advantage of every opportunity or make the most of the time that they have in life to serve God through serving one another and others (Gl 6:10). They must maintain a life-style of servanthood in order to guard themselves against the evil that is always present in the environment in which they live (See At 2:40; Gl 1:4; 1 Jn 5:19). At the time of Paul's writing, great persecution of the church was about to be unleashed through the personal vendetta of Nero against Christians. After Nero, Domitian would later in the 1st century unleash Roman State persecution that would eventually make Christianity an illegal religion in the Roman Empire. All who would not submit to Caesar as lord would be accused of insurrection. Christians, therefore, when accused of being insurrectionists of the Empire, would thus be subject to the punishment of death. The days in which Paul wrote to the Ephesians were thus evil. They would become worse by the end of the 1st century (See "Historical Background" in intro. to Rv).

5:17 In order to guard oneself against the deceptive power of the devil, one must educate himself in the word of God (2 Tm 2:15; 3:16,17). The Christian would be foolish to turn away from the truth of God (Cl 4:5). In turning

away from the truth of God, he would be giving up a divine standard of moral conduct. Therefore, the disciple of Jesus should make every effort to study God's moral and doctrinal guide in order that he not be tossed to and fro in a world of religious error and immoral conduct (4:14; see Cl 1:9; 2:2; 2 Pt 3:18).

5:18 *Be filled with the Spirit:* This statement is an imperative command. Therefore, reference is to Christians taking the initiative to know the Spirit-inspired truth of God, and allow that truth to guide one's moral behavior and doctrinal beliefs. One must not only understand what the will of the Lord is, but he must also allow the will of the Lord to direct his life (At 20:32). When one's life is directed by God, then God receives all credit for the godly behavior of the Christian.

5:19 *Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs:* This is the nature of the Christian who has responded to the grace of God. Singing and making melody in one's heart defines the nature of daily Christian living. On every occasion and in every situation Christians are to be speaking to one another in song (At 16:25; see Cl 3:16). God made our spirit to release worship through the instrument of vocal singing. When Christians lift their voices to God, they emotionally pour out praise to the glory of God. ***Psalms:*** These were songs that were devoted to the praise of God and possibly included Psalms of David that were put into melodies of praise to God. ***Hymns:*** These were possibly songs written by the early Christians that expressed special thanksgiving to God for His saving grace. ***Spiritual songs:*** Christians should sing those songs that exhort and edify the soul of man and bring him into a spirit of worship. It is through the medium of such songs that teaching and exhortation are to be carried out in the communication of disciples one to another. In singing, therefore, Christians focus on praising God by teaching and admonishing one another. ***Singing and making melody in your heart:*** The imperative command here is that every disciple participate in singing in order to focus on praising God. Vocal singing is inclusive, for every disciple has been given the instrument of his voice in order

to make melody in his heart to the Lord and his fellow believer. This is what the Holy Spirit instructs that disciples do in order to release the joy and praise that is in their hearts because of what God has done in their lives. **To the Lord:** This phrase defines the direction to which “singing and making melody” should be directed. In this command, therefore, we are indirectly warned not to add to that which God seeks from the heart of men. God is not seeking to be entertained. He is not looking for outward performances, but inward praises. Therefore, it is superfluous to assume that God, who is spirit (Jn 4:24), seeks to listen to the clanging of physical inventions of noise that men perform for their own entertainment. In the pagan cultures in which the early Christians lived there was an assortment of mechanical instruments that were used in worship of those gods that the adherents had created after their own image. In doing such, they had convinced themselves that such gods enjoyed the mechanical clanging of instruments that only the worshipers enjoyed. These performances only portrayed an outward effort of worship without concentration on the inner man with which the one true God seeks to be worshiped (See comments Jn 4:24). When one worships God, he must always search the word of God in order to determine how God wants to be worshiped and not how worshipers would entertain themselves. Though it is not wrong for Christians to entertain themselves, they must not assume that entertainment is worship. Worshipers must always remember that God desires to listen to our hearts, not our harps.

5:20,21 Giving thanks: The heart that responds to the grace of God is a heart that continually gives thanks to God with a dedicated life that is presented as a living sacrifice (Ps 34:1; Rm 12:1; Cl 3:16,17; 4:2; 1 Th 5:18; see comments Rm 12:1,2). **Submitting to one another:** The church is a community of slaves who seek to serve one another's needs. It is a community that is governed by the law of love, and thus, the members are loving slaves who go about doing good. By such love, the world knows the true church of Christ (Jn 13:34,35; see Ph 2:3; see comments Mk 10:35-45; 1 Jn 3:10-12; 4:7-16).

CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

In the section of Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4 Paul makes an analogy between the God-ordained relationship of the husband and wife with the God-ordained relationship between Christ and the church. In view of the statement of verse 32, he seems to be using the understood husband-wife relationship to explain the mystery of the Christ-church relationship. Therefore, emphasis in the text is on understanding the Christ-church relationship by making reference to the husband-wife relationship. He follows the discussion with parent-child (6:1-4) and master-servant relationships (6:5-9).

5:22 *Wives, submit to your own husbands:* The submission of the wife to the husband should be understood in the context of what he has just said in verse 21, “*submitting to one another in the fear of God.*” All Christians are to function in submission to one another. There are areas, therefore, where the husband is to submit to the wife. She is designated as the keeper of the home (Ti 2:5). Husbands are to submit to the wives in order to guard the wives’ work of being keepers of the home. “Submit” here does not suggest that the wife is intellectually or spiritually inferior to the husband. The wife is to maintain her God-appointed function in reference to the leadership of the husband and father of the family (See 1 Co 7:12ff; 11:3; Cl 3:18; 1 Tm 2:11-15; 1 Pt 3:1). She is to do this in order to preserve the God-ordained environment in which children can have an example of how to submit to spiritual leadership. The wife’s submission is for the purpose of equipping children to grow up with an attitude of submission. ***As to the Lord:*** Verse 22 explains the nature of the wife’s submission to the husband. She is to submit as she does to the headship of the Lord. Christian husbands and wives should consider their love of and submission to the Lord greater than their love of one another. Such guarantees that husbands will love their wives and wives will submit to their husbands in order to produce an environment in which children can be nurtured to be godly citizens of society.

5:23 *The husband is the head of the wife:* The metaphor “head” is here used in reference to the relationship

between the husband and wife as it is used in reference to the headship of Jesus to the church. Headship refers to that which is the center of reference, and thus, the leadership factor of the relationship. The husband is to maintain the center of reference for the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the wife and family. When husbands fail in this area, the family is crippled with a man who has not accepted his responsibility that is assigned to him by God. When the head is dysfunctional, so is the family. Headship, therefore, is maintained by servanthood leadership in the family, not by the dictatorial demands of an unloving tyrant. Headship leadership of the family is to be after the nature of Jesus' headship of the church (1:22; 1 Co 11:3; Cl 1:18; 2:19; compare comments Mk 10:35-45). Jesus loved His bride, and gave Himself for her. **Savior of the body:** Jesus ransomed Himself for the church (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk 2:11; Jn 4:42; At 20:28; Ph 3:20). In like manner, husbands should give themselves to their wives. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the church, and thus a loving husband sacrifices himself for his wife.

5:24 As the church: As the sustenance for the preservation of the church rests in the serving headship of Jesus who is in control, so the sustenance and preservation of the wife lies in the serving spiritual and physical leadership of the serving husband who has the responsibility of spiritually leading the family. The church submits to Jesus because Jesus lovingly gave Himself for the church. The more the husband gives himself to his wife, the more the wife will respond to his leadership. **Subject:** It is God's will that the husband have the final authority in the relationships and decisions of the family. There is discussion in times of differences, however, the final decision of the husband must be maintained in order to preserve the unity of the family. A family that has no center of reference concerning decision-making has no final authority upon which to be united.

5:25 Husbands, love your wives: Godly headship is controlled by the love of the husband for the wife. A loveless head turns into a tyrannical dictator who feels free to lash out with physical and mental abuse. Love, however,

protects the wife and the continuity of the family. Jesus so loved the church that He gave of Himself for the sake of the church (1:5; 2:4; Rm 5:8). He ransomed Himself for the redemption of the church (Mt 20:28; At 20:28). In such a manner, husbands should function in reference to their wives. The marriage relationship is not a relationship wherein husbands think only of themselves. It is a relationship wherein husbands learn to unselfishly consider another person with respect, honor and love. It is a relationship wherein men learn to focus on others more than themselves. Such a relationship provides the opportunity for individuals to prepare their characters for eternal dwelling. It is in such an environment where children learn to behave according to the will of God.

5:26 Sanctify and cleanse: Sanctification refers to making holy before God. Through His sacrifice on the cross Jesus made the church holy before God. God sees the church, therefore, through the blood of Jesus, and thus, we stand perfectly cleansed of sin before God. We stand perfect, not because of flawless living in reference to law, but because of the blood of Jesus (Cl 1:22; Jd 24). "Cleansing" refers to solving the sin problem of men. Members of the body of Christ have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus at the point of immersion into Christ (At 22:16; Ti 3:5). They have been washed in the waters of baptism in order to be presentable before God (See comments Jn 17:17; 1 Pt 1:22-25). The word of God purifies one insofar as one brings the behavior of his life into conformity with the will of God. Sanctification begins at the time one crucifies the body of sin by immersion into Christ for the remission of sins (Rm 6:3-6; see Js 1:21). It continues throughout one's life by walking in the light (1 Jn 1:7).

5:27 A glorious church: The church is not glorious because of its performance of law or meritorious deeds and programs. It is the glorious result of the grace of God that was poured out through the redemption that was revealed through Jesus (Ti 2:11). The church exists because of the cross, and thus is glorious as a result of God's work through Jesus. All glory must be given to God for providing the way by which the church is able to be

presented before Him a glorious church (Cl 1:22; Jd 24).

5:28,29 As their own bodies: In marriage, the man and woman become one in the eyes of God (vs 31; Gn 2:21-24; Mt 19:4-6). The husband, therefore, is to care unselfishly for the wife as he cares for himself. Jesus gave Himself for the church, which is His body (Mt 20:28; At 20:28; Cl 1:18). The husband is to care for the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the wife as he would care for himself after the principle of loving others as himself (Mt 22:36-40; Gl 5:14,23,24). It is significant to note that the responsibilities that the Holy Spirit here directs Paul to write concerning the relationship between a husband and wife cannot be carried out in a polygamist relationship. It is impossible for a man to carry out these God-ordained responsibilities to more than one woman. **Nourishes ... cherishes:** The husband is to physically care for the wife. He is also to spiritually care for her emotional and spiritual needs. A man who cares little for himself will care little for his wife. Therefore, men should have self-respect for themselves in order to nourish and cherish their mates.

5:30 We are members of His body: Christians throughout the world are members of the one universal body of Christ. Membership, therefore, is not in reference to a connection with local assemblies of the church, but with the one universal head of the body who is Jesus (1:22,23; 4:4,11-16; 1 Co 12:27; Cl 1:18). The emphasis of membership in the New Testament in reference to the church is on one's covenant relationship with Jesus. Emphasis is not on a sectarian alliance with separate assemblies of the church, which concept promotes dividing the one church into many groups. At the time Paul wrote, all the members of the church who were in Ephesus were members in fellowship with those who were disciples in Corinth, Philippi and throughout the world. "For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Co 12:12). Disciples are interdependent on one another throughout the world. In the context of the Christian marriage, therefore, husbands and wives must function in their relationship with one another as

members of the body of Christ. They must remember that they have a bond with Jesus that is to function as a bond to hold them together as a man and woman. The bond of the Christian marriage is inseparably linked to the bond that both husband and wife have with Christ and His body.

5:31 *The two will become one flesh:* The uniqueness of the oneness of the church in its universal relationship to the one head, Jesus. This oneness illustrates the spiritual bond between the husband and wife in marriage (See comments 1 Co 6:12-19). In marriage the partners are to leave parents and cleave to one another (See Gn 2:23,24; Mt 19:5). In the eyes of God, the two become as one. Therefore, in order for the two to become one they must cleave to one another as husband and wife.

5:32 *This is a great mystery:* The relationship that is established between the man and woman in marriage in turn illustrates the unity of the church with reference to Jesus as the head of the body. The universal body of Christ, the church, is in a covenant relationship with Jesus. As a result, all members are connected to the one head, and thus, all members have the gift of fellowship with one another (See comments Jn 15:1-9). Their fellowship with one another is not based on their agreement to conform to the traditions of a particular group of men, but because they have been obedient to the one Head. The best illustration that can be used on earth in order to manifest this relationship, is the bond that exists between a man and woman in marriage. Therefore, as a member of the church, one is not to commit spiritual adultery by being married to another religious group that is created after the desires of men (Rm 7:1-4; Js 4:4). When one is born into Christ, he is born into the body of Christ (Rm 6:3-6). He cannot be born into a man-made church. He can be added only to the church of Christ as a result of his obedience to the gospel (At 2:47). Likewise, Christian husbands and wives bond together in marriage as they have bonded to Christ by obedience to the gospel. As we are one in Christ, so the husband and wife are one in marriage.

5:33 *Love his own wife:* The husband must love his

wife as his own body (vs 25). Paul's emphasis is not on the wife as being property or a sex object. He is stressing the husband's responsibility of caring for the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the wife. There is action emphasized in the word "love" in this context. The husband, therefore, must take action to carry out his responsibilities to his wife. **Wife ... respects her husband:** Wives must reverence and respect the headship of their husbands. Those wives who do not live in subjection to their husbands are stealing away the headship of the husband and robbing their children of an example of submission. Wives that live in order to encourage the headship of the husband who loves them, are guaranteeing their security in a marriage bond that is based on love and mutual respect. They are setting an example for their children. In all things, those husbands and wives who give themselves to the headship of Jesus, have established a common spiritual bond upon which marriage is enhanced and maintained (See Mt 10:34-37; Lk 14:26; At 4:19; 5:29). It is into this atmosphere that children are born and reared to be good citizens and future fathers and mothers. Therefore, the guarantee for a better society lies in the strengthening of the Christian home. Those homes that establish environments that are models for society are the spiritual preservative of society. Christian homes should be conducted in such a manner that they set the example for all homes in any particular society. The example of a Christian home is a light to a world of broken homes. Christian homes are also a hope to all in society that the principles of Christ make it possible for one to establish a home in which love abounds and children are reared to honor God.

Chapter 6

6:1 Obey your parents: Obedience of children to parents is instituted by the Lord (See Cl 3:20; compare Rm 1:30; 2 Tm 3:1,2). Those children who walk in disobedience of parents do not disobey only their parents, but the Lord who instituted the obedient respect children are to render to the parents. Obedient children promote a Christian atmosphere in the family whereby they may

mature into assets for social stability.

6:2 Honor your father and mother: The first commandment for children under the Sinai law was that they respect their parents (See Ex 20:12; Lv 19:3; Dt 6:1-16; Pv 23:22). When children give honor to their parents, they help in preserving God's plan for the Christian family. Children thus have a responsibility to work with their parents in developing the family atmosphere that God desires that Christian families maintain.

6:3 The foundation for social order is established in the home by the obedient relationship children maintain with their parents. When children are allowed to lead undisciplined lives, they eventually lose respect for their parents. A child that does not give honor to the authority of the parent will eventually do the same in reference to authority in society. Therefore, honor and respect for authority in society begins by such being practiced in the home.

6:4 Do not provoke your children: The father should not assume the position of a dictatorial tyrant who stirs up fear and anger in the hearts of his children (See Cl 3:21). The parents in the home should not behave in an unloving manner to one another. If they do they will provoke resentment in the minds of the children. **The discipline and admonition of the Lord:** Training involves setting examples of how the word of God is applied in Christian behavior. Christian parents must teach the word of God to their children and guide them to practice it in their lives. They must give living examples of the Christian life in practice (See Gn 18:19; Dt 6:4-9; 11:18-20; 2 Tm 3:16,17). Solomon wrote, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Pv 22:6). Children who learn righteous living in the home will have a standard to which they are able to return if they wander in the wilderness of sin.

MASTER-SLAVE RELATIONSHIPS

6:5 Bondservants, be obedient to ... your masters: The Greek word for "bondservants" here is from *doulos* which is the word for those who were born from parents who were slaves (See Cl 3:22 - 4:1; 1 Tm 6:1,2; Ti 2:9,10; 1 Pt

2:18). Christian bondservants were to render obedience to their masters as to the Lord. They were not to manifest an arrogant or defiant attitude in carrying out their duties. **Sincerity of your heart:** Their service to their masters was not to be from a hypocritical spirit, but from a sincere attitude of service. Their sincerity in service would reap consideration from their masters. They are to give their service to their masters as they would serve the Lord.

6:6,7 As bondservants of Christ: Bondservants are to work for their employers as they would for Christ. With such an attitude of servitude, they are doing the will of God. When one is giving service to others according to his social obligations, he must render such as he would serve God. If such were to be the attitude of bondservants in reference to their masters, then certainly such is to be true will all Christian employees. Christian employees, therefore, do not carry out their service as to men, but as their work is in service to God. The purpose of the employee is to make sure that his employer is successful. In this way, the employee protects his job and provides for his family.

6:8 Paul here makes application of the principles he has just discussed in reference to all men who give service in some way to others. The bondservant or employee's good attitude and work may not be recognized and rewarded by the master. However, God does recognize such and will eventually reward such in eternal glory (See Mt 5:12; 25:21-23; Rm 2:6; 2 Co 5:10; Cl 3:24,25). The work of an employee on the job is working for the Lord, for the Lord has ordained that one should provide for his own sustenance.

6:9 Masters, do the same: Paul turns to the responsibilities of Christian masters. Christian masters must not extract performance out of their bondservants or employees through threats (Cl 4:1). They must remember that they have the Lord as their Master, before whom they will eventually give account. They must deal with their bondservants or employees as they would have the Lord deal with them (Compare Mt 7:12; Js 2:13). When these concepts of the master-slave relationship were put

into practice, at least in the Christian community, the practice of having bondservants eventually came to a close. At the time Paul wrote these instructions, it was estimated that from a third to a half of the population of the Roman Empire was composed of slaves. **There is no partiality:** All people must realize that all men are viewed as the same in the eyes of God. Therefore, the closer one is in his relationship with God, the more he views all men as God views him (See Dt 10:17; At 10:34,35; Rm 2:11; 1 Pt 1:17). Christianity is not culturally linked, that is, it does not favor any particular culture of the world. Christianity is the culture of God that should be manifested in the relationships that men have with one another.

Spiritual Armor For Spiritual Soldiers (6:10-20)

SPIRITUAL ARMOR FOR SPIRITUAL SOLDIERS

There is always a spiritual struggle between good and evil that is within the life of those who are seeking to do that which is right (Rm 13:12; 2 Co 10:3-6; 2 Tm 2:3; 1 Th 5:8). Jesus has already won the victory over evil for the saints. The saints have this victory if they will remain in the battle. In the following verses Paul uses the armor of a soldier to metaphorically explain what Christians must do in order to uphold their victory against all that Satan would launch against them through his devices of deception.

6:10 Be strong in the Lord: The Christian's strength is maintained if he remains in fellowship with the Lord who is the source of power against Satan (Rm 8:31,37; 2 Co 6:7; 10:4; 12:9; Ph 4:13). This imperative command places the responsibility for being strong on the shoulders of the Christian. If the Christian does not remain strong, it is not the fault of other brothers or the fault of the Holy Spirit. In the following statements that the Holy Spirit makes, He does not assume responsibility for keeping the Christian strong. The responsibility for faithfulness is with free-moral saints who must maintain the spiritual armor of the Lord by which strength is maintained against the wiles of Satan. In order for God to remain a

just God in judgment, no accusation can be laid against Him by the apostate Christian. The fallen Christian cannot blame God in any way for this apostasy and subsequent condemnation. Therefore, the Holy Spirit does not work in the life of any individual in a manner that would subject free-moral agents into conforming to the will of God. If He did, then the apostate Christian in his condemnation could have reason to accuse the Holy Spirit for not guarding him against sin and death. The final responsibility to remain faithful to God, therefore, rests on the shoulders of each disciple. For this reason, the Holy Spirit directs Paul to write these words in order that each member of the body assume his responsibility to put on the whole armor of God.

6:11 *The whole armor of God:* The reason for putting on the whole armor of God is to be able to stand against Satan's deceptions. Satan has deceived the whole world. Through the intimidation of the evil environment in which Christians live, they are often drawn away from truth in order to conform to the teaching and behavior of unbelieving friends and neighbors (Js 1:13-15). ***Schemes of the devil:*** Satan schemes in order to deceive the innocent. His deceptive influences are presented to the saints of God through every means (4:17; 2 Co 2:11; 1 Pt 2:11; 5:8; see comments 2 Th 2:9-12; 1 Jn 2:15,16). If one is not conscious of the fact that Satan is continually scheming to deceive the righteous, then he will not be vigilant against apostasy (See Mt 24:4,5,23-25). The most common deception of Satan is through the means of misdirecting the religious inclinations of man (See comments Mk 7:1-9). The world is full of religions that satisfy man's religious desires. However, all such religions are false because they are not founded upon the word of truth that has been revealed by and through the Holy Spirit. By smooth and fair speech, the religious leaders of the world have thus led astray the hearts of the innocent who are ignorant of the word of God (See Hs 4:6; Rm 16:17; At 20:30).

6:12 This verse explains the mediums through which Satan schemes to deceive the world. ***We do not wrestle against flesh and blood:*** The Christian's struggle is not

against the physical things of this world (Jn 18:36-38). His struggle is a spiritual battle against the deceptive devices of Satan who seeks to change the moral values of those who are willing to live according to their own desires as opposed to the will of God (2 Co 10:3-6; see Lk 22:53; Rm 8:38; Cl 1:16; 2:15). Once moral values and doctrinal beliefs are changed, then the behavior of the individual follows the misdirected values. **Against the powers:** The source of all evil that is seen in the world is Satan and his demonic forces that are at work in order to destroy the work of God through Jesus. Through deception, Satan has instigated those institutions and governments that control society to lead people against the truth of God. He works through the false religions and mystical beliefs of those who do not know God or desire to know the truth of God. The saints must be aware that Satan is alive and working in a deceived world of secular enticements and religious misdirection. Our awareness of such is the first step in preparing ourselves not to be led astray (See Mt 24:4,5,23-25; At 20:30; 1 Tm 4:1ff; compare Jb 1:7; 2 Co 4:4; Ep 2:1,2; 1 Pt 5:8).

6:13 Take up the whole armor of God: It is the responsibility of the Christian to take up the armor of God (See Is 11:5; 59:17). If he succumbs to the schemes of the devil it is not the fault of the Holy Spirit or another brother. The Holy Spirit is not here instructing that Christians resort to calling on Him in order that He directly guard them against apostasy. He is not instructing Christians to resort to the construction of a ceremonial religion or particular religious formulas or seances to ward off the forces of evil. He is simply stating that the individual who will be held accountable for himself must spiritually clothe himself with those things that have already been revealed. **In the evil day:** Paul is here referring to those times when Christians will be tested to the extreme. In this case, he is possibly looking forward to the day of tremendous persecution that would eventually be launched against the church by the Roman State (See intro. to Rv). However, the evil day could be any day in the life of a Christian in which he is greatly tested by trials or tempted by deception to forsake his faith. In

such times, therefore, the Christian is to stand against or oppose that which is wrong (Ps 36:12; Gl 2:11; Js 4:7; Rv 6:17). Those who do not stand against Satan will fall to Satan's devices to lead them astray from that which is right and true. It is not coincidental that Paul made these statements of warning to the Ephesian church and other churches in the region. He had previously warned the Ephesian elders that men with selfish ambition would arise among their leadership (At 20:29,30). Ephesus had always been a seat of religious error. In the years to come after the writing of this letter, false religion would continue to plague the churches of the area. The churches would eventually become complacent (See comments Rv 2:4,5). In their complacency, Satan would make havoc of the church. We would assume, therefore, that the Holy Spirit sees the days of apostasy coming, and thus, in this context forewarns every member to arm himself for spiritual warfare against Satan.

6:14 *Having girded your waist with truth:* In order to stand against the deceptive devices of Satan, the Holy Spirit explains here what must be done. Christians should first put the truth of God in their hearts by believing and living the truth (Ph 1:27). They should do such in order that they be transformed into the strong character of Jesus, as well as be able to identify and stand against all that is error and morally wrong (See Is 11:5; Lk 12:35; Rm 12:2; 2 Tm 2:15; 3:16,17; Hb 4:12; 1 Pt 1:13; 2:2; 3:15; compare 1 Jn 4:1,2; 3 Jn 3,4). ***Breastplate of righteousness:*** In the soldier's armor, the breastplate protects the vital organs just as living the will of God protects the vital spiritual life of the Christian. Here the Holy Spirit speaks of putting on a life of doing that which is right (4:24; 5:9; Ps 119:172; Is 49:17; Rm 13:12; Ph 1:11; 1 Th 5:8; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7).

6:15 *The preparation of the gospel:* It is upon the foundation of the historical event of the gospel that Christians maintain emotional, mental and spiritual stability (1 Co 15:1). It is the fact of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope that we can have peace of mind and confidence that Jesus has all things under control for the sake of the Christian (See comments 1:20-

23; Hb 1:3; 2:14,15; 1 Pt 3:22; see Rm 10:15; Ph 4:7; compare Is 52:7; 2 Tm 1:12).

6:16 *The shield of faith:* “And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). As the shield protects the soldier’s body against the attacks of the enemy, so the faith of the Christian functions as a shield to ward off the attacks of doubt, discouragement and despair. By increasing faith through study of the word of God (Rm 10:17), the Christian is able to stand against the deceptions of Satan. Every temptation that Satan may throw against the Christian can be stopped by truth that is learned through a study of God’s word (See comments 1 Co 10:13; 2 Tm 2:15; 3:16,17). There is no power that Satan may have that can break through the armor of God that the Christian exercises in his life (See comments Rm 8:37-39).

6:17 *The helmet of salvation:* It is the helmet that protects the head which is the center of reference of the body. Because of the helmet, the soldier can confidently keep his head high in order to engage the enemy in battle. Christians can do such because of the assurance of their salvation that is based, not in their works, but in the grace of God through the cross (See 1 Th 5:8; see comments 2 Tm 1:12; 1 Jn 2:1-6; 3:19-24; 5:18-20; compare 2 Tm 3:15). ***The sword of the Spirit:*** The purpose of the sword is both for attack and defense. The Christian uses the word of the Spirit to attack the enemy of deception and also to defend himself against being deceived (4:14; 2 Th 2:8; Hb 4:12; Rv 1:16; 19:13-15). It is the responsibility of every Christian to arm himself with a knowledge of the word of God in order not to be tossed to and fro in a world of turbulent religious deceptions. One must “*grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pt 3:18). Those who are ignorant of the word of God are fertile soil for the deceptive beliefs of Satan (Is 5:13; Hs 4:6). Christians, therefore, must be vigilant in their study of the Bible (2 Tm 2:15).

6:18 *Praying always:* Christians should maintain a life-style that lends itself to prayer (Lk 18:1; Cl 1:3; 4:2; 1 Th 5:17; Ph 4:6). It is through prayer that not only the inward man is strengthened, but also the work of God

is called upon by the disciple to function in his life. **In the Spirit:** In the 1st century, inspired prayer would fall under the miraculous gift of prophecy (1 Co 14:15; Jd 20). The early disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1). The early disciples, therefore, would need direction in prayer, for most of the Gentile Christians were converted out of idolatrous religious beliefs. They had no biblical background concerning how to pray or what to pray. It was for this reason that the Holy Spirit directed prayers in order to lead them to pray according to the word of God (See comments Rm 8:26,27). Today, Christians have the word of God in written form in order to direct their prayers.

6:19 And pray for me: We must keep in mind that Paul was writing these words from Nero's prison in Rome. Though a bold and strong man in the faith, Paul realized he needed prayers in order to preach the gospel in all situations. He was on trial for his life, though God was working through his trial to defend Christianity before the world of unbelievers (See intro. to At). Paul here asks the Ephesians to pray for him that he be bold in that which he must speak concerning the gospel of Jesus (At 8:35). The truth was revealed to Paul by revelation. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, his knowledge of the truth and possession of the Spirit did not subjectively instill within him a spirit of boldness. He was bold insofar as he believed the evidence of what God had done in his life. He, as well as all Christians, are free-moral agents with the responsibility to stand fast in the Lord. In order to do this, prayer calls on God to work in the Christian's life in ways that are past our understanding. Paul here asked for the prayers of the saints that he be bold (2 Co 3:12). Though we do not understand how God would make Paul bold in answer to the Ephesians' prayers, we can be assured that their prayers were answered. We must by faith be assured that at least in this area of request, God is able to perform that which the Holy Spirit here guided Paul's hand to write. Therefore, we pray for boldness, and by faith, we are confident that God will deliver.

6:20 I am an ambassador: Paul was Jesus' ambassador

to Rome at the time this letter was written (Pl 9; 2 Co 5:20). He was there on behalf of the work of God. And in this case, he was there to be the defense of Christianity before the highest court in the world (See intro. to At). Every Christian is an ambassador who works on behalf of the One who has sent him forth into all the world to preach the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). Ambassadors represent the one who sends them. Christians have been sent as ambassadors of Jesus with the message of salvation and hope. In order to fulfill their duties as an ambassador, they must speak the message of the One who sent them forth as ambassadors. While they speak for the One who sent them, they must portray in their lives the One from whom they came. Good ambassadors for Jesus, therefore, deliver the message of their Master, both through the lives they lead and the message they deliver. In this way they are ambassadors from the kingdom of light to the kingdom of darkness. They are light to the world.

Final Greetings And Recommendation (6:21-24)

FINAL GREETINGS & RECOMMENDATION

6:21,22 Tychicus: Paul sent the evangelist Tychicus with this letter to comfort the minds of the Ephesians who were worried about the condition and situation of Paul (At 20:4; Cl 4:7,8; 2 Tm 4:12; Ti 3:12). ***I have sent:*** Here is an example of the epistolary aorist verb tense. Tychicus was with Paul at the time this letter was written. However, by the time Tychicus arrived in Ephesus with the letter, and it was read before the church, the “sending” of Tychicus would have been an event of the past. ***He might comfort your hearts:*** It is the work of the messengers of God to comfort the hearts of Christians with good news about the work of God in other areas (At 14:26-28; 2 Co 1:6). When God's work is reported, those whose interest is in the work of God will rejoice. Luke recorded that the church in Jerusalem rejoiced when they heard of the conversion of the household of Cornelius (See At 11:18). John wrote, “*I have no greater joy than to*

hear that my children walk in truth" (3 Jn 4). In the case that Paul here mentions concerning Tychicus, Tychicus would personally comfort the Ephesians with words that Paul was in the loving care of God. They would also be comforted with the words of this letter. Therefore, we would assume that one of the works of an evangelist is to report concerning both the obedience of men and women to the gospel, as well as the faithfulness of others (At 14:26,27).

6:23,24 Peace to the brethren: Paul desired that unity and love exist between Jew and Gentile disciples in Ephesus (vs 15; 2:14-18; 4:3). It is the desire of God that peace prevail in every place where the gospel has been received. **Grace:** Paul's appreciation for God's grace shows through again in the conclusion of another inspired epistle to the church. God's grace is to all those who love Jesus and seek to make Him the Lord of their lives through obedience to His word. It is because of this grace that we are righteous before God.

Commentary by Roger E. Dickson

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ABREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Ci**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pi**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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