

SOLDIERS FOR CHRIST

An Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

By

Dr. Brian J. Bailey



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PREFACE

The Ephesian Epistle beautifully portrays Christ as the warrior King, clothed with the armor of God. This same armor is available to us by His grace so that we too may be victorious over the enemy.

Ephesians is the epistle of grace, love and power. Its pages are permeated with the fragrance of prayer. Because of its high degree of spiritual truth and revelation, Ephesians has been called *The Queen of the New Testament Epistles*.

The first part of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) takes us into heavenly places in God through Christ Jesus. The second part (chapters 4-6), after revealing to us our throne rights with Christ, shows us how to walk victoriously over the world, the flesh, and the devil in our daily life.

This epistle was written (along with Colossians, Philemon, and Philipians) during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. It is one of the richest and deepest teachings in the whole of the Word of God, mainly

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due to the fact that these dear Ephesian believers had been privileged to sit under the teaching of the Apostle Paul in person for about three years.

One of the main themes of this epistle is love. Remarkably, it was for the lack of this personal love for Christ that the Lord rebuked the Ephesian believers many years later in Revelation 2:4: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, *because thou hast left thy first love.*”

It behooves us to learn from this rebuke, since it is often in our strongest area that we can fail. For example, Moses, who was the meekest man in all the earth, became provoked in his spirit by the children of Israel and lost his temper. His reaction and subsequent disobedience caused him to be barred from entering the Promised Land (see Psa. 106:33).

This little book is presented to you with the prayer that it will help you climb to higher spiritual places in Christ, and thereby give pleasure to God the Father in whom we live, and move, and have our being. I pray this book will be a blessing to you.

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INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul addresses this epistle to the believers in Ephesus. Ephesus was built on several hills about four miles from the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the Cayster River. It was situated between the Maeander River to the south and the Hermus River to the north. This strategic position caused Ephesus to flourish.

It is worthy of note that the seven churches of Revelation are all situated in this area. Laodicea is located in the basin of the Maeander, while Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia are near the Hermus. Pergamos is further to the north on the River Caicus. In the valley of the Cayster River, the birth of ancient Asia took place.

Eventually the Asian province extended from sea to sea. It was ruled over by the kings of Pergamos. The last king of Pergamos, King Attalus III, died in 133 B.C. He left the whole of his domains to the Romans. According to the historian Strabo, the province of Asia was made a proconsular province by Augustus. Today it forms part of the nation of Turkey.

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By New Testament times, the city of Ephesus had become the capital of the province of Asia, and was the fourth largest city of the Roman Empire, with an estimated population of over 250,000. It was an extremely wealthy city, and its treasury served as a bank to which many kings applied for massive loans.

Its religious life was governed by the pagan temple of Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the world, and it supported hundreds of tradesmen who made souvenirs and images of the goddess. Also, Ephesus was filled with the worship of the occult, as Acts 19:13-20 seems to suggest.

Paul's visit to this city of wealth and paganism is recorded in Acts 19:1-2: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

Paul remained in Ephesus for two full years teaching in the school of Tyrannus so that all who dwelled in this province of Asia heard the Word of God. One reason the Gospel spread from Ephesus was that the city was connected by highways to all parts of the province and beyond. However, the

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most significant factor was that God did special miracles by the laying on of Paul's hands, and by handkerchiefs which, after being laid upon his body, healed the sick to whom they were sent.

This epistle is full of long and complicated sentences that are at times difficult to unravel. We need to remember that in actuality it was not written by Paul but *dictated* by Paul while he was chained to a Roman soldier.

Timothy became the first bishop of Ephesus. Years later, Onesimus the runaway slave of Philemon was appointed bishop of Ephesus. Tradition holds that the beloved Apostle John lived there, and possibly that Mary the mother of Jesus died there. Thus the church was graced by many wonderful saints of God over the years. However, by the early Middle Ages Ephesus was no longer useful as a port due to silt deposited from the river, and it declined as did its spiritual influence. Its name, however, lives on through this most beautiful and spiritual letter which we will now seek to study.

Above all, we want to *experience* those most precious truths contained within its pages, for the Epistle of Ephesians is not a book that can be understood through mental comprehension, but only through personal experience.

THREE DOMINANT THEMES

1. Divine Election
2. Reconciliation
3. The Church (the Body of Christ)

OUTLINE

1. THE INTERIOR LIFE

The believer's position in Christ (1:1-3:21)

2. THE PRACTICAL LIFE

The believer's conduct in Christ (4:1-6:24)

EXTENDED OUTLINE

THE BELIEVER'S POSITION IN CHRIST (CH. 1-3)

1. Blessed with all Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places in Christ

- a. Elected
- b. Adopted
- c. Redeemed
- d. Forgiven
- e. Sealed with the Spirit

2. The Need to Receive the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

- a. The hope of His calling
- b. The glory of His inheritance
- c. The exceeding greatness of His power to us

3. Members of the Church are:

- a. Quickened from their trespasses and sins
- b. Made to sit in heavenly places
- c. Saved by grace
- d. Made His workmanship
- e. Made a new man

4. A Habitation of God Through His Spirit

- a. Strengthened with might by His Spirit
- b. Indwelt by Christ through faith
- c. Rooted and grounded in love
- d. Filled with all the fullness of God

THE BELIEVER'S CONDUCT IN CHRIST (CH. 4-6)

1. Qualities of Leadership

- a. Humility
- b. Meekness
- c. Longsuffering
- d. Forbearance
- e. Peace

2. Gifts of Leadership

- a. Apostle
- b. Prophet
- c. Evangelist
- d. Pastor
- e. Teacher

3. Goals of Leadership

- a. Perfecting the saints
- b. Equipping them for the work of the ministry
- c. Bringing them to the unity of the faith
- d. Bringing them to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ

4. The Aspects of Walking in Christ for the Believer

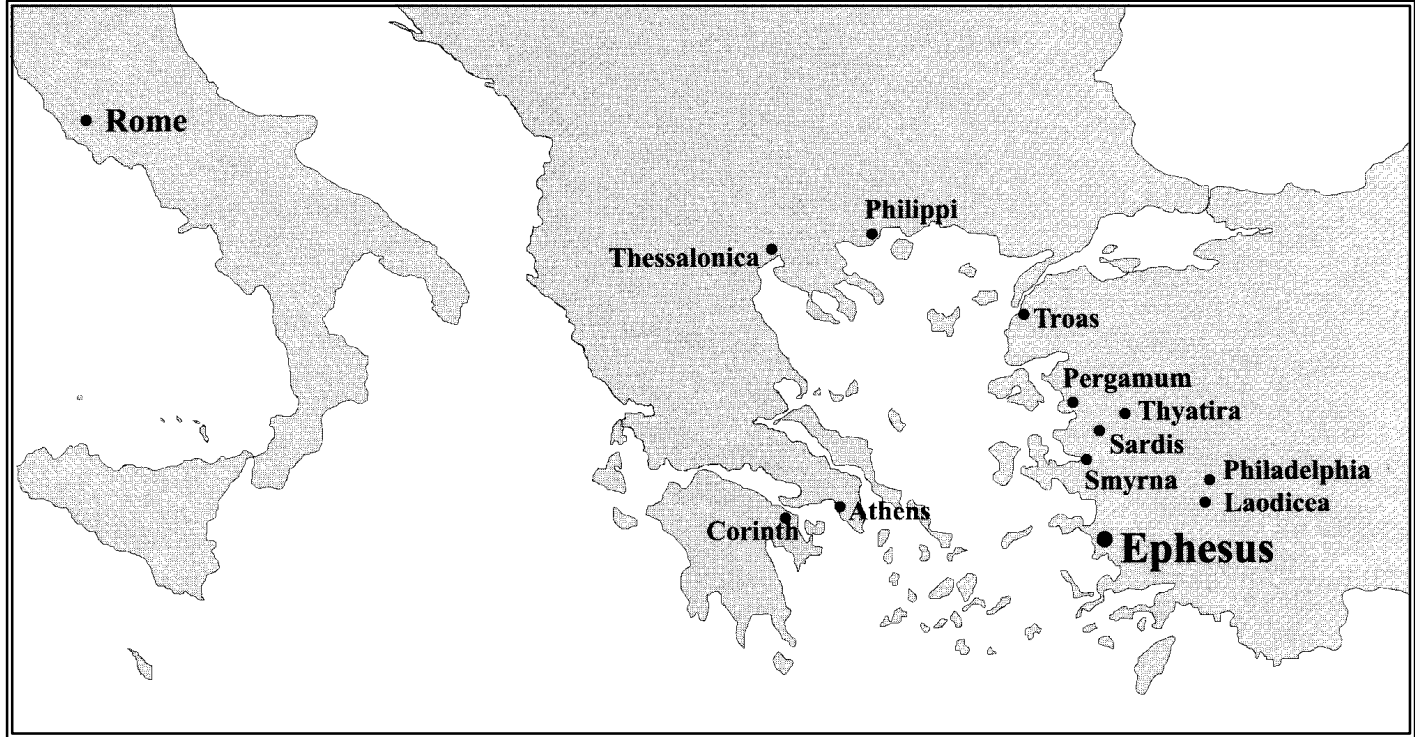
- a. Walking in love
- b. Walking in light
- c. Walking circumspectly as Christ walks

5. The Abundant Life is Revealed in:

- a. Married life
- b. Family life
- c. Secular life
- d. Prayer life

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Map of Ephesus



Part One

The Believer's Position In Christ

Chapter 1

Chapter One of Ephesians speaks of the good pleasure of the Father. In this chapter we see that everything in life is done according to God's good pleasure. Everything has been created for the pleasure of the Father, and that includes you and me, beloved.

1:1 - *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus."* Paul opens his letter to his friends at Ephesus in his normal manner. He says that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. Our ministry is according to the will of God. We cannot choose what we want to be in the Body of Christ; the Lord is the One who chooses.

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Hebrews 5:4 speaks of the fact that not just anyone who aspires to be in the ministry receives that calling: “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

We think we know what will make us happy, but in reality only God knows what we were created for and what will truly satisfy us. Many people spend their whole life seeking to do something that they were not meant to do or pursuing a career that God has not called them to, and they are never happy.

I know people who have spent their whole lives trying to become concert pianists, but they were never happy or satisfied because God had not called them to that ministry. We must find out what God's will and calling for our lives is, and seek by His grace to fulfill it. Only then will we find true happiness.

The term *saints* (meaning *holy ones*) is used of Christians. They are called saints because they are joined to Christ who is holy. *Faithful* is used here to denote those Christians who are walking wholeheartedly in the statutes, commandments, and ways of God. It is the faithful who are entrusted with the truth and teachings of God (2 Tim. 2:2).

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Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 of the high standards required to be a servant and minister of the Lord: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

Christ said in Luke 16:10, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” God, like any good employer, always gives us little responsibilities at first to see if we will be faithful to qualify for greater responsibilities and a greater level of ministry. As we are faithful in the little things, God promotes us in His kingdom, for promotion does not come from man, but from the Lord alone (Psa. 75:6-7).

A short time after I was first saved, the Lord told me to ask the Sunday school superintendent at the church I was attending if I could be a Sunday school teacher. The superintendent said to me, “We have a class of ten boys all about ten years old, and we think you will be the ideal teacher for them.” Other teachers had given up on these naughty little children, but I was determined that I would be faithful to the task the Lord had given me. God was very merciful and faithful to me, and within a short period of time all of these boys gave their hearts to the Lord in dramatic conversions.

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Another very important lesson in life we need to learn is that we must be faithful in our secular employment. Jesus said in Luke 16:11, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Many people, in their zeal for serving the Lord, quit their secular jobs prematurely. This is especially the case in revival. I have been privileged to have witnessed several revivals in different parts of the world, and have seen many people make tragic mistakes by quitting their jobs in order to serve the Lord.

We have to be faithful to finish the work God has given us to do before He will promote us and move us on. I had to complete the work God had given me to do with that small Sunday school class before He would move me on to greater avenues of ministry. Therefore, we must not leave our secular occupation until we pass the tests there, and then God will move us on to full-time ministry in His perfect time.

1:2 - *"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."* Peace means unity and oneness with God. *Grace* means unmerited favor. We were chosen not because of any merits of our own, but because God chose to show us favor. Grace also means divine

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enablement. When the Apostle Paul was suffering with an affliction, the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). It was grace that enabled Paul to endure that affliction.

It is the Lord's grace alone that enables us to accomplish His will and purposes. The last four years of my wife's life were a living nightmare for her. She was paralyzed on one side of her body and also suffered from heart problems. I had to do everything for her. I had to bathe her, clothe her, feed her, and take her everywhere she went.

Toward the end of the fourth year of caring for her, I began to get very weak, and I could feel that the grace of God to care for her was beginning to leave. I no longer had the physical strength to continue, and I did not know what was happening. And then the Lord took her home to be with Him. I realized that it was only the grace of God that enabled me and strengthened me to care for her all that time. Truly, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us!

1:3 - *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* The thought of blessing comes from the Greek word

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eulogetos, which means “to praise, adore or lift up by reciting the goodness or virtues of a person.” In this case, the person is the Father Himself. We are to bless God and speak well of Him because of His goodness toward us.

He has blessed us by giving us all spiritual blessings (spiritual gifts and virtues) that are in heaven. Peter says, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). God, like any good father, does not give us everything we ask for, because some things we ask for would be detrimental to us. He gives us the things that we need which will be a blessing to us.

We have been blessed because one aspect of God’s nature is His delight in blessing others. Psalm 145:9 states that the Lord is good to all. In fact, the whole of Psalm 145 speaks of the goodness and compassion of our God toward His creation. The Apostle Paul notes in Romans 8:32 that “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

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Our Heavenly Father is a generous Father who delights in blessing His children. Just as at Christmastime and other occasions when parents give gifts to their children and rejoice when they say “thank you”—so our Heavenly Father gives us gifts because He loves to see the sparkle in our eyes and the joy in our hearts when He blesses us, and He loves to hear our heartfelt thanks.

Therefore, we should have confidence to approach the Lord's throne, as the Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 4:16: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 7:25 that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, or as we say in English, “The Lord is able to save from the ‘guttermost’ (the worst condition imaginable) to the uttermost all those who come unto Him.” Praise the Lord!

It is important that we have a right concept of God the Father. So often our relationship with our natural father affects our relationship with our Heavenly Father, both positively and negatively. I myself had a wonderful father and had a very close relationship with him.

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One of the most vivid memories I have from my childhood is of my father lying in bed with me one night when I had an ear-ache. He cupped his hand over my ear to make it warm and ease the pain. Therefore, as a Christian and a child of God, it has been very easy for me to think of God the Father as being a wonderful Father because of my own earthly father.

Unfortunately, though, others have not had very good fathers. Many times there are memories they have to forget, and they have to be healed of emotional scars before they can have a close relationship with God the Father. Not too long ago I was having dinner with several pastors in another country, and one pastor told me of the wonderful relationship he has with his daughter. She feels free to come up to him and fix his tie, straighten his hair, hug him and be affectionate with him. She has great love for him and he likewise has great love for her.

The interesting thing is that the wife of another pastor eating with us said, "I would never dare touch my father like that or talk to him that way." She had a father who was very mean and unpleasant. It is amazing that this negative view of her father carried over to her view of God the Father. It was easy for her to relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, but it was very difficult for her to draw near to God the

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Father. Unconsciously, her relationship with her natural father was affecting her relationship with her Heavenly Father. Therefore, it is very important that we understand that God is a very good Father who cares for us.

I would like to consider now the blessings that we have received from God the Father through Christ Jesus.

1:4 - *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."* God has chosen each one of us, knowing us and calling us by name, before the foundation of the world.

When we consider this subject, we are constrained to examine one of the most profound theological statements pertaining to life—that the Lord *foreknew* each of us. Therefore, because He foreknew us before the foundation of the world, He planned the steps that He would take in our preparation for life and eternity. This thought is developed by Paul in Romans 8:29-30: "For whom he

God has not pre-destinated anyone to hell! Jesus Christ bled and died on the cross to save every soul, but He knows who will embrace Him and who will reject Him.

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did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” God’s *predestination* is based upon His *foreknowledge*. These two theological words are inseparable. Because He knows all things, He plans everyone’s life accordingly. However, He gives each person an opportunity to receive salvation and eternal life. God does not predestinate anyone to hell. He bled and died on the cross for every soul. However, He knows who will embrace Him and who will reject Him.

In 2 Peter 3:9 we read, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” God desires everyone to be saved. Paul states in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” God chose each one of us and called us according to His plan for our lives. In actuality, it is not we who chose Him, but He who has chosen us. Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and

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ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

Why did God choose us and what is the purpose of life? These are two of the most important questions we could ever ask ourselves. Before I was saved, I used to ask myself nearly every day for several years, *What is the purpose of life?* In search of my answer, I read the writings of many philosophers who themselves did not know the real purpose of life. Their books only made me more depressed.

For several years when I was a young man, I would get up every morning and take the hour-long bus ride to London and then return home at night. I saw many of the same people every day, and they seemed to accomplish nothing with their lives. This question of the purpose of life haunted me until I got saved. It was then I realized what the purpose of life is.

God has chosen us out of all the billions of people in the world to receive salvation and eternal life. But that is not the real purpose of life, if I could say that. God has chosen us not only so we go to heaven, but so that we become holy and without blame in love before Him, as Paul explains in verse

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4. The Lord chose us and called us before the foundation of the world to become holy and without blame before Him in love. Let us examine these three parts of our calling.

1. Holiness means “being different and separate from the world.” Holiness involves a separation from worldliness, the works of the flesh, and the devil.

2. Without blame comes from the Greek word *amomos*, meaning “without blemish.” The best analogy of this would be the Levitical burnt offering. Every part of the bullock was divided and washed (Lev. 1). Therefore, as Paul tells us in Romans 12:1, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice upon the altar of God, and every part of us—our minds, our will, our affections, our walk, and our service—must be washed by the washing of God’s Word, through obedience to His Word (Eph. 5:26).

3. Before Him in love means that we have a love relationship with Him. We must never forget that the relationship between God (who is love) and His children is rooted and grounded in love. When we have true love developed in our hearts, we can stand before the Lord Jesus.

God desires us to be holy and without blame, but His greatest desire is that we love Him and others. Just think of yourself as a parent. Would you be happy if your child was clean, had good manners,

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and was obedient to you, but he did not love you? How would you feel? There would be no satisfaction or joy in your heart unless your child loved you. The thing that a parent wants more than anything else from his child is love. So it is with our Heavenly Father. What He wants more than anything else is for us to love Him with all of our hearts. Let us now consider the specific spiritual blessings God pronounces upon us:

1:5 - *"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."* Therefore, we are first predestinated by God and then adopted.

1. Predestinated - *Predestination* means to predetermine an event or action, and literally "to limit in advance." This can be understood in Acts 17:26: "And [the Lord] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." God has predetermined the boundaries of the nations and the duration of each empire that has ever existed.

The dispensation of the Church Age also has a certain limit imposed upon it, as Paul says in Romans 11:25, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in

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your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.” Therefore, Christ’s return is based also upon the fact that all the appointed Gentiles must first be brought into the fold of God before He will return. Also, before Christ comes, the Gentile powers will gain dominion over the rebuilt temple area in Jerusalem for forty-two months, culminating with the Antichrist and his nefarious acts and ways (Rev. 11:1-2,7).

2. Adopted - Only our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is begotten of the Father in the sense that He came forth directly from the Father. John 1:18 says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

We were adopted by the Father into His family when we accepted Jesus into our hearts. Romans 8:15-16 says: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit [Himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” When we are born again, the Spirit of God bears witness in our hearts that we have been “born” into the family of God and that we are His children, redeemed by His blood.

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In order to balance this truth of predestination, we must make it clear that predestination is rooted in the foreknowledge of God; the two are inseparable. God knows how people will react to the truth they have, and even also how they will react to truth that has not been given to them. This is exemplified in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in Luke 10:13: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” Because of His foreknowledge, the Lord knew that if Tyre and Sidon had seen the works He performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida, they would have repented and turned to the Lord. But they were not judged worthy of greater light because they rejected the light they had.

These truths are predicated upon the good pleasure of God. In fact, all things in this creation are because of His good pleasure. We now quote some other aspects of the good pleasure of God. Christ said in Luke 12:32, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Paul stated in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

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Therefore, it is by His good pleasure that we inherit the kingdom of God that was vacated by the devil and his angels. The Lord is the wise Master Potter who forms us into vessels of glory according to His predeterminate good pleasure. Thus we should seek to know what He has ordained for our lives before the foundation of the world so that we do not mar His work through disobedience or slothfulness. Paul said, “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power” (2 Thess. 1:11).

We were created solely by the Lord’s good pleasure and for His purposes. The twenty-four elders fell down before the Lord and said in Revelation 4:11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

1:6 - *"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."* All things are by God's grace, for by grace are we saved (Eph. 2:8). The beginning of our spiritual life is by grace, and we are enabled to finish everything we start only by grace. Zechariah 4:7 says, “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the

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headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” Zerubbabel was told that by the grace of God he would finish the rebuilding of the temple, which had been hindered by the Persian Empire.

All obstacles are removed by grace. For the building of the Restoration Temple, the obstacles included the edicts of the Persian Empire. The temple headstone, the stone that completed the building, was put in its place only because of the grace of God.

Everything we are and everything we accomplish is because of God’s grace. God made this very real to me personally years ago in a vision that lasted on and off for five days. In this vision, I was in heaven sitting before the Lord, who was Himself sitting upon a grassy knoll. All that was communicated to me was, “Grace, grace, grace.” And I knew that whatever the Lord chose to do in or through my life was uniquely because of His grace.

Man’s dependency upon grace was made real to the Apostle Paul, for he stated in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

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1:7 - "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" Now we see two further spiritual blessings that the Father has bestowed upon us according to the riches of His grace: *redemption* and *forgiveness of sins*.

1. Redemption - *Redemption* means "that which was lost has been recovered or bought back from the one who had it in his control." Before we were saved, we were Satan's possession by virtue of our sins. We who were lost have been redeemed and bought back by the blood of the Lord Jesus (see Eph. 1:14). God has paid the price to redeem us. Also, in *redemption* there is the sense of being delivered from the power of sin that so easily besets us.

2. The forgiveness of sins - Our sins have been forgiven because of the Lord's death upon the cross of Calvary. We receive forgiveness of sins through the riches of His wonderful grace toward us miserable sinners.

1:8 - "*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.*" This verse contains many precious truths. First of all, we see that God treats us or approaches us to the degree that we are able to understand, appreciate, and dwell in His light. He comes to where we are seated, and teaches us

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and talks to us on our level of comprehension. This is illustrated by the Lord's words to His disciples in John 16:12: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." There were many truths the Lord wanted to share with His disciples, but they were not *ready* to hear them at that time.

When a child is just beginning to learn the basics of arithmetic (addition and subtraction), you do not confuse him with the complexities of calculus. It is the same in the kingdom of God. The Lord shares truth with us according to our spiritual level. The more we progress in Him, the more He reveals to us.

This is something we must keep in mind when we preach and teach. It is no good to give a polished sermon full of nuggets of wisdom and deep truths if those truths go over the heads of the listeners and they cannot comprehend them. We must preach according to the level of our congregation and seek to take them one step higher.

When we travel to other churches or countries to minister, we have to be very mindful of this. We must ask the Lord to reveal to us the level of the church where we are ministering. This is a lesson that was made very real to me in Indonesia. I met there an ophthalmologist from the United States.

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He devoted one month out of every year to go to Indonesia and instruct the native doctors. He said that every time he went to a hospital or clinic, he tried to ascertain their level of knowledge so that he could perform a surgery for them that would increase their knowledge by *one step or level*.

Years ago, when my wife and I were living in Switzerland, I was taking hotelier courses in order to become the director of a Christian hotel which also served as a missionary and conference center. I had to study for a very difficult final exam. One thing I learned was that wine had to be brought out of the cellar and stored at room temperature for two hours before being served so it would be served at room temperature. There is a principle contained in this. We must minister at the spiritual temperature of the congregation. If we go to a mainline church that is very traditional and not Spirit-filled, we must be very careful not to offend them by trying to change them all at once. We should seek to impart truth and vision to them that will take them one level higher in the kingdom of God.

God desires that we have *wisdom* and *prudence*. Wisdom in the Greek is *sophia*, which speaks of comprehending spiritual truths. The Greek word for “prudence” that Paul uses is *phronesis*, which

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denotes practical wisdom or prudence in the management of affairs. The difference between the two is that wisdom is primarily *spiritual*, and prudence is primarily *practical*.

Wisdom is spiritual insight into heavenly truths, and prudence is the God-given ability to manage our day-to-day affairs. These two blessings, wisdom and prudence, will enable us to become very well balanced people for the glory of God in the eyes of both the inhabitants of heaven and earth alike.

The important thing in the Christian life is to have *balance*. As humans, we tend to go to one extreme or another. So often we either concentrate on spiritual wisdom and ignore prudence, being impractical and of no earthly good, or we are very practical, but we lack spiritual wisdom. God wants us to have both.

1:9 - "*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*" This word *mystery* signifies something that is not understood by the uninitiated, but is made clear to those who belong to the true Church. This is due uniquely to the fact that the Father has predetermined to keep His plans secret from the world and reveal them only to His beloved sons and daughters.

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This fact may be substantiated by Paul's words in 1 Corinthians: 2:7-8: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." This truth may be also seen from Christ's response to the disciples' question as to why He spoke in parables. The Lord answered them in Matthew 13:11 by saying, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

1:10 - "...*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.*" This little phrase "the dispensation of the fulness of times" would seem to refer to the time after the millennial reign of Christ upon earth when God the Father will create the New Heavens and the New Earth according to His good pleasure.

The *gathering together* would be the reconciling of all things that are in Christ, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:19: "...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." We must again stress

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that this only applies to those who are *in Christ*. In no way does Paul endorse the doctrine of the reconciliation of all things including the devil, as some suggest. Only those who are *in Christ*, whether they be in heaven or on earth, will be reconciled unto God the Father because they are in Christ.

1:11 - *"...In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."* We who have trusted in Christ for our salvation will likewise receive an inheritance in the Lord, according to our works (see comments on Ephesians 2:10).

As we see in this verse, all things are planned and predestinated according to the will of God who works to bring to pass His purposes. But to what and for what are we predestinated?

1:12 - *"...That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."* We have been chosen and predestinated to glorify the Lord. Paul says in Romans 8:29 that God, according to His foreknowledge, predestinates those whom He knows are capable of being conformed to the image of Jesus. Therefore, we are called to be like Him and to glorify Him. As Peter states, we are to "show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

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1:13 - "...*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*" Here we have the normal sequence of events for believers in Christ:

1. Hearing the word of truth
2. Trusting in Christ for salvation
3. Being born-again or sealed with the Holy Spirit

The term *sealing* was used in New Testament times for merchandise that had been purchased and awaited collection by the purchaser. God the Father has purchased us by the blood of Christ and has placed His Holy Spirit in us as a seal signifying that we belong to Him, and that we are awaiting our final redemption on that glorious resurrection day. However, being sealed by the Holy Spirit by no means signifies eternal security. As long as we walk in obedience, we are guaranteed eternal life, but outside of the covering of obedience, there is no assurance.

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1:14 - *"...Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a taste of the powers of the world to come until our bodies are completely redeemed at the first resurrection (cf. Heb. 6:5). The *earnest* signifies a sample of what the whole will be. Therefore, the experience of the Holy Spirit we know today is merely a small foretaste of what it will be like in heaven.

1:15 - *"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints..."* The Ephesian Christians were known especially for their faith and love, a subject Paul explains more fully later in this epistle.

1:16 - *"...Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."* Herein lies a truth of great importance for every Christian, and pastors in particular. The Apostle Paul gives thanks throughout his epistles for all those who were members of the congregations under his apostolic authority (1 Thess. 1:2). It is an evidence of spiritual maturity when we can recognize that the Lord has not only called and chosen pastors for specific congregations, but that He has also chosen the

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congregations for the pastors. Let us also remember that He has chosen the churches where He desires us to be members. This is the first of Paul's apostolic prayers for the Ephesian believers.

1:17 - *"...That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."* Paul prays that God would give wisdom to the Ephesian saints. In the book of Proverbs, King David admonishes Solomon to get wisdom since wisdom is the principal or most important thing in this life and in the life to come (Prov. 4:7). However, the wisdom that Paul prays the Ephesians will receive is not abstract, but a very specific wisdom. His desire was that his dear Ephesian brethren would possess a revelation of Christ in a way they had never known.

1:18 - *"...The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."* Paul prays that their spiritual understanding may be enlightened, that they may know the hope of His calling and the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

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We need to know that there is a far greater revelation of the goodness of Jesus Christ available to us than that of mere salvation from hell. However, that is not meant to minimize the blessing of our redemption from the pit of hell. If one has ever contemplated or had a revelation of the horrors of eternal dam-nation, that by itself would be enough reason to praise our Savior throughout the countless ages of eternity. Throughout the ages to come, the Father will continually be revealing His grace toward us—miserable, lost sinners that we were.

Paul also speaks of the Lord's inheritance in the saints. Deuteronomy 32:9 says, "For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." The Lord's inheritance in His people is the work that He has done *in* and *through* them while they are upon earth. The Lord has invested much in us, and as seen in the parable of the pounds and talents, He is looking for a return. He gave His life for us, and His desire is that we will be transformed into His image.

1:19 - *"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."* We must not neglect to experience the Lord's mighty power. In giving the four qualifications for those who participate in the First Resurrection (Phil. 3:10-11), Paul mentions

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experiencing the power of His resurrection as one of those qualifications. He now specifies this aspect of His power in verse 20.

1:20-21 - *"...Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."* To appreciate this passage we must first realize where the Lord Jesus Christ was when He was resurrected. Certainly, His physical body was in the tomb, yet His spirit was in the heart of the earth (even as Peter declares in 1 Peter 3:19 that by the Holy Spirit Christ "went and preached to the spirits in prison").

On the third day, the Father resurrected Jesus and also all the righteous who were in paradise in the center of the earth. Ephesians 4:8-10 says, *"...When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"*

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A mighty army of Old Testament saints ascended with the Lord into the very heaven of heavens. This resurrection power is the tremendous power that Paul prayed would be revealed by the Spirit of wisdom to his dear fellow saints in Ephesus.

Now Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father, and all power has been given unto Him. After His resurrection, Christ said to His disciples in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Amy Carmichael had a vision of Christ's ascension into heaven. When the Lord Jesus Christ got to heaven, the Father got off His throne and came to meet His Son, and embraced Him. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all rejoiced together that the Son had completed the will of His Father.

1:22-23 - *"...And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."* The Father has put all things under the feet of Christ and has made Him the Head of the Church. The head directs all the actions of the body. Therefore, Christ directs all the members of His body (the Church) so that the united body fulfills the will and purposes of the Father.

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This is a great mystery (Eph. 5:32). As Christians we form the Body of Christ. We are members of His spiritual body, and as such, we are intimately united to Him in spirit and in purpose. May we so live in such a way as to glorify our risen Head.

On one visit to Southern Africa, the Lord gave my wife a vision of a *spastic* child—a child whose members all function, but are not coordinated by the head, thus accomplishing nothing. The Lord spoke to my wife, “Most of My body is like that spastic child.” Many Christians are full of activity, but are not governed by their Head, Christ, and led by the Spirit. Therefore, they accomplish little that is of eternal worth. May we, beloved, be controlled by our Head the Lord Jesus Christ through the blessed Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2

Paul develops several different themes in Chapter Two. First of all, He speaks of our deliverance from the powers of darkness, then of our position in Christ—of the fact that we were saved by grace, and of the unity that Christ has brought between Jew and Gentile through His death upon the cross.

2:1 - *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."* Here we have a truth that is of the utmost importance. We are dead when we are in sin's cruel bondage. Jesus declared, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (Jn. 8:34). He then continued by warning that the

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servant of sin will not remain in the house of God forever (Jn. 8:35). Thus sin not only bars us from heaven, but also will lead us to hell.

Let us remember the truism: “Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” The prophet Ezekiel states that a righteous man who turns from his righteousness after being warned will have a stumblingblock (or a valid excuse) that will cause him to leave the house of God and walk in a path that leads to hell (Ezek. 3:20). This is referring to people who once knew the ways of God. Remember, sin kills: our *innocence*, our *ideals*, and our *will*.

Sin will absolutely destroy us unless we find grace to stop sinning. I read a very sad story about an Irish-born writer of the nineteenth century named Oscar Wilde. Mr. Wilde was a brilliant man—a child prodigy. He received coveted literary prizes at a very young age, and his writings were extremely popular, especially in Great Britain. Unfortunately, he began to degenerate and give himself over to all kinds of worldly pleasures and sins. It was not long before these pleasures became his masters.

The confession of his own mouth concerning these sins was this: “I no longer controlled my destiny. These pleasures controlled me.” He ended up going to prison because of his immoral life-style. In

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prison he wrote a large volume explaining what happened to him. The essence of what he wrote is that he ruined his life through giving himself over to pleasures. That is the tremendous power and destruction of sin.

2:2 - *"...Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."* In times past, before we were saved, we walked according to the course of this world. "The course of this world" signifies that we were governed by the customs, standards, and ethics of this world, which basically are situational. In other words, the standards of this world do not conform to the absolutes of the Word of God and the Ten Commandments.

The evil spirits which have given their allegiance to Satan control the minds of the people of this world and rule over their affairs. They not only control those they rule over, but actually form their characters. People take on the nature and character of the spirit that governs a certain locale or country. This accounts for the fact that the citizens of every nation have different characteristics—some are violent, some are passive, some are industrious, and others are lazy and indifferent.

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2:3 - *"...Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others"* (NKJV).

The desires of the flesh are listed for us in Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

These seventeen works of the flesh that the Apostle Paul mentions will prevent us from entering into heaven. One time I was studying a book about the kings of England. The interesting thing is that one of the kings mentioned in this book said, "I have a thousand sins and they torment me continually." This king never found Jesus as His Lord and Savior and went to hell after he died. It was the works of the flesh that destroyed him.

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The desires of the mind are contrary to the will of God. “Be-cause the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). Therefore, as a man thinks, so is he (Prov. 23:7).

Our mind as well as our desires have to be transformed, even as Paul says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We must be very careful about what we desire. Our desires will either keep us in the path of God or they will take us away from it.

The New Man-Alive to God

2:4 - *“...But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...”* Rooted and grounded in the purposes of God for His creation is the inescapable fact that God loved the world (Jn. 3:16). Everything springs from His love. In fact, mercy is a product of His love. Therefore, we too must be filled with love so that we understand His actions. God is merciful, and mercy is always associated with good works (Jas. 3:17).

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2:5 - *"...Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)." One of the most salient truths associated with the love of God is that He first loved us—not when we were believers, but when we were lost in our sinful ways. Paul tells us in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is the drunkard, the harlot, and the helpless to whom the Lord Jesus graciously stretches out His hand of salvation. "I am not come to save the righteous, but sinners," was Christ's often-heard cry. Although ninety-nine sheep may be safely in the fold, the true Shepherd will seek the lost lamb at the hour of midnight, not considering His own comforts (Lk. 15:4-7). We cannot reform ourselves. Only the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit can transform us.*

Our Position in Christ

2:6 - *"...And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* This verse speaks of the spiritual position the believer has in Christ and his authority. Sitting in heavenly places with Christ is both a present and future truth. It is a position—seated in heavenly places—that is a reality now so that we may claim throne rights over our adversary, the devil. At the

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same time, we must balance this by realizing that while we are still upon this earth we are subject to all the vicissitudes of this temporal body with all its limitations.

The book of Ephesians is governed by three words: *sit*, *walk*, and *stand*. In Ephesians 2:6, Paul speaks of the fact that Christ has caused us to sit in heavenly places. Then Paul speaks in chapter five of walking in love, walking in light, and walking circumspectly. And in chapter 6 he says that having done all, we should stand.

2:7 - *"...That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* The purpose of God is that in heaven He may reveal His lovingkindness to us in a way that would not be possible upon earth. In heaven there will be a continual unfolding of the riches of His grace. We will forever be learning in heaven about the Lord's great love for us.

It is clear that there is a limit to how much of the Lord's divine truth we can know here upon earth. In 2 Corinthians 12:4 Paul speaks of a time when he was caught up in the Spirit to the third heaven, where he heard things that are "not lawful for a man to utter" here upon earth. Moses also makes this

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clear in Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

This truth was made real to me personally when I saw one of our former students in heaven, she was playing an instrument that was veiled from my eyes. Therefore, it is evident that the Lord in His infinite wisdom has chosen to limit our knowledge here upon earth. What is important is that we learn all that He has purposed for us while we are upon this earth so that we do not come short in this area of knowledge that He has for us.

Everything that God will reveal to us throughout eternity is according to His kindness toward us. He has a fervent desire to show us so much of His love, yet we are not able to receive it upon earth with all our human limitations. As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His boundless love toward us.

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Saved By Grace

2:8 - *"...For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."* In verse 8 there is one of the most profound theological statements in the whole of the Word of God. We are not saved by our own works or our own goodness, but salvation is uniquely the free gift of God. Salvation is not obtained by our merits, but solely by the favor and grace of God. Salvation is received by faith, which itself is also a gift of God. In order to receive the Lord's free gift of salvation, we must have faith—and only God can give us the necessary faith. When we comprehend this most precious truth, we begin to cry out, "Why me, Lord?" and we fall at His feet in adoration and thanksgiving.

2:9 - *"Not of works, lest any man should boast."* Salvation is not by our good works. We cannot work for our salvation; otherwise God would owe us something. Everything is by grace so that no man can boast in the sight of God. This point is made several times in the Word of God, including 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, where Paul declared: "...God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which

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are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory [or boast] in his presence.”

We are now introduced to another truth: God’s purposes for our lives are determined and brought to fruition by Him.

Saved For Good Works

2:10 - *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* We are the clay, and the Lord is the Potter who makes us according to His predetermined pattern. He created us to fulfill certain tasks and good works that He ordained for us before the foundation of the world. Do you see the balance between verses 8 and 10? In verse 8 Paul tells us that we are not saved by our good works, but solely by God’s grace. Then in verse 10 he tells us that we are to live a life of performing good works. We are not saved by good works, but for good works. Good works perfect our saving faith.

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Let us walk in the Spirit so that we fulfill the good works that the Lord has ordained for us day by day. Every day the Lord has preordained certain works that we should accomplish. It could be something as simple as a handshake or smile to help encourage someone who is discouraged. We must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and be led by the Spirit to know what the Lord wants us to do each day.

The Hopeless State of the Sinner Who Does Not Know Christ

2:11 - *"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands."* The actual state of the lost is depicted here. A word of explanation is needed to understand the scriptural division of the nations. The Bible categorizes the peoples of the world into basically three main groups.

1. *The Israelites* are those who descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and are therefore heirs of salvation according to the promises made to Abraham. They have the token of the covenant in their flesh—circumcision.

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2. *The Gentiles* are those who were outside of the promises made to the seed of Abraham, and were later referred to in New Testament times as those who were either Greek or spoke the Greek language.

3. *The heathen or barbarians* were the uneducated among the nations—uncouth, coarse, vulgar, and rude. In Scripture, heathen and barbarians generally refer to the non-Grecian nations, such as the people of Malta who were of Phoenician stock (Acts 28:2-4).

Paul places all those outside of Christ in the category of Gentiles, who were lost, without Christ, and without hope. We now go on to list the pitiful conditions of those Gentiles who are without

Christ, and remember that this list also applied to us before we came to know Christ as our Savior.

Aspects of the Hopelessness of the Gentiles:

1. Uncircumcised
2. Without Christ
3. Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel
4. Strangers from the Covenants of Promise
5. Having no hope
6. Without God in the world
7. Far off
8. Destined for eternal damnation in the blackness of the darkness of hell

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2:12 - "...That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." One of the most tragic aspects of the existence of the ungodly is that they live their lives alone, without the companionship and fellowship of the Lord Jesus. They have no hope beyond the grave and as their time of death approaches, they become gloomier and more apprehensive. This is what we were like before the Lord came into our lives.

The Blessings of the Sacrifice of the Blood of Christ

2:13 - "...But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." We have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ. The efficacy of the blood of Christ is illustrated symbolically in the Tabernacle of Moses. Under the Old Covenant, only by the sprinkling of the blood of animals could mortal man (the high priest, in particular) approach the mercy seat where God's presence resided (Heb. 9:25). By this the Holy Spirit was showing that only by the blood of Christ can we draw near to God. Paul speaks of this in Hebrews 10:19: "...Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

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2:14 - *"...For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."* There was a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles because of the laws and commandments the Lord had given Israel. These laws not only divided the Gentiles from the Jews, but also separated the Gentiles from the presence of the Lord. However, the Jews who did not keep the laws were also separated from the presence of God. Those laws were fulfilled by Christ. He made of two nations (or peoples) one new man, as Paul now goes on to explain. In addition, Christ has caused both Jew and Gentile to be at peace with God. The wall of partition is built by bricks of rebellion, each brick representing an act of disobedience. And so brick by brick it has to be dismantled as, for example, was the Berlin Wall.

2:15 - *"...Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."* This thought of a new man has to be explained. It presents a very important theological truth. In Scripture, Christ is portrayed as the Head of the Church. Also, we are told that we are flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone, and members of His body. Therefore, there exists in heaven a heavenly body of believers.

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Each believer is not only a member of the Body of Christ, but also has a certain function. (Those who have had visions of hell declare that in hell there is also a body that is joined to Satan.)

The practical outworking of this truth is that we are being developed to function in our heavenly calling. We are being prepared in this life to fulfill certain functions throughout all eternity. Therefore, as members of one body, we should all be united even though we have different functions and personalities.

Paul develops this truth in 1 Corinthians 12:27-28: “Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Redeemed Jews and Gentiles are members of this one body. This is further illustrated by the heavenly city called New Jerusalem, which has twelve gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel, while the foundation stones are named for the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. 21:10-21).

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2:16 - *"...And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."* Both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God by Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross. By His death, Christ slew the spirit of enmity (or antagonism) that existed between Jew and Gentile.

2:17 - *"...And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."* The Gospel of peace was preached not only to the Gentiles who were far away from the truth of God, but also to the Jews who served God in the blindness of their mind and were not truly keeping the law.

2:18 - *"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."* Both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father through Christ. This incidentally was a stumblingblock to many Jews, as Paul declares in Romans 10:3-4. Ephesians is written primarily to the Gentile believers in Ephesus and in the Roman province of Asia (situated in modern-day Turkey). The epistle is intended as an encouragement to non-Jewish believers.

2:19 - *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."* In view of the fact that Christ has made both Jew and Gentile one in Him,

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we Gentiles have been given equal status and have been placed on an equal basis with the Jews as citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We no longer are termed foreigners, but have equal status and rights with the Jews. There is a place in God's house for us (cf. Jn. 14:2).

The Holy Temple

2:20 - "...And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." We are living stones in the temple of God. 1 Peter 2:5 tells us: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Jesus is the Chief Corner Stone (1 Pet. 2:6). All the measurements of the other stones are taken from Him.

The analogy of a building, and of a temple in particular, is used in several places in Scripture to illustrate the bonding that exists between Christ and His people, the Church. Peter refers to us as *living stones*. The foundation of a building is of the utmost importance, especially when it is a spiritual building. The foundation stones are not simply the lives of the apostles, but also their teachings (which should permeate our very being). The foundation and the stones have the same texture.

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Let us ask for “the old paths” as Jeremiah enjoins us (Jer. 6:16). The old paths speak of the elementary truths of repentance from dead works and faith toward God (Heb. 6:1). Paul also exhorts us, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9). May we be built upon such lives as Paul’s and Jeremiah’s. The Lord Himself is the Chief Cornerstone, which in a building is the stone from which all other measurements are taken. His life must ever be our example and the standard by which we evaluate our lives. In particular, we must respond in obedience to His teachings, which are capsulized in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7.

2:21 - *“...In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”* The thought of being *fitly framed together* signifies that every believer has a God-appointed position and function in the Church. We are joined to those who are of like mind and vision. Thus we should be members of those congregations which have the same truths that the Lord has imparted to us, so that we may grow into the full maturity of our God-appointed ministry.

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The Church forms a spiritual temple. As with all the tabernacles and temples mentioned in Scripture, which have definite degrees of progression in them, there are different levels in the Church. For example, the temples all possess three basic places: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. Therefore, according to our spiritual position in Christ we should be in the church which provides the truth for our particular development.

2:22 - *"...In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* Finally, we must remember that we cannot grow alone, but we need to be joined to other parts of the Body to be nurtured in the faith. Remembering above all that the purpose of a temple is to be a dwelling place of God, it is essential that Christ be in us, and that we be filled with the Holy Spirit and all the fulness of God. We will seek to develop this thought further in Ephesians 3:19.

Chapter 3

In Chapter Three the Apostle Paul expounds on the breadth, length, depth, and height of God's love which surpasses all knowledge. He prays that we might be strengthened in our inner man and be filled with all the fullness of God.

3:1 - *"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles..."* The construction of this section of the epistle is complex. Paul begins a statement, but does not finish it. He picks it up again in verse 14, where he finally states why he is writing. Instead of completing his thought, he states in

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verse 2 that he had received a stewardship (or dispensation) of grace for the Gentiles. Therefore, at this time we will seek to examine and exegete this exposition of the grace of God toward the Gentiles.

However, before so doing we must not neglect the important doctrine of vicarious suffering that surfaces in this verse. We note first that the Apostle Paul does not call himself a prisoner of Rome, but of Jesus Christ. Paul is reaffirming the truth that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

The Apostle Paul was in Rome by the will of God. The Lord Himself appeared to Paul and plainly told him that he would go to Rome to be a witness for Him there: “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11).

Paul was also suffering in prison for the benefit of the Gentile believers. This may be explained from Paul's own writings to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 4:10-15: “Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested

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in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God" (NKJV).

Paul was bound with chains so that others might know the abundance of God's grace in their lives. Paul lost his freedom so that others might receive their liberty. Death in him was working life in others. As he suffered, the grace of God was being re-leased to the Gentile believers for whom he was responsible.

3:2 - *"...If ye have heard of the dispensation [or stewardship] of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward."* Paul had received from the Lord the truth of a new dispensation that he in turn might declare it to the Gentiles—those who before that time had been outside of the covenants of God, as we have previously discussed in chapter two (cf. Gal. 2:7).

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3:3 - *"...How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words..."* Paul did not receive this truth from man, as he clearly states in Galatians 1:15-17: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. " Paul was personally taught by the Lord in the Arabian desert for about three years.

3:4 - *"...Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)." As we read what follows, we will be able to appreciate the revelation God gave to Paul. God revealed to him the mystery of Christ, which had been hidden from previous generations. God ordained that this mystery would be revealed at the commencement of the Church Age.*

3:5 - *"...Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."* For something to be considered truth, it must be

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established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Therefore, the Lord revealed it not only to Paul, but also to other prophets and apostles.

At the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, James quoted Amos 9:11-12 to affirm that the Gospel was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews, saying in Acts 15:15-17: “And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.”

3:6 - *"...That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."* This is the hidden mystery which was revealed to Paul. The Gentiles, who were outside the blessings of God, have in these last days been included and made fellow heirs with the Jews. As Gentiles, we have become members of the Body of Christ along with the Jews and partakers of His promises. All the Old Testament promises to the Jews are open to Gentile believers

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in Christ. The covenants that God made with the patriarchs, including Abraham, have been opened to us through the mercy of God the Father (cf. Rom. 9:4).

3:7 - *"...Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."* Paul continues by explaining the ministry the Lord gave to him. We must understand that it is the Lord alone who can call us to the ministry. Paul repeats this truth again and again throughout this epistle because it was a deep conviction in his own life. The ministry is not merited, for it is only by the effective working of God's power and grace that we receive our ministry and are able to fulfill it.

Our function and ministry in the Body of Christ has already been predetermined in the mind and heart of God the Father. However, we must use the gifts the Lord gives us, and be productive and fruitful in our particular realm of ministry. This is accomplished in the measure that we permit the power of God to work within us unhindered by the obstacles of the flesh. Let us take heed to the ministry the Lord has given us to make sure that we complete the work He has given us to do, as Paul exhorted Archippus in Colossians 4:17.

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3:8 - *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."* Paul soliloquizes over the tremendous grace of God of which he was so undeserving. Truly, none of us merit or deserve the Lord's grace, but Paul felt that he was the least of all saints and the most unworthy person to receive the grace of God because of his past. Before his conversion, he had been a persecutor of the saints, putting many of them into prison.

Paul testifies in 1 Timothy 1:12-13, 15: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and [a violent man]: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Paul also states in 1 Corinthians 15:9, "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Paul felt unworthy of the tremendous calling and ministry the Lord gave to him. His calling was to present the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. Oh, what riches there are in Christ, what unsearchable riches! Paul wrote to the Colossian

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saints of “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Paul received this calling to make Christ known to the Gentiles, while Peter was sent to the Jews.

3:9 - *"...And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."* The Lord desires that we all understand this mystery—the Gentiles are now joined to the Jews through Jesus Christ by the predetermined will of God the Father.

3:10 - *"...To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."* Now Paul expounds on the purpose of this mystery. The calling upon the Church, the corporate body of believers which includes both Jew and Gentile, is to manifest the manifold wisdom of God. The word manifold means “many different hues of color.” By this we understand that the wisdom of God has many different colors or facets to it. As problems come in different shades of difficulties, there is a matching color of wisdom to solve that particular

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hue of problem. To illustrate this, my wife used to say that for a blue-hued problem, there was a matching blue hue of wisdom.

The angels enthroned in heaven's glory are taught God's ways by the release of God's wisdom through His Church, and through us as individual members of the Body of Christ. Peter states something very interesting in 1 Peter 1:12: "To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into" (NKJV). The angels desire to look into the work of God in His people. We can surely say as Paul said in Romans 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" All this, as we now read, was in the purpose of God before the world began.

3:11-12 - *"...According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."* It is through Christ that we can have access unto the Father. We should not come timidly into the Lord's presence, but with great

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assurance that He will receive us with great joy, for the Father has chosen us to be His children and to be with Him throughout all eternity.

As Paul says in Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Because of Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross, we now have access unto the Father. The Apostle Paul stated in Romans 5:2 that through Jesus Christ “we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

3:13 - *“...Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”* Paul now returns to the theme with which he opened this chapter—his suffering for these dear Ephesian believers. We need to realize that ministers and pastors are called upon to suffer for their flock (or congregation), not vice versa. As the shepherd spends long wearisome nights watching over the flock so that they may rest in peace, so spiritual shepherds must suffer anguish, trials, and tribulations in order for their flocks to be the beneficiaries of spiritual blessings from on high.

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3:14 - *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Let us remember that all prayers are directed toward the Father in the name of Jesus. It is by the shed blood of Christ that we have access to the throne of grace.

The Ephesian epistle is noteworthy for its prayers. If ever you find it difficult to formulate prayers, may we suggest that you use the Apostle Paul's prayers as an example of prayers to pray. This incidentally is the second of Paul's apostolic prayers for the Ephesian believers. The first prayer is recorded in Ephesians 1:16-20 and the second in Ephesians 3:14-19.

3:15 - *"...Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."* The concept of heaven is that of a family. We should nourish this truth continually in our hearts. As believers, we are one family, and we all have one Father, who is blessed for ever.

The Way to the Fullness of God

We are entering into one of the most sacred passages in Scripture. These verses show the way for us to partake of all the fullness of God. In view of this, we have sought to delineate very clearly the steps Paul lays out for us.

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3:16 - *"...That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."* At the beginning of our journey toward the fullness of God, we should note that the Apostle Paul is writing, for the most part, to mature believers. The founders of the Ephesian church had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the prayers of the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:1-6). Then Paul taught in Ephesus for about three years.

Furthermore, a number of church leaders such as Timothy and Tychicus had passed through Ephesus. Therefore, it was a church that had many wonderful teachers who had laid a very deep and solid spiritual foundation. This fact is important to remember when we consider that which Paul now expounds.

Paul first prays for them to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in their inner being. Paul is not speaking about the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial sign of speaking in other tongues, because these believers were already filled with the Holy Ghost. He is speaking about an on-going experience of a further infilling of the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill us with all of His

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fullness. Being *strengthened by might in our inner man* includes the following areas of our lives:

1. Our Mind - God wants us to be able to discern between good and evil. This is only accomplished as we put on the mind of Christ. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:16, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” Having the mind of Jesus Christ means that we take on the humble, servant nature of Christ as illustrated in Philippians 2:5-7.

2. Our Conscience - We should be of “quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” to know what pleases the Lord and what does not (Isa. 11:3). We want to have a *sensitive* conscience that convicts us of sin, not a *seared* conscience like the reprobate.

3. Our Will - Our will must be tempered and controlled by the Lord. We want to partake of the Lord's promise in Ezekiel 36:27: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

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3:17 - "...*That Christ may dwell [abide] in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love...*" The purpose of being strengthened in our inner man is that Christ may dwell within our hearts by faith. Therefore, this is not the initial experience of salvation when the Lord enters our hearts, nor is it the subsequent experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. *Dwell* in the Greek means "to permanently take up one's abode." In other words, the Lord desires to make our bodies His permanent dwelling place. This is an experience that I was permitted to have a number of years ago at a certain conference.

The speaker, who was a missionary from another country, had so upset the other ministers on the platform that they were not listening to his message. While he was speaking, I saw the Lord walking down the aisle of the auditorium. He walked up the steps onto the platform, crossed over, and walked right *into* me. Then to my amazement He leaned forward; and as He was in me, I also leaned forward to listen more carefully to what the speaker was saying about the Lord. I then realized that the Lord was teaching me something about the nature of His love that I did not know. He loved this errant missionary, even though the other ministers and I had rejected him because of his very rough nature.

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Thus it is the Lord Jesus within us who enables us to be *rooted in love*, meaning that all of our thoughts, words, and actions have their source in love. God wants us to be rooted in love, so that

God wants us to be rooted and grounded in love, so that everything we do springs from love. Love must be the motivating force behind everything we do and say.

everything we do springs from love. It is not only a matter of doing what is right, but we must do everything out of love.

Of course it is right for parents to discipline their children, but the question is: What is motivating them to discipline their children—anger and frustration, or love?

You see, everything we do must be done out of love. Also, God wants us to be *grounded in love* so that everything we build is built upon the solid foundation of love.

3:18 - "...*May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height...*" God's desire is that we comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of His boundless love. When we have a revelation of the love of God, it transforms our lives.

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Breadth - We must be willing to stretch forth our arms to receive all nationalities and classes of people, as well as those with difficult temperaments.

Length - We must be willing not only to go the extra mile, but many more miles in order to redeem and help a brother or sister in need. Christ said in Matthew 5:41, “And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two” (NKJV). The Lord teaches us a lesson about love by using a natural illustration from the days in which He lived.

A Roman soldier was permitted to oblige a citizen to carry his armor and belongings one mile. However, the soldier could not force him to carry his pack for two miles. However, the Lord Jesus Christ tells us what true love is—love is going beyond what we are required to do. We want to go the second, or third, or fourth mile, or whatever it takes to show the love of the Lord to those around us.

Depth - We must be willing to go into the very abyss or pit into which someone has fallen in order to pull him out, even as someone had to lift David out of the horrible pit into which he had fallen because of his sin with Bathsheba (Psa. 40:1-3). This love was dramatically manifested by the Salvation Army

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in earlier times by their insistence on going after the drunks and the never-do-wells of nineteenth century London. No individual was too far gone to receive their helping hand.

Height - The height of the love of God can have several connotations. It can apply to going after those who are the so-called *elite* of society, while also being able to lift, as Hannah says in her song, the beggar from the dunghill to make him sit with princes upon their thrones (1 Sam. 2:8). In English, we say that “He saves from the ‘guttermost’ to the uttermost.”

We saw this truth illustrated in Kenya where God saved men and women from the Masai tribe who actually sat upon their dunghills and lived in huts made of cattle dung. The Lord caused many of them to become flaming evangelists. One of the Masai tribesmen even laid hands upon a past president of Kenya and prayed for him. God literally raised up these very poor people from their dunghills to sit with princes.

3:19 - *"...And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."* The love of Christ defies human understanding. It is beyond our comprehension how One so filled with heaven's glory could condescend to die for us. The

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Apostle Paul states that perhaps one would dare to die for a good man, but Christ died for us when we were still in the filth and degradation of our sinful ways, covered in the mire of sin's bestiality (see Rom. 5:7-8).

However, this is the path to being filled with all the fullness of God, who is love. Love is the bond of perfection (Col. 3:14). The Lord in His high priestly prayer speaks of the union of love between the believer and the Father and the Son: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (Jn. 17:23). This is impossible in our natural strength, but the Apostle turns our attention to the One who is able to accomplish it, by saying:

3:20 - *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."* The Apostle Paul brings us back to the fact that we need a fresh infusion of the power of the Holy Spirit for this glorious truth to be realized in us. Paul eulogizes the Father. He is able to do much more than we could ever ask or think!

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3:21 - *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."* In concluding this first half of the epistle, which deals with our position in Christ, Paul causes us to focus upon the truth that this glorious experience is to be demonstrated throughout all the countless ages of eternity. Praise His most wonderful name!

Part Two

The Believer's Conduct in Christ

Chapter 4

We now come to the second half of this “queen of all epistles” by considering the fact that from our position of oneness with the Father and His dear Son there must be a practical outworking of this most glorious experience. The changes that take place in our interior life must manifest themselves in our practical life or otherwise we have not really been transformed.

Qualities of Leadership

4:1 - *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation [or calling] wherewith ye are called."* Paul now returns to his own position. He reiterates that he does not

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consider himself a prisoner of Rome, but rather of the King of Kings. It is interesting and indeed important that those who are prisoners of Christ are called prisoners of hope in Zechariah 9:12. So, dear ones, even though you may be in a prison experience, never think that it is the end for you. In actuality, it is only a passing phase. It will bring you out into a greater light and glory after He who holds all things in His hands has determined that your divine sentence has run its course and accomplished His purposes in your life.

After all, consider where Paul was writing this epistle from. He was writing from Rome, where he was under house arrest, chained to one member of the Praetorian Guard after another—yet here he wrote some of the most priceless gems of divine literature of all ages. Paul expounded on truths that have been a blessing to millions of believers throughout the Church Age.

Then this old warrior of the faith uses a word translated *beseech* which is one of the most poignant cries that has ever left the lips of mankind. It is a word that issues forth from a prisoner being beaten to death, who is pleading for his life. Thus it portrays the cry of one who is in effect saying, “With all

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that is within me..." He *urges* us to "walk worthy" of our heavenly calling. We should conduct ourselves in a manner becoming one who is called to inherit heaven's throne of glory.

That thought reminds me of a young member of a royal family of yesteryears. When his companions asked him to join them in an ignoble prank, he responded, "I cannot; I am a prince." Our vocation (or calling) is high and holy, not to be sullied by ignominious acts that could defile the bearer of such a glorious hope. We must walk circumspectly (Eph. 5:15).

4:2 - "...*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*" Paul defines the poise and conduct of a Christian believer. We now will consider these virtues which Paul enjoins us to manifest in our daily life.

Lowliness - The Greek word translated *lowliness* was a word used of those who were despised. It portrays the thought of one who would cringe as a slave. However, Christianity has made of this almost despicable word in Greek culture a virtue that is to be among the most desired aspects of a Christian's character. How are we to be clothed upon with such a spiritual garment? The key, as with many of the attributes of Christian character, is our *mind*.

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Lowliness (or humility) starts and ends with our appreciation of ourselves. It is to realize with mental appraisal our total unworthiness—that we are indeed nothing—and to esteem others better than ourselves. Of course, we also must not neglect to contemplate Christ and the humility that flows from the One who has been designated worthy by the Father to be the very imbue ment of wisdom and glory. I trust that for the rest of my life, and for that matter, for all eternity, I shall never forget beholding Him as wisdom.

The One who knows and understands all things and has the ability to do all things is clothed upon with the very essence of humility. In one experience I had with the Lord, He gave me the impression that He was completely unperturbed by the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding His Father granted to Him. He was concerned only with pleasing His Heavenly Father. While upon earth, Jesus portrayed a sense of complete dependency upon His Father. He declared, “*The Son can do nothing of himself*, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (Jn. 5:19). This attitude of lowliness is also expressed by David in Psalm 8:3-4 and Psalm 131:1-2.

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Meekness - A meek person is “one who has complete control of his spirit so that he manifests the correct attitude in every circumstance.” In a truly meek person, there is not the absence of anger, which one might think, but it is so controlled that it is manifested at the time when anger is justifiable and meritorious. However, unlike Moses, one’s spirit does not become provoked, nor does one speak out of reaction to a circumstance. Meekness involves accepting every circumstance that comes our way as coming from the Lord (Rom. 8:28).

Longsuffering - The Greek word *makrothumia* translated “longsuffering” describes a person who never admits defeat. The believer who has the Lord’s longsuffering worked out in him is never broken by any misfortune, suffering, disappointment or discouragement, but persists to the end.

Longsuffering enables us to endure insults and injuries without complaining or becoming bitter, to suffer gracefully for a very long time with unpleasant people, and to suffer with fools without becoming irritated. When this fruit of the Spirit is worked out in our lives, we are able to triumph over disappointments when people let us down.

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Forbearance - Forbearance, which is grounded in love, is able to endure in another person a fault or sin that God has not yet dealt with. It is the ability to understand why a person acts and talks the way he does. With this understanding, Christians are able to draw upon the grace of God to endure that person's weakness until God grants him deliverance from it. Long-suffering is the ability to see beyond the faults and flaws and hear the cry of the heart which longs for deliverance.

4:3 - "*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" In verse 3, Paul adds a further admonition to the chosen ones in their walk upon earth. It takes a great effort and endeavor on our part to maintain unity. The Greek word translated *endeavor* has this very same connotation of labor and diligence; it does not imply that the task is easy. Paul, therefore, is indicating that keeping the unity of the Spirit is by no means simple.

To better appreciate this exhortation to keep the peace, let us consider the peace offering described in Leviticus chapter 3. In this offering the Lord made it clear that all the fat pertaining to the animal was to be offered unto God. The energy of an animal or human being is stored in the fat. In other

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words, all our strength must be offered unto God. Therefore, keeping peace or unity requires all of our strength.

What does keeping the unity of the Spirit mean spiritually? In recent years, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has come upon virtually every denomination, especially in the Charismatic revival of the 1960s. Fellowship that was never before possible was realized.

People from different denominations and beliefs who were baptized in the Holy Spirit joined hands and hearts in unity. Denominational barriers and walls came down because of the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

This unity of the Spirit required that people lay aside their doctrinal differences and not have disputes over doubtful and debatable issues (see Rom. 14:1).

The importance of unity for the Body of Christ, Christian families, and nations cannot be overemphasized. In the negative sense, when the inhabitants of Babel were united, the Lord said that there was nothing that they would *not* be able to do (Gen. 11:6). That is the power of unity! The Church must and will come to unity before the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

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As long as the Church is divided, it will be weak. Christ Himself said, "A house divided against itself shall not stand." In the early nineteen hundreds, the greatest enemy of Spain was itself. It was a nation that was torn with division. General Francisco Franco led a rebellion against the loyalist party in Spain. The Spanish Civil War lasted from July 18, 1936 to March 28, 1939. Spain was a nation divided against itself. Therefore, let us as believers learn from history and seek to be one united body which fulfills all the purposes of God.

The last enemy to be defeated before David took Mount Zion and brought unity to the whole land of Israel was the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:6-9). The Jebusites represent those who sow discord among the brethren (compare Deuteronomy 7:1-2 with Proverbs 6:16-19). This is also the last enemy that will be defeated in the Church in these last days. God is leading His Church to the unity that is upon spiritual Mount Zion (Psa. 133), and those who sow disunity among the brethren will be cast off by God.

4:4-6 - *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* Paul now enunciates a sevenfold aspect of oneness. We will examine briefly these seven facets:

The Sevenfold Oneness of Believers in Christ

- 1. One Body** - We are all members of one mystical body of believers (whether Jew or Gentile), which Scripture calls the Body of Christ.
- 2. One Spirit** - We are all born again by the same blessed Holy Spirit.
- 3. One Hope** - We all have the blessed assurance of eternal life in Christ.
- 4. One Lord** - There is only one head of the Church, namely our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- 5. One Faith** - We all have one faith, which comes from Christ, and by that same gift of faith we are saved.
- 6. One Baptism** - We are all baptized into one body in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- 7. One God and Father of all** - And above all else, we all have the same God and Father (who is the Father *of* all, *above* all, *through* all, and *in* all of us).

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The Gifts of Leadership

4:7 - *"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."* One of the primordial truths in the Word of God is that the Lord has given multifaceted gifts to each of us. A partial list is supplied for us in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12. Thus it behooves us to know and acknowledge our gifts, as well as to develop them so that we may use them to their maximum advantage (Rom. 12:6-7). We want to offer unto the Lord the fruit of our talents. The Lord was able to give these gifts unto men because He first descended into the bowels of the earth. We will now discuss this truth as we consider verse eight.

4:8 - *"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."* As Dr. Barclay, the renowned commentator, so aptly and rightly notes, this is a quotation from Psalm 68:18 with a distinct difference. We now quote Psalm 68:18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them."

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Here we have a portrait of the conquering King of Kings returning from the battlefield, and receives gifts. However, the New Testament shows Him giving those gifts to men. Therefore, we may deduce that because He conquered sin, death, and the devil, He received these gifts, and in turn gave them to us.

The Apostle Paul says something very interesting here. He says that Christ led *captivity captive*. This refers to the fact that although His physical body lay in the grave in the Garden of Gethsemane, His spirit went down into the bowels of the earth. When He arose, He brought the Old Testament saints with Him, leading captivity captive.

4:9 - *"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"* The Apostle Peter amplifies this truth in 1 Peter 3:18-20: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

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Thus when He ascended, the Lord took with Him all the Old Testament saints who were in Paradise along with those who had believed in the days of Noah yet had not lived in sufficient light in order to be delivered by Noah's ark.

4:10 - *"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."* As Paul already declared in Ephesians 1:20, the power of God came upon Christ after three days and three nights while He was in the center of the earth, and lifted Him up with all the Old Testament saints into heaven above. While Christ was upon this earth, He was confined to an earthly body and limited to being in one place at a time, but now He is omnipresent—being able to be everywhere at the same time.

The Five-fold Ministry

4:11 - *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."* These five ministry gifts are given by the grace of God. We cannot function in any of these offices without the mantle of God. These ministry gifts cannot be claimed; they are only given by the Lord to those whom He has sovereignly called to the ministry.

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The function of the five-fold ministry is as follows:

1. Apostle - The *apostle*, or “the sent one,” is a wise master builder who lays the foundation for the work of God and founds different works (1 Cor. 3:10). He is the one who has the vision for a particular work, and so often the financial provision for the work flows through him (either personally or through his prayers). The apostle ensures that the foundation is firmly laid and that all measurements—whether doctrinal, ethical, or spiritual—are clearly taken from Christ the Chief Corner Stone.

An apostle is one who sees the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:1, “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?” The apostle has an unfolding revelation of the life, person, and ministry of Jesus—not only of His earthly ministry, but also of His heavenly ministry.

The apostle commits to faithful men and women whom God gathers around him the vision that the Lord Jesus Christ imparts to him, and they in turn will transmit those teachings to the congregations they raise up.

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An apostle must be a man of integrity and be faithful in all his house, as was Moses (Heb. 3:2). The apostle is a pattern of love for the Lord and others. He is called upon to suffer for the sake of others, filling up in his body the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ for those under his responsibility (see Col. 1:24).

The apostle at times is greatly loved and admired, while at other times he is maligned. Sometimes he experiences deprivation, bearing in his body “the dying of the Lord Jesus” for the sake of others (2 Cor. 4:10-12). Yet even though he may experience all of this, he still has a buoyant spirit, continually rejoicing in the Lord and praying that the abundant grace of God may flow to others so that they may be more than conquerors.

The calling and responsibility of the apostle is to plant the truths that Christ has given to him in the hearts of others so that they in turn may become the gardens of the Lord in which Christ is pleased to dwell in all of His fullness.

Finally, the apostle should manifest the signs, deeds, and power of Christ so that the faith of the believers will not be in earthly wisdom, but in the power of God. The Early Church had many apostles

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of varying degrees. Some were called *apostles of note* because they made full use of their ministry (Rom. 16:7). Whatever our ministry may be, let us seek to emulate the character of an apostle, and be as the Apostle Paul. We want to be those who labor diligently in the particular harvest field that God has given to us.

2. Prophet - Certainly, throughout Holy Scripture we find that a prophet of God is one who speaks for God. He is a man (or woman) with a message from God, and in the truest sense has become his message. He is an epistle known and read of all men everywhere (cf. 2 Cor. 3:2).

We find the first mention of the prophet in the days prior to the Flood. Mahalaleel (praiser of God), who came from the godly line of Seth, undoubtedly praised and worshipped God with a prophetic anointing. Enoch, the grandson of Mahalaleel, prophesied of the Second Coming of Christ (Jude 1:14-15). These early patriarchs, such as Enoch, walked with God and pleased their Maker. Their understanding of future events was clear and precise, even as Enoch called his firstborn *Methuselah*, which means “at his death shall be the sending forth of waters”—signifying by the spirit of prophecy

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that the Flood would come the year he died. From history, we know that the Flood occurred the same year as Methuselah's death.

Lamech, the son of Methuselah, was a righteous man. He called his son *Noah*, which means "rest." He had insight into the fact that Noah would bring rest and comfort to the earth after the flood by bridging the two dispensations and thereby preserved the human race.

A prophet, therefore, is one who foresees future events (Acts 11:27-28). The prophet Isaiah saw many things that would take place in the future, including the days of Christ and the New Heavens and New Earth. John 12:41 says of Isaiah, "These things said [Isaiah], when he saw [Christ's] glory, and spake of him" (see Isa. 6:1).

As one studies the lives of the prophets in Scripture, it is amazing to find that many of them saw before their very eyes the events of which they prophesied. Therefore, they could declare them with such confidence, authority, and accuracy. We read in Isaiah 13:1: "The burden of Babylon, *which Isaiah* the son of Amoz *did see*." The prophet Isaiah literally saw with his own eyes events that were

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going to happen to Babylon, including the fall of Babylon many years before it even became a world power.

The prophet Jeremiah actually heard and experienced the things that would take place many years ahead into the future. Jeremiah saw the land of Israel spoiled and he heard the war cries. It was all taking place before his very eyes, and he could hear it with his ears (Jer. 4:19-21). This was not only a common experience of the Old Testament prophets. The Apostle John, who was a true seer, has transmitted to us the most accurate exposition of future events in the book of Revelation.

Prophets, however, are not limited to seeing just the future. At times they are able to see and declare past as well as present events. Moses, who wrote concerning the future history of Israel, also wrote concerning the creation, which took place thousands of years before his birth. John reveals the New Heavens and New Earth to us, and also declares those things that took place before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

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Prophets also move under a canopy or prophetic covering of the Lord. When others come into their presence, they often will also bring forth anointed utterances, as was the case when Saul came into the presence of Samuel (1 Sam. 10:9-13).

This prophetic ministry is manifested in the way the gift of prophecy operates, as spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. However, those who have the gift of prophecy are not classified as prophets who have the ministry gift of a prophet. Any believer can prophesy under the anointing of the gift of prophecy, but the ministry gift of a prophet is given by the Lord Himself to those whom He has sovereignly called to that ministry. The gift of prophecy is given by the blessed Holy Spirit. May we all know our gifts and callings, and seek to make good use of them to the glory of God the Father. Those who are called to the ministry of a prophet should lift their vision higher to believe that in these last days of the Church Age their precious ministry will come to its perfection and maturity again.

3. Evangelist - An evangelist is primarily a soul winner. The fire of God burns deep in his heart with compassion for the lost. His continual desire is to set men and women in the path of life everlasting.

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Evangelists are well versed in the first principles of the doctrines of Christ and are well able to enunciate the ways of God.

Sometimes they are gifted with a healing and miracles ministry, with signs following to confirm the preaching of the Word. Philip the evangelist was such a man (Acts 21:8). His preaching, accompanied with signs and miracles (Acts 8:5-8), led many in the city of Samaria to the Lord. He also opened up the message of the Suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian eunuch in the desert and led him to the Lord.

In a sense, we should all seek to be soul winners, for Proverbs 11:30 tells us that “he that winneth souls is wise.” It is helpful for an evangelist to have an experience of heaven and hell so that he may with passion warn men and women of the eternal judgment to come.

4. Pastor - A pastor fulfills the role that the shepherd does for his flock, as is brought out in Psalm 23. He leads them in paths of righteousness, bringing them into the peace and rest of God. A pastor's responsibility is to pour in the oil and the wine when members of his congregation are wounded or discouraged. He also must always seek to lead them on to higher ground and new pastures, meaning

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that he must implant an ongoing vision in their hearts, take them on in their Christian journey, and also feed them continually with new truths from God's Word. A pastor must be a constant student of the Word to obtain fresh revelation and truth for his congregation.

A pastor should have the "tongue of the learned" so that he knows how to speak a word in season to those who are weary (Isa. 50:4). He must be there in times of need and sorrow to comfort, console, and lend a hearing ear.

The pastor is also a father to the congregation, giving guidance, direction, and wisdom to his flock when they encounter the perplexing problems of life. He is to be a tower of strength for them when they experience the trials and storms of this life. The pastor must ever seek to be a conduit for the love, peace, and joy of Jesus Christ to flow through him to his flock.

Remember, Christ is the Good Shepherd, meaning that He is good at being a shepherd. The pastor should always wait upon the Lord to be instructed by Him in caring for the flock of God. In so doing, he will hear on judgment day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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5. Teacher - A teacher is one who expounds on the Word of God and makes doctrine and truth very clear and easy to understand for people. He uses topics and subjects to make the Scriptures palatable to his listeners. Ecclesiastes 12:9 speaks of the responsibility of a teacher: "And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs" (NKJV). A teacher's high calling and responsibility is to give people good, sound doctrine.

Also, a teacher must feed his students or congregation according to their spiritual age. You do not give a baby steak; you give him milk. It is the same in the spiritual realm. The Apostle Paul said to the Hebrew believers: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

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Note the rewards of a faithful teacher in Matthew 5:19: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Two excellent examples of teachers in the Word of God are Ezra, who caused the people to understand the law (Neh. 8:8), and of course the Apostle Paul, who reminds us in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” If you are a teacher, never forget the admonition of Abraham Lincoln, who said, “He who dares to teach others, must never dare to stop learning!”

The Fivefold Ministry

- 1. Apostle** - the founder and leader
- 2. Prophet** - the spokesman for God
- 3. Evangelist** - the winner of souls
- 4. Pastor** - the shepherd of the flock who cares for and nurtures them
- 5. Teacher** - the one who feeds the flock with the finest of spiritual truths so they may grow spiritually

The Purpose of the Five-fold Ministry

4:12 - "...For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The ministry gifts are given to the Church for the following purposes: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the Body of Christ. Three specific aspects of the Christian life are covered here.

1. To perfect the saints - This means to properly equip the people of God, ensuring that they are using their gifts to their fullest extent, being completely equipped to fulfill their God given mission and purpose in life.

2. For the work of the ministry - The Greek word *ergon* signifies "industry" or "work." The saints are not only equipped to do their work, but they actually are encouraged to do it. Many are well equipped or richly endowed in this life to accomplish much, but because of lack of direction or motivation they produce nothing of significance during their earthly sojourn.

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3. To edify the Church - The edification of the Church is the end aim of all the gifts. This is the purpose of the gift of prophesying. 1 Corinthians 14:4 says, "...He that prophesieth edifieth the church." It is God's desire that the Church be built up in the most holy faith.

4:13 - *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* There are four goals stated here toward which we must strive.

1. The unity of the faith - This means that we all have the same doctrine, and preach and speak the same thing. Obviously, since the Holy Spirit is the Teacher of the Church (Jn. 14:26; 1 Jn. 2:27), if His people walk in the Spirit, there will be no differences in doctrine. This unity of doctrine (the faith) will take place as the Church comes to maturity in these last days. Isaiah prophesies that the watchmen (or ministers) will see eye to eye (Isa. 52:8).

2. The knowledge of the Son of God - As Paul states in Philippians 3:10, to know Christ—not academically, but experientially—is one of the great quests of our lives. We need an unfolding revelation of His person, character, and ministry. This is only possible by the grace of God. Even as it

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is solely by the mercy of God and His sovereign will that we can believe in Christ as our Savior and realize that He is the Son of God (Mt. 16:16-17), so also we can only know Christ experientially as the Apostle Paul knew him by the grace of God.

3. Unto a perfect man - God's desire for us is that we become perfect (Mt. 5:48), both morally and spiritually. We must be morally righteous and also spiritually developed to comprehend the ways of God. This word *perfect* means "to be complete." It does not imply that we are infallible, but that we walk in all the ways of God.

4. Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ - We are called to be mature like Christ. Maturity is relative to one's age. A man matures during his lifetime in several different stages—as a baby, as a boy, as a young man, and finally as an adult. In much the same way, in our Christian development we must grow and progress from a spiritual babe in Christ (a new believer) to a mature saint and spiritual father in the Lord.

We need to understand the difference between *maturity* and *perfection*. These two words are very important for the Christian life. A person could be mature, but not be perfect; and also perfect, but not

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mature. God wants us to be both mature and perfect. When a baby is born, he is inspected by the doctors to see if he is healthy. If all the members of his body are functioning properly, he is considered a perfect baby. However, that baby is not mature by any means, but he is perfect for his age.

This is true of the Christian life as well. When we are born again, we are immature, but we are considered perfect for our spiritual age. However, if after ten years of being saved we have not grown spiritually, we are no longer perfect.

Let us also consider this truth from the example of an apple. This was made very real to me when I lived in the state of Washington where I saw the Golden Delicious apples harvested. When the apple begins to bud on the tree, the orchardist looks at it with pride, because it is the time for it to begin budding. Then it begins to grow into a tiny little apple and continues to grow. At every stage of the apple's growth, if it has grown as it should, it is considered perfect. However, that apple is not yet mature enough to be harvested. When harvest time comes and the apples have grown, they are

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mature, perfect, and ready to be eaten. God wants us to be both perfect (or complete) and mature in Him.

4:14 - *“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”* Christ stated that we shall know the truth, and that the truth will set us free (Jn. 8:32). We must realize, however, that the converse of this statement is also true. Error will ensnare us, and bring with it a multitude of grief.

Therefore, Satan’s ultimate goal is that we be ignorant of the great salvation that there is by faith in Christ. However, if Satan does not succeed in keeping us from knowing the saving grace of Christ, he seeks to occupy us with errors that will keep us from receiving our full reward in Christ. John said, “Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward” (2 Jn. 1:8 - NASB).

I have previously made mention in my writings of a little African girl who received marvelous revelations of heaven. In one of the revelations, while the Lord was upon His throne in heaven, He

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told this little girl that those Christians who do not put away their idols will not have the direct access to His throne that she enjoyed. Balaam, who had such a mixture of truth and error in his own life, declared that he would see the Lord, but not near (Num. 24:17). It is a love for the truth and for Him who is the truth that will keep us from embracing false doctrine, as will righteousness and a commitment to obey the Lord (Jn. 7:17).

Let us mature in the Lord Jesus Christ, beloved, so that we are not entrapped by false doctrines—doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). False doctrine will make us confused and unsteady in our Christian walk. I have noticed that those who hold false doctrines seek to propagate them whenever possible, and are intolerant of those who hold the truth. All their energies are consumed by the false so that they bring no fruit unto perfection. However, we should major in love and truth, even as Paul now enjoins us.

4:15 - *“...But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”* God dealt with me concerning this verse many years ago when I was in the southern United States. As soon as my wife and I entered the hotel room where we were staying one particular night,

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the literal presence of God was in that room. The Spirit of God took me to heaven, and as I began to cross the river that is right before the entrance to heaven, I felt such terrible hardness and sadness in my heart.

And the Lord said to me, “It is not just a matter of speaking the truth, but you must speak the truth in love.” Then I understood that it is not sufficient just to speak or preach the truth, but we must do it in the *right spirit*—in the softness and warmth of love. This is only possible if we permit the Lord to soften our hearts. We must allow the Lord to take away the stony heart and give us a soft heart (Ezek. 36:26).

For the truth to be effective in people’s lives, it must first be accepted. In order for people to accept and embrace the truth, we must share it with them in love. If people know we love them, they will accept just about anything from us. But if we come across harsh and cold, they will have a very hard time accepting what we say. That is why we must major in love.

4:16 - *“...From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the*

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body unto the edifying of itself in love.” The NKJV reads: “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

This section concludes with the Apostle’s drawing our attention again to the corporate body of the Church that has one head—Christ. The human body is watched over and nourished by its head, but all the members contribute to the welfare of the other by nourishing each other. In the same way, the Body of Christ (the Church) is also nourished and grows through what it receives from each member—though it is governed by the Head.

Another truth that is important for us to understand here is that every member of the human body is joined to another specific member of the body. The arm is attached to the shoulder, not to the hip bone. It is the same in the Body of Christ. Though we are to have fellowship with all of the Body of Christ and receive from every member, there are certain people to whom God has joined us. It is with these people that we flow together and function the best.

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In Ezekiel 37, the prophet Ezekiel was told to prophesy to a valley full of dry bones. When he prophesied, the Spirit of God came upon those dry bones, the breath of life came into them, and they were joined together to form a mighty army—representing the restoration of the nation of Israel. It is very interesting that these bones came together in their appointed places. Ezekiel 37:7 says that “the bones came together, *bone to his bone.*” This is what Paul is saying. We are joined to those of like vision, calling, and purpose to fulfill the purposes of God for His Church.

Paul says we are joined and knit together by what every “joint supplies.” We receive revelation, nourishment, and encouragement from other members of the Body of Christ. We must never forget that we cannot succeed without receiving from the other members of the body. Even some of the very vital organs, including the heart, are useless without the other members of the body. We need one another. That is why we must not neglect the assembling together of ourselves (Heb. 10:25).

The Walk of the Gentiles

4:17 - *“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity [or futility] of their mind.”* We have already established that our mind controls our actions

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and our walk. The state of our mind determines both our immediate and ultimate conduct, and the direction of the path in which we set our feet. The state of our mind will therefore determine our final destination— spiritual and moral, as well as our secular destination. The minds of the Gentiles alluded to here are governed not by any sense of eternal judgment or spiritual values, but rather by the customs of this world.

4:18 - *“...Having [their] understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”* Paul now enumerates the consequences of the human mind, which is an enemy of God (Rom. 8:7), and can never be reconciled to God. The human mind produces spiritual blindness in the heart, causing the spiritual understanding to be darkened. The consequence is that one is unable to perceive the light of the glorious Gospel. This is a foretaste of the eternal blackness of darkness into which those who reject the light of Christ will be plunged.

Therefore, the unredeemed are ignorant of the real issues and purpose of life, living here upon earth oblivious to the divine retribution that awaits them at the judgment seat when the books will be

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opened and every man shall have to give an account before God for the deeds done in the flesh. Because they have no understanding of the purpose of life, they dwell carelessly and cast off all restraint (see Prov. 29:18).

4:19 - *“Who being past feeling [or having become callous] have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”* Thus they are held captive willingly by all kinds of perverseness and wicked sexual practices which are linked so often to greed and covetousness for this world’s luxuries. The NIV reads: “Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.” The Christian life is the very antitheses of that which the Gentiles practice.

The Way to Holiness - 4:20 - 5:20

Now the Apostle Paul turns to those dear Ephesian Christians who were delivered from such a lifestyle, and he addresses now the way to holiness in Christ from chapter 4:20 to chapter 5:20. A holy life is not an option, but a requirement for all Christians. “Be ye holy, for I am holy,” says the Lord in Leviticus 20:7 (see 1 Pet. 1:16).

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Paul reminds the Hebrew believers that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Holiness is being separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and being joined to God who alone is holy, as Paul now explains in these next verses.

4:20-21 - *“But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”* The New American Standard Bible reads: “But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus.” The Apostle Paul begins by reminding them that they have received the Gospel and learned of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone is truth (Jn. 14:6).

4:22 - *“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;”* In his theology, Paul develops the concept that we have two natures which he calls the “two men.” There are two natures: the nature of the fallen man which we have received from Adam, and the pure nature of the last Adam, Christ, who conquered sin and the sin nature. Paul develops this in greater detail in Romans chapters 5 and 6 and also in Colossians 3:5-8. (Please see our book, *Romans—More Than Conquerors*, for further explanation of this truth.)

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When we become born-again, we receive the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ within us. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” As believers, we have two natures within us striving for control. As we yield to the ways and commandments of God, the nature of Christ becomes stronger and stronger within us, and our old nature becomes weaker and weaker until it is rendered inactive. If we feed the new nature, it will become stronger and rule over our fallen nature.

The new man and nature of Christ within us cannot sin, while our old, Adamic nature cannot do what is right. The Apostle John confirms this in 1 John 3:9: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” This verse has been greatly misconstrued over the years.

John is not saying that believers cannot sin, but he is saying that the new nature within them cannot sin, because it is the nature of God. However, believers still have within them their old nature which can sin. Paul said his old nature caused him to do things he did not want to do, and hindered him from doing the things which he wanted to do (Rom. 7:15-20).

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Paul calls our old nature which we received from our parents the *old man*. We must “put off” the old man with all of its deceitful ways and desires. Putting off the habits and acts of the old man is like taking off a garment. We must not yield to the beckonings and lusts of our carnal nature. What a struggle! Our human nature is bent on sinning. However, when we have the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts, we can triumph over our sinful nature, for we have the new man within us.

As people grow older and get bigger, their old clothes do not fit them any more. It is the same with our spiritual life. As we feed the new man within us, he gets bigger and stronger, and the clothes (or works) of our old nature no longer fit us (or no longer bind us).

4:23 - “*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*” The way to the new man and new life starts in the mind. The mind, as we have already said, is one of the most important members of our body, both in the physical sense and the spiritual sense. Therefore, it behooves us to cultivate our minds to put on the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Paul uses the word *renewed* both here and in Romans 12:2, where he says that we are *transformed* by the renewing of our mind.

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How are our minds renewed, and what is our part in this wonderful transformation? Well, Proverbs 23:7 states that “as a man thinketh, so is he.” Our thoughts, therefore, determine to a great extent what kind of a man or woman we will be. We must feed upon good and profitable thoughts which will transform us into the image of Christ. In the negative sense, we are warned concerning those who lived prior to the days of the Flood that the thoughts of their hearts were evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

The psalmist likewise speaking of the wicked says that “God is not in their thoughts” (Psa. 10:4). King Solomon states that the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination (Prov. 15:26). What a contrast with the thoughts of the righteous, which are just and pure (Prov. 12:5). Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ will reward the wicked by giving them the fruit of their own thoughts. In other words, as they have intended to do unto others, it shall be done unto them (Jer. 6:19). The Lord therefore cries out in Isaiah 55:7, “Let the wicked forsake his thoughts.”

Therefore, it is our thoughts that govern and mold our character. Something very important to realize is that our thoughts are conditioned by our works. Paul says in Colossians 1:21, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works.” If we are doing evil deeds, those

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acts of wickedness will pervert and corrupt our mind. In a positive sense, good works will condition our minds to produce right thoughts.

We also must train our minds by meditating upon the Word. The psalmist exclaims in Psalm 119:97, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” And he also says in Psalm 119:113, “I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.” We must meditate upon the right things. Meditating upon God’s Word and pure things will transform not only our minds, but our whole being.

These two aspects of walking in right paths and meditating upon the Word of God—which are two keys to a prosperous Christian life—are brought out in Psalm 1:1-3: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

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4:24 - “*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*” The new man—our new nature—has been created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. These two virtues of the new man must be thoroughly understood.

Righteousness • What is righteousness? Basically, it means keeping the Ten Commandments and the laws of God. The righteous man will do what is just, straight, and right in the sight of God and man on all occasions and in every circumstance. From this position of doing what is right, he cries out for a pure heart and then receives the gift of righteousness (Psa. 24:5). It is those who hunger and thirst for righteousness that will be filled (Mt. 5:6).

After being filled with the righteousness of God, the Christian must seek to become holy as well, for it is possible for a believer to be righteous and not be holy. This is illustrated from the life of Lot. 2 Peter 2:7-8 says: “*And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that *righteous man* dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;).*”

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In one respect, Lot is called a righteous man, but he was not a *holy* man. Holiness speaks of being separate from sinners, which Lot was not, and deals with motives and heart purity. A person can obey the laws of God, and yet not have a heart that is pure and holy. After Lot was rescued from the destruction of Sodom, he committed incestuous acts with his daughters.

Holiness • Let us now consider holiness from a scriptural standpoint. Holiness is being separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and being joined to the Lord who alone is holy. Lot was lured toward Sodom because of the lust of his eyes. “Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and [Lot and Abraham] separated themselves the one from the other” (Gen. 13:10-11).

The lust of the eyes was the determining factor in Lot's decision to dwell in the cities of the plain and to pitch his tent toward Sodom, even though the men of Sodom were wicked. Therefore, holiness

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involves being purged of the lust and desire of the eyes, as well as being intimately entwined with God.

4:25 - *“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”* Now Paul reverts to those things that we must *put off*. Lying, in reality, is the breaking of the ninth commandment, which states, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Ex. 20:16). All liars, those who do not tell the truth, will be consigned to the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Those who do not tell the truth are in fact hurting their neighbors in the Body of Christ.

When we do not speak the truth, we are plaguing (or making sick) the Body of Christ and stunting its growth since the body is strengthened and matures on truth that is spoken in love (see Eph. 4:15). The human body can only function when the brain sends true signals to it. Erratic and false messages endanger not only the members to whom they are sent, but in effect the whole body. It is the same with the Body of Christ.

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4:26 - *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”* Now the Apostle Paul deals with anger. His words need explanation. Reading it literally, the Apostle is commanding us to be *angry*. This surprising statement must be understood in the light of Holy Scripture.

There is anger that is a fruit of our carnal nature, but there is also a divine anger which is a part of the character of God Himself. At times, the fierce anger of the Lord was manifested against Israel for its rebelliousness. Moses said in Numbers 32:14, “And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.” Thus we can be justifiably angry when someone deliberately sins against another member of the Church, yet we must never allow this anger to take away our sleep or to remain after nightfall, for then it would dominate and rule over us.

4:27 - *“Neither give place to the devil.”* This next verse also merits careful study, because it is not generally understood among Christians that we can give Satan inroads into our lives and churches. Those, for example, who are lifted up with pride and do not have a good testimony before those in the world are guilty of allowing Satan to take advantage of them, and thereby wreak havoc in the Church.

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Equally, a church which does not forgive a repentant sinner enables Satan to take advantage of it (see 2 Cor. 2:10-11).

I knew of a certain pastor who had committed sin and then asked for forgiveness, but was not forgiven by the congregation. Because they did not forgive their pastor, Satan was permitted to cause much suffering to that church through spirits of anger, hatred, and unforgiveness. When they truly forgave their pastor, peace and joy enveloped that church once again.

If Satan cannot prevent us from accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, he then seeks to prevent us from receiving a full reward and everything that God has for us. He wants us to miss God's mark for our lives. There are several ways enunciated in Scripture that the devil seeks to take advantage of a Christian:

1. Pride - The Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:6, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

2. Evil or unrighteous living - Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:7, "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

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3. Unforgiveness - We read in 2 Corinthians 2:10-11, "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

4. False doctrine - John says in 2 John 1:7-8: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." This is also substantiated by Paul's warning to the Colossians: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18).

It may be understood in this way. The Sultan of Brunei, who is one of the richest men in the world, gives considerable sums of money for the advancement of Islam. He is underwriting something that is false. Therefore, when he appears before the throne of God, he will not receive a reward for all of his giving, but instead condemnation for supporting a false religion. Likewise, if we as Christians embrace

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false doctrines that do not glorify Christ we too will receive condemnation. Therefore, our doctrines must come from the throne of God so that we may receive a just reward for our labors.

An additional example can be taken from the teachings of the Lord Jesus. He said in Matthew 5:19, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Therefore, to summarize what I have been saying: pride, unrighteous conduct, unforgiveness, and erroneous doctrines can all enable Satan to have an advantage over us.

4:28 - *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”* When a person meets Christ and receives the new nature, there is a transformation. Those who in their former lives used to steal no longer steal. Stealing breaks the seventh commandment— “Thou shalt not steal” (Ex. 20:15). Paul then exhorts those who have been accustomed to stealing in the past (and have now given their lives to Christ) to work.

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Hard work has always been one of the qualities of a godly life. Paul stated quite clearly that he not only labored with his hands, but that also he worked harder than the other apostles (1 Cor. 15:10; Acts 20:34). The ultimate purpose of hard work is that we have enough to give to those who are in need.

It might be beneficial at this time to consider some of the guidelines that Paul lays down for giving. They are taken from 2 Corinthians 8:5, “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” There is a divine order associated with giving.

1. We must first give ourselves wholeheartedly to the Lord without any reservations, seeking to develop an ever increasing love relationship with Him. We must ever be aware of the snare of putting the ministry before the Lord. The Ephesian church was rebuked for this very thing in Revelation 2:4: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” The Ephesian believers were commended for their works (Rev. 2:2), but they had neglected their relationship with the Lord, which must always come first in our lives before anything or anyone else. The first

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commandment—to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind— must take priority in our lives (Mt. 22:37). From this heart of love toward the Lord we then come to the next step in the ministry of giving—giving ourselves to our church.

2. We are to give ourselves in loving commitment to our church or fellowship. This includes financial support, as well as supporting the leaders and members of the church in prayer and also by our commitment, becoming one in vision and purpose with them.

3. After we have given ourselves to the Lord and our church, we will then be conditioned to give to the work of the Lord and the needs of the poor. We should meditate often upon the Lord's teachings concerning giving, especially what He said in Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (NKJV).

Also, let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:6: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Obviously, a farmer can only expect to reap in the field where he has sown seeds.

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Likewise, we as Christians can only expect to reap in the fields of the world where we have sown seeds either by our prayers, giving, ministering there ourselves or through our spiritual children. We want eternal fruit in many countries of the world. Therefore, as Isaiah 32:20 says, “Sow beside all waters”—meaning many places around the world.

4:29 - *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”* The Apostle turns now to what we might term a series of contrasts in behavior between the old and new man.

We must not let any corrupt or unwholesome words come out of our mouths. Our words are a reflection of our heart. And our new nature—Christ in us—only speaks words that are edifying and also glorifying to the Lord. We should pray the prayer of King David in Psalm 19:14: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

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Our words should edify and build up others. We want to be channels to impart grace to others through our words. Sincere words of commendation do much to encourage fellow saints in their earthly pilgrimage. In edifying others, we are securing an eternal reward for ourselves.

The importance of our words can be seen by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 12:36, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” I once met a lady who had a remarkable vision of heaven. One of the truths that she was shown was that a reward will be given in heaven for every smile and kind word spoken here upon earth.

4:30 - *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”* We must ever realize that the Holy Spirit is likened in Scripture unto a dove. The dove is known as a bird of peace, and it is extremely sensitive to anything that disrupts the serenity of its environment. This is why doves are often found beside still waters.

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The Holy Spirit is easily grieved and chased away by sin, rebellion, disobedience, complaining, and wrong attitudes. The Holy Spirit abides upon the life of a believer who is at peace with God, and who has the righteousness and holiness of God worked out in his life.

The Holy Spirit is the One who seals us or marks us until the day when the Lord will redeem us from this earth. During the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord sent His angels into the city of Jerusalem to set a spiritual mark upon the foreheads of those who cried and sighed for the wickedness that was done therein (Ezek. 9). God sets a mark upon believers to keep them from destruction as long as they walk in obedience.

4:31-32 - *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* Again we see the contrast between the ugliness of the old man and the sweetness of the new man. We will now seek to examine the works of the flesh and determine their antidotes.

Attributes of the Old Man

- **Bitterness** is a long-standing resentment in a person's heart. Bitterness often enters into a person's heart and spirit when he has been wronged by another Christian. Disappointing circumstances can also cause bitterness.

Bitterness comes in when a person becomes offended and fails to appropriate the grace of God. The Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 12:15, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

The terrible thing about bitterness is that it not only affects the one who is bitter and tormented by it, but it also defiles and affects others. Bitterness spreads just like a disease. In reality, we become bitter when our will is crossed. Therefore, two antidotes are needed to overcome bitterness: a holy acceptance of all situations and a forgiving spirit.

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- **Wrath** is hot anger or passion. It is a very intense form of anger. Wrath burns like a fire within the breast of a person, but it has the habit of subsiding just as quickly as it was stirred up. It can only be cooled by not meditating upon the person who has offended us.
- **Anger** is a strong feeling of hostility. Paul is not speaking here of the godly anger against sin (v. 26), but of the anger that is one of the works of the flesh. A person becomes angry when he does not get his own way, and often has a tantrum. The antidote to anger is a submissive spirit.
- **Clamor** signifies a tumult or loud shouting because of a controversy or a dispute. The antidote is to major on the peace of God.
- **Evil speaking** refers to insulting language. This is condemned in James 3:9: “[For with our tongue] we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.” Let us esteem others as greater than ourselves and speak respectfully of them.
- **Malice** is a desire to harm others or see them suffer. A person with malice is vicious and seeks to harm others. Quite often traits of character are best understood by contrasts. *Kakia*, the Greek word

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for *malice*, which means “badness,” may be compared to the Greek word *arete* which means “excellence.” The antidote to malice is to seek to be kind and sweet to all, and above all, seek the best for others.

Attributes of the New Man

Paul then lists the graces (or virtues) which are pleasing in the sight of God our Heavenly Father. Notice the contrast between the attributes of the old man and the new man.

- **Being kind** to our fellow Christians and neighbors means being considerate of their needs in every aspect of life. Their total well-being should be taken to heart.
- **Tenderhearted** means to be soft and warmhearted toward others, being as gentle as a nurse would be toward a sick patient.
- **Forgiveness** means to pardon by an act of our will what others have done against us. True forgiveness not only involves forgiving the person who has wronged us, but *forgetting* what they have done to us.

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Upon the cross, the suffering Savior said to His Father of those who had so wrongfully and cruelly mistreated Him, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If Christ could forgive those who crucified Him, how much more should we be always ready to forgive our fellow loved ones in the Church as well as non-believers.

Chapter 5

The various aspects of walking in Christ for the believer is one of the main themes of this blessed chapter. We are called to walk in *love*, walk in *light*, and walk *circumspectly*. Then Paul addresses the very important subject of marriage, speaking of the blessings of married life, but also the responsibilities.

5:1 - *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”* We are admonished to follow God, or to imitate Him, as children imitate their earthly fathers. A father wants his son to be just like him. So it is with God the Father—He wants us to be just like Him and His Son, Jesus Christ.

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The Greek word translated *followers* literally means “imitators.” It was a maxim of the Greeks that to attain unto success one had to learn the theory of a craft, imitate the master craftsmen, and then get as much practice as possible. A Christian should, therefore, study the doctrines of the Word of God, and seek to imitate Christ at all times. When a believer is confronted with a problem, he should simply ask, “What would Jesus do in this situation?” The answer would then become obvious.

God is our Father. When we are born-again, we become His children and He becomes our Father. God the Father delights in His children. I once had a vision of the Father in heaven from the back. He was playing with the children in heaven. He was touching them and fondling them with such love and tender care. Psalm 103:13 says, “Like as a father pitieth [touches or fondles] his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” This vision really caused me to understand the nature of the Father and how He desperately longs to be our Father. What the Father longs for more than anything else is an intimate love relationship with His children—even more, if I could say that, than obedience. True love, of course, always includes obedience.

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5:2 - *“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”* Then comes the admonition to walk in love as Christ has loved us. With what love did Christ love us? His love for us caused Him to give His life for us. Therefore, we should be wholehearted for the Lord and give our lives for Him and for others. Christ is our elder brother. He is the only begotten Son of God, and we have been adopted into His family. And as our elder brother, He shows us how we should walk and live.

Love is the fulfilling of the law, even as Jesus answered the lawyer when asked which were the chief commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt. 22:37-40).

To walk in love involves basically two spiritual laws: (1.) Love, the fruit of the Spirit, must be developed constantly in our hearts and lives; and (2.) as Romans 8:4 states, we must walk in the Spirit. This does not mean simply to be filled (or baptized) with the Holy Spirit, but rather to be guided and directed by that same Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit, we will fulfill all the good works that God

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has ordained for us to accomplish (Eph. 2:10). Even as Jesus' life was a sweet smelling savor unto His Father, so should we send up such a continual odor to heaven.

5:3 - *"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."* Paul again reverts to his admonitions against the works of the flesh.

- **Fornication** is the illicit relationship between a man and a woman outside of marriage. Fornication is forbidden and condemned in Holy Scripture. Moral chastity is always the standard for the born-again Christian.
- **Uncleanness** speaks of all sexual practices that are contrary to the laws of nature. In the broadest sense, this would include homosexuality.
- **Covetousness** signifies greed—the insatiable desires of the carnal nature that are never satisfied. Proverbs 30:15-16 gives a very similar description of covetousness: "The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that

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saith not, It is enough." Covetousness is also a characteristic of hell itself, which continually opens up its mouth and is never satisfied with the souls of the damned that it receives (Isa 5:14).

These sins are so terrible and diabolical that Paul commands that they be not even named among the saints. The NIV says that there should not even be "a hint" of these sins among believers. Not one of these sins should be committed by any of the saints.

5:4 - *"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."* Paul lists several other things that Christians must not do.

- **Filthiness** - We must not say anything that is contrary to purity. Filthiness means obscenities or unclean speech.
- **Foolish talking** - Even the heathen realize that what one speaks can create within the heart of the hearers a desire to perform those very acts. Saying silly or foolish things is not becoming of a child of God.
- **Jesting** - Jestng (or coarse joking) means witticisms in a vulgar sense, ribaldry, or off-color jokes.

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Such talking should not be heard among the saints. Much rather we should devote and use our times of conversation for the rehearsing of the good things that the Lord has done for us and all of His kindness toward us. In Malachi 3:16 we read, "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." We want to be numbered among this group which speaks to one another continually about the Lord, His Word, and His goodness.

5:5 - *"For this ye know, that no whoremonger [or fornicator], nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."* We must not be deceived, beloved. Those who practice sexual and lustful deeds will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. We must not allow the devil to rob us of our eternal inheritance through a sinful lifestyle, for as Paul now states, only eternal judgment in hell would await us.

Paul speaks of covetousness, or greediness, as idolatry. Paul repeats this in Colossians 3:5, where he says, "... and covetousness, which is idolatry." Covetousness causes us to worship the thing we

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desire and put it before the Lord, thus making it an idol. May the Lord purge our hearts of this trait of the old man.

5:6 - *“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”* Many professing Christians and even ministers tend to minimize the warnings of Paul. They stress that God is love, and therefore He would not be so severe in judging His own people. But, beloved, let us remember the words of the Apostle Jude who said, “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not” (Jude 1:5). The Apostle Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 10:5-6: “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”

5:7 - *“Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”* One of the most important spiritual lessons that we can learn is that the companions with whom we fellowship are going to determine, to a great extent, our lifestyle. For this reason, both Psalms and Proverbs begin with warnings concerning our

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acquaintances and friends. Since we have already quoted Psalm 1 earlier in this book, let us look at the warnings that David gives to Solomon. “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Prov. 1:10). “My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path” (Prov. 1:15). Also, let us remember the words of Paul, who stated in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ ” (NIV).

5:8 - *“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”* Let us ever remember that our past is to be exactly that—*past*—and not to be resurrected. In writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul said, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). We must remember that our fellowship is with the Father and His Son (1 Jn. 1:3), and this fellowship is only possible as we walk in the light as He is in the light. 1 John 1:7 makes this very clear: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” *Walking in the light* means to walk in obedience to the Lord’s commandments.

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5:9 - *“(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;).”* The nine fruits of the Spirit are listed in Galatians 5:22-23, but here Paul chooses to abbreviate them.

1. Goodness is the intrinsic nature of God Himself. He declared to Moses in Exodus 33:19 that His glory was in effect His goodness. His goodness is, in reality, Himself. The Lord appeared to me once, stretched forth His arm to me, and said, “Touch Me, I am altogether goodness.” From this statement, I understood that He was incapable of doing evil, and that is what He expects from the actions of His children. Everything that we do—our thoughts, actions, and speech—must therefore be bathed in goodness.

The summary of the life of Hezekiah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 32:32: “Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his *goodness*, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.” In other words, King Hezekiah was a man who was filled with the goodness of the Lord. This word goodness could also be translated as *kindness*.

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There is a similar record given of the life of King Josiah as well: “Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his *goodness...*” (2 Chron. 35:26). These two kings were known and remembered for their goodness. May our prayer be that we are known for our goodness and acts of kindness.

2. Righteousness is the quality or virtue that causes us to associate only with those things that are correct, lawful and right in the sight of God and man. Psalm 45:7 speaks prophetically of Christ, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” True righteousness involves a hatred for wickedness as well as a love for righteousness.

3. Truth in this setting signifies *doctrine*. The Lord Jesus Christ said in John 8:32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” One of the ministries of the blessed Holy Spirit is to reveal truth unto us. Jesus declared in John 16:13, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.” It is the Holy Spirit who will enable us to fulfill the rest of Paul’s exhortations.

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5:10 - *“Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”* The Holy Spirit will give us discernment so that we know what pleases the Lord and what displeases Him. Furthermore, we must demonstrate in our speech and conduct those things that are godly. We must demonstrate what is acceptable unto God.

5:11 - *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”* One of the snares of the enemy into which so many believers fall is fellowshiping with unbelievers who practice the works of the evil one. Often, the case is made that if we will fellowship with the unbeliever in his lifestyle and go along with the things he does, we will be able to win him to Christ. That is a false notion. It is the Spirit alone who can convict and bring one to Christ; we are only the channels, and the channels must be clean and unpolluted.

5:12 - *“For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”* The power of our words is not readily understood. However, when we consider that the Lord spoke and the whole universe came into existence, then we realize that in the positive sense our words are creative and capable of bringing into being that which we say.

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Therefore, by this reasoning, evil conversation is able to engender evil thoughts in the hearers and so develop evil lusts in those who allow their thought life to retain such thoughts. This is the rationale of advertising—to create a desire for a certain product. Companies portray their products, such as cigarettes, in a wholesome environment, hoping to induce people to buy their product, and in this case, to start or continue smoking.

To delight in the acts that the world does in secret is not only dangerous, but when it is brought to the light in the company of pure and honest people, it covers the hearers and speakers alike with the spirit of shame. Therefore, Paul continues by giving this warning:

5:13 - *“But all things that are reprov’d are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”* In this statement, the Apostle Paul is saying that light reprov’s or rebukes the works of darkness. Light reveals their wickedness and perverseness. In the natural, even as light reveals that which is hidden by darkness, so too in the spiritual realm, light reveals hidden sins.

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5:14 - *“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”* Performing the works of darkness causes us to be spiritually insensitive, inconscient, and asleep to the things of Christ. God wants us to awake to holiness and righteousness.

I am reminded of the saying of a certain professor, Dr. Dalton, who later became chancellor of the Exchequer in England. He spoke of *the great sleep*, meaning that after this life all that awaited a soul was an eternal sleep.

His words are very revealing to all discerning Christians. In actuality, he was already asleep to spiritual things. The admonition to us is clear.

5:15 - *“See then that we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”* We are to walk circumspectly. The word *circumspectly* means “diligently” or “carefully.” Walking circumspectly can be illustrated by the way in which a cat walks upon a building’s high garden walls which are surmounted with pieces of broken glass to prevent break-ins. The cat will ponder very carefully where it puts its paw, almost in a contemplative air so that it does not touch the broken glass even with the pad of its paw lest it should be wounded.

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If a cat takes this much care about where it places its feet, how much more should we walk circumspectly and take great care to ensure that we place our feet in the paths of righteousness. If we are not careful with our spiritual walk, we can become wounded by the contamination of sin, just as the cat could be wounded by the sharp glass on the top of a wall.

5:16 - *“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* In this verse, there is a truth that should govern our lives. There is a battle for our time that we have been allotted here upon earth. The devil provides all kinds of attractions that are carefully designed to steal from us the precious commodity called *time* which cannot be retrieved. Once we have lived a day, we can never get it back.

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, it is Vanity Fair that takes one's attention away from eternal things. In modern days, the television is the greatest time consumer imaginable, perhaps of all ages. There is an intense battle for our time fought out minute by minute with the adversary of our souls. Let us gird up the *loins of our minds* so that we do not permit him to rob us of our time here below (1 Pet. 1:13). We must be disciplined in our thinking.

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Every person on earth has twenty-four hours a day and one hundred and sixty-eight hours a week, and three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Yet why is it that some people make such valuable use of their time and others do not accomplish anything? Those who make wise use of their time are the ones who prosper in life. Moses said in Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We need to number or count our days so that we use them wisely, for none of us knows how long we will live.

Paul tells us to *redeem* (or to get back from the devil's grasp) our God-given privilege of deciding minute by minute what we are going to do within the life span accorded us. Years ago there was a radio program in New Zealand entitled *Opportunity Knocks*. This program consisted of a phone call to a person chosen at random. They then would answer a question, and if they answered correctly, they would receive a prize. When the telephone rang, *opportunity knocked* for them. For us as Christians, there are untold opportunities to serve the Lord day by day. Let us make the most of our opportunities and our time.

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5:17 - *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”* The will of God is for us to make the best use of life’s opportunities. The Apostle Paul then writes of one sin that will easily rob us of our eternal rewards— drunkenness.

5:18 - *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”* While it is scripturally impossible to support the position of total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages, perhaps the words of Saint Augustine would help us. He stated that “abstinence is easier than temperance.” I am in complete accord with this. Do not touch liquor or go anywhere near it! That is the safest way to avoid drunkenness. Wine is a mocker, and leads so often to immorality for those who fall into the temptation of drinking excessively.

Instead, the Christian should seek to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and speak daily in other tongues. Being filled with the Holy Ghost is not a one-time event. There is a continual infilling of the Holy Ghost—*be ye being filled with the Spirit* (as it reads in the original Greek).

In England, when you take your car to the gas station, the gas clerk will frequently say to you, “Would you like your car *topped up*?” By this he means, “Would you like me to fill your car up with oil?” Even

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if your oil level is just barely down from full, they will still ask you if you want it filled to the top. We need to be “topped up” daily in our lives with the blessed Holy Spirit. In verse 19, Paul gives us the key to being daily filled afresh with more of the Holy Spirit:

5:19 - *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* The spiritual exercise of speaking to ourselves is not readily understood by a number of God’s dear people. Therefore, some words of explanation are necessary here.

We are a composite creation of a triune God who made us in His image (Gen. 1:26). We are a triune being—there are three parts to us. We have a physical body, a soul, and a spirit. This is illustrated by the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The soul is the seat of our emotional life. It is swayed by outside influences. This is illustrated by the godly King David when he was confronted with the army of Israel under Absalom. David spoke to his own soul, which was frightened and overwhelmed within him, and said: “Why art thou cast down, O

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my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psa. 43:5).

When we become discouraged, we must encourage ourselves in the Lord (1 Sam. 30:6), and speak faith and hope to our souls.

Another thing that is beneficial is to sing spiritual songs to ourselves, singing in our native tongue and also in other tongues. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord at all times. Praising God lifts our spirit, causing our spirit to have dominion over our soul, even as Paul now writes:

5:20 - *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* A thankful heart makes a joyous heart. As Proverbs 17:22 states, a merry heart does good like a medicine. Thankfulness enables us to soar as an eagle into heavenly places, causing us to have the ascendancy over life’s problems.

5:21 - *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”* We now have what we might term the doctrine of *submission*. This leads into the theme of marriage. We need to learn to submit to the

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wishes of others on a daily basis, which sometimes means submitting to those who are under us in authority.

The Blessings and Responsibilities of Married Life

Marriage was always intended by the Lord to be like “heaven upon earth” (cf. Deut. 11:21). Our homes are therefore to be permeated with the fragrance of heaven’s joys and peace through the beautiful harmony of husband, wife, and children dwelling together in the blessed state of family life.

There is a divine and godly order concerning submission that we would do well to consider now. The Scriptures say a lot about authority structure. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

Authority Structure

1. The head of all things is God the Father. All things emanate from Him, and all things were created by Him and for His good pleasure (Rev. 4:11). In His good pleasure, He purposed that in Christ, His only begotten Son, all the fullness of the Godhead should dwell bodily (Col. 2:9). Therefore, God is the head of Christ.

2. The head of man is Christ. Christ is in authority over man.

3. The head of the woman is man. A woman is in submission to her husband. A woman's spiritual head and authority is her husband. The woman was told in Genesis 3:16 by God that her husband would "rule over her."

However, in this divine chain of authority and submission, there is that thought that we should lovingly submit ourselves to one another, as the Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 5:21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

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Each one of us should recognize the special gifts that other members of the Body of Christ possess, and therefore we should submit to them at appropriate times. When we have to make decisions, we should seek other people's opinions and ask them for their advice so that the whole Body of Christ functions in perfect harmony. This is especially important in marriage. Although the husband is in charge, a wise husband will learn early in marriage to submit to the wishes of his wife. He must be the head of the home, but he should also yield to the wishes of his wife in things that do not matter one way or the other. The husband should also pray before he makes decisions and seek the counsel of his wife. My wife and I made a covenant together that we would never make a decision unless both of us agreed. Although many times I could have made decisions on my own even though she was not in agreement, I waited until we both felt the witness. And many times she was right.

5:22 - *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”* One of the most distressing signs of the times is the lack of respect of the marriage vows. When a woman marries a man, she vows before God to love, honor, and obey her husband. This verse clearly states that the woman is to look at her husband as though she were looking upon the Lord. By honoring her

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husband, she honors God. Regretfully, there is much demeaning of the husbands on the part of the wives today. The result is that marriages are collapsing everywhere, even the marriages of born-again, Spirit-filled Christians.

The key to a happy marriage usually starts with the wife. Women are commanded to submit to their husbands, and then husbands are told to love their wives. So often I have seen that if a woman will not submit to her husband, her husband cannot find it within himself to love her. As a woman begins to yield herself to her husband, she will find that his heart will begin to be opened to her. Remember wives, it is not your responsibility to correct or change your husbands; that is the Lord's job. Your responsibility is to love him, submit to him, and be faithful to him, and as you do, the Lord will begin to deal with your husband.

5:23 - *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”* The head in the human body not only controls, but also gives direction to the rest of the body. Husbands should likewise realize their God-given responsibilities to guide and direct their wives. Many wives have told me that they would willingly submit to their husbands, but the track

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record of their husband is so bad. He leads them from one disaster to another. The wife, therefore, loses confidence in her husband's leadership, and can no longer submit to him.

The husband must realize, therefore, that he has the responsibility to give sound Spirit-led leadership to his wife. This is only possible to the degree that the husband abides in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the Scriptures are very clear, that the wife must lovingly submit to her husband, not just submit with a bad attitude—that does not win any man's heart.

5:24 - *“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”* The word everything really does mean just that—in every thing! In all manner of means, ways, and circumstances would be an acceptable translation too. It would naturally be understood that the wife is not obligated to submit if her husband demands something of her that is contrary to the Word of God. As Christians and members of the Body of Christ, we must first and foremost submit to our Head—Christ.

5:25 - *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”* Now we come to one of the highest commandments in Holy Scripture. Husbands are required by the

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Lord to have *agape* love, or God's love, for their wives. This is a very high standard. The husband is called upon to be as Christ to His bride. In him, his wife must see the attributes of Christ Himself in his relationship with her. She not only has to see the love of Christ in her husband, but she herself must be the recipient of that love. As Christ washes the Church with the Word, so the husband spiritually washes his wife with the law of kindness.

One of the most difficult aspects of marriage is the dissimilarity between a husband and wife. The

In heaven, we will all be graded on marriage. We want to have a passing grade. We must always seek to honor and love our spouses as Christ has loved His Bride the Church.

wife is definitely the weaker vessel. The husband has to learn that she does not think or talk the way he does. She was created differently by the infinite wisdom of a loving Heavenly Father. Thus she has to be treated with due consideration, and be spoken to softly because her emotions are easily troubled and disturbed. What a husband sows, he reaps; and he reaps from his wife. It is a true fact of life that as a husband treats his wife, so the Lord will treat him.

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I well remember a pastor whose wife asked him for a new dress. When the husband said “no,” the Lord said to him, “As you treat your wife, so I will treat you.” His wife immediately received her new dress.

Being a husband is a great responsibility. A husband is required to present his wife to the Lord. I knew a pastor who was having a difficult time with his wife, and the Lord Jesus said to him in no uncertain terms, “I want you to present your wife to Me.” He responded, “Lord, I cannot.” The Lord said, “I will give you one year to prepare your wife for Me.” To a great extent, husbands are held responsible for the spiritual condition of their wives.

My wife passed away in the autumn of 1994. We had a wonderful marriage. It was like heaven on earth; we were so happy. While I was writing this book on Ephesians, the Lord gave me a vision of my report card in heaven. I was surprised to see only one subject on my report card; it was marriage. I asked the Lord why there was only one subject, and the Lord said because that was the only aspect of life that I had completed. Mercifully, I received a passing grade in marriage, due a great deal to the wonderful wife that I had. Now I am pressing on to complete my course and receive a passing grade

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in all my other subjects in life. But you see, we will all be graded in heaven on our marriages. We want to receive a passing grade.

5:26 - *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”* The Word of God cleanses us. This can speak of the written Word of God, including teaching manuals and books, the spoken word through preaching, and also the quickened Word through a rhema (spoken) word from God. The spoken word is often more creative and powerful. We are washed by the water of the Word. There are various degrees of washing according to the fabric. On our modern washing machines, we have settings for delicate clothes as well as normal clothes. It is the same with people.

Some people are more delicate, and need a softer word, while if the character of the person is more stubborn, sharp rebukes are necessary to remove the stain of sin from their soul. Those who are called upon to be spiritual cleaners must be well qualified in their vocation. They must be tempered and gentle, being careful not to destroy the delicate by harsh washings and also not be hesitant to administer the sharp rebukes when necessary to those who are errant and hardened by sin.

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5:27 - *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* Traveling, as I do in so many countries of the world, I am obliged to have my laundry done by different persons of many nationalities. It is interesting to see the state in which my clothes are returned sometimes. At times my housekeeper looks at my clothes upon my return from a trip and throws out some of them because they have been literally scrubbed upon stones or on harsh scrubbing boards in underdeveloped countries. My clothes need more delicate washing. However, the end goal of all these washers worldwide is to make my clothes spotless.

The color of the water can also affect clothes. If the water is dirty or rusty, it can leave stains on the clothes. This brings out another interesting spiritual truth. If the water of the Word is contaminated with doctrines that are not correct, it leaves a stain upon the souls and spirits of those to whom we preach. I also like my clothes nicely ironed so that there are no wrinkles. This too has a spiritual connotation. We must ensure that we have no spiritual or doctrinal quirks which mar the image of Christ within us.

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5:28 - *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”*

There is in this verse a certain truth that is found also in the second commandment which states, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mt. 22:39).

Our actions toward others are governed by our thoughts toward ourselves. Therefore, we must love ourselves, since that love conditions our feelings toward others. The path to loving ourselves in the holy, scriptural sense is that we must first accept ourselves as we were created. This includes accepting our physical appearance, realizing that we are made in the fashion that our Heavenly Father intended.

David said in Psalm 139:13-16: “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

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Thus we see from this passage that the Lord formed us in our mother's womb, according to the heavenly book that was written by the Holy Father prior to the foundation of the world. We should never complain about our physical appearance, for Isaiah 45:9-11 warns us: "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands?' Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?' This is what the LORD says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?" (NIV).

We cannot challenge our physical makeup, or for that matter, where we were born and to whom. Our Heavenly Father in His infinite wisdom has chosen all of these minute details of our lives before the foundation of the world. Therefore, to murmur is to challenge His wisdom as Job did when he complained about the trials he was going through. In fact, when the Lord finally spoke to Job, the Lord's question to him was: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4). To conclude this thought of loving ourselves, I would just like to say that it is necessary to have a holy

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acceptance of how God has created us, and that we must love ourselves in light of the fact that God has created us according to His good pleasure.

Therefore, husbands are commanded to love their wives as themselves, accepting them as the Lord created them. Husbands need to realize that their wives are the weaker vessel. Men need to be understanding of their wives and appreciate them for the way they are and the way God made them. This will greatly encourage them and enable them to be the helpmates for their husbands that God created them to be.

In loving your wife, you are in reality *loving* yourself, for she is a part of you. When you treat her with kindness and do her good, you are making an investment in her, from which you will in return receive eternal dividends. A man's wife is, in effect, his own flesh, as Paul now writes:

5:29 - *“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”* Again, the underlying thought is that husbands must view their wives even as the Lord regards His Church.

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The Sublime Mystery (5:30-32)

5:30 - *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* Without a revelation from the Lord, it is seemingly impossible for mortal man to really understand this divine mystery. The Lord is the Head of the Body. We are members of His Body with a distinct ministry even as the Heavenly Father has so ordained. It is possible to be a part of the head, in the sense that the eyes are a part of the head. This in reality was the role of the seers of old. Others are ears in the Body of Christ, as was Samuel who heard the word of the Lord. Others who declare the words of the Lord are God’s mouthpiece. Those who use their hands to provide for the needy and aid them function as hands in the Body of Christ.

We need to seek the Lord to find out what He has called us to be and do. It is no good trying to be a hand if we are called to be an eye. We want to be faithful to the tasks the Lord gives us so that we might become as the hymn writer said, *His hand extended*. As we are surrendered to the Lord’s will, He is able to accomplish the will of His Father in and through His Body, the Church.

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Every member of the Body of Christ has a very important role to play. God has a place for each one of us in the Body of Christ. Some members of the human body are more visible than others. So it is in the Church—some people have ministries that are more visible than others, but we all have a part in accomplishing the purposes of God. Paul says in Romans 12:6 that we all have “gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Let me give you a simple little illustration to show you how every part of the body works together to help each other. If I cut my right hand, my legs run to the medicine cabinet, my eyes look for the band aid, and my other hand puts the Band-Aid on my right hand. In the same way, every member of the Body of Christ is needed to perform a task.

5:31 - *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”* Paul now reverts to the theme of marriage in this context of our unity with Christ by quoting the words of Adam in Genesis 2:23-24: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The

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purpose of marriage is for man and woman to become *one flesh*—having one mind, one heart, and one united purpose to fulfill the will of God for their lives.

Spiritually, as members of the Body of Christ, we are all called to be His Bride. Psalm 45:10-11 says: “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” We must leave everything behind, and wholeheartedly follow the Lord if we want to be His Bride. Our Heavenly Bridegroom delights in His Bride and desires her beauty.

In the Song of Solomon, we can see the three degrees of relationship between a bride and her husband and between the Church and the Lord. The first degree of relationship is found in Song of Solomon 2:16: “My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.” In the beginning of their married life, the bride often feels that her bridegroom belongs to her, that he is her possession. New brides always like to show off their new husbands to their relatives and say, “He is my husband.” It is the same with us when we first begin our love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We feel that Christ belongs to us.

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The second degree of relationship is seen in Song of Solomon 6:3: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." As a marriage progresses and the bride matures, she realizes that she exists solely for the bridegroom and that in reality, she belongs to him. The bride begins to seek not to be pleased by her bridegroom, but to please him. As we mature in the Lord, we begin seeking to please Him, realizing that we belong to Him.

There is another very important stage in marriage which determines whether a marriage is successful and satisfying or is an average, "run-of-the-mill" marriage. This final step in marriage is the difference between a *good* marriage and a *great* marriage. In Song of Solomon 7:10, the bride says, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me."

The ultimate purpose in marriage is for the bride to totally win her husband's heart and for him to delight in her and be pleased by her—loving her more than anyone else. This is the goal for every Christian—to be pleasing in the Lord's eyes and win Christ.

It is the beauty of a bride that wins the favor of her husband. However, a woman can be physically attractive, but if she constantly complains and criticizes her husband, she becomes very *unattractive*

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to him. In our relationship with the Lord, it is the inner beauty of the nature of Christ (the fruits of the Spirit) within us that makes us attractive to Him. Psalm 45:13 says of the bride, "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold." The Bride of Christ is filled with the glory and divine nature of God (gold represents the divine nature).

Psalm 45:2 speaks of the bridegroom (Solomon), but also of the bride because the bride is to take upon herself the attributes and nature of her bridegroom: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." It is only by the grace of God that we can become beautiful in the Lord's eyes. It is the blessed Holy Spirit who prepares us for our Heavenly Bridegroom, just as Hegai the keeper of the women prepared Esther for the king.

5:32 - *"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."* Marriage is a type of the blissful union between Christ and His Church. Thus marriage was instituted by the Heavenly Father not solely for the purpose of procreation, but so that we might understand the relationship that He desires us to have with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

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5:33 - *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”* The Lord loves us so much that He gave Himself for His Church. Therefore, husbands should give themselves totally for their wives. A husband has a tremendous responsibility. In the eyes of God, he is responsible for his wife. He must love her with unselfish love and give his life for her. The wife in turn must reverence and respect her husband as she would the Lord Himself. This concludes chapter five and this section on marriage.

Chapter 6

From speaking on marriage, Paul now turns his attention in the last chapter of Ephesians to give admonitions to nearly every class of people— children, fathers, servants, and masters. Then he goes on to describe the spiritual armor of the Christian soldier, which will be looked at in great detail.

Admonition to Children

6:1 - *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”* The role of a child with respect to his parents breaks down into two principal parts: *obedience* and *honor*.

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1. Obedience - Even the Lord Himself as a child had to learn obedience to his mother Mary while upon earth. Hebrews 5:8 gives us insight to the childhood years of Jesus: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Luke 2:51 records about Jesus, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." Jesus was subject to His parents. Therefore, children must submit to their parents. In order for a child to *learn* obedience (and I emphasize that we have to *learn* to become obedient, because we are not obedient by nature), he must be corrected by his parents (which includes spanking him at times).

Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (NIV). A parent who really loves his child will discipline him. Solomon continues by saying in Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Furthermore, Proverbs 29:15 tells us, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." The royal road to an obedient child is through

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chastisement and reproof. Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

2. Honor - Children also must honor their parents. This is the fifth commandment, and it is the first commandment which contains a promise of blessing. We must always honor our parents, no matter what. Even when our parents are wrong, though we may not agree with them, we must be respectful of them and give them the honor they are due. God will never bless a person who dishonors his parents.

You will notice that there is no age limit given in Scripture for this commandment. Many people think that they can stop obeying and honoring their parents after reaching a certain age (eighteen or twenty-one years old) or after they move out of their parents’ house. But Scripture does not say that we only have to honor our parents while we live in their house. This is a commandment we must keep as long as we live.

6:2-3 - *“Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”* The fifth commandment—to honor our father

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and mother—pronounces a blessing upon those who keep it. Long life and prosperity are blessings that come from honoring our parents.

I have noticed during my lifetime that those who honor their parents always prosper, but those who criticize them and do not take care of them suffer needless adversities. In an extreme case, I have been a witness to the judgment spoken of in Proverbs 30:17: “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”

A young man who consistently disobeyed his parents and was very cruel to them threw himself off a mountain-top in Switzerland into the valley below. A stream with a swift current swept him away, and when he was found several days later his eyes had literally been picked out by the birds. Let us, therefore, always seek to honor our parents that we may be pleasing unto the Lord.

Admonition to Fathers

6:4 - *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Paul now addresses parents, and fathers in particular.

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The responsibility of children is to obey their parents. Fathers must make sure they do not provoke their children to anger. The Apostle Paul repeats this in Colossians 3:21: “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”

When parents discipline their children, they must control their own spirits and make sure they are disciplining their children out of love, and not out of anger or a hot temper. Children are told to respect their fathers, but in all honesty, many fathers do not live in such a way that merits their children’s respect.

We must raise our children in *firmness* and *gentleness*. These two ingredients are necessary. This is a pearl of wisdom that all parents would do well to remember and apply to their lives. While a child must be disciplined in order to learn obedience, he must be disciplined in an atmosphere of self-control and love. If a father loses control of his temper and becomes angry while he disciplines his child, his child will not benefit from his correction, but will only become bitter.

Also, fathers should not require unreasonable standards or have unrealistic expectations of their children. I have seen so many parents ruin their children by being too strict with them. This causes

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children to lose all respect for their fathers. Children also are provoked to anger when their parents shout at them and demean them, especially in front of others.

It is surprising the number of teenagers and those well into their adult years who have been so adversely affected by the anger of their fathers toward them that they have not been able to develop a healthy spiritual relationship with their Heavenly Father. Let us remember the teachings of Solomon in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." By God's grace, let us seek to implant into our children (whether natural or spiritual) the qualities of goodness, righteousness, and temperance. They in turn will implant them into their children.

Admonition to Servants

6:5 - *"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ."* Now Paul addresses servants (or slaves).

In the days of Paul, there were several million slaves in the Roman Empire who served those of higher social class. The Apostle Paul did not encourage them to rebel against their masters, but

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believing that God ordains and works through all things, told them to submit to their masters and to obey them. No matter how unjust or unfair our situation may be, if we have a right attitude, the Lord will bless us.

The Early Church was composed of many slaves and those of servant class. Paul said to the Corinthians, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29). Many times those who have had a rough life are softer toward the Lord than those who have lived in wealth and ease.

The conditions under which most slaves in the Roman Empire lived and worked were very poor and inhumane. The description in 1 Samuel 22:1-2 of a certain group of men which joined themselves to David describes very accurately the slaves in Paul’s time: “David therefore departed thence, and

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escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them..."

The slaves in Paul's time grumbled and complained, and often only worked when their masters were watching them. Therefore, the Apostle Paul enjoins them to *serve* their masters even as they would the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They are told to serve their masters with faithfulness, sincerity of heart, and reverence. This is a lesson that we would all do well to understand, since all authority is in the hands of the Father.

Paul declares in Romans 13:1-5: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God,

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a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

6:6-8 - *“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”* Paul tells servants how they should serve their masters—and this applies to us with respect to our leaders or bosses. We should serve those who are in leadership over us, doing everything as unto the Lord. We are to be faithful not only when they are watching us, but even when they are not. Everything we do will be rewarded by God Himself.

Paul now addresses the theme of rewards as he does in his other epistles to the churches. He wrote to the Galatian church: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8).

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We will receive either a reward or punishment for everything we do in this life. We receive some of our rewards in this life, but most of them are reserved in heaven. The wicked many times do not receive the recompense for their evil works until the great white throne judgment of God. Often, because they are not punished in this life, they feel as though they are getting away with their sin. However, let us not be deceived. We will reap what we sow. We will not reap good if we have sown evil, just as we will not reap apples if we have sown oranges.

The doctrine of eternal judgment with its theme of rewards (or just retribution) flows through Holy Scripture, concluding in the great white throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11-13: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." Therefore, as servants of the Lord and those

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in authority over us, let us sow faithfulness and loyalty to them that we may reap eternal rewards!

Admonition to Masters

6:9 - *“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”* Paul admonishes masters (those in authority) to treat those under them in the same way slaves (or servants) must treat their masters. The NIV says, “And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.” Masters are to do the same things slaves are told to do in verses 5-6.

Having been on both sides of the fence in my life (being under authority and in authority), I have learned to appreciate the position of both servants and masters. While the master enjoys many privileges that his rank bestows, the responsibilities and pressures are phenomenal. This is why James writes, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater

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condemnation” (Jas. 3:1). Those who are in authority or leadership of any capacity (including teachers), are held more accountable than others.

In a position of authority, we can so easily offend many who are dependent upon us for their day-to-day working conditions and welfare. That is why we have to be slow to speak and quick to hear those for whom we are responsible. The righteous who are in positions of authority would do well to meditate upon the words of the patriarch Job: “If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me; What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?” (Job 31:13-14).

The Christian Soldier

6:10 - *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”* Now we come to the theme of *Soldiers For Christ*, which we have chosen as the title of this book. We will consider this subject in great detail. As believers, we must never forget that we are in a spiritual battle against the enemy—the devil and all of his fallen angels. The enemy desires to rob us not only of our full

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rewards, but also of our eternal salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God the Father.

The enemy is very powerful, but we must remember that the enemy is outnumbered. When Satan (then called Lucifer) led a rebellion against the Lord in heaven, one-third of the angels followed him and were cast out of heaven. It only takes simple mathematics to realize then that two-thirds remained faithful to Christ. Therefore, for every fallen angel there are two good angels. In addition to this, many of the fallen angels are already chained and bound (Rev. 9:14).

When Elisha's servant was troubled because of the Syrian army that was surrounding them, Elisha prayed that his spiritual eyes would be opened to see that there were more for them than against them (2 Kgs. 6:15-17). Praise the Lord, we are in the majority!

Satan knows that he is defeated; his only hope is that the children of God do not know it. He knows the Bible very well, and he has read the doom that awaits him. When Jesus was upon earth, the demons cried out to Him in terror, "Have you come to torment us before the time?" (Mt. 8:29). The demons know that their time is limited and that their day of judgment is coming.

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Many years ago when a fellow pastor was in Las Vegas, Nevada, his spiritual eyes were opened and he literally saw the twin spiritual rulers of that city. These fallen angels were colossal in size and influence. The Lord anointed him to say to them, "Your time is short." Do you know what their reaction was? They did not deny what he had said, neither did they resist him; they simply bowed their heads in recognition that their judgment was coming soon.

It is very important to the Lord that His people learn spiritual warfare. God said to the children of Israel when they were about to go in to possess the land of Canaan that He had left seven nations in the land to teach them warfare (see Deut. 7). King David said of the Lord, "He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms" (Psa. 18:34).

One aspect of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ that we often forget is that He is the Warrior King. Yes, He is the sweet, tender Jesus who pours in the oil and the wine, but He is also a man of war (Ex. 15:3). He is the Captain of the Lord's host, as He appeared to Joshua (Josh. 5:14-15). If we are to be like Jesus in every aspect of His character and nature, then we must learn spiritual warfare as well. And we cannot learn to fight unless there is an enemy.

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Many people ask: “Why did the Lord leave Satan here during the Church Age? Why did He not just give him his final judgment at Calvary?” The reason is that it pleased the Father to leave Satan around to torment us and attack us so that we might become like Christ and learn spiritual warfare.

In life, we rarely learn or achieve anything unless there is an obstacle. There is a very common saying: “No pain; no gain.” In order for our muscles to be developed, there must be an opposing force. For our muscles to become stronger, we must exert effort against some form of resistance, usually weights.

Well, for us to grow and become strong as Christians, there has to be a resistance that comes against us. That is why God permits the enemy to resist us and persecute us.

To fight and win this battle, we must be equipped, as any other soldier, with the proper uniform (or armor) and weapons. Therefore, let us now consider our spiritual armor.

The Armor of God



6:11 - *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* In olden days, a warrior would put on armor in order to protect himself from the onslaught of the enemy. We have included the drawing of a Roman soldier to enable you to better appreciate these verses.

As Christians, we must put on the whole armor of God. No piece of our armor can be missing, otherwise we could be easily defeated. Using the example of a Roman soldier, Paul mentions six particular pieces of spiritual armor that we must put on.

6:12 - *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual*

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wickedness in high places.” Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers. One of the things that makes spiritual warfare different than military warfare is the fact that our enemy is invisible. Therefore, he has a tremendous advantage, since at times we are not even aware that he is present.

Often the devil makes us think that the problem is ourselves. We must fight against the great deceiver of our souls. In order to win the fight, we have to be spiritually equipped with the gift of discerning of spirits so that we may be able to detect his presence and his crafty plots against us.

These principalities are fallen angels of very high rank who have great authority and power. They can rule over whole nations, cities, and villages as well as over governments and agencies. They have great influence over the inhabitants of those territories. These spiritual forces can also influence and even empower television programs and music groups who in turn influence their listeners in an evil way and cause them to walk in the paths of unrighteousness.

6:13 - *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* In a battle, the key to winning is to hold one’s ground and to

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remain steadfast against the enemy. We cannot cede any of our territory to the enemy. To stand firm, we must be strong in the Lord, for we certainly cannot withstand the enemy in our own strength.

I remember a time years ago when a fallen angel tried to strangle me to death while I was lying upon my bed. He came into my room and began to attack me. I tried to defend myself, but my hands went right through him. It was only as I called upon the name of the Lord in my spirit that he left. My throat incidentally was sore for several days afterwards; so it was a very real encounter.

In His wisdom, God has provided armor for us to be able to combat our foes from the pit of hell. The armor is appropriated by faith, and is *instantaneous* and *progressive*. A soldier must put on his armor every day. As believers, we must put on the armor of God every day by faith. It is no good to win a battle one day and then be careless the next day, because the enemy attacks us when we least expect it. Morning by morning, we must seek to put on the armor of God. As a soldier practices using his gear and weapons, he becomes more and more skillful with them. In much the same way, as we use the armor of God, we progressively become more adept at using it.

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6:14 - *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”* Now the Apostle becomes very specific concerning the articles of spiritual clothing that the soldier of Jesus Christ must put on.

1. Girdle of Truth - A girdle is a belt or sash worn around the waist and middle section. The girdle covers our loins. The loins spiritually represent our inward parts. The loins are the place of strength and life. In the armed forces, soldiers are required to do exercises to make these muscles firm and strong. When I was in the Royal Air Force in England, we had to do a hundred and fifty sit-ups in a row to strengthen our stomachs. Likewise, we must have “truth in the inward parts” (Psa. 51:6)—meaning a thorough knowledge of the Word of God.

We need to be able to rightly divide the Word of truth. This involves studying, as Paul writes to his spiritual son in 2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” A girdle functions as a belt that supports the armor of the soldier. Truth and integrity hold everything together (Isa. 11:5).

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2. Breastplate of Righteousness - The breastplate is a protection for the vital organs of the body. If the heart of a soldier is wounded, it affects every other part of his body. Spiritually, we must do everything possible to protect our hearts from the attacks of the enemy. King Solomon declared, "Keep [or guard] thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). It is righteousness that will protect our hearts.

The breastplate of righteousness represents always doing from the heart that which is right in the sight of the Lord and man. It is to hunger and thirst after righteousness so that our whole beings are filled with the righteousness of the Lord (see Mt. 5:6). Righteousness protects our hearts from being penetrated by the enemy.

6:15 - *"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."*

3. Gospel of Peace - The protective sandals which the Roman soldier wore were a very important part of his gear. They kept him from becoming lame by protecting his feet from being pierced by stones or thorns (spiritually speaking, the works of the flesh). Thus the peace of God prevents us

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from becoming spiritually lame (cf. Heb. 12:13), and also enables us to put Satan under our feet (Rom. 16:20).

Our feet give us stability, poise, and balance. They also mobilize us and take us where we want to go. Therefore, we should always seek to bring peace wherever we go. In order to do so, we must be peacemakers and therefore we must ourselves be filled with the peace of God. The prophet breaks forth in ecstasy in Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

6:16 - *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”*

4. Shield of Faith - In olden days, every troop carried shields, because the most common offensive weapons were arrows, spears, or darts. The primary means of defense was the *shield*. The darts of Satan’s armies are subtle words of doubt that are hurled against the saints. So often, as we have

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mentioned before, the believer feels that he himself is thinking those evil thoughts, but the faith of God will enable us to encourage ourselves in the Lord.

We are protected against the enemy as we are covered with the faith of God. The leather shields were anointed with oil to protect the soldier from the fiery darts of the enemy. Our faith must be anointed by the Holy Spirit in order for it to be effective against the enemy.

6:17 - *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

5. Helmet of Salvation - The battle also rages in our minds. Therefore, we need to put on the helmet of salvation whereby our mind is protected from all the tormenting thoughts that the enemy is capable of sending our way. The pressure against Christ's mind was so great that He sweated great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Armor of God

- 1. Girdle of Truth*
- 2. Breastplate of Righteousness*
- 3. Gospel of Peace (for our feet)*
- 4. Shield of Faith*
- 5. Helmet of Salvation*
- 6. Sword of the Spirit*

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A favorite ploy of the enemy is to torment our minds. Turning to the Lord in the midst of these attacks enables us to receive His peace, which is as strong as a garrison of the angelic hosts, keeping both our hearts and minds in the peace of God.

6. Sword of the Spirit - The sword is our only weapon of offense. We must use it. The Word of God, which is likened to a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12), can indeed cause the enemy to fall back. We must use the Word as did our Savior in His combat with the devil upon the Mount of Temptation (Mt. 4). Every time the devil quoted the Word of God out of context, the Lord came back with the scripture that nullified his temptations.

6:18 - *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”* The power of prayer is phenomenal. Prayer changes things. Therefore, we are exhorted to pray without ceasing, meaning that our life should be a life of prayer. By this we understand that in actuality we are praying or are in communication with the Lord virtually every moment of the day. Even when we are doing our normal duties, we can be in an

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attitude of prayer. This conditions our every action, since we are continually talking to the One whom our soul loves.

How wonderful is prayer! We are able to converse with the Lord in whatever we are doing. Watching in prayer for others means to continually be aware of their spiritual needs. If they are in danger, the Spirit of the Lord can use us to intercede for them.

6:19 - *“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.”* One of the most humbling aspects of prayer is that irrespective of our spiritual rank or ministry, we are very dependent upon the prayers of others. Paul pleads with his converts to pray for him so that he will be enabled to proclaim the gospel with boldness at Rome. In other epistles he asks for the prayers of the saints so that he could have doors opened for him (see Col. 4:3). We would do well to learn from the great apostle’s example and entreat the prayers of even the least of the newborn saints in the kingdom on our behalf.

6:20 - *“For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”* The Apostle Paul calls himself an ambassador of Christ. He uses this title and rank just one other

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time to describe his mission on behalf of the Lord Jesus in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." An ambassador is one who speaks on behalf of his head of state to the nation to which he is sent. Thus we see the authority with which Paul dignifies his ministry. He spoke as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). But this great spokesman for the Lord was dependent upon the prayers of others.

6:21-22 - *"But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts."* One of the noteworthy aspects of the life and ministry of Paul is that he was always in communication with his beloved converts.

In this way, Paul was very similar to Reverend John Wesley, who published his journal frequently so that his converts would know the wondrous things that God was doing through him. Paul, however, was sending his beloved Tychicus to the Ephesians. Tychicus was from the Roman province of Asia

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(modern-day Turkey). Tychicus accompanied Paul while he was in Ephesus, went with him to Macedonia, and was with him in Greece. He was a well-known companion of the Apostle Paul, and was also the bearer of the letter to the Colossian church (Col. 4:7).

He apparently knew the Ephesians very well, because he was sent by Paul to them from Rome during his last imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:12). Tychicus was entrusted to explain to the Ephesian congregations Paul's situation at Rome during his first imprisonment. He obviously was one who excelled in the ministry of comfort and consolation.

6:23-24 - *"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."* Now comes the closure that like the beginning of the epistle invokes the common New Testament church greetings of peace and grace.

The Apostle Paul also speaks of the love of the Lord that comes through faith. It certainly is a closing salutation of a father to his spiritual children and friends in this very spiritually advanced congregation. My prayer is that the peace of God will be upon you, dear reader. God bless you!

EPILOGUE

The Epistle to the Ephesians while magnifying the grace of God can be summed up by three words: *sit*, *walk*, and *stand*. We are spiritually *seated* with Christ in heavenly places.

From this place of authority and grace, we can then *walk* in love and holiness before God. And because of this we can put on the whole armor of God whereby we can withstand all the attacks of the Wicked One, and having done all, *stand*.

We have presented this Epistle in such a way that you may become one of Christ's triumphant soldiers, not just standing but becoming victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is with this prayer for you, dear reader, that this book has been written.