

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 1

Eph 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 . . ."*
(Eph 1:1)

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

The epistle to the Ephesians is thought to have been written about A.D. 63. The church was apparently established around A.D. 56,- about seven years prior to this writing. This is where Paul confronted a number of disciples who knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, and had only been baptized with the baptism of John (Acts 19:1-7). He later spent two years "*disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus*" (19:10). This was preceded by a period of three months during which Paul disputed in the local synagogue, where he faced considerable opposition from the Jews (19:8-9). After "*divers were hardened and believed not,*" he took the disciples and moved to the school of Tyrannus, where he taught daily, Paul's work in Ephesus was evidently very productive, for at the time of this writing he had "*heard*" of their "*faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints*" (1:15). Rather than simply glorying in their faithfulness, he wrote to them of advancing further, seeing more, knowing more (1:15-20), and having a larger circumference of comprehension (3:16-19). Although at the time they were apparently doing well, that was not enough. There is no point in the walk of faith where the individual, or a congregation, is beyond all danger. Spiritual life is designed by Divine intention to be worked out in the crucible of conflict, while in a body that is vile, possessing a contaminated nature that is to be put off, and surrounded by hostile and inimical influences. Thus Paul will write to this church candidly about putting off certain things, and putting on certain things. He will write to them concerning the necessity of putting on "*the whole armor of God*" (Eph 6:10-18), as well as "*the new man*" (Eph 4:23). He will admonish them to make no place for the devil (Eph 4:27), and not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:30). The letter is a sterling example of how the Head of the body speaks to His church - to a church that is doing well. He does not assume His people have reached a sort of plateau where they are carried along to greater heights and deeper depths - even though many professing "*Christians*" live as though a place like that really exists. This epistle will accent the nature and necessity of spiritual understanding. In this regard, it is quite similar to the Colossian epistle, although it is not precisely the same. The acceptance of the Gentiles will be particularly expounded., thus showing the absence of inferiority in Christ Jesus.

PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

Eph 1:1a *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ . . ."* Other versions read, "*an emissary of the Messiah Yeshua,*" ^{CJB} "*a legate [official emissary] of Jesus the Messiah,*" ^{MRD} "*Jesus Christ's messenger,*" ^{LIVING} and "*an apostle, a special agent of Christ Jesus.*" ^{MESSAGE}

PAUL FREQUENTLY REFERS TO HIS OFFICE. Paul's letters frequently refer to his appointment as

"an apostle of Jesus Christ." He was "called to be an apostle" (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1). He was "ordained a preacher, and an apostle" (1 Tim 2:7). He was "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13). He wrought "the signs of an apostle" (2 Cor 12:12). He was "an apostle, (not of men, neither by man), but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father" (Gal 1:1). He was "appointed a preacher, and an apostle" (2 Tim 1:11).

AN APOSTLE. An apostle is a delegate - or a delegated person. He is an ambassador, sent forth with a message. He is an official representative of the One who sent him. He does not come in his own name. He does not come to establish himself as a leader. The word *"apostle"* has the following lexical meaning: "a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders." ^{THAYER} An *"apostle"* is not a dignitary sent forth to mediate a particular problem. He is not a mere figurehead, demanding respect for because of his own person. This is someone with a message- a special word that cannot be known independently of the special messenger being sent to declare it.

It is for this reason that the church is said to be *"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone"* (Eph 2:20). Any body of people that is built upon a foundation that cannot be so described cannot possibly be the church!

The *"prophets"* of reference are those who foretold the coming of the Messiah - those who, by *"the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow"* (1 Pet 1:10-11). The message given to the apostles elaborated upon and expounded what the prophets had to say about the coming Savior. Peter reminded the people, *"Yea, and **all the prophets** from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days"* (Acts 3:24). He declared to the household of Cornelius, *"To Him give all **the prophets** witness"* (Acts 10:43). Paul's ministry is described in these words: *"he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of **the prophets**, from morning till evening"* (Acts 28:23).

The message of an apostle, therefore, was in perfect harmony with the declarations of the prophets concerning the Messiah. Those who were familiar with the Prophets, which were read every Sabbath day in the synagogue (Acts 13:15;15:21), would be able to make an association between what Paul preached, and what their Scriptures had foretold.

When Jesus expounded Himself to the two on the road to Emmaus, He reminded them of what was written in *"Moses and all the prophets . . . concerning Himself"* (Lk 24:27). Later, when appearing to the eleven and those who were with them, He reminded them of His ministry among them; *"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and **in the prophets**, and in the psalms, concerning Me"* (Luke 24:44). The Apostles took up where Jesus left off, expounding Him out of Moses and the Prophets, confirming that what God had promised of old time had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The circumstances of our time are alarming. A Jesus is being preached that does not at all harmonize with what the Prophets said of the real Savior. "Another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4) has been fabricated, and is being preached, that suits the desires of the people rather than fulfilling the words of the Prophets. This fulfills the word of Paul, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear"^{NIV} (2 Tim 4:3).

OF JESUS CHRIST. An apostle of Jesus Christ is one that He personally sent forth. During His earthly ministry Jesus called twelve men to Himself, naming them "apostles." "And when it was day, He called unto him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles" (Luke 6:13). It is interesting that the word "apostle" is a transliteration of the Greek word "a-post-o-lon." That suggests there was no precise English word that conveyed the intended meaning of the word. Therefore, the translators coined a word, which sound preachers and teachers would expound doctrinally.

Jesus sent the apostles out with a message. Apart from that message, they had no Kingdom significance. He also sent out Paul with a message, and a commission to, with that message, "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). The message, because it was "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16), would do the work. They would do the proclaiming. Where this appointed message is not preached, the means to salvation has been withheld!

BY THE WILL OF GOD

1:1b " . . . **by the will of God** . . . " Other versions read, "through the will of God,"^{ASV} "by the purpose of God,"^{BBE} "by the pleasure of God,"^{MRD} "chosen by God,"^{LIVING} "that is what God wanted,"^{ERV} and "under God's plan."^{MESSAGE}

WILL. The word translated "will" has the following lexical meaning, which is reflected in several of the versions: "**qe, lhma** thelema {thel'-ay-mah} **Meaning:** 1) what one wishes or has determined shall be done 1a) of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ 1b) of what God wishes to be done by us 1b1) commands, precepts 2) will, choice, inclination, desire, pleasure."^{THAYER} "as the result of what one has decided will; (1) objectively will, design, purpose, what is willed"^{FRIBERG}

As is evident, the word "will" has to do with purpose, determination, choice, and design. The "will of God" is something more than a desire. It is a determination - a purpose that is intended to be carried out. It involves what God desires, or wants, but goes infinitely further than the ordinary meaning of desire. Of course, when we are speaking of God, we must remove ordinary concepts from our minds, for, as men count things, there is nothing about God that is "ordinary." Today many are not at all hesitate to associate God with the ordinary, and weigh his words and his will as they would with any of their peers. Often, they think nothing of being in disagreement with God, or at variance with His revealed will. Of course, men have accommodated such thinking by inventing a "god" that handily fits into humanly made molds. Any person who objects to this condescending view of God is considered prudish, or straightlaced in their thinking.

Lest men become wise in their own conceits, Jesus made quite clear the stance of those who despised the will of the Lord. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven"* (Matt 7:21). *"The will of God"* is an appointment, and is to be strictly honored by men. Paul being an apostle *"by the will of God"* means that no man is at liberty to reject what he teaches. His word is what God has determined men should hear. Thus, when Paul opens up his letter to the church in Ephesus by saying he is an apostle by the will of God, he is declaring that his message is to be heard, just as though God Himself had thundered it out of heaven. If he says men are to *"put on the whole armor of God"* (Eph 6:11), that is precisely what they are to do. If he says, *"put off concerning the former conversation the old man"* (Eph 4:22), and *"put on the new man"* (Eph 4:24), the readers are not to hesitate to do it. If he cries out, *"Awake thou that sleepest and rise from the dead,"* then men are to set about to do precisely that (Eph 5:14). If he says of certain transgressions, *"let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints"* (Eph 5:3), then the hearers must be sure they carry out that mandate. It is the will of the Lord, and those who fail to do His will, will ultimately be rejected by Him.

Servants are admonished to be found *"doing the will of God from the heart"* (Eph 6:6). The whole body of believers are admonished to *"be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph 5:17). It is no more right for a professing disciple of Jesus to ignore that word, than it would be for Paul to ignore his apostleship! Having been sent to preach he said, *"woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel"* (1 Cor 9:16). Likewise professing Christians must say, *"Woe is unto me if I do not put off the old man, and put on the new man!"* *"Woe is unto me if I do not put on the whole armor of God!"* Children must say, *"Woe is unto me if I do not honor and obey my parents!"* Employees must say, *"Woe is unto me if I do not do the will of God from my heart!"* Those who are spiritually lethargic must shout, *"Woe is unto me if I do not awaken, and rise from the dead!"*

At all cost, men must be transformed by the renewing of their mind, so they may *"test and approve what God's will is"* ^{NIV} (Rom 12:2). That is what Paul did, yielding his body as a living sacrifice unto God in order that he might discern the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. As he writes to the Ephesians, there is no question in his mind about what needs to be said. He has been sent forth by Jesus Himself, and in strict accord with the will of God.

Whenever we read of anything that is *"the will of God,"* we must understand that His will is attended by His power and direction. For example, the intercession of the Holy Spirit for us is carried out *"according to the will of God"* (Rom 8:27). Jesus delivered us from this present evil world *"according to the will of God"* (Gal 1:4). We are admonished to be *"perfect and complete in all the will of God"* (Col 4:12). God's will for us is pointedly said to include this: *"abstain from fornication"* (1 Thess 4:3). His will is that we give thanks *"in everything"* (1 Thess 5:18). The will of the Lord is to be *"done"* by us (Heb 10:36). His will is *"that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"* (1 Pet 2:15). His will is even the governing factor concerning our suffering (1 Pet 3:17).

Here is how we must reason concerning these things. If Paul could carry out such a large commission by the will of God, surely we can determine to carry out the will of the Lord concerning ourselves, our lives, and our roles in the body of Christ.

TO THE SAINTS AND TO THE FAITHFUL

6:18 " . . . to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Other versions read, "to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus,"^{NASB} "To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus,"^{NIV} "To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus,"^{RSV} "To: God's people living in Ephesus, that is, those who are trusting in the Messiah Yeshua,"^{CJB} "To God's holy and faithful people who are united with Christ in the city of Ephesus,"^{GWN} "to them who are at Ephesus, sanctified, and believing in Jesus the Messiah,"^{MRD} "I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, I who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus,"^{NLT} and "to his holy and faithful people in Ephesus who are in union with Christ Jesus."^{ISV}

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN. This verse addresses the people of God from two vantage points - like two sides of the same coin. The two words of identity are "saints" and "faithful/" These are the people to whom, he writes. If the reading was a public one, which it probably was, each hearer would be faced with the obligation to determine if this introduction aptly described them. If it did not, then until they were found in those categories, the letter would not benefit them, for it was only written to those so identified.

THE SAINT'S. Other versions read, "God's people,"^{CJB} "holy,"^{GWN} "sanctified,"^{MRD} "holy ones,"^{NAB} "holy people,"^{NJB} and "Christian friends."^{LIVING}

Prior to Christ, the word "saints" was used of holy angels (Deut 33:2; Job 15:15; Psa 30:4). It was also used of God's holy ones, toward whom the Lord was devoted (Deut 33:3; 1 Sam 2:9; Psa 31:23; 37:28; 85:8, etc). Prophetically, Daniel spoke of a time when the saints would "take the Kingdom" (Dan 7:18,22,25). However, when the prophets spoke to the children of Israel, they did not refer to them as "saints." In fact, the word "saints" is mentioned only eight times from Isaiah through Malachi, and only by Daniel, Hosea, and Zechariah (Dan 7:18,21,22,25,27; Hos 11:12; Zech 14:5). Zechariah's reference is to the angels.

In the New Covenant Scriptures, however, from Acts through Revelation, we find the word "saints" mentioned **sixty times**. It is an appropriate description of the people of God. It means "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His . . . pure, upright, holy,"^{THAYER} "pertaining to being holy in the sense of superior moral qualities and possessing certain essentially Divine qualities in contrast with what is human - 'holy, pure,

divine."^{LOUW-NIDA}

Being "saints" postulates that a fundamental change has taken place in the people. **Unlike the profane priests of old (Isa 5:20), God does not call someone holy who is actually unholy!** Further, being holy involves human effort - yea, successful human effort. It is not purely "human," for the required resources are supplied to meet the requirement: "be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet 1:15). No part of life is permitted to be unholy, not devoted to the Lord, or characterized

by qualities antithetical to those of the living God.

The purpose of God is involved in this, for we are "*called to be saints*" (Rom 1:7) - not only in the world to come, but in this present evil world (Tit 2:12). Saints are people who are given to "*comprehend . . . what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height*" of God's salvation (Eph 3:18). The "*love of the brethren*" is a love that is directed toward "*all the saints*" (Col 1:4). These are people who are "*in the light*" (Col 1:12). The mystery of redemption that has been hidden "*from ages, and hidden from generations,*" is now "*made manifest to His saints*" (Col 1:26). These are a holy people who are being conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29).

THE FAITHFUL. The saints are "*faithful*" people - faithful to God! They are not vacillating, wavering, and doubtful people. They are noted for cleaving to the Lord "*with purpose of heart*" (Acts 11:23). They walk as "*obedient children*" (1 Pet 1:14), making "*straight paths*" for their feet (Heb 12:13). This is not to say they are morally perfect - although that is the direction in which they are headed, as they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12-13).

The term "*saints*" is not a generic term - like friends. It is a word that builds on the fact of regeneration, the reality of change, and the realness of the new birth and reconciliation to God. Those who are properly classified in this group will profit greatly from this epistle.

IN CHRIST JESUS. This is the domain in which every single aspect of salvation is found - "*in Christ Jesus!*" All benefits are here! All of God's objectives for men are there. This is where Divine acceptance is realized. It is where grace is given. It is where all of the promises of God reside. All of that may seem very apparent - but it is not. Some seek acceptance in a religious institution, or in some kind of religious practice. Some seek it in keeping a code, or assenting to a series of theological statements, or embracing a supposed "plan of salvation."

Before God will confer any of the benefits He has promised, all of which are absolutely essential, the person must be "*found*" in Christ (Phil 3:9). Christ must dwell in the person (Eph 3:17), and the person must be found in Christ. There is where acceptance is realized (Eph 2:6). There is where new creatureship is accomplished (2 Cor 5:17). There is where there is "*no condemnation*" (Rom 8:1). There is where trust must be placed (Eph 1:12).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 2

Eph 1:2 *"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. . . ."* (Eph 1:2)

NEEDED RESOURCES AND THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH THEY ARE OBTAINED

The life of faith cannot be lived in the energy of the flesh. While that is easy to say, it should be evident to every believer that it is not as simple as it may sound. This is not so much owing to the complexity of the truth as it is to the complexness of living by faith. **First**, we have the treasure of salvation in an earthen vessel (1 Cor 4:7). **Second**, we have a dual nature, with two distinct natures residing in the body - the *"new man"* and *"the old man"* (Eph 4:22-24). **Third**, These nature are hostile to one another - so much so that *"ye cannot do the things that ye would"* (Gal 5:17). **Fourth**, we cannot stop the eruption of the old nature in temptations (Rom 7:15-25). **Fifth**, in our time, *"Babylon the great"* holds sway over the Christian world (Rev 17:5; 18:11-13). **Sixth**, we are being qualified for an eternal inheritance by suffering (2 Thess 1:5). **Seventh**, we face an aggressive enemy who is crafty (2 Cor 11:3). **Eighth**, there is a contrary Law resident in our members that wars against the law of our mind (Rom 7:23). **Ninth**, the way that leads to life is narrow, and few there be that find it (Matt 7:13-14). **Tenth**, this life requires that we *"see Him who is invisible"* (Heb 11:27). **Eleventh**, Jesus has left behind a measure of sufferings that is to be filled up by those following Him (Col 1:24). **Twelfth**, salvation requires that, after we have *"suffered a while,"* we be made perfect, established, strengthened, and settled (1 Pet 5:10). **Thirteenth**, we are daily faced with worldly lusts that *"war against the soul"* (1 Pet 2:11). **Fourteenth**, although we are *"in the world,"* we are *"not of the world,"* have been chosen *"out of the world,"* and our primary citizenship is in heaven (John 15:19; 17:11; Phil 3:20). **Fifteenth**, being in the world, we are reminded that we *"shall have tribulation"* (John 16:33). These conditions, and many more, make it impossible to complete the course set before us with natural resources alone. It is imperative that we have help from heaven, and that heaven wants to give it - i.e. is forward to give it, and in abundance. Throughout this epistle, Paul will make clear that God has not saved us, then left us on our own. He has provided a staggering number of benefits, none of which are meager, inadequate, or cannot be received in abundance daily.

THE HARMONY OF GRACE AND PEACE

Eph 1:2a *"Grace be to you, and peace . . ."* Other versions read, *"Grace and peace to you,"* ^{NIV} *"Grace be to you, and peace,"* ^{DOUAY} *"Good will and peace,"* ^{GWN} *"give you grace and peace,"* ^{NLT} *"May his blessings and peace be yours,"* ^{LIVING} *"spiritual blessing and peace,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"Favor to you and peace,"* ^{ABP} *"be kind to you and will bless you with peace,"* ^{CEV} and *"grace and peace poured into our lives."* ^{MESSAGE}

It is obvious from the various translations that "*grace*" and "*peace*" are not simplistic terms. There is a lot in them, which we ought to expect, seeing they come to us from heaven. It also should be evident that these benefits are needed, for God has not represented Himself as giving what can be obtained elsewhere, or what is not necessary. That is one reason why we are to seek the things that are "*above*" (Col 3:1-2) - because they are essential to the maintenance of spiritual life. There are no redundancies in "*all spiritual blessings*," nor can we hobble on to glory with only a representative sampling of them. There really is nothing "pertaining to life and godliness" that is vestigial, rudimentary, or unneeded. As elementary as that may seem, Satan has persuaded many professing believers that they do not need what God has given. Consequently, they are attempting to maintain, and even improve, spiritual life without the resources God has provided.

GRACE BE TO YOU. Grace is primarily defined doctrinally, not lexically. However, there is a small amount of value in knowing what the word means from an etymological point of view.

Grace Under the Old Covenant. The word "*grace*" is used thirty-nine times from Genesis through Zechariah. Ezra spoke of grace being given the people for a "*brief moment*" (Ezra 9:8). As used there, the word means favor - especially in not dealing with the people according to their recalcitrant nature. When referring to God's attitude toward the people, that is how the word is most often used during the First Covenant (Ex 33:16; Psa 84:11; Prov 3:34; Jer 31:2). There is also the example of Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and was noted for excelling his generation. His moral state can be traced to the fact that he "*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*," or God bestowed grace upon him during a time of cursing because he was living by faith. The emphasis seems to be on the latter, although it certainly does not rule out the former,

Grace Under the New Covenant. The word "**grace**" is more weighty under the New Covenant. That is because of the atoning death of Christ. It is as though the fountain of grace has been opened, so that it pours forth more copiously upon the children of God. Ordinarily, grace is thought to be primarily for sinners, but that is not the case in Christ Jesus. **Grace is consistently depicted as for those who are in right relation with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.** By way of comparison, "*grace*" occurs one hundred and thirty times from Matthew through revelation. It is mentioned only four times in the Gospels (Lk 2:40; John 1:14,16,17) - and all of them are speaking of Jesus Christ Himself.

"*Grace*" is mentioned ten times in the book of Acts (4:33; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3,26; 15:11,40; 18:27; 20:24,32). "*The grace of God*" was perceived in the people (Acts 11:23), something that was not true of Israel. The Gospel is referred to as "*the word of His grace*" (Acts 14:3; 20:,32), and "*the Gospel, l of the grace of God*" (Acts 20:24). Believers were to "*continue in the grace of God*" - a concept not taught under the Old Covenant (Acts 13:43). They are "*recommended to the grace of God*" (Acts 14:26; 15:40), another new kind of teaching. Several years after Pentecost, and after the conversion of the household of Cornelius, Peter boldly announced to the brethren in Jerusalem, "*through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved*" (Acts 15:11). Men were also said to have "*believed through grace*" (Acts 18:27).

As used in the apostolic writings, "grace" means "benefit, favor, liberality," ^{STRONG'S} "Good-will, lovingkindness, favor . . . the act of favoring," ^{THAYER} "helpfulness . . . enabling power" ^{FRIEBERG}

In Christ Jesus, "grace" is always associated with doing something. This ranges from believing (Acts 18:27), to laboring "more abundantly" (1 Cor 15:10). "Everlasting consolation and good hope" are traced back to the grace of God (2 Thess 2:16).

Thus, when "grace" is given to the people they have Divine enablements to do what is required of them, and receive what has been provided for them.

AND PEACE. This is a peace that is harmonious with "grace." It is a peace that maintains the unity of believers (Eph 4:3), keeps both the heart and the mind (Phil 4:7), and can "rule" in the heart (Col 3:15). The word itself means, "quietness, rest, and set at one again." ^{STRONG'S} As regards our association with God, peace reflects a very real harmony and accord with God (Rom 5:1). The Gospel is referred to as "the Gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15). It is a trait of spiritual mindedness (Rom 8:6). Peace is an aspect of the Kingdom of God - i.e. it is evidence of His rule (Rom 14:17). It also flows from the well of believing (Rom 15:13), settling the believer, and bringing a calmness to the soul that frees one from the agitations of life in the world. This is a quality that, no matter how much of it you possess, you know you could do with more. Grace and peace are complementary, so that the more you have of one, the more you have of the other.

FROM GOD THE FATHER

^{1:2b} ". . . , from God our Father . . ." All versions read the same: "God our Father." This precise phrase is used eleven times in Scripture - all in the epistles (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1,2; 1 Tim 1:2; Phile 1:3). Nine of those references refer to "grace" and "peace" coming to us "from God our Father." One of them refers to the church as being "IN God our Father" (2 Thess 1:1). Another refers to "grace, mercy, and peace" being "from "God our Father" (1 Tim 1:12).

THE CONCEPT OF "FATHER." The concept of God being "Father" is common in Scripture, although in our time a lot is not made of it. Moses spoke to Israel about God being their "Father" (Deut 32:6). David was promised that God would be a "Father" to Solomon (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chron 28:6). David prayed to God as the "Lord God of Israel our Father" (1 Chron 29:10). In the 68th Psalm, David affirmed God is "a Father of the fatherless" (Psa 68:5). The godly are depicted as saying, "Thou art my Father, my God" (Psa 89:26). Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be called "The everlasting Father" (Isa 9:6). Isaiah declared to God, "Doubtless Thou art our Father" (Isa 63:16; 64:8). Jeremiah referred to God as "My Father" (Jer 3:19).

There are total of ten times God is referred to as "Father" in Genesis through Malachi! With the exception of Psalm 68:5, where Divine provision is accented, the references all have to do with the Origin of a person or people. God is the One who brought them into being, whether that is viewed according to the flesh, or

according to being in Christ Jesus. The latter is the emphasis of apostolic doctrine.

By way of contrast with its Old Covenant usage, God is referred to as "*Father*" two hundred and fifty-nine times from Matthew through Revelation. One hundred and eighty-one of them are in the Gospels. In teaching His disciples, Jesus referred to God as "*Your Father*" (Matt 5:16,45,48; 6:1,8,15; 7:11; 10:20,29; 18:14; 23:9; Mt 11:25,26; Lk 6:36; 12:30; John 8:42; 20:17). He taught His disciples to pray after this manner, "*Our Father which art in heaven*" (Matt 6:9; k 11:2). In the book of Acts, Jesus referred to "*the Father*" two times (Acts 1:4,7).

All of this accents that Jesus did, in fact, come to reveal the Father to men - to acquaint them with God Himself, His manners, and His will. Jesus did not come primarily to direct men concerning what they should do - although He did teach men concerning such things. However, that was not the stress of His preaching. By means of parables and by direct statement, He expounded "*the Father*" to the people - particularly the disciples.

When Jesus summarized what people were to see in Him, He said it this way, "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:9). He explained His presence by saying, "*the living Father sent Me*" (John 6:57). He declared that He always did the things that pleased "*the Father*" (John 8:29). He affirmed that He did "*the works of My Father*" (John 10:37). When it came to His desires, or will, He said, "*I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me*" (John 5:30).

Jesus left the strong impression - and we must perceive it - that when God is referred to as anyone's Father, they are especially obliged to do what He says, and reflect His will in their words and deeds. Jesus lived out that truth before men.

In the book of Acts, only Peter referred to God as "*Father*" in the preaching that is recorded there (Acts 2:33). The majority of teaching concerning "*the Father*" was to believers.

The doctrinal treatise of the "*Father*" is found in the epistles, where "*the Father*" is mentioned seventy-six times. He raised us in our baptism (Rom 6:4). The Holy Spirit cries "*Abba Father*" from within us (Rom 8:15). The church is to glorify God the Father "with one mind and one mouth" (Rom 15:6). It is affirmed of the Father, "*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him*" (1 Cor 8:6). In the end, Jesus will deliver up the Kingdom "*to God, even the Father*" (1 Cor 15:24). When it comes to mercy, God is "*the Father of mercies*" (2 Cor 1:2). For those who come out from among the ungodly, and forge no unequal yokes, God says He "*will be a Father unto you*" (2 Cor 6:18). He is presented as "*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor 11:31). Jesus delivered us from "*this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*" (Gal 1:4). It is "*the Father of glory*" that gives "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*" to us (Eph 1:17). Through the Spirit we have access "*unto the Father*" (Eph 2:18). The "*Father*" is "*above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Eph 4:6). When every tongue confesses Jesus is Lord, it will be "*to the glory of God the Father*" (Phil 21:11). In salvation hearts are

being established *"in holiness before God, even our Father"* (1 Thess 3:13). Concerning our origin, God is the *"Father of spirits"* (Heb 12:9).

Grace and peace are not the results of some form of human discipline. They are not the natural result of being in Christ. They both come from the One who created us, and beget us in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:3) - *"The Father."* Every believer should be advancing in the degree of their awareness of the Father. After all, Jesus is bringing us to God (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus has also promised, *"I will confess His name before My Father"* (Rev 3:5).

THE APPOINTED DISTRIBUTOR - THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

^{1:2b} *" . . . and from the Lord Jesus Christ."* Grace and peace are said to come from *"God our Father AND the Lord Jesus Christ."* This expression is found eleven times in the epistles (Rom 1:7; Eph 6:23; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1,2,12; 1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 4:1; Tit 1:4; Phil:3). In addition to *"grace"* and *"peace"* coming from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, *"love with faith"* come from them (Eph 6:23). God is glorified in the saints *"according to the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thess 1:12). Paul delivered a charge to Timothy *"before God and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 4:1).

Salvation is so ordered that proper thinking always is done in view of God the Father **and** the Lord Jesus Christ. They are joined together and cannot not be separated. The only separation that occurred between them is when Jesus had *"the iniquities of us all"* laid upon Him by God Himself, and then was *"forsaken"* by God as He was *"made a curse for us"* (Gal 5:21) - God condemning sin in the flesh of Christ (Rom 8:23). Now, however, Jesus has been glorified with the glory He had with the Father *"before the world was"* (John 17:5).

JESUS IS THE DISTRIBUTOR. It is not that the Father gives us some grace, and Jesus gives us more. The Father has made the determination to send *"grace and peace"* to His children - but He does so through the Lord Jesus Christ. The gifts, no matter what they are, come from God, through His Son. It is *"by"* Jesus that we *"believe in God,"* whether initially or thereafter (1 Pet 1:21). We have *"peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 5:1). We *"joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 5:11). God gives us the *"victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor 15:57). Each believer is an *"heir of God through Christ"* (Gal 4:7). The kindness of God is *"toward us through Christ Jesus"* (Eph 2:7). The peace of God keeps our *"hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:7).

Whatever is needed to by Jesus' disciple, is also required to be received from God, for God sends the benefit by the hand of Jesus, so to speak. That being the case, whoever does not forsake all that he has to follow Jesus, cannot possibly receive what is distributed through Him (Lk 14:33). The person who does not prefer Jesus to his own family, cannot receive what God ministers through Him (Matt 10:37). The individual who does not take up his cross every day and follow Jesus, is barred from receiving what is given exclusively through Him (Lk 9:23).

If a person is not believing on Christ (John 7:38), fleeing to Him for refuge (Heb 6:18), and hearing Him speak from heaven (Heb 12:25), he is cut off from all of the supplies that are brought to men from God through Jesus. Those who are not being shepherded by Jesus cannot be fed by Him (John 10:14,27).

I do not believe the modern church makes enough of Jesus. Too little is known Him, and too few are actually following Him. There are other matters that have been allowed to upstage Jesus. As a consequence, both grace and peace are glaringly absent in the so-called Christian world. Divine enablement is virtually unknown, and spirits that are confident and settled are exceedingly rare. And why is this so? It is because Jesus is not dwelling with the people. He has been relegated to the back room of religion, and He will not occupy such a reproachful position. If Jesus is not considered to be the preeminent Person, He simply leaves, hiding Himself from the people. What is more, they will not be able to find Him until they seek Him with all of their hearts (Jer 29:14). If God has so structured things that Jesus "*in all things might have the preeminence*" (Col 1:18), what can really be said of the individual who lives as though that was not really true?

SOMETHING TO SEE. Although salvation joins us to the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), brings the indwelling Spirit (Gal 4:6), with God dwelling in us (1 John 4:15), and Christ as well (Eph 3:17), there is an aspect of divine affiliation that must not be missed. A sufficient gulf remains between man and God that a Mediator is required to access God, or to receive from Him. It is written that "*there is One Mediator between God and men*" (1 Tim 2:5). Jesus said "*no man cometh to the Father but by Me*" (John 14:6) - and that is initially, and after we have been "*received*" as well (Rom 15:7). To put it another way, if Jesus does not receive us, neither will God. No person, regardless of the supposed level of their advancement in the faith, can do without Jesus. There are not special occasions when you can ignore Jesus, yet gain direct access to God.

One of the great jeopardies of our time is the lack of emphasis being placed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is written, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" (Eph 1:3). That being true, there is no real spiritual blessing being realized independently of Christ Jesus. Even the love of God "*is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom 8:39), and those who imagine that God loves those out of Christ as much as those in Him, have simply betrayed their ignorance.

Paul writes to the Ephesians within the framework of Divine priorities. He does not begin with their earthly lives, but with life in Christ Jesus. He calls their attention to the indispensable gifts of grace and peace, clearly stating to them from whence they come. He knows that if you are going to lead men in their thinking, you must begin at the right place.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 3

Eph 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,""* (Eph 1:2)

GOD HAS BLESSED US

As we proceed through this epistle, it will become very evident that salvation in its entirety, from beginning to end, is of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father is the preeminent Person in the Scriptures, and particularly in this book - a book in which the foundations of our faith are accentuated. Think of the perspective that is developed by this marvelous letter. **(1)** Grace and peace come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2). **(2)** Blessing belongs to God (1:3a). **(3)** He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings (1:3b). **(4)** God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (1:4a). **(5)** Our lives are intended to be lived before Him in love (1:4b). **(6)** God predestinated us to be adopted by Jesus Christ to Himself (1:5a). **(7)** This adoption is according to the good pleasure of His will (1:5b). **(8)** All of this is to the praise of the glory of His grace (1:6). **(9)** God made us accepted in the Beloved (1:6b). **(10)** We have the forgiveness of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (1:7a). **(11)** The redemption is according to the riches of His grace (1:7b). **(12)** God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence (1:8). **(13)** God has made known the mystery of His will (1:9a). **(14)** This has been according to the good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself (1:9b). **(15)** We have been predestined to obtain an inheritance according to His good pleasure (1:9b). **(16)** The good pleasure was purposed in Himself (1:9c). **(17)** His aim is to gather all things together in Christ (1:10). **(18)** We have been predestinated according to His purpose, who works all things after the counsel of His own will (1:11). **(19)** The aim is for us to be to the praise of His glory (1:12). **(20)** God has sealed us with His Holy Spirit (1:13). **(21)** Paul prays that God will give His people the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (1:17). **(22)** The eyes of our understanding are opened to the hope of His calling, His inheritance, and the working of His mighty power (1:18-19). **(23)** The power is that which God wrought Jesus in raising from the dead and exalting Him (1:10-22).

There are twenty-three salient points related to God the Father - and they are only the ones in the first chapter. Let there be no question about the emphasis of this epistle!

BLESSED BE GOD

Eph 1:3a *"Blessed be the God . . ."* Other versions read, *"Praise be to God,"* ^{NIV} *"Praised be ADONAI,"* ^{CJB} *"Praise the God,"* ^{GWN} *"All praise to God,"* ^{NLT} *"How we praise God,"* ^{LIVING} *"Let us give thanks to the God,"* ^{GNB} and *"How blessed is God!"* ^{YLT}

The word translated "*blessed*" means "adorable . . . praised." ^{STRONG'S} The idea is that of praise that is prompted by being enthralled with God Himself - particularly because of what He has done. Praise is a fruit of spiritual insight and thankfulness. Where these traits do not exist, praise is an impossibility. God is not "*blessed*" by words emitting from unthankful, and unholy hearts. We have an example of the Divine attitude toward empty praise. "*Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols*" (Amos 5:23). Again, "*Woe to them that are at ease in Zion . . . That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David*" (Amos 6:5). And again, "*When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with [I cannot endure your evil assemblies' ^{NIV}]; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting*" (Isa 1:12-13).

When David "*blessed*" the Lord, it is because of what he comprehended. "***Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me***" (Psa 66:20). "*O God, Thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. **Blessed be God***" (Psa 68:35). Paul did the same: "***Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God***" (2 Cor 1:3-4).

The phrase "*Blessed be the God*" is like an eruption of insightful praise and thanksgiving to God. As the great heart of Paul began to ponder the advantages given freely to the saints of God, he extolled the Lord, making mention of particular benefits. Even under the Law God said, "*When thou hast eaten and art full, then **thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which He hath given thee***" (Deut 8:10). How much more ought such expressions to be found among those who have "*tasted of the Lord, that He is gracious*" (1 Pet 2:3). Four times David exhorted his own soul to bless the Lord: "*Bless the Lord, O my soul*" (Psa 103:1,2,22; 104:1). He blessed the Lord for giving him counsel (Psa 16:7), because he stood in an "*even place,*" or on spiritually level ground (Psa 20:12), and because he saw God is "*very great*" (Psa 104:1). He vowed to "*bless the Lord at all times*" (Psa Psa 34:1).

PAUL'S AWARENESS. As Paul writes he is acutely aware of what the Lord has provided for the saints. He does not take for granted that they are living in the cognizance of such marvelous realities. Nor, indeed, does he assume that they are not. Rather, as he writes he himself is, as it were, enclosed in the purpose of God. At this point he is not thinking of the attainments of the Ephesians, or of any liabilities that exist among them (such as is mentioned in Ephesians 4:26). What God has provided in Christ Jesus is of such magnitude, and is so essential to the life of faith, that Paul must mention it, doing so with a thankful spirit.

GOD CONSCIOUSNESS. One of the great failings of the modern church is its lack of an awareness of God Himself. That awareness is an aspect of knowing God, which is the summation of eternal life (John 17:3), and a solid aspect of the New Covenant (Heb 8:11). There is no such thing as a reconciliation to God that leaves the individual unaware of the One who saved him. That awareness is also a critical aspect of spiritual growth - growth in which the individual becomes more and more knowledgeable of, and acquainted with, God Himself.

In the epistles alone, "God" is mentioned seven-hundred times. Emphasizing His ownership of all things, the word "*God's*" occurs nine times. The saints are "*God's elect*" (Rom 8:33; Tit 1:1), "*God's righteousness*" (Rom 10:3), "*God's ministers*" (Rom 13:6), the church is "*God's husbandry*" (1 Cor 3:9), Christ Himself is referred to as "*God's*" (1 Cor 3:23). Our "*body*" and "*spirit*" are "*God's*" (1 Cor 6:20), and the church is referred to as "*God's heritage*" (1 Pet 5:3).

By way of comparison, "*man*" and "*men*" are mentioned a total of fourteen times from Romans through Jude, and "*the world*" eighty-five times, generally with a warning tone.

How is it that with such a stress on "*God*" in the Scriptures (4,081 times in all the Scriptures), so little is said or known of Him within the church of our time? Could it be that the Word by which men live (Lk 4:4) is not viewed as very important? Indeed, men have come to trust in a form of godliness that rejects the power of it (2 Tim 3:5).

I do not know that there are words that can adequately describe the gravity of this situation. It is out of synch with the manner in which Moses and the Prophets spoke and wrote. It clashes with the ministries of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul's writings assign a preeminent place to the God of heaven, and we do well to pay attention to it. The proper consideration of God - "*the Lord God*" - is the circumference of all valid learning.

THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS BLESSED US

^{1:3b} " . . . and *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us. . .* "

Paul is careful to precisely identify the God of whom He speaks. He knows nothing of recognizing the gods of the nations as being valid, or even the same God as the One of whom he speaks. He certainly would not acquaint Him with a god like "Allah," or say that heathen nations worshiped the same God under another name. He will be very specific.

THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Ten times we read that God is "*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This expression is associated with glorifying God (Rom 15:6), blessing God (2 Cor 1:3), God's awareness of what His people say (2 Cor. 11:31), and God blessing us (Eph 1:3). It is used when speaking of God giving His people wisdom and knowledge (Eph 1:17), prayer (Eph 3:14), and thanksgiving (Eph 5:20; Col 1:3), and the new birth (1 Pet 1:3). Jesus Himself referred to God as "*My Father*" forty-seven times, and "*His Father*" three times.

And what does all of this mean? Simply that we cannot think of God apart from Christ, or of Christ apart from God. Jesus Himself set the tone for the consideration of Himself.

1. Those entering the Kingdom of heaven are the ones who *"do"* the will of *"My Father which is in heaven"* (Matt 7:21).
2. Whoever confesses Jesus before men, Jesus states, will be confess by Him *"before My Father which is in heaven"* (Matt 10:32).
3. Likewise, those who deny Jesus before men, Jesus *"will also deny before My Father which is in heaven"* (Matt 10:33).
4. Jesus said all things were delivered to Him *"of My Father"* (Matt 11:27).
5. Whoever *"shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven,"* Jesus said, was related to Him (Matt 12:50).
6. When Peter confessed Jesus, he was told, *"flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"* (Mat 16:17).
7. Significant places in the Kingdom of God are assigned *"for whom it is prepared of My Father"* (Matt 20:23).
8. Jesus will say to His people on the last day, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mat 25:34).
9. Jesus is *"the only Begotten of the Father"* (John 1:14).
10. Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19).
11. The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does (John 5:20).
12. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22).
13. Whoever does not honor the Son, *"honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him"* (John 5:23).
14. Jesus did not seek His own will, but the will of *"the Father which hath sent Me"* (John 5:30).
15. It is the Father Himself who has born witness to Jesus (John 5:37).
16. It is *"God the Father"* who has sealed Jesus, signifying His exclusivity (John 6:27).
17. It is the Father who gives the true Bread from heaven, which is His Son (John 6:32).
18. All that the Father gives to Christ will come to Him (John 6:37).
19. No man can come to Jesus unless it is given to him by the Father to do so (John 6:65).
20. If any man serves Jesus, the Father will honor him (John 12:26).

You see, then, the importance of thinking of Jesus within the content of the Father, and of thinking of the Father within the context of Christ. This is *"the day of salvation"* (2 Cor 6:2) - unlike any other time in the history of the world. All valid doctrine leads men to God through Jesus Christ. Where there is no proper understanding of God, there can be no correct view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, where Jesus is not know, it is impossible for God to be known.

WHO HATH BLESSED US. Now Paul traces blessing to its ultimate Source. To be blessed is to obtain eternal advantage. It is to realize benefits that pertain to life and godliness. In this text it has primarily to do with obtaining the benefits that are realized because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. These are advantages that relate to the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). They have to do with running the race that is set before us (Heb 12:1-2), and standing firm *"in the evil day"* (Eph 6:13). Whatever is required to walk in the Spirit and live by faith are included in the blessings that will be mentioned.

If believers are not careful about this matter, they will begin thinking of the blessing of God only as it relates to life in this world. To be sure, such things are not to be viewed independently of God, who helps and cares for us in this world. However, we must not allow this view to dominate our thinking. First, if we do, we will not be as thankful tomorrow as we are today. Thankfulness for temporal things is essential, but it has a tendency to fade with time. It is best to major on being thankful for the *"spiritual blessings"* that are freely given to us. That will sensitize our spirits so that we will be thankful *"for all things"* (Eph 5:20), and *"in everything"* (1 Thess 5:18). This is one of the chief, if not the primary, aspects of *"the sacrifice of praise"* - *"giving thanks to His name"* (Heb 13:15).

THE APPOINTED DISTRIBUTOR - THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

1:3c " . . . *with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* "

Paul now elaborates on how we are to think of God's blessing. He will raise the bar of thought, so that it is not rolling along the earth. While it is good and necessary to give thanks for benefits experienced *"in the body,"* the perspective before us must not be our stress.

WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. Immediately we are called into the domain of plentitude. Quite frequently men are thankful for the extraordinary. Here we are called to consider what is, in the Kingdom of God, the ordinary. O, we do not view these things as in any way common. These are not things that **can** be beneficial, but things that ARE certainly profitable.

What are *"spiritual blessings?"* Other versions read, *"every spiritual blessing,"* ^{NKJV} *"every blessing of the Spirit,"* ^{BBE} *"all the spiritual blessings,"* ^{NJB} *"blessed is IN all spiritual blessing,"* ^{PNT} *"all manner of spiritual blessings,"* ^{TNT} and *"every spiritual (given by the Holy Spirit) blessing."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

From one vantage point, this is every blessing conferred by, or brought to us by, the Holy Spirit. This includes *"the things that are freely, given to us of God"* (1 Cor 2:12), the *"fruit of the Spirit"* (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9); washing, sanctification, and justification (1 Cor 6:11); obeying the truth (1 Pet 1:22); the shedding of the love God abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5); righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17); all joy and peace in believing, and abounding in hope (Rom 15:13); renewal (Tit 3:5); and spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1-11).

"*Spiritual blessings*" pertain to "*the spiritual man*" (1 Cor 2:15), or the man who is "*led by the Spirit*" (Rom 8:14), and is taught by the Spirit (1 John 5:20,27). It is the person in whose heart into which the Holy Spirit has been sent by God (Gal 4:6), and whose body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). The spiritual man thrives in "*spiritual blessings*." Jesus referred to these things as the "*meat*," or spiritual food, that does not perish (John 6:27).

These "*blessings*" are already in place. They are not things that are made as they are needed, but are appropriated by those who believe they are intended to be possessed.

One of the unique things about the New Covenant is that everything that is required to sustain spiritual life is already in place. Like the grain in Joseph's warehouses, these things are distributed from the place where God has placed them.

IN HEAVENLY PLACES. Other versions read, "*heavenly realms*," ^{NIV} "*in the heavens*," ^{BBE} "*in heaven*," ^{CJB} "*in the heavenlies*," ^{DARBY} "*in heavenly things*," ^{GENEVA} "*in the heavenly realm*," ^{ISV} "*that Christ has brought us from heaven*" ^{CEV} "*the heavenly world*," ^{GNB} and "*the high places*." ^{MESSAGE}

Where are these "*heavenly places*?" This is not a reference to heaven itself, as some versions indicate-i.e. "*in heaven*." Jesus is said to have entered into "*heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*" (Heb 9:24). This cannot be the "*heavenly places*" to which he refers, for then would they not have been "*given to us . . . in Christ*."

This is the realm in which God has placed us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6). It is a domain that parallels the holy place in the Tabernacle in which the priests ministered regularly. "Heaven itself" answers to the "*Most Holy Place*" into which the High Priest alone entered once a year. The Holy Place was the area in which work was done. The Most holy place is where atonement was made.

This is a domain above the earthly domain, but lower than heaven itself. It is a domain adapted to the redeemed in which what God gives may be obtained. It is accessed by faith, and in it we find "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2 Pet 1:3). This is the "*Jerusalem that is above, which is the mother of us all*" (Gal 4:26). This is the place of the Kingdom into which we have been translated (Col 1:13). It is where men "*live by faith*" and "*walk in the Spirit*."

Here is where we have "*fellowship*" with the Father and with the Son (1 John 1:3), and where "*the*

communion of the Holy Spirit" is enjoyed (2 Cor 13:14). This is associated with the Kingdom we have "received" - a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:22-28). From the standpoint of faith, it is where our lives are *"hid with Christ in God"* (Col 3:3).

IN CHRIST. "All spiritual blessings" can only be obtained *"in Christ."* That is, only the person who is *"in Christ"* can obtain them. Those in Christ are said to have been *"baptized into Christ"* - something that occurs when men are baptized in water (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27). From another point of view, God puts us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30). From yet another perspective we are *"joined unto the Lord"* (1 Cor 6:17), and *"added to the Lord"* (Acts 5:14). As will be affirmed in the second chapter, God *"made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (2:6).

In all of this, God is the acting Agent, and Jesus Christ is the reason for the action. What has been accomplished by God in Christ cannot possibly be attained by means of the Law - any law! It is not the result of self=effort, or the exertion of mere will power. From beginning to end it may be said of salvation, *"This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes"* (Psa 118:23).

With the expertise of a spiritual tactician, Paul begins his epistle to the Ephesians by focusing their attention on the true Cause of salvation. He speaks of provisions the world does not have - provisions that cannot be invented by men, or accessed by natural aptitude. Thus he sets the tone for all valid teaching concerning the redemption that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON 4

Eph 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" (Eph 1:4)*

CHOSEN IN HIM

Verses three through twelve are a single sentence in the Authorized Version. This is also true of the NASB. In the NKJV verses three through ten are a single sentence. Whether one wishes to make an issue out of the punctuation or not, it must be acknowledged that there is a single thread of thought from verses three through twelve. The beginning words of verses four through twelve also confirm this to be the case: *"according . . . having predestinated . . . to the praise . . . in whom . . . where He hath . . . having made known . . . that in the . . . in whom also . . . that we should be."* There is a logical flow in the text as truth is opened up like a panorama, providing a large context for the rest of the book. In a day when short sentences, and brief homilies are the fad, such thinking is not being cultured. People are craftily being moved to have brief and unrelated thoughts. Because of this, in the average congregation, understanding, particularly *"spiritual understanding"* (Col 1:9) is nearly impossible to attain. That is precisely why the illogical nature of many formal presentations, whether in speaking or writing, is so evident. To the *"spiritually minded"* (Rom 8:6), things are regularly spouted in the name of Christ that make no sense. They are like the babbling of someone deprived of understanding, and often amaze godly people that anyone has had the courage to speak in such a fashion. The thing to be seen in this passage is that Paul, being a true servant of the Lord, was not content for the people to maintain small peep-hole views of the Kingdom of God, or the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The power of truth is realized in the perception of its inter-relationary nature. Individual inspired statements are like pieces of a puzzle that are being properly assembled. The comprehension of this is absolutely revolutionary in its effects. Sin becomes unreasonable, and holiness becomes reasonable. Satan's encroachments are seen more readily, and a greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit is realized. Those who are realizing these benefits have a robust spiritual appetite, a certain abhorrence of the flesh, and a profound longing to be with the Lord. Who can adequately state the satisfaction, joy, confidence and peace that are so realized?

ACCORDING AS

Eph 1:4a *"According as . . ."* Other versions read, *"just as,"* ^{NKJV} *"for He,"* ^{NIV} *"even as,"* ^{NRSV} *"as He,"* ^{DOUAY} *and "thus He."* ^{NJB}

The word from which *"according to"* is translated is **kaqw.j** [ka-thos] which means, "according as, just as, even as . . . it is annexed to preceding words . . . in proportion as, in the degree . . . agreeably to the fact that," ^{THAYER} "as a

causal because, since, in as much as," FRIBERG "as a causal because, since, in as much as." LOUW-NIDA

This word is used thirty-one times in the Scriptures (Mk 11:6; Lk 1:2; 19:32; John 5:23; 12:50; 15:10; 17:14,16,22; Acts 7:17; 11:29; 15:14; Rom 1:28; 11:8; 1 Cor 1:6,31; 11:1; 13:12; 2 Cor 9:7; Gal 3:6; Eph 1:4; 5:25; Phil 1:7; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Pet 3:16; 1 John 2:6,27; 3:3,7; 3 John 1:2,3). In each of these cases, the words "*according to*" or "*even as*" are an elaboration of the previous statement - an explanation of the factors that caused that described condition to take place.

Here we touch upon the Divine attribute of doing everything for a cause. As it is written, "*and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it* [to Jerusalem (14:22)], *saith the Lord GOD*" (Ezek 14:23).

When God does something, there is a cause for the action - something that gave rise to His working. This is speaking more particularly of an underlying cause, even though there are secondary causes also. For example, consider the flood of Noah's day. The secondary, or immediate cause, was the wickedness of man (Gen 6:5-6). The foundational cause, however, was the fact that God made man for His glory (Isa 43:7). There was also another foundational cause: God is repulsed by iniquity, and therefore will not allow it to go on unrestrained.

Another example of God being moved by a cause is Abraham. From an immediate viewpoint, it was Abraham's faith that moved God to bless Him (Gen 15:6). From a foundational point of view, it was because He had chosen Abraham to be the one through whom the Messiah would come (Gen 12:3). From another foundational point of view, it was because He knew Abraham would faithfully pass along what God had told him to his children (Gen 18:17).

There is a marked tendency in the Christian community to over-simplify God's "*great salvation*." Rarely is it seen in association with a purpose - an "*eternal purpose*." Often God is not seen as purposing to save men for His own glory, even determining to do so before the foundation of the world. Because of the failure of men to see this association, all manner of teachings have arisen that actually contradict the revealed character of God. Some imagine that once a person is accepted by God nothing can be done that will negate that acceptance. Others see God as loving every person alike, having no preferences among men, and considering everyone the same - whether it is Judas and Paul, David and Goliath, or Abraham and Abimelech.

All of this is owing to the failure to understand God as He has revealed Himself. However, Paul, in his writings, will not allow false perceptions of God to continue. He will shatter simplistic views of God with sound doctrine. He will speak of salvation as primarily a work of God, and secondarily a benefit to men. Because the Ephesians were noted for their faith toward God, and their love toward the saints (Eph 1:15), they will be able to digest more of what Paul has been given to see. He will speak to them of matters he did not make known, for example, to the churches of Galatia. The reason for this circumstance was that they had been so diverted from the truth, that they were no longer able to comprehend "*what is the breadth, and*

length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:18-19). That is one of the immediate penalties for embracing a fraudulent Gospel.

In our text, the cause for verse three is being stated: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph 1:3). Why has God so blessed those in Christ with such plentitude? How are we to think of such marvelous provisions? Have they been supplied to us because God *"loves us so much?"*

It is interesting to note that no sinner of Scriptural record was ever told that God loved Him. We should not conclude from this that it is necessarily wrong to do so. However, it seems to me that we are responsible to present the love of God as it is presented in Scripture. So far as Scripture is concerned, those who were told of the love of God were always earnest inquirers (John 3:1,16), Christ's disciples (John 14:21; 16:27), or those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 5:5; 8:39; Tit 3:4; 1 John 3:16; 4:9). Those who were told of the love of God were always reminded that His love is in and through Christ Jesus (John 3:16; 14:21; 16:27; 17:23; Rom 8:39; Eph 2:4-6; Thess 2:16; 1 John 4:10-11; Jude 1:21).

The reason for this circumstance is that the love of God expressed toward men is motivated by another cause. It is not a love that stands on its own, so to speak. Now Paul reasons with the brethren about foundational matters moving the Lord to bless men. He will not leave them thinking that it is what they have done that has so moved the Lord of glory.

CHOSEN IN CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

^{1:4b} " . . . *He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world . . .* "

The statement that follows represents the cause for which God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* It ought to be evident that the Divine motivation for so blessing us has to be rooted in God Himself, and not in us or our response to Him. The situation with which we are faced today is this: most professing Christians in the United States, are unaware of the abundance that has been supplied in Christ Jesus. They also are unaware of the nature the God of salvation. In addition to that, this deficiency has been duplicated throughout the world by means of an erroneous gospel that is being promulgated. For these reasons, the passage before us will clash with many people's view of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. The very words Paul employs will prove to be a stumbling block to the carnal mind.

HE HATH CHOSEN US. Other versions read, *"He chose us,"* ^{NKJV} *"He made election of us,"* ^{BBE} *"He had previously chosen us,"* ^{MRD} *"God chose us to be His very own,"* ^{LIVING} *"He picked us out,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"God had Christ choose us,"* ^{CEV} *"God had already chosen us to be His,"* ^{GNB} *"He elected us,"* ^{LITV} *"He had us in mind, had settled on us,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"He chose us [actually picked us out for Himself as His own]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word translated "*chosen*" means "to pick or choose out for oneself," ^{THAYER} "choose from among a number . . . choose for some purpose," ^{FRIBERG} "select," ^{UBS} and "to make a choice of one or more possible alternatives - 'to choose, to select, to prefer.'" ^{LOUW-NIDA} From the standpoint of language itself, there is no question concerning the meaning of this word. It is a choice that is selective by nature, in which a person or persons are distinguished from all others. In the choice itself, there is an association with a specific purpose - a reason that dictated the choice.

Additionally, this choice preceded our personal choice - i.e. it happened in the past. Whether this fits handily into one's perspectives of God and man, the point of the text is that a previous choice is what determined the fact and action of the Father placing "*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*," where they could be accessed by those who live by faith.

Men often speak of making "Jesus the Lord of their life," or the time when they "received Christ" into their heart," or when they were "baptized for the remission of sins." It is certainly not that there is no reality in any of those statements. However, they are not at the basic causal level. The truth of the matter is that the greatness of the resources that have been **provided** to us can in no way be accounted for by our own response. We must not confuse having access to "*all spiritual blessings*" with the **fact** of their provision.

Your faith will not be caused to increase, and spiritual growth and advancement will not be realized simply because you availed yourself of "*spiritual blessings in heavenly places*." Spiritual growth and productivity, as well as access to these blessings, can be traced to a Divine choice - a choice that was made independently of your own achievement.

IN HIM. That is "*in Christ*" (verse 3). Not only is Christ alone the distributor of these blessings, but their very existence is because of Him. Other versions read, "*in the Messiah He chose us*," ^{CJB} "*through Christ*," ^{GWN} "*through what Christ would do for us*," ^{LIVING} "*Through Him He picked us out*," ^{WILLIAMS} "*God had Christ choose us*," ^{CEV} "*through our union with Christ*" ^{GNB}

The meaning here is that God has never considered Jesus apart from those who belong to Him - His children, or His bride, or those given to Him by God. The salvation of God has always been considered with the Savior **and** the saved in mind. God did not simply provide an opportunity for men to be saved - although that is how it appears on the underside, or earth-side of things. He did not provide "*all spiritual blessings*" in hopes that some men would be saved. The perspective of our text is a higher view that accounts for the precise provisions of a Savior, and everything required to bring men safely to glory. It was a choice - a Divine choice of those who would be given to the Son (John 5:39; 17:7,9,11,24; Heb 2:13)! The ground of that choice was not the decision of the people, but Christ and His merits.

BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. The choice was made before the world was founded - at the same time the Lamb was determined to be slain (Rev 13:8). This means that the ground for the choice cannot be something that those living in the world would do, for the choice was made before the world was founded.

Jesus identified *"before the foundation of the world"* with when He was with the Father in all of His glory (John 17:24) - *"before the world was"* (John 17:5). Peter declares that at that time - before the world was founded - it was determined that the Lamb would be slain. The wisdom with which salvation is associated was *"ordained before the world"* (1 Cor 2:7). The *"purpose and grace"* given to us in Christ Jesus, were provided *"before the world began"* (2 Tim 1:9). The eternal life that has been given to us was *"promised before the world began"* (Tit 1:2).

If we are ever going to grow up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15), or mature to the point where we can accurately discern good and evil (Heb 5:14), we must come to the point where we trace the origin of our salvation to a Divine choice that was made before the world was even created, or the works of men were considered. That is the point Paul is making.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHOICE

1:4c *" . . . that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."*

The purpose of God is now related not only to His choice of those in Christ Jesus, but to what He was to do in them. What we WERE necessitated the provision of salvation. What we ARE confirms that we are or are not saved. This is foundational teaching. It is not approaching the lives of the saints as those who are tempted, need grace, and are caused to stand. Those are certainly valid areas of thought, but that is not what is in the mind of Paul as he write these words. He is aiming at grounding the saints by clarifying why they are in Christ in the first place, and the purpose for which they are there. A grasp of these two realities greatly impacts thinking.

THAT WE SHOULD BE. Again, the word *"that"* means "in order that," or "to this end." This is why God chose us. Other versions read, *"to be,"*^{NIV} *"so that we might be,"*^{BBE} *"for our being,"*^{YLT} *"He decided then to make us,"*^{LIVING} *"He wanted us to be,"*^{IE} and *"for us to be."*^{ABP}

There is no such thing as a salvation that is not initiated by Divine choice and carried out to a determined conclusion. God does not determine the means without also determining the objective. In salvation, if the means are avoided, salvation will not be experienced. If the purpose of salvation is not realized, no one can assume they have participated in it. This is not *"should be"* from the standpoint of Law - i.e. we ought to be , It is rather the determination of what will be produced by the choice that has been declared.

HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME. Other versions read, "holy and blameless,"^{NASB} "holy and without blemish,"^{ASV} "holy and free from all evil,"^{BBE} "holy and without defect,"^{CJB} "holy and unspotted,"^{DOUAY} "holy and perfect,"^{GWN} "holy and faultless,"^{NJB} "saints and without blame,"^{TNT} and "holy (consecrated and set apart for Him) and blameless."^{AMPLIFIED}

The word "holy" means exclusively belonging to God - sanctified, and set apart. The expression "without blame" refers to a state of moral spotlessness and purity. This same circumstance is described in a number of ways in the apostolic writings. Those in Christ are said to be "created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Zacharias said of the salvation of God, "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75). Paul wrote, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Th 4:7). Those who claim identity with God through Christ are admonished, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim 2:19). The grace of God effectively teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). Believers are exhorted, "yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom 6:22). Solemnly we are admonished, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1), The Lord works in His people to make them "increase and abound in love toward one another, To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thess 3:12-13).

An unholy church is a reproach to God, and is set at variance with the Lord Jesus. No person can live in contradiction of the purpose of God and expect to land in heaven with all of the advantages promised to the faithful. It simply is not possible to ignore or contradict the revealed purpose of God, and still remain in His favor. Those who present such a God have lied!

BEFORE HIM IN LOVE. Other versions read, "in His sight, in love,"^{NIV} "before Him,"^{RSV} "in love . . . in His presence,"^{CJB} "before Him through love,"^{TNT} "before Him covered with His love,"^{LIVING} "loving people,"^{CEV} "Because of His love,"^{GNB} and "by His love."^{MESSAGE}

Some versions have the expression "in love" as the beginning of verse five: "In love He predestinated us . . ." ^{ISV} There is an element of truth in this, for the two verses go together in this rather extended thought. The idea is that His love produces these marvelous effects because of His predestinating choice. That is, Paul is identifying the root reason why people are holy, separated unto God and living for Him. From one point of view, it is true that this is an objective, as is taught in the sixth chapter of Romans. However, that is not the perspective of Ephesians. The love of God is like a fountain from which His salvation flows. However it is also the cause of true holiness within those who abide in the love of Jesus (John 15:10).

Jesus referred to the impact of Divine love when He said to His disciples, "If a man love Me, he will keep My

words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with Him" (John 14:23). To the degree that God the Father, together with Jesus the Son, take up residency in the believer, a holy life results.

A purported Divine love that does not produce this holiness is spurious. Here, the love of God is not an abstract, or theoretical idea. When Jesus said the one receiving and keeping His words would be "*loved of My Father*" (John 14:21), He was speaking of an active love that produces real holiness that will stand the test of the day of judgment.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 5

Eph 1:5 *"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will"* (Eph 1:5)

PREDESTINATED UNTO ADOPTION

Having received evidence of the Ephesian's commitment to the Lord and His people, Paul now launches into an inspired commentary of the work of God in Christ Jesus. He knows that spiritual stability and consistency come from comprehending *"with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Eph 3:18-19). Carefully note that Paul does not speak of what God can give the world, how He can save sinners, or what he can do for the suffering world. It is not that such things are unlawful, or ought not to be considered. However, when it comes to being personally acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, "others" are not the ultimate point. To be sure, the crucifixion of the flesh and the mortifying of the deeds of the body will enable a proper interest in others. However, that is not the thrust of apostolic teaching - and here we are dealing with thrust, or emphasis, not novelty. This is an exceedingly difficult matter to address in today's "Christian" culture. So little is being said about what God has and is doing in redemption, that writings such as those of Paul, are considered interesting, but well beyond the reach of the average believer. Getting the people busy with institutional concerns is now considered fundamental. Yet, in this epistle, we will not be given the faintest idea of how that church was doing as a community institution - if, indeed, it was that at all. Paul throws himself into an extensive commentary on what God has done in Christ Jesus, and how it is anchored in eternity - before man was created, before man fell, and before the creation itself. He will not speak of what the Ephesians chose, but what God chose. The purposes of the Ephesians will not be the point of this book, but the purpose of God. At this point, he will not even focus on how men ought to live, but will speak of Divine intentions. Already he has written that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (1:2). He has emphasized that this has been according to a choice God made in Christ before the foundation of the world, and that this was done in order that we might be holy and without blame before Him in love. Now he continues with another lofty consideration.

HAVING PREDESTINATED US

Eph 1:5a *"Having predestinated us. . ."* Other versions read, *"He predestined us,"* ^{NASB} *"He destined us,"* ^{NRSV} *"having foreordained us,"* ^{ASV} *"we were designed before by him,"* ^{BBE} *"He determined in advance,"* ^{CJB} *"having marked us out beforehand,"* ^{DARBY} *"Because of his love he had already decided,"* ^{GWN} *"according as he had previously chosen us,"* ^{MRD} *"God decided in advance,"* ^{NLT} *"His unchanging plan has always been,"* ^{LIVING} *"God planned long ago,"* ^{IE} *"Having predefined us,"* ^{ABP} *"God was kind and decided that Christ would choose us,"* ^{CEV} *"God had already decided,"* ^{GNB} *"Long, long ago he decided,"* ^{MESSAGE} *and "He foreordained us (destined us, planned in love for us)."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word from which "*predestinated*" is translated has the following lexical meaning: "predetermine, decide beforehand . . . to foreordain . . . decreeing from eternity . . . appoint beforehand," ^{THAYER} "decide on beforehand, determine in advance," ^{FRIBERG} "decide from the beginning or beforehand, predestine; set apart from the beginning or beforehand," ^{UBS} and "to come to a decision beforehand - 'to decide beforehand, to determine ahead of time, to decide upon ahead of time.'" ^{LOUW-NIDA} In English the word means, "the act of foreordaining to an earthly lot or eternal destiny by divine decree; also : the state of being so foreordained . . . foredestine, foreordain, predetermine." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

HAVING. This word reflects the meaning of "predestinated" - something that was done before they were "*saints*" (1:1a), before they were "*faithful*" (1:1b), before they were "*blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*" (1:3). This verse is an explanation of what took place before they were "*chosen in Him before the foundation of the world*" (1:4a). It was before the determination was made that they would be "*holy and without blame before Him in love*" (1:4b). Before the world was created, and before mankind was created, here is a Divine determination that was already in place.

This is something about God that must be known if we are to give Him proper glory. When it comes to salvation, He is basically motivated from within Himself, not by what man does, or what He sees men will do. Before God embarks on a work, He first purposes what He will do, and how He will do it. Furthermore, if He is this way, it is the height of folly for men to conduct themselves as though their conduct will move God to act in favorable, yet unplanned ways toward them. If it is countered that God will bless us because we "*walk as dear children*" (Eph 5:1), and "*walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*" (Col 1:10), there is something more to remember. Such a walk moves us to be the kind of people He has previously determined to bless. In matters regarding salvation, God does not do anything He has not planned, or purposed, to do.

God has declared, "*Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand*" (Isa 14:24). Again, He emphasizes the sureness of His purpose: "*For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*" (Isa 14:27). Boldly He announces, "I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa 46:11). And again, "I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it" (Jer 4:28). The particular point here is not the specifics of what God has purposed, but the fact that He does purpose, and act in strict accord with that purpose.

This is particularly true in matters pertaining to salvation and the saved. For example, the sanctified ones have been "*called according to His purpose*" (Rom 8:28). That purpose was determined "*in Himself*" (Eph 1:9). Divine "*purpose*" relates to God working "*all things after the counsel of His own will*" (Eph 1:11). We are speaking of an "*eternal purpose*" (Eph 3:11). Men are both saved and called in strict accord with God's "*purpose*" (2 Tim 1:9).

All of this reveals the absurdity of tailoring religion to the desires of men. The idea of appealing to men's desires, and entering into activity that centers in the resolution of their persona problems may appear wise

and desirable. However, that is not how God works.

PREDESTINATED US. The saved are the ones who were "*predestinated,*" "*foreordained,*" ^{ASV} "*marked out,*" ^{DARBY} and "*chosen.*" ^{MRD} This text does not say God predestinated the means through which we would be saved, but that He predestinated "*us*" - those who are now in Christ (1:4). It is the "*us*" that were predetermined, marked out, and chosen.

That is, we are to know and comprehend that our involvement in salvation was according to Divine determination. To some, this is a fearful thing to consider, and to others it is the epitome of ignorance. But that is only because they are not sure of their standing before the Lord. For those who have the "*full assurance of faith,*" this is a blessed sound, for it places their salvation squarely in the hands of the Lord, and not in their own. In his letter to the Romans Paul candidly states, "*Moreover whom He did predestinate, them he also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified*" (Rom 8:30). He sees no danger in teaching people in such a manner. It is clearly said of God that "*HE did predestinate,*" "*HE also called,*" "*HE also justified,*" and "*HE also glorified.*" Who would object to such a grand announcement - particularly when they have faith in Christ and love for the saints?

PREDESTINATED UNTO ADOPTION

1:5b "*. . . unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. . .*"

Now Paul states the objective of the predestination, or Divine predetermination. This is something that could not possibly happen independently of Divine determination.

UNTO THE ADOPTION. Other versions read, "*to adoption as sons,*" ^{NKJV} "*to be adopted as His sons,*" ^{NIV} "*for adoption as His children,*" ^{NRSV} "*to be His sons,*" ^{RSV} "*for the position of sons,*" ^{BBE} "*to be heirs,*" ^{TNT} "*become His own sons,*" ^{IE} "*make us His own children,*" ^{ERV} "*make us His children,*" ^{GNB} and "*to be adopted (revealed) as His own children.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

Nearly all versions use the word "*adoption,*" or "*adopted.*" The expression "*adoption of children*" is translated from a single word (**ui`oqesi,an**). The meaning of this word is, "*adoption as sons . . . the consummate condition of the sons of God, which will render it evident that they are the sons of God,*" ^{THAYER} "*of the sonship status bestowed on those who believe in Christ,*" ^{FRIBERG} "*to formally and legally declare that someone who is not one's own child is henceforth to be treated and cared for as one's own child, including complete rights of inheritance - 'to adopt, adoption.'*" ^{LOUW-NIDA} and "*adoption (of children), only in a transferred sense.*" ^{GINGRICH}

This word accents two things: first, that we are not the sons of God by nature, and second that sonship, in this case, has particularly to do with obtaining the inheritance. This word is used frequently to describe our identity with God. We have "*received the Spirit of adoption*" - the Spirit being the source of our spiritual life (Rom 8:15). This word is also ascribed to the resurrection body: "*waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Rom 8:23). As compared to the rest of the world, being adopted by God was the peculiar blessing of Israel (Rom 9:4). Redemption is said to have taken place in order that we might "*receive the adoption of sons*" (Gal 4:5).

In all of these cases, the **revelation** of sonship is the point. Adoption is more than a declaration, or something put into writing. The reality of sonship is confirmed by a show of evidence within the adopted ones. The ultimate showing will be at the resurrection of the dead, when our bodies are redeemed (Rom 8:23). This confirms our humanness is not the basis of our adoption, which is why that event is referred to as "*the adoption*" (Rom 8:23). Having access to all spiritual blessings, and experiencing Divine acceptance impacts upon the life of the saved one. It is that evidence that testifies to the reality of sonship.

The adoption must be seen as a legal right to heirship. It is what John referred to when he wrote, "*But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name*" (John 1:12). Other versions read, "*He gave the right.*" ^{NIV}

BY JESUS CHRIST. The technicalities of redemption and adoption are summarized in Jesus Christ. The whole of our adoption, or legal identity with God himself, is realized "*by Jesus Christ.*" Other versions read, "*through Jesus Christ,*" ^{NASB} "*in Jesus the Messiah,*" ^{MRD} "*by sending Jesus Christ to die for us,*" ^{LIVING} and "*that Christ would choose us.*" ^{CEV}

It is to be understood that this is Jesus Christ in His redemptive and intercessory capacities. This is not Jesus the friend, but Jesus the "*Lord and Savior*" (2 Pet 1:11). No person has any saving association with God until his sins are removed in Christ Jesus, and he is experientially reconciled to God. This is not a mere matter of getting control of your life, as it is often represented. It is rather a matter of getting rid of things that separate one from God.

TO HIMSELF. Being reconciled to God is everything - being one with Him, with no enmity or disagreement! The point of salvation is not to resolve fleshly and earthly deficiencies, although, in the process of being reconciled to God, some of these things are resolved. But that is not the purpose of redemption, and Jesus Christ should not be presented as though He is seeking to improve life in this world.

By Jesus Christ we "*are reconciled to God*" (Rom 5:10). We are thus "*alive unto God*" (Rom 6:11), and begin to live "*unto God*" (Rom 6:10). We present our various capacities "*unto God*" (Rom 6:13), and are "*servants to God*" (Rom 6:22). Our fruit is "*unto God*" (Rom 7:4), and our bodies are presented as a "*living sacrifice unto God*" (Rom 12:1). Ultimately, we will give an account of ourselves "*unto God*" (Rom 14:12). When we were converted, we "*turned to God*" (1 Thess 1:9), and we give attention to showing ourselves

"approved unto God" (2 Tim 2:15). The New Covenant enables us to "draw nigh unto God" (Heb 7:19). We "come unto God" by Jesus Christ, who makes intercession for us (Heb 7:25). Our aim is to be "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5).

These things are more than requirements, although they are surely that. These reflect the purpose of God in Christ Jesus. They are the personal evidence of being predestinated unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ - sons "to Himself." The objective for being in Christ is to have access to, and favor with, the Living God. Take Him out of the picture, and there is no purpose for salvation, or life in Jesus Christ.

THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL

1:5c " . . . according to the good pleasure of His will. "

And why did the Lord predestinate us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to Himself? What is the root cause of this gracious choice? At the foundational level, was it because He loved humanity? Was it because, He looked down into the future, and saw what men would do? Paul will not leave us wandering about this. He will speak clearly and distinctly.

ACCORDING TO. Other versions read, "in accordance with,"^{NIV} "in the,"^{BBE} and "to carry out,"^{WILLIAMS} The technical meaning of the word translated "according" is, a preposition denoting motion or diffusion or direction from the higher to the lower . . . down from . . . according to, agreeably to; in reference to agreement or conformity to a standard."^{THAYER} This is the language of cause and effect, The effect is, "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." **The thing that caused that determinate action is what is now stated.** Men have philosophized about the cause of predestination, but here the real reason is presented.

THE GOOD PLEASURE. Other versions read, "the kind intention,"^{NASB} "His pleasure,"^{NIV} "the purpose,"^{RSV} "in keeping with His pleasure,"^{CJB} "His favor,"^{CSB} "as was agreeable to,"^{MRD} "it gave Him pleasure,"^{NLT} "would please God,"^{IE} "the happy choice,"^{WILLIAMS} "and because it pleased Him, and was His kind intent."^{AMPLIFIED}

God predestinated us because it was pleasing to Him to do so - and He is righteous! Later Paul will affirm that God has made known the mystery of His will to His children for the same reason - it was His "good pleasure" (Eph 1:9). He also stated in his letter to the Philippians that God works in His people "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13).

Jesus told His disciples the Father would give them the Kingdom because it was His "good pleasure" to do

so (Lk 12:32). David was so confident in this kind of doing that he prayed, "*Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem*" (Psa 51:18). Jesus taught us to pray like this when He said, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" (Matt 6:10),

Those who question the reality of God's predestination are questioning what it pleases Him to do. No further explanation is required. If the action to which he refers pleased God, and God is holy, just, and true, then what reason is there to question His choice?

OF HIS WILL. And what is it that brings so much pleasure and satisfaction to God Almighty? It is "*His will*" - "*according to the good pleasure of His will.*" Other versions read, "*His purpose,*"^{BBE} "*He freely chose to do this,*"^{GWN} "*This is what He wanted to do,*"^{NLT} and "*it is what He wanted.*"^{IE}

When holy men prayed for believers, they would pray like this: "*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ*" (Heb 13:20-21). It is true that Jesus sometimes asked people what they wanted (Mk 10:36; Matt 20:32) - but it was not often. Far better to be knowledgeable of "*His will,*" and to work and pray within that context (Col 1:9). When God works with us, it is "*to do His will*" (Heb 13:21). When we pray, we know that if we ask "*any thing according to His will, He heareth us*" (1 John 5:14).

In this text we come to the loftiest of all redemptive benefits - to receive the adoption of sons in order to the realization of an "*eternal inheritance*" (Heb 9:15). Does Paul here admonish the Ephesians to do this or that in order that the benefit will be realized. That such admonishments are necessary cannot be denied. Yet, there is a proclamation to be heard first - one that will provide a proper incentive to think and work rightly. It is a proclamation that boldly announces we have received a Divine supply of staggering greatness, and that is has all been provided in light of the fact that we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated to be adopted as sons - rightful heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. All of this has been done because God wanted to do it - and the desire was purposed in Himself.

We need look no further for a reason for God's marvelous grace, or stagger about because it seems too difficult to explain why He "*so loved*" the world, or "*loved me and gave Himself for me.*" It is because He purpose to do so, and wanted to do so. There was an eternal objective that birthed His salvation, initiating it through our calling, and bringing it to fruition in the Son. It was His own glory He was seeking, not merely our betterment. That is what throws the majestic and illuminating light on His great salvation. It is why those who neglect this salvation will not be able to escape the wrath and indignation of God (Rom 2:6). The hostility of such people toward God is seen in the fact that they do not want what He has willed, and do not find pleasure in what pleases Him.

God's will is always "*good,*" and "*acceptable,*" and "*perfect*" (Rom 12:2) - particularly regarding Him predestinating us to the adoption of sons, in order that we might have access to "*all spiritual blessings,*" and

obtain the inheritance provided for His sons.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 6

Eph 1:6 *"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved . . ."*

(Eph 1:6)

HE MADE US ACCEPTED

It is always in order to remind the saints that their salvation is wholly owing to the work of God Himself. He is the One who made all of the key determinations, without which salvation would be beyond the reach of man. No form of human wisdom could have successfully devised a way back to God, or a means of appropriating the expiation of sin. Although this may appear quite clear, our adversary the devil is ever vigilant to hide this from us. He does this by diverting our attention to lesser things. How important some of them appear, having to do with personal success, family concerns, influencing people, etc. When any subject, however lawful it may appear, dominates our attention, we are set adrift on a sea that carries us away from God. This is precisely why the ministry of Jesus Himself, as well as that of the Apostles, did not major on human relationships. When they were mentioned, they were always within the context of our identity with God. Husbands and wives, therefore, are to think of their relationship as a figure of Christ and the church (Eph 5:22-32). Masters and slaves were to consider their positions in view of their association with the Lord (Eph 6:5-9). Children were to view submissiveness to their parents as being obedient to the Lord (Eph 6:1-3). Parents were raise their children with the Lord and His will in mind (Eph 6:4). The burden of every letter written to believers deals with the matter of their identity with God through Jesus Christ. Everything is seen through that lens. No letters are written to an audience because they are businessmen, politicians, or of a particular occupation. No letter is specifically written to husbands, wives, children, or people in a particular earthly class or age group. Words are delivered to such souls, but they are always within the context of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Among the gifts placed in the church, there is not a single one that is for a special group within the body of Christ. Even when Luke wrote to Theophilus, an apparent official of some sort, he wrote of the Gospel of Christ (Luke), and the spread of the Gospel (Acts). It appears that Philemon was a man of means, yet when Paul wrote to him, it was within the context of the body of Christ and mutual ministries within that body. It is apparent from the letter to the Ephesians that Paul is focused on things men do not consider to be practical, or having to do with everyday life. However, that is a wholly erroneous conclusion and must be avoided at all cost. Paul is writing of things that touch upon every facet of life.

THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE

Eph 1:6a *"To the praise of the glory of His grace . . ."*

Paul continues to speak of the saints being "*predestinated unto the adoption of children unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will*" (1:5). This is an elaboration of why He chose us in Christ "*before the foundation of the world*" (1:4). This is not a cold doctrine, nor is it intended to provoke controversy among the saints of God. The information that is here vouchsafed to all believers is intended to assist them in evaluating their own status before the Lord. It is not enough to stand before the Lord only with our sins forgiven! There is a reason why we have been forgiven, justified, and sanctified. If that reason is not realized, either God's purpose will not have been carried out, or those claiming to have their sins forgiven have not told the truth. I do not see how we can escape these conclusions.

TO THE. Other versions read, "*so that we would,*" ^{CJB} "*Unto the,*" ^{DOUAY} "*so that,*" ^{GWN} "*so we,*" ^{NLT} "*Now,*" ^{LIVING} and "*so that we might be.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the language of purpose - of Divine intention. This accounts for the reason God does something - the aim or objective that is intended by His action.

- *"Predestinated **unto the** adoption" (1:5).*
- *"Having predestinated . . . **unto the** praise" of the glory of His grace (1:6).*
- *"Being predestinated . . . **that we should be** to the praise of His glory" (1:12).*
- *"Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise . . . **until the** redemption of the purchased possession **unto the** praise of His glory" (1:14)*
- *"Who created all things by Jesus Christ **to the intent** that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church" (3:10)*
- *"That He would grant you . . . to be strengthened with might by His Spirit . . . **that Christ may dwell** in your hearts" (3:16)*
- *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God **unto a perfect man**" (4:13)*
- *"That which is good for the use of edifying, **that it may** minister grace" (4:20)*
- *"Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed **unto the** day of redemption" (4:30)*
- *"Walk as children of light . . . **proving what is** acceptable unto the Lord" (5:8-10)*
- *"Doing service **as to the** Lord, and not unto man" (6:7)*

This is a perspective that was not readily seen in the Law. Duty was largely perceived as an end of itself, even though there were occasional glimpses of Divine reasoning. However, in Christ a new manner of speaking has been established. Now an eternal perspective is granted, and a consciousness of why God has worked in the revealed manner, and why we are required to do certain things. In this text the focus is on why God has worked as He has - choosing and predestinating, and adopting.

PRAISE OF THE GLORY. *"To the praise of the glory."* Other versions read, *"so that we would bring him praise,"* ^{CJB} *"so that . . . should be praised,"* ^{GWN} *"might be glorified,"* ^{MRD} *"for the praise of the glory,"* ^{NAB} *"Now all praise to God for,"* ^{LIVING} *"Praise God for His glorious,"* ^{IE} *"to the [praise of the splendor,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"so that we would praise this glorious,"* ^{ISV} *"in high praise of the glory,"* ^{ABP} *"so we should praise God,"* ^{CEV} *"this brings praise to God,"* ^{ERV} *"Let us praise God,"* ^{GNB} *"He wanted us to enter into the celebration of,"* ^{MESSAGE} *"[So that we might be] to the praise and the commendation of His glorious."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Many of the versions miss the point of the text. This is not an exhortation to praise, it is a statement of what God intended. The idea is not that He intended us to praise Him, although that will take place once His gracious intention is seen. **Rather, the idea is that the saints themselves became a cause for praise.** They are trophies that exhibit a hitherto relatively veiled trait of the Lord. Heavenly hosts see this trophy as well as insightful men. Salvation, by its very nature, shines the spotlight on the Divine trait that is here extolled.

OF HIS GRACE. Other versions read *"glorious grace."* ^{NIV} The glory, or splendor, is that of God's grace - how it is beheld, shining in pristine brightness in a world that is dominated by the wicked one. It will also be beheld in the ages to come, when He shows *"the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"* (Eph 2:7).

This grace is not perceived by God overlooking the sinful condition of man, but is perceived in their holy and blameless state before Him (1:4). The saints are a changed people with new hearts, eyes that can see, and ears that can hear. Their appetites have been refined, and their preferences changed. They prefer the light, and are preparing themselves to be the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7). It ought to be apparent that an unholy and lethargic church contradicts the revealed purpose of God. Jesus did not die, come back from the dead, and return to heaven in order to have a people that show no evidence of the power of the grace of God.

HE HATH MADE US ACCEPTED

^{6b} *" . . . , wherein He hath made us accepted . . . "*

WHEREIN. Other versions read, *"by which,"* ^{NKJV} *"which,"* ^{NASB} *"that,"* ^{NRSV} *"commensurate with,"* ^{CJB} *"He favored us with,"* ^{CSB} *"in which,"* ^{DOUAY} *and "wherewith,"* ^{GENEVA}

The word *"wherein"* is translated from a Greek word meaning, "of place proper; a. in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space," ^{THAYER} "the primary idea is within, in, withinness, denoting static position or time . . . (1) of place; (a) denoting a position within boundaries in, within." ^{FRIBERG}

The **environment** in which the stated objective is realized is the point of this expression. This is admittedly a technicality, but it must be seen with some degree of clarity. The point here is not that God bestowed grace upon us - although He certainly did do that. Rather, it is what takes place within the environment of grace -

what is accomplished in that domain.

When it comes to the grace of God, men are not prone to think about what is accomplished. There is a marked tendency among professed believers to view grace as Divine favor in spite of what men are by nature, and what they have done.

Grace is described as the environment in which we "*stand*," or are spiritually stable (Rom 5:2; 1 Pet 5:12). It is the well from which spiritual gifts are issued (Rom 12:6). It is what enabled Paul to affirm he had "*labored more abundantly than they all*" (1 Cor 15:10). Grace brings a "*sufficiency*" that cannot be otherwise realized (2 Cor 9:8; 12:9). God has called the saints "*into the grace of Christ Jesus*" in order that they might appropriate the benefits of salvation (Gal 1:6). The "*grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love*" (1 Tim 1:14). **In** the grace of God we are made strong (2 Tim 2:1). There is "*help*" in grace for the "*time of need*" (Heb 4:16). Grace is the environment in which we "grow" (2 Pet 3:18).

Thus "*grace*" is seen as something in which we are located - a place in which marvelous supplies and enablements are realized. It is not an area in which God pretends that we are something that we really are not.

HE HATH MADE US. Other versions read, "*which He freely bestowed on us,*"^{NASB} "*has freely given us,*"^{NIV} "*avored us with,*"^{CSB} "*he has taken us in to His favor,*"^{DARBY} "*He had made us freely accepted,*"^{GENEVA} "*poured out on us,*"^{NLT} "*gracious love that He gave us,*"^{IE} and "*He has enriched us.*"^{WEYMOUTH}

The words "*made us*" are the first part of a single Greek word [*evcari,twsen*] which means "to make graceful I. e. charming, lovely, agreeable."^{THAYER} The idea is that God has caused us to be something. The trait that is now mentioned has been caused to be identified with us. This is the language of creation - the "*new creation*" (2 Cor 5:17). It is the result of Divine "*workmanship*" (Eph 2:10), or "*the operation of God*" (Col 2:12).

This is not speaking of something we have received, as some versions suggest. It rather speaks of what we have become by the grace of God. While it is true that we have received grace - even "*grace for grace*" (John 1:16), that is not the point of this text. It is rather what grace has made of us - the work it has accomplished in us. That work does not contradict who we are, but rather has made us what we are in Christ Jesus.

ACCEPTED. Once again, the point of the text is not what we have received, but rather what we have become - "*accepted.*" Other versions read, "*avored us,*"^{CSB} "*taken us into His favor,*"^{DARBY} "*has blessed us,*"^{ESV} "*made us freely accepted,*"^{GENEVA} and "*favor which He has shown us.*"^{WILLIAMS}

God could not receive us in Adam, or according to our natural condition. Not even His matchless grace could induce such an acceptance. Further, the bestowment of grace upon us is certainly something that takes place in Christ. However, before grace could bless us with "*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*" (Eph 1:3), we had to be changed - created anew. This could only take place within the circumference of Divine favor and preference. God could not ignore our fallen state. That is why before we were in Christ Jesus we are referred to as God's "*enemies*" (Rom 5:10), "*alienated*" from His life (Eph 4:18), "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph 2:1-1), and "*having no hope and without God in the world*" (Eph 2:12). In that condition, God's nature would not allow Him to "*accept*" us, for that would necessitate Him acquitting the guilty - and that is something God cannot do, not by any means (Ex 34:7; Nah 1:3).

Grace is an environment in which men are made acceptable to God. As they stand in that grace, they are pleasing to God, and He is attracted to them, to do them good. All of this assumes a distinction among men - they are not all viewed alike. Some are favored, and some are not. Some are accepted, and some are not. The difference between men can be traced to where they are located, and where they are standing. If it is in the grace of God, that grace is said to be "*wherein He hath made us accepted.*" The grace of God, then, is not a cold and lifeless doctrine, designed to give assurance to the spiritually lethargic and immature. It speaks of the means by which we are transformed and caused to become the apple of God's eye.

IN THE BELOVED

^{1:4c} "**... in the Beloved.**" Other versions read, "*In the One He loves,*" ^{NIV} "*in the loved One,*" ^{BBE} "*in the Beloved One,*" ^{CJB} "*in His Beloved Son,*" ^{DOUAY} "*His dear Son,*" ^{GWN} "*Christ . . . God loves Him,*" ^{IE} "*by the One being loved,*" ^{ABP} "*He gave us to His dear Son,*" ^{GNB} and "*the One having been loved.*" ^{LITV}

IN THE. Notice what a point Paul makes of Christ in the first verses of Ephesians: "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ . . . the faithful in Christ Jesus . . . Grace be to you, and faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ . . . He [God] hath chosen us in Him [Jesus] . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ . . . He hath made us accepted in the Beloved . . . He might gather together in one all things in Christ . . . in whom [Jesus] we have obtained an inheritance . . . who first trusted in Christ . . . in whom [Christ] ye trusted . . . in whom [Jesus] also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed*

with that Holy Spirit of promise" (1:2-13) - and that is only the first part of the opening chapter.

Who does not know that many of these things are being addressed in the modern church without any particular regard for Jesus Christ? The fact that this unfortunate circumstance exists is proof of the aggressiveness of the devil, and the indolence of men. Men have, in fact, largely ignored what God has said about Jesus - "*the record God has given of His Son*" (1 John 5:10-11). There is no other explanation for the neglect and ignorance of the Lord's Christ!

In this text we have an explanation for why God has accepted us, or received us. He has "*made us accepted*" - but not by a Divine fiat or pronouncement. Our acceptance is owing to an accomplishment - something that only God could do. It is only within the context of that love that any acceptance of man is possible.

BELOVED. "*The beloved*" is Christ Jesus. There is a special construction in this Greek expression that should be noted [evn tw/ hvgapme,nw]. The literal translation of the expression is, "*in the One having been loved.*" ^{INTERLINEAR} **That is, before any love for man can be affirmed, the love must first be seen as being toward the Son: "having been loved."**

Twice God affirmed Jesus was His "*beloved Son*" - first at His baptism (Matt 3:17), and second at His transfiguration (Matt 17:5). The word "*beloved,*" as used in these texts, means "esteemed, dear, favorite, worthy of love," ^{THAYER} and "of one not only greatly loved but also unique, the only one of a class only beloved, one dear." ^{FRIBERG} God's love for Jesus is unique. The only way it can be accessed by anyone else is for them to be "*in Christ.*" Outside of Christ, there is no way this love can be realized - and without this love, there can be no Divine acceptance of the individual.

The fact that God loves the Son is affirmed again and again. "*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand*" (John 3:35). "*For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel*" (John 5:20). Jesus prayed that His followers would be "*made perfect in one that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them* [the ones "made perfect in one"], *as Thou hast loved Me*" (John 17:23).

It is evident that God's love of a person is contingent upon their acceptance and love of His Son. Jesus told His disciples, "*For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God*" (John 16:27). In this case, being loved by God is synonymous with being accepted by Him.

Again, Jesus affirmed to His disciples that loving Him was the necessary prelude to God loving them. "*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him*" (John 14:21). Again He said, "*If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him*" (John 14:23). The Lord Jesus declares that God's love for us is strictly owing to our relation to Jesus Christ - in the case of these two pronouncements, that includes having His commandments and retaining them, which is the evidence that the individual really does love Jesus, The love of Jesus includes a preference for Him, and a refusal to forsake His Word. Upon the basis of that love - a love confirmed by having and keeping the commandments of Jesus - the Father Himself will love us, Jesus will love us, and make Himself known to us. Further, based upon that manifested love for Jesus, He and the Father will take up residence in us.

THAT IS A VIVID PICTURE OF DIVINE ACCEPTANCE! It is all based upon our love for Jesus - a love that is confirmed by our reaction to His Word. In the words of our text, that is how God made "*made us*

accepted." That is why He bids us to draw near to Him. It is why He has given to us "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2 Pet 1:3).

In our text, Paul has removed "*the flesh*" as any kind of motivation for Divine acceptance or blessing. The entirety of salvation in all of its varied aspects hinges on Jesus, and Jesus alone.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 7

Eph 1:7 *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace . . . "*
(Eph 1:7)

IN WHOM WE HAVE

Paul is in the middle of an elaborate explanation of how the saved have come to participate in God's great salvation. He is tracing this participation to its ultimate Source, and is doing so with characteristic carefulness and precision. Shining the intellectual spotlight on Jesus, he refers to the believers as *"the faithful in Christ Jesus"* (1:1). He bestows grace and peace on them *"from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (1:2). He affirms that God is *"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1:3), and declares He has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (1:3). All of this has been in strict accord with His choice of us *"in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love"* (1:4). This choice, in turn, was the outcome of the fact that He *"predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself,"* which was *"according to the good pleasure of His will"* (1:4). All of this was not merely in order to our experience of salvation, but was in order to *"the praise of the glory of His grace,"* which was the environment in which God Himself *"made us accepted in the Beloved"* One (1:6).

To this point, then, the involvements of our salvation include faithfulness that comes about *"in Christ Jesus."* The grace and peace that is required to initiate and bring salvation to culmination came from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though God is our Father, He is primarily *"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Our enjoyment of salvation is strictly owing to us being chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. That choice was in order that we might be holy and without blame before Him in love. That determination was in keeping with God's own predestination of us to be His children in Christ Jesus, which was in order that we might be observable trophies of His grace - an aspect of the Divine character that was little known before Christ Jesus. Grace is so potent and so effective, that it has made us acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. If believers are going to be effectively admonished to grow up into Christ, they must come to have a working knowledge of these revealed realities. The rigors of spiritual life require that this be so.

WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD

Eph 1:7a ***"In whom we have redemption through his blood . . ."***

The absolute centrality of Christ continues to be emphasized in this verse. Perhaps a word on the meaning the word "centrality," as I am using it, is in order." Something that is central is not merely something in the center of things. That which is central gives proper meaning to everything gathered around it. The central person or subject is expounded by what is around it. To put it another way, what surrounds the central thing is intended to make it more clear. While there is a sense in which Christ sheds light on all that is around Him, it is more proper to see **Him** as the Object of clarity and understanding. Eternal life is not knowing about redemption, but knowing the God who redeemed, and the Christ through Whom He has done it. In our text, we are being exposed to an exposition of the God of salvation. In this exposition God and Christ are being expatiated by providing the details of salvation. A salvation that does not eventually produce insight into the Person and purpose of God, as unfolded in the person of Christ, is no salvation at all.

WE HAVE. Other versions read, *"we gain."* ^{NJB} The word *"have,"* as used in this text, means, "1) to have, i.e. to hold 1a) to have (hold) in the hand, in the sense of wearing, to have (hold) possession of the mind, to hold fast keep, to have or comprise or involve, to regard or consider or hold as 2) to have i.e. own, possess." ^{THAYER} This is not a declaration of what we should have, but what we **do** have in Christ - *"in whom we have."* This is not what we can have in Christ, but what is actually possessed. However, as with all Kingdom benefits, if it is not known, the advantages of it cannot be consciously realized. Also, this is not philosophical talk that paints for us an ideal situation, but it is one that is actually experienced.

THE CONCEPT OF REDEMPTION. We are introduced to the concept of redemption in Moses and the Prophets. God Himself was frequently referred to as "Redeemer" (Job 19:25; Psa 19:14; Isa 41:14; 48:17; Jer 50:34). As the time drew near for Jesus to be born, it was announced that God, in Christ, had "visited and redeemed His people" (Lk 1:68). At that time there were also people in Jerusalem who *"looked for redemption"* (Lk 2:38). Paul wrote of *"the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Rom 3:24). He boldly announced that Jesus has been *"made unto us . . . redemption"* (1 Cor 1:30). Paul wrote that Jesus "gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity" (Tit 2:14). The Gospel announces that Jesus has *"obtained eternal redemption for us"* (Heb 9:12), and that we have been *"redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Pet 1:18). It is written that Christ has *":redeemed us to God"* by His blood (Rev 5:9). Thus we are declared to have been redeemed FROM something TO God. Redemption, then, frees us from servitude to sin, domination by the devil, and living with a defiled conscience.

Redemption required a payment of some sort. Thus when an unacceptable sacrificial animal was a firstborn, even though it could not be offered to God, yet it belonged to Him, and the person keeping it had to redeem it (Ex 34:10). While the payment made is important, what it accomplished is the most important thing. In Christ Jesus, *"redemption"* denotes our recovery from sin and reconciliation to God, It speaks of a liberty that cannot be overthrown by the devil. The outcomes of redemption are justification, and even the legal purchase of the body and its guaranteed resurrection (Rom 8:23). We have been *"redeemed from the curse of the Law"* (Gal 3:13), and *"from all iniquity"* (Tit 2:14). We have even been redeemed from a vain manner of life, as depicted in living under the Law (1 Pet 1:18).

THE POSSESSION OF REDEMPTION. It is stated that we *"have redemption."* This has particular regard

to the effects of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Those in Christ actually have the freedom that was purchased in the redemption. They are free from the dominion of sin, the tyranny of a goading conscience, and all that entails servitude to sin. Of course, if this is not known to the disciple of Jesus, Satan can more easily bludgeon them with a guilty conscience, and lure them into sin. Temptation becomes stronger when the person in Christ is less knowledgeable of what has actually taken place in salvation.

THE MEANS OF REDEMPTION. The freedom is only as effective as the individual sees the strength of the redemption price that was paid. The most important effect is found in God's view of Jesus' vicarious death. If He is satisfied with the price that Jesus paid, then all of the benefits associated with that redemption accrue to the believer. These benefits are announced in the Gospel, and expounded in the *"apostles doctrine."* If this announcement and exposition are not given, the benefits will not be grasped by faith, for faith *"comes by hearing"* (Rom 10:17).

The price paid for this redemption was blood, not money - *"the blood of Christ"*-i.e. through His blood" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12; Rev 5:9). That is, sin was actually punished in the Person of Christ, on the cross. The Divine edict was, *"the soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezek 18:4,20). Because sin involved indebtedness to God, the whole of the human account was transferred to Christ, and He became responsible for the payment of the whole. When Jesus *"became a curse for us"* (Gal 3:13), having been *"made sin for us"* (2 Cor 5:21), the debt was paid, and men were redeemed. A life of spiritual triumph requires believing this to be true.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

1:7b " . . . **the forgiveness of sins** . . ." Other versions read, *"the forgiveness of our trespasses,"*^{NASB} *"the forgiveness of sins,"*^{NIV} *"our sins are forgiven,"*^{CJB} *"the forgiveness of offences,"*^{DARBY} *"the remission of sins,"*^{DOUAY} *"God forgives our failures,"*^{GWN} *"the forgiveness of transgressions,"*^{NAB} *"forgave our sins,"*^{NLT} *"remission of the trespasses,"*^{YLT} *"took away all our sins,"*^{LIVING} *"We have the forgiveness of sins!"*^{IE} *"the forgiveness of our offenses,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"forgiveness of our shortcomings,"*^{WILLIAMS} *"the release of transgressions,"*^{ABP} *"the remission of deviations,"*^{LITV} *"free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds,"*^{MESSAGE} and *"the remission (forgiveness) of our offenses (shortcomings and trespasses)."*^{AMPLIFIED}

"SINS." Right here we are exposed to a teaching that has been virtually hidden by the contemporary emphasis of much preaching and teaching. Even the word *"sin"* has become relatively rare in church circles. The gravity of the word itself (sin) has been lost in the morass of a worldly emphasis. Just pondering the various ways this word is represented confirms how serious sin is: *"trespasses," "offences," "failures," "transgressions," "shortcomings," "deviations,"* and *"misdeeds."* The fact that the Greek expression is difficult to contain in a single word is itself proof of the magnitude of sin.

The word from which *"sins"* is translated is not the word ordinarily used for sin (hamartia - (Matt 1:21; John 1:29; Acts 2:38; 3:19; Rom 3:20; 6:2; 8:2; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:5; Eph 2:1, etc). That word means "to miss the mark, be mistaken, to miss or wander from the path of righteousness."^{THAYER} Paul does use this word in a parallel statement made in Colossians 1:14: *"we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."*

Here, however, a different word is used which means "offense, or trespass." This has to do with the violation of what God has said, which more defines what it means to miss the mark. The word "sin" presents the matter from our viewpoint - we missed the mark, failed to measure up to Divine requirements, or devoted ourselves to vanity. "Offenses," "transgressions," or "trespasses" have to do with **the nature of sin** itself. It offends God, transgresses His Law and will, and is of itself illegal before God. The meaning of the word used here is "a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness."^{THAYER} "Sin" deals with the end of the matter - it misses the mark. Trespasses deals with the nature of the deed itself.

These days sinners are not often told how their lives are viewed by God. Jesus declared that there were those upon whom the wrath of God "abides" (John 3:36), who are "condemned already" (John 3:18). This means that unbelief, a failure to trust, and not acting upon a word God has given, is a sin of the greatest magnitude. Those who are not in Christ Jesus are described as "children of disobedience" and "children of wrath" (Eph 2:2-3). **Until sin is seen for what it really is, "forgiveness" cannot be seen for what it is!**

FORGIVENESS. Other versions use the words "remission,"^{DOUAY} "took away,"^{LIVING} "release,"^{ABP} and "free from."^{MESSAGE} The word "forgiveness" is an exceedingly large word. Its lexical meaning is, "freedom, pardon, deliverance, liberty, remission;"^{STRONG'S} "1) release from bondage or imprisonment 2) forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty."^{THAYER}

This is judicial act of God through which the record of sin is removed from the account of a person, and the debt for the transgression is righteously borne by Another. Our sins were not merely forgotten, overlooked, or erased from the record. They were actually, by Divine imputation, transferred to Someone else. They were of such a nature that we could not be acquitted of guilt by God loving us, and therefore refusing to look at what we had done. Those sins, all of them, were "laid upon" the Lamb of God, God's only begotten Son, and the full penalty was exacted from Him (Isa 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24).

Jesus "took" away the sins of the world - i.e. He removed them from the sight and consideration of God Himself. The words "took away" pertain primarily to God's view, and secondarily to our view. The word "forgiveness" has primarily to do with our view of the matter. Thus Jesus announced to the impotent man, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Lk 5:20). It is also written, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom 4:7).

As used here, the forgiveness of sins is a total view, not a detailed one. That does not mean there is no need to confess sin in order to forgiveness. It rather means that we are free from the dominating influence of sin. Further, this language is addressed to faith, and is not intended to cause confusion for the people of God. There is an ongoing forgiveness that results from living in the power of this reality. It is stated in this manner, "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" (1 John 1:7). This is the view of which our text speaks. It is not to be taken as meaning that when we sin we are automatically forgiven. In other words, Paul is affirming a reality that will, if believed and heartily embraced, enable the individual to "reign in life by One, Jesus

Christ" (Rom 5:17). At some point believers must learn to think like this.

ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE

1:7c " . . . *according to the riches of His grace.*"

We will now see why Paul has written so precisely. Grace is perceived in the context of forgiveness, not within the framework of continuing in sin. Paul writes in such a manner as to encourage sound thinking, giving the advantage to faith, not to human reasoning.

ACCORDING TO. Other versions read, "*in accordance with,*"^{NIV} "*through the,*"^{BBE} "*this accords with,*"^{CJB} "*because of,*"^{GWN} "*such is the,*"^{NJB} and "*because.*"^{CEV}

In the expression that follows Paul is accounting for us having redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of our sins. Why did we receive such a glorious benefit? What prompted it? Some might say it was our obedience. Others might trace the cause to our faith. Still others would say it was because we were baptized. Maybe it was because we called upon the name of the Lord, or repented of our sins, or were humble and contrite before God. Those things are surely involved in experiencing the forgiveness of sins. However, they are not the root of the matter. All of them are secondary because they were produced by something greater - and faith must hear of the greater thing. Paul will not anchor the faith to the people in what they have done. He will commend them for their faith in God and love for the saints. But when it comes to grounding and stabilizing them, he will rise higher, for faith and hope must be in God Himself (1 Pet 1:21).

THE RICHES. Now Paul traces redemption and the forgiveness of sins to their ultimate cause - "*the riches.*" Other versions read, "*the wealth,*"^{BBE} "*overflowing,*"^{GWN} "*richness,*"^{NJB} "*abundant,*"^{WEYMOUTH} "*generosity,*"^{WILLIAMS} and "*the riches and the generosity.*"^{AMPLIFIED}

Once men form an adequate perception of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, they will want to know of the rich fountain from which it has flowed - or overflowed. Let us thrust from us simplistic expressions of Divine causes, for they bring no glory to God. Furthermore, let no one think this is too profound to seek to understand, perceive, or comprehend it. What God has revealed is intended to be comprehended. It is not to be left in the cauldron of mystery.

OF HIS GRACE. Here is the vast reservoir that contains all of the richness required for God to redeem men from sin and to Himself. Where is the plenitude found? Everything that is required to experience the forgiveness of sins can be found in this domain - "***HIS GRACE.***"

The expression "*His grace*" is found eight times in Scripture. There is "*the word of His grace*," or a testimony of it (Acts 14:3; 20:32). We are "*justified freely by His grace*" (Rom 3:24). Paul traced his prodigious labors to "*His grace*" (1 Cor 15:10). Paul said he was called "*by His grace*" (Gal 1:16). We have redemption "*by His grace*" (Eph 1:7). In the "*ages to come*" God will show "*the exceeding riches of His grace*" (Eph 2:7). We are "*justified by His grace*" (Tit 3:7).

Grace has to do with God's favor, preference, esteem, and approval. It has to do with what pleases Him and is acceptable in His sight. It is linked with kindness, His great love, and His tender mercy. God's grace is not feeling sorry for someone, but being attracted to them. It moves Him to do what He prefers to do: blessing, enabling, and caring for. Grace works within the saved what God desires to find in them. This includes believing through grace (Acts 18:27), and receiving "*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*" (2 Thess 2:16). It was "*by the grace of God*" that Jesus tasted "*death for every man*" (Heb 2:9).

The grace of God has to do with what we receive, NOT what we do not receive. A proper usage refers to what we are, not what we were. It has to do with what we receive, not what we do not receive. That is, we do not say, "By the grace of God I am not going to hell," but "By the grace of God I am going to dwell forever with the Lord. It would be better to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am," rather than saying "By the grace of God I am not what I was." We should prefer saying, "By the grace of God I am His son," rather than "By the grace of God I am no longer a child of disobedience. The "*gift of God*" - what we receive - is "*by grace*," not what we do not receive (Rom 5:15). Grace teaches us (Tit 2:11-12), enables us to stand (1 Pet 5:12), and was "*exceeding abundant with faith and love*" (1 Tim 1:14). The grace of God is even the source of the spiritual gifts that are dispensed to saints through their measure of faith (Rom 12:3; 1 Pet 4:10).

It is by Jesus Christ that we have "*access by faith into this grace*" (Rom 5:1) - the environment where the spiritual resources are found. From one point of view, these resources are "*in heavenly places*" (Eph 1:3). However, it is God's grace that has placed them there. This has been done because Jesus has thoroughly pleased God by laying down His life and taking it up again. The good pleasure God has in the Son has sufficiently dissipated the wrath that was once directed toward those who have now received the Son.

If believers are to experience the kind of confidence and assurance that enables them to fight the good fight of faith, running the race that has been set before them, they will have to hear of the grace of God and embrace it. An uninterrupted diet of "ought to" and "supposed to be" will never accomplish what one valid and welcomed thought of the grace of God will do. The commandments of God are most precious to those who know the grace of God in truth.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 8

Eph 1:8 *"Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence . . . "* (Eph 1:8)

GOD HAS ABOUNDED TOWARD US

Edification involves a certain building process. The saints themselves are the building project, and the objective is for them to be a suitable dwelling for Deity. If anyone but the Lord had undertaken such a process, it would have been utterly hopeless. Edification is not an end of itself. As essential as it is to know the deep things of God, and comprehend the magnitude of God's great salvation and the love of Christ, those are not the end, or objective, but are the Divinely appointed means to a determined end. Your experience in Christ will attest to the truth of this. When your understanding is in the state of expansion, and new vistas of truth are regularly being ministered to you, your spiritual appetite will still be stretching forward in an earnest effort to apprehend that for which you have been apprehended. Even fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3), is not the ultimate purpose of God. This by no means suggests that we are to consider such things unimportant, or that we should strive to gain the objective without the appointed means to that objective. The church is being *"buildded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"* (Eph 2:22). John saw the fulfillment of this purpose in his vision of the glorified church: *"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God"* (Rev 21:3). Jesus came to get the work underway. He described that initial work in this manner: *"If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto Him, and make Our abode with him"* (John 14:23). The building of the church-aggregate commences in this world by each individual *"living stone"* being made a suitable dwelling place for God. Now it is *"through the Spirit."* The limitation is our mortality, for the living God cannot be joined to mortality.

In this first chapter of Ephesians Paul is using spiritual expertise to show how we are being individually built up so we can, in fact, fit together. The aim, however, is not simply to fit us together, but to be fitted together for a habitation of God - that He might dwell and work in the saved throughout the ages to come. No person can afford to remain ignorant of this purpose.

WHEREIN - THE ENVIRONMENT OF GRACE

Eph 1:8a **"Wherein . . ."** Other versions read, "which He,"^{NKJV} "which He"^{NASB} "that He,"^{NIV} "whereby He,"^{GENEVA} "in which,"^{RWB} and "God gave us that grace."^{ERV}

The word "wherein" is translated from a single Greek word - **h`j** (hos). That is, this is not a word that is supplied for easy reading, a filler to make the sentence more understandable. There is a Greek word for, what is here translated, "wherein." From the language point of view, the word is a "demonstrative pronoun." That is, **this sentence is intended to elaborate on the grace of God, showing what has been done through it.** We have been forgiven in accordance with the grace of God (1:7), but that is not the only thing grace has done. The grace of God is a rich reservoir of Divine supply. It does not represent a mere Divine attitude toward us. All too often, grace is seen as a Divine posture toward fallen man that views him as something entirely different than what he really is - i.e. he is actually a vile and wayward sinner, but God views him as though that was not the case at all. Whether it has been specifically taught in such a way or not, that is the impression that is entertained by the nominal Christian.

GRACE IS AN ENVIRONMENT. Grace is an environment in which the work of God is accomplished within us. If grace has been shown for "*a little space*," then a little or short work was done (Ezra 9:8). An abundant work, on the other hand, would require an abundant supply of grace - and the salvation God is a great work: "*so great salvation*" (Heb 2:3).

The Objective. Salvation is an aggressive and extensive work. Its aim is not merely to cover the past. Its objective is stated to be the conformation of the predestinated ones to "*the image of His Son*" (Rom 8:19). Considering what He had to start with, this is a most arresting consideration! Viewed from another point of view, the aim is for the aggregate church to be presented to Christ "*a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*" (Eph 5:27) - again, a most aggressive objective! Divine ability is set forth as being able to keep us "*from falling*" and present us "*faultless before His presence with exceeding glory*" (Jude 1:24).

In the book of Ephesians, the objective is presented in a most thorough manner. First, while the church is upon the earth, certain intentions are being fulfilled. They include every member of the body being matured so that Christ can minister through that member to the rest of the body (Eph 4:12-16). In this work the body will be united in both faith (Eph 4:12), and in the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:1).

From an even higher perspective, it is to "*gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth*" (Eph 1:10).

Now, let us be clear about this. Any church program that does not blend perfectly with these revealed objectives cannot possibly be from God. Such cannot be valid endeavors, and ought not to be supported by the saints. It is not in order for some well-meaning person to rise and compile a list of such programs so that

all will be aware of them. Rather, it is the responsibility of each member of the body of Christ to strive to be able to *"discern both good and evil"* in such matters. Those who feed and nourish the flock of God are to apprise them of what God is doing, and so instruct them that they will be able to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). In all of this, there can be no assumption, presumption, theorizing, or philosophizing. That necessitates sobriety, the singularity of devotion to the Lord, a strong faith, the rejoicing of the hope, and being steadfast and unmoveable.

Now, the point of this text is that the grace of God is the environment in which all of this is accomplished. In fact, it cannot be realized in any other environment. If there is a minimization of God's grace, then there is a corresponding reduction in the work of God. Further, it must be *"the true grace of God wherein ye stand"* (1 Pet 5:12). An erroneous view of the grace of God, or an ignorance of it, will not sustain the soul or enable growing up into Christ in all things.

CONTINUE IN THE GRACE. With these things in mind, the exhortation of Paul and Barnabas to some inquiring Jews and religious proselytes makes perfect sense: *"continue in the grace of God"* (Acts 13:43). Because God's grace places the emphasis upon His favor, this continuing in the grace of God can be stated another way, *"Be ye therefore followers of God, as DEAR children"* (Eph 5:1). The same kind of emphasis is found in the words of Jesus to His disciples, *"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall ABIDE IN MY LOVE; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love"* (John 15:10). Another way of saying the same thing is, *"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Col 1:10).

At all cost, we must remain within the perimeter of the grace of God, for all of the intended accomplishments can only take place there. Let it be clear that grace is not given to obstinate sinners, the rebellious, and the carnal - even though men have been influenced to think as though He does. The grace of God always comes through the channel of faith (Eph 2:8), and faith will not allow a person to live outside the circumference of the grace of God. Such an action is always preceded by a departure from the faith (1 Tim 4:1).

GOD HAS ABOUNDED TOWARD US

1:8b " . . . **He hath abounded toward us . . .**" Other versions read, *"He made to abound toward us,"* ^{NKJV} *"He lavished upon us,"* ^{NASB} *"He made to abound toward us,"* ^{ASV} *"He gave us in full measure,"* ^{BBE} *"He has caused to abound toward us,"* ^{DARBY} *"hath superabounded in us,"* ^{DOUAY} *"He poured out his kindness,"* ^{GWN} *"He hath showered on us,"* ^{NJB} *"He shed on us abundantly,"* ^{TNT} *"showered down upon us the richness of His grace,"* ^{LIVING} *"gave us that grace fully and freely,"* ^{ERV} *"He gave to us in such large measure,"* ^{GNB} *"He thought of everything, provided for everything,"* ^{MESSAGE} *and "lavished upon us."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

HE HATH ABOUNDED. Salvation is by no means characterized by sparsity or meagerness. There is no rationing of the provisions of grace - no law against gathering what it has supplied. If one only considered the professing church, there is no way that one would conclude that salvation is noted for an abundance of what grace brings. Ponder the number of references to the abundant nature of salvation:

- Life "more *abundantly*" (John 10:10)
- "Poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45)
- "Riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (Rom 2:4)
- "Receiving an "*abundance* of grace" (Rom 5:17)
- "Grace did *much more abound*," Rom 5:20)
- "How shall He not with Him also *freely give us all things?* (Rom 8:32)
- "Riches of His glory" (Rom 9:23; Eph 3:16)
- "Riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom 11:33)
- "For *all things* are yours" (1 Cor 3:21)
- "Possessing *all things*" (2 Cor 6:10)
- "Riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7)
- "Riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18)
- "Rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4)
- "Exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph 2:7)
- "Unsearchable *riches* of Christ" (Eph 3:8)
- "Him that is able to do *exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph 3:20)
- "His *riches* in glory" (Phil 4:19)
- "All *riches* of the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2)
- "The *treasures* of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3)
- "Ye are *complete* in Him" (Col 2:10)
- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you *richly*" (Col 3:16)
- "God, who giveth us *richly all things* to enjoy" (1 Tim 6:17)
- "That the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished* unto *all* good works." (2 Tim 3:17)
- "The Holy Spirit, which He shed on us *abundantly*" (Tit 3:6)
- "Wherein God, willing *more abundantly* to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: (Heb 6:17)
- "Rich in faith" (James 2:5).

There is an approach to salvation, in both its initiatory and ongoing aspects, that manages to hide the abundance that is realized in Christ Jesus. That is chiefly found in attempting to serve God by Law, adopting a strictly philosophical view of redemption, or being caught in the snare of institutionalism, which gravitates to the traditions of men, formulated into a law.

TOWARD US. Other versions read *"upon us,"* ^{NASB} *"on us,"* ^{NIV} *"in us."* ^{ABP} The following versions read *"toward"* or *"towards"* us: KJV, NKJV, ASV, ERV, PNT, RWB, WEB, YLT, and EMTV. The word translated *"towards"* has the following lexical meaning: "into, unto, to, towards, for, among," ^{STRONG'S} "a preposition governing the accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction and limit: into, to, toward," ^{THAYER} "denoting motion toward a place, after verbs of going, sending, moving to, toward, into." ^{FRIBERG} **The point is not where this abundance is found, but where it is directed.** The possession of these benefits is realized by faith. They are not automatically deposited in every professing Christian. Even when they are actually received, the measure to which they are experienced is strictly governed by faith, for we both *"live"* and *"walk"* by faith (Rom 1:17; 2 Cor 5:7).

It seems to me that the point here is that any restriction of the abundance of grace is not owing to any reluctance on the part of God. He has *"abounded toward us."* That, of course, assumes that we are in Christ (1 Cor 1:30), abiding in Christ (John 15:4), abiding in His love (John 15:10), and striving to know Him (Phil 3:10). It assumes we are walking by faith (2 Cor 5:7), and in the strait and narrow way (Matt 7:13-14), and are increasing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:18).

The word "us" assumes that all of that is taking place. More specifically, it is founded on the fact of us being *"chosen in Him before the foundation of the world."* It presumes we have been *"predestinated unto the adoption of sons according to the good pleasure of His will,"* and have been *"made accepted in the Beloved,"* now possessing redemption and forgiveness (Eph 1:4-7).

GOD HAS ABOUNDED TOWARD US IN ALL WISDOM AND PRUDENCE

1:8c *"... in all wisdom and prudence"* Other versions read, *"with all wisdom understanding,"* ^{NIV} *"in all His wisdom and insight,"*

^{CJB} *"in all wisdom and intelligence,"* ^{DARBY} *"all wisdom and understanding,"* ^{GENEVA} *"every kind of wisdom and insight,"* ^{GWN} *"He understands us and knows what is best for us at all times,"* ^{LIVING} *"the possessor of all wisdom and understanding,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"along with all wisdom and understanding,"* ^{ISV} *"Through perfect wisdom and spiritual insight,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"in every kind of wisdom and understanding (practical insight and prudence)."* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need."*
MESSAGE

At this point, the reader must decide if salvation is driven by the needs of humanity, or the purpose of God - and there is a vast difference between the two. It seems to me that Paul has gone to great lengths to point us in the right direction. He has spoken of *"spiritual blessings"* (1:3), being *"chosen"* in Christ (1:3), and being *"holy and without blame before Him in love"* (1:4). There is the matter of being *"predestinated unto the adoption of sons"* (1:5s), and the driving factor of *"the good pleasure of His will"* (1:5b). In the end, the saved are intended to be trophies and exhibits of the grace of God (1:6). In summary, we now have *"redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (1:7).

It ought to be obvious that, in the salvation of God, placing the stress on the personal and self-perceived needs of men is a contradiction of everything that has been said to this point. Yet, men continue to present Christ from this perspective, as the great Problem-solver of what men think they need the most - whether it is something personal, domestic, and some other facet of life in this world. According to this text, this is a total misrepresentation of the Lord's Christ.

Second, we must determine if the "*wisdom and prudence*" of reference is something we receive, or if it characterizes the manner in which God has saved us. Some versions represent us as having received "*all wisdom and prudence*."^{LIVING/ISV/GWN/AMPLIFIED/MESSAGE} That the saved can be "*Filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Col 1:9), cannot be denied. However, it is not experienced at the point we have "*the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins*" (1:7). There are two sides to the initial experience of salvation. First is a fundamental moral and spiritual change - being born again. Second that which is born of God is invested with the Divine nature, as seen in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The expansion of our wisdom and understanding is something for which the apostle prayed (Eph 1:15-18; Col 1:9). While Christ is clearly identified with the believer (John 1:12), the indwelling Christ is said to accompany maturity (Eph 3:16-17). To put it another way, Christ is to be "*formed*" in the believer, and that is accomplished in the experience of spiritual growth (Gal 4:19).

This by no means suggests that we are not in Christ, or that Christ is not in us from the beginning. However, it is in an initial sense, and that beginning is not intended to be perpetual. It does introduce us to a certain conforming process which is required for us to be forever with the Lord.

The point of this text is that God has abounded toward us, intending that Divine plenitude find residence in us. He has done this in a wise and prudent way. This wisdom and prudence was required because of the technical nature of salvation. The human condition could not be glossed as though it was something hard for men to do, but was more likely to happen if God helped the remedy along. So to speak. Here are a few matters that required Divine wisdom and prudence.

- The character of God could not be compromised or ignored in the salvation of men. He could not save men pretending as though He did not hate sin, or that sin did not affect Him. God had gone on record that He hates pretentious religion (Isa 61:8; Amos 5:21; Zech 8:17). He clearly stated that some things men did were an "*abomination*" to Him (Jer 44:4; Lk 16:16). Something had to be done with sin so that He no longer saw it.

- God is fundamentally righteous, which is a trait that rises higher than men dare to imagine. It had to be right to save men. God had to be righteous in making men righteous.

- There was a heavenly gallery observing the redemptive working of the Lord. They had seen the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden, the flood, the dispersion at Babel, and the destruction of

Sodom and Gomorrah. Whatever it took to save men must not call those actions into question.

- A way must be made for men to obtain the Divine nature, for God cannot dwell with those unlike Himself. This transaction must be meticulously righteous beyond all question.
- Sin had to be judged, totally and once for all. There had to be a way to gather it all sin into one mass, as it were, lay it upon One like unto men, and the judgment of sin be accomplished.
- A righteous way of neutralizing the power of the devil now, and finally removing him from among the elect altogether, had to be realized.
- Salvation had to enable men to live in a fallen world, while in a corrupt body, and in the presence of moral wickedness, all the while working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Indeed, the wisdom and prudence required by such things is found in every aspect of salvation, and that in abundant measures.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 10

Ephesians 1:9

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL MADE KNOWN

Unlike human purposes and determinations, the work of God, particularly as it regards the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim 2:10), is known within the greater context of the knowledge of God Himself. In fact, if God is not known, it is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to understand His salvation, why it is structured the way it is, and why He requires certain involvements of those desiring to partake of that salvation. It is most unfortunate that this is not generally known, and it is not apt to be known if one insists on exposing themselves to the kind of preaching and teaching that prevails in our time. It is true that at the beginning of new creatureship there is a minimal amount of understanding concerning the nature and will of God. During that beginning stage we are simply to do what we are told, without doubting or questioning. This is confirmed by the conversions recorded in the book of Acts. The direction of earnest inquiries was relatively simplistic: "*Repent and be baptized*" (Acts 2:38); "*Why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized, washing away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16); "*If thou believest thou mayest*" [be baptized] (Acts 8:37); "*And he commanded them to be baptized*" (Acts 10:48); "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). However, growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15), growing "*in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet 3:18), "*perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord*" (2 Cor 7:1), and being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29) will require some precise knowledge of God and His ways. A common error of our times is thinking that conformity to Christ takes place by responding to Divine requirements. It is not ordinarily associated with knowledge (Eph 1:17), comprehending (Eph 3:18), and understanding (Col 1:9). One of the primary ministries of Jesus to His people is giving us an "*understanding, that we might know Him that is true*" (1 John 5:20). What Paul is doing in this passage is bringing to the people a more thorough acquaintance with God Himself, and how His Person is revealed in the totality of our salvation. Once believers begin to comprehend what Paul is here teaching, they will obtain an understanding that will guarantee their growth in Christ, their successful navigation through this world, and their safe arrival in glory. This objective accounts for his fervent teaching.

HAVING MADE KNOWN UNTO US

Eph 1:9a "*Having made known unto us . . .*"

God has conducted Himself in strict keeping with His own character and purpose. In the development, revelation of, and carrying out of His great salvation, He has never conducted Himself out of character or departed from who He is. Put more simply, when God provided coats of skin for Adam and Eve, it was a perfect expression of His nature. When He promised a coming Seed who would crush the serpents head, He

was being Himself. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, God acted in strict accord with His character. The same may be said of His cursing of Cain, the sending of the flood, the dispersion at Babel, the calling of, and promises to Abraham, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God acted in precise accord with His unchanging character. Grace, for instance, does not mean that God departs from His fundamental character. Grace is the expression of His character, and His final wrath poured out upon the ungodly is also. The cutting off of some of Israel, the grafting in of some of the Gentiles, and the merging of the two in Christ Jesus are all expressions of the Divine nature.

HAVING. Other versions read, "He has," ^{NRSV} "making," ^{ASV} "that He might," ^{DOUAY} "When He," ^{GWN} "He did this," ^{NET} "God has," ^{NLT} "when," ^{WEYMOUTH} "God did," ^{GNB} "letting us in on." ^{MESSAGE}

This is an elaboration of the expression, "*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence*" (1:8). That is, the means through which God abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence took place when the subject of this verse was "*made known*" to us.

To put it another way, the magnitude of His great salvation was discerned when what follows was made known to us. This is something that occurred in the past. To put it more precisely; it began taking place in the past. A certain unfolding of Himself began to take place when we heard and embraced the Gospel of His grace. That message, coupled with our faith opened the fountain of spiritual understanding.

MADE KNOWN. There are at least two ways a person can view the Gospel of Christ, God's power unto salvation (Rom 1:16). It can be seen as a message that informs of what is required for us to come out from under the domination of sin. There certainly is a sense in which this is true. However, this kind of knowledge is not sufficient to enable a person to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. There is something that must be "*known*" - for anything that God makes known must be apprehended by the ones to whom it is being made known.

Something that God makes known can be known in no other way. Such things can not be discovered by human searching. Purported scholarship cannot muse upon the truth and arrive at a knowledge of something that only God can make known. For example, the Jews had the facts concerning the Messiah recorded in their Scriptures. They also were confronted with the Messiah Himself, who went about among them, doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. Yet, when the chiefest among them was confronted with the living Christ, they knew Him not. Thus it is written, "*Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*" (1 Cor 2:8). These "princes" included high priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, governors, emperors, key Jews, and key Gentiles. They proceeded in their diabolical deed because of what they did NOT know - even though they had been confronted with the Evidence.

This is the first of five references in Ephesians that speak of God having made something known (1:9; 3:3.5; 6:19,21). The matter that was made known did not pertain to things unique to this world. God did not major

on revealing matters pertaining to the governments of the world, unless it touched upon His own purpose.

UNTO US. Every version states clearly that the thing made known was to "us." To whom, does this refer? The word "us" is used seventeen times in the epistle to the Ephesians. God has "*blessed us*" (1:3), "*chosen us*" (1:4), "*predestinated us*" (1:5), "*made us accepted*" (1:6), "*abounded toward us*" (1:7), and now "*made known unto us*" (1:9). He will also affirm that God's power is "*to us-ward*" (1:19), that God "*loved us*" (2:4), "*quicken**ed us*" (2:5), "*raised us*" (2:6), will show "*the exceeding riches of His kindness toward us*" (2:7), removed "*the middle wall of partition between us*" [Jews and Gentiles] (2:14), His might power works "*in us*" (3:20), "*every one of us is given grace*" (4:7), and "*Christ also hath loved us*" (6:2).

Can there be any question about the identity of "us?" This is referring to those who are "*in Christ.*" who are the "*household of God,*" the "*brethren*" of Jesus, and "*the sons of God.*" What has been revealed, is for "*the whole family*" of God (Eph 3:15). If, as with Paul, it is something revealed to him, it was made known for the whole house. None of the redeemed are excluded in the dispensing of what God has made known. No leader within the body of Christ who fails to make these things known is bringing honor to God, or doing the work that has been assigned to him. Knowing what has been made known by God is part and parcel of knowing God Himself, for He is chiefly made known in the revelation of what He has purposed to do. When we know such things, we will be able to evaluate whether or not we are accepted by Him.

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

^{1:9b} ". . . *the mystery of His will . . .*" Other versions read, "*secret of His purpose,*" ^{BBE} *His secret plan,*" ^{CJB} "*mystery of His plan,*" ^{GWN} "*mystery of His pleasure,*" ^{MRD} "*secret of His will,*" ^{NET} "*mystery of His purpose,*" ^{NJB} "*His mysterious plan,*" ^{NLT} "*His secret reason for sending Christ,*" ^{LIVING} "*the secret of what He wanted,*" ^{IE} "*the secret purpose of His will,*" ^{MONTGOMERY} "*His own mysterious ways,*" ^{CEV} and "*the mystery (secret) of His will (of His plan, of His purpose).*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

"THE MYSTERY." There are a number of references to "*the mystery.*"

1. Paul referred to the preaching "*of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery*" (Rom 16:26).
2. Later in Ephesians, Paul will declare that "*the mystery*" was made known to him "*by revelation*" (Eph 3:3).
3. He also affirms that he had personal "*knowledge in the mystery of Christ*" (Eph 3:4).
4. He also states that he wrote in order "*make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery,*" or to see what it is, and be a part of it (Eph 3:9).
5. He will ask the Ephesians to pray for Him, that he might open his mouth "*boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel*" (Eph 6:19).
6. He also asked the Colossian brethren to pray for the same thing (Col 4:3).
7. He declared to the Colossians that "*the mystery*" had been "*hid from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to His saints*" (Col 1:26).

8. Paul also affirms that when the saints are *"knit together,"* it is in order to *"all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of **the mystery** of God, and of the Father, and of Christ"* (Col 2:2).
9. A time was revealed to John in which *"the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets"* (Rev 10:7).

As used in the above text, *"the mystery"* refers to something that has been hidden from previous ages and generations, but is now revealed through Jesus Christ. It is not a mystery that can be unraveled by reading through the prophets, and deciphering the words of Jesus. It is something that has to be made known by God to men. In this case, it was revealed to Paul, who, in turn, made it known to the household of God. **The exposition of this mystery is what makes Paul's writings unique.** Having received this marvelous revelation, Paul, whom Jesus considered *"faithful"* (1 Tim 1:12), dispensed what he had been given to see, doing so zealously and faithfully.

"OF HIS WILL." Jesus spoke of *"the mysteries of the Kingdom"* (Mk 4:11). Elsewhere Paul wrote of *"the mystery of Christ"* (Eph 3:4; Col 4:3), the *"mystery of the Gospel"* (Eph 6:19), the *"mystery of God the Father and of Christ"* (Col 2:2), *"the mystery of the faith"* (1 Tim 3:9), and the *"mystery of godliness"* (1 Tim 3:16). **That means there are things about "the Kingdom," "Christ," the "Gospel," "God the Father and Christ," "the faith," and "godliness" that cannot be discovered by research or study.** This is why men can study earnestly for years, yet missing key aspects of the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus. God has so arranged the Kingdom that those who are novices cannot see the deeper things. They are hidden from the casual and disinterested. Flesh raises an impenetrable wall between the individual and the *"mysteries"* mentioned above. Jesus thanked God that it is this way: *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"* (Matt 11:25). Luke says that at that time Jesus **rejoiced**: *"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight"* (Luke 10:21).

The *"mystery"* under consideration has particularly to do with God's will: *"the mystery of His will."* This is the *"will"* that determines what the Lord does (Eph 1:11). **What is it that God wills, or desires, to do?** That is a subject over which the Christian world is divided. Some say His basic will is to give people what they want. Others, that it is the conversion of souls. Still others see His will as His people walking in an orderly manner. Some think it is to help the poor. Others that it is to see solid families developed.

This is God's will at the foundational level. His desire that we be a holy people is based upon *"the mystery of His will."* The conversion of souls, assisting needy, and having godly families are all founded upon this deeper aspect of God's will. This is the purpose that drives salvation itself. The promises are founded upon it. Spiritual gifts flow from this as well.

This will is what Paul is going to open up in the letter to the Ephesians. Already he has touched upon some of the facets of this marvelous will. It involved blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. It is what compelled Him to chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinate us to be sons, and make us accepted in the Beloved. There is a lofty purpose that has driven all of this, and that is what has not been revealed, or made known.

ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL

^{1:9c} ". . . , *according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself*. . ." When we talk about the will of God, it is important that we know what moves God to want to do something. Here it is spelled out for us.

ACCORDING TO. What follows is the source out of which God's "will" comes to light. It has to do with what pleases Him, and what He purposes to do. When it comes to what God does, especially in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is what He wants to do, which perfectly accords with what pleases Him, what He has purposed in Himself, and who He is. God will not act in contradiction of these things: His will, His good pleasure, and what He has purposed in Himself.

HIS GOOD PLEASURE. Other versions read, "*kind intention*,"^{NASB} "*according to His purpose*,"^{RSV} "*in agreement with the design*,"^{BEBE} "*In accord with His favor*,"^{NAB} and "*merciful intention*."^{AMPLIFIED} The words "*good pleasure*" are translated from a single word that means, "in particular, good-will, kindly intent, benevolence . . . delight, pleasure, satisfaction."^{THAYER}

God's intentions are not to damn people - although some will be damned (Mk 16:6; 2 Thess 2:12). In the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, God is revealing His grace. He is not basically revealing His wrath, although that is involved (Rom 1:17). When it comes to what was done to Jesus, God's wrath was made known. Having laid on Him the iniquities of us all (Isa 53:6), His own sword was awakened against Christ, His "*Shepherd*" and His "*Fellow*" (Zech 13:7). Indeed, in the flesh of Jesus God "*condemned sin in the flesh*" (Rom 8:3), making Him "*to be sin for us*" (2 Cor 5:21), then making Him a curse because of it (Gal 3:13).

But let it be clear, from the viewpoint of our text, the driving objective of God was not to smite Jesus, curse Him, and awaken His sword against Him. That was a means to an end, but was not the end itself.

What are the implications of this truth? It is that our primary purpose for embracing Christ is not to escape condemnation, although that is involved, for we have "*fled to Him for refuge*" - but it was not to escape condemnation, but to "*lay hold upon the hope set before us*" (Heb 6:18). There is a "*wrath to come*," to be sure, and we aim to flee from it by coming to Christ (Lk 3:7). However, that is not all that is coming. There is coming a time when the saints will be like their Savior (1 John 3:2). There is coming a time when the saints "*will take the Kingdom*" (Dan 7:18,22,25). There is coming a time when an abundant "*entrance*" shall be ministered to those in Jesus (2 Pet 1:11). There is also coming a time when the saints will receive praise from God (1 Cor 4:5), and "*inherit the Kingdom*" prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34). The time is coming when the saints will judge the world, judge angels, and inherit the earth (1 Cor 6:2-3; Matt 5:5). All of these are aspects of the expression of God's "*good pleasure*." He takes great delight in conferring these benefits upon those who believe the record He has given of His Son.

The need for knowing these things is seen in the fact that lower motives will not sustain the soul. There is a view running about among believers that sees God as well pleased because they manage not to be immoral or harmful. This is driven by a Law mentality. On the surface, it appears to be wholly right, but it actually obscures the good things God has determined for His people. You will not find one person so motivated that rejoices in the Person of God, or finds great delight in obtaining the *"spiritual blessings"* that are hidden in the heavenly places. Such people rarely, if ever speak of the Father praising them, or reigning with Christ, or being made acceptable in the Beloved. They do not know much about God's *"good pleasure."* This is because God has purposefully hidden these things from those who do not rejoice in Christ Jesus.

PURPOSED IN HIMSELF. Other versions read, *"purposed in Christ,"* ^{NIV} *"set forth in Christ,"* ^{NRSV} *"the design which He had in mind, to put into His hands,"* ^{B&E} *"that He planned in Him,"* ^{CSB} and *"He had before determined in himself to accomplish."* ^{MRD}

The intent of the verse does not appear to be the means by which God would carry out His purpose - *"in Christ"* - but the fact that He determined this plan Himself. First He determined what He would accomplish, then the means through which it would be accomplished. Therefore, when Jesus thanked God for hiding these things from the wise and prudent, but revealing them to babes, He added, *"for so it seemed good in Thy sight"* (Matt 11:26).

Thus the objective, according to God's purpose, is said to be the conformation of the [predestinated ones (Rom 8:28-29). The purpose of God is also said to stand *"according to election"* - what it pleased the Lord to do (Rom 9:11). Even our *"calling"* *"was not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"* (2 Tim 1:9). As soon as men become self-centered and self-serving, they are outside of God's will, and at variance with His purpose. However, when they seek to prove and know *"what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"* (Rom 12:2), they are standing in the center of God's will, and will surely be blessed by Him.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 10

Eph1:10 *"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 . . ."* (Eph 1:10)

THE DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES

If we could properly classify things, which would be most important - what we ought to do, or what God has purposed to do? A large percentage, if not the majority, of "Christian" emphasis is being place on the former. If you were to remove from the landscape of Christendom everything related to what men ought to do, or what men can be in the earth, you would not have very much left! However, here are some things that would remain: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and holy angels. We would still have the Gospel, the promises, fellowship with Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. There would still be reconciliation, atonement, justification, cleansing, faith, hope, and love. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge would remain, with the Scriptures, the body of Christ, together with everlasting consolation and good hope. The names of the elect would still be written in heaven, the new and living way would still be open, and the New Covenant would still be in place. We would still have the blood of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the grace of Christ. There would still be the cross of Christ, the riches of Christ, and the doctrine of Christ. Circumstance cannot remove a one of these things, and faith can appropriate them all, whether it is the popular thing to do or not.

Sound doctrine revolves around these realities - things that cannot change or be removed. The awareness and persuasion of these things builds faith and stabilizes the soul. The knowledge of these things awakens faith and hope, causes sin to appear unreasonable, and holiness to make perfect sense. There are no legitimate concerns that these do not address.

Paul's strategy, if I may call it that, is to shine the brightest light on the Ephesians, and to do it at the first of his letter. Their commitment to faith and love fitted them for such an approach. He will tell the people what God is intending to do in Christ Jesus. That will shed light on everything else. Further, because the purpose of God is not variable it contributes to spiritual solidity, firmness of character, and resoluteness to fight the good fight of faith.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES

Eph 1:10a *"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . ."*

This is the language of purpose - Divine objective. The greatness and extensiveness of God's salvation, the lengthy preparation for its implementation, and the intricate involvements of God with man, declare that something more is involved than giving man a fresh start. While care must be taken not to minimize conversion, it must not be stressed to the point that the purpose of it all is obscured. Salvation is not a sanctified way of focusing on mankind. It remains fundamentally true, there is *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph 4:6). Paul is developing this superiority doctrinally.

THAT. Other versions read, *"with a view to,"*^{NASB} *"to be,"*^{NIV} *"as a,"*^{NRSV} *"unto,"*^{ASV} *"for the,"*^{DARBY} *"toward the,"*^{NLT} *"in regard to,"*^{YLT} *"and this was His purpose,"*^{LIVING} *"to usher in,"*^{ISV} *"God's goal,"*^{ERV} and *"He planned for."*^{AMPLIFIED}

This is WHY God *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings"* (1:3). It is His reason for choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world (1:4). It is why He predestinated us unto adoption (1:5). It is the reason why we were *"made accepted in the Beloved"* (1:6). It is why we *"have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (1:7). It is the cause that moved Him to *"abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence"* (1:8). It is why He has made known *"the mystery of His will"* (1:9). **If this point is missed, there is no true or lasting meaning to everything that has been said thus far.** If any part of what has been said is considered outside the context of this verse, it shall have been considered wrongly.

THE DISPENSATION. Other versions read, *"an administration suitable,"*^{NASB} *"put into effect,"*^{NIV} *"plan,"*^{NRSV} *"the ordering,"*^{BBE} *"His purpose,"*^{LIVING} *"the government,"*^{WEYMOUTH} and *"finish His plan."*^{ERV}

The word *"dispensation"* means "the management of . . . oversight, administration. . . the office of administrator . . . a manager or overseer."^{THAYER} **The idea is that of God Himself managing and bringing to fruition what He has purposed.** It is not that God purposed something, and man brings it to pass. Man's participation has nothing to do with managing the process itself. Men are not causing the purpose of God to be fulfilled, as some allege. God is not waiting for men to do something before He does what He has determined. What men do relates to **preparatory** work, not finalization.

This means that Divine provision (all spiritual blessings) is not the point, but leads to it. It means that choosing us in Christ was not the objective, but was a necessary prelude to it. Being predestinated to adoption was not an end of itself, but was required to fulfill God's purpose. Being made accepted in the Beloved is not the conclusion, but leads to the conclusion. Redemption and forgiveness are not the end, but a means to the end. God's aim is not merely to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. That is rather what paves the way for Him to do what He has intended. Making known the mystery does not conclude the work, but rather prepares the way for the work to be concluded.

Speaking practically, this means that "the great commission" is not the real objective. It means that winning souls, as vital as it is, is not the primary work. It means that having a successful church in this world is not the ultimate aim, nor is personal satisfaction, growth, and stability the conclusion of the matter. All of that is

preparatory for the fulfillment of an eternal purpose that was kept secret from the foundation of the world.

THE FULNESS OF TIMES. Other versions read, *"when the times will have reached their fulfillment."*^{NIV} *"fulness of time,"*^{NRSV} *"when they [times] are complete,"*^{BBE} *"when the time is ripe,"*^{CJB} *"when the times had run their course,"*^{NJB} *"at the right time,"*^{NLT} *"the time were full come,"*^{TNT} *"the climax of the ages."*^{AMPLIFIED}

This speaks of arriving at a previously appointed time - as when the Son was sent forth and was born of a woman *"in the fulness of the time"* (Gal 4:4). It is the kind of fulness that took place when Israel came out of Egypt *"the selfsame day"* (Ex 12:51). Elsewhere this is referred to as an *"appointed"* time (Gen 18:14; Ex 9:5; Job 14:14; Hag 2:3). Just as surely as there was a time appointed for Jesus to enter the world, and a specific day on which the day of Pentecost was *"fully come"* (Acts 2:1), there is a time appointed when God's grand objective will be completed. All of the preparatory work shall have been completed. The bride will have made herself ready. The church will have been duly prepared for a habitation of God. The harvest of both the righteous and the wicked will be reaped. There will be no further need for the world. Time will come to a grinding halt, death will be swallowed up in victory, and all enemies will be vanquished. Satan shall have been publically brought down in shame and disgrace. The words of all of the prophets since the world began will have been fulfilled (Acts 3:21). What follows will then be accomplished, bringing God's glorious purpose to absolute and precise fulfillment.

THAT HE MIGHT GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE

1:10b *" . . . He might gather together in one all things in Christ . . ."*

How would one state the purpose of God - -the ultimate and grand purpose? For most, it is an assignment that is too challenging. However, the Lord revealed to Paul the way it could be stated succinctly. As a general rule, the summation of a purpose is only possible when the various parts of it are perceived. Paul has shown Kingdom competence in both areas: the comprehension of the parts, and the summation of the whole. Mature Kingdom thought is revealed in an ability to speak in this manner. It is not wise to say we know so much about a matter that we are not able to summarize it, That inability confirms the matter is not known as fully as it can be.

GATHER TOGETHER INTO ONE. Other versions read, *"summing up of all things,"*^{NASB} *"Bring all things . . . together,"*^{NIV} *"to gather up all things,"*^{NRSV} *"might come to a head,"*^{BBE} *"bring everything together,"*^{CSB} *"re-establish all things,"*^{DOUAY} *"unite all things,"*^{ESV} *"all things might again be made new,"*^{MRD} *"collect in one all things,"*^{WEB} *"bring into one the whole,"*^{YLT} *"restoring the whole creation,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *and "to unify all things and head them up and consummate them."*^{AMPLIFIED}

If we were to obscure this statement, most professing believers would never be able to conclude it. It appears to the unlearned to have no real relevance for men today. It is too vague for unbelief to decipher it.

The truth of the matter is that men have learned to live with division - particularly within the professed church. Even though the word has been given by the King, "that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10), and that divisions are an indication of carnality (1 Cor 3:3), yet such things are generally tolerated without the slightest twinge of conscience.

The impropriety of division is seen in the revealed objective of God - "*to gather together in one . . .*" That means that the "*all things*" of reference are intended to blend together. They are made to fit together. Where the "*unity of the Spirit*" (Eph 4:3) and "*the unity of the faith*" (Eph 4:13) are not being realized, flesh has successfully penetrated the church.

Let it be clear that everything mentioned thus far is in order to the realization of this purpose (see Table at the right). These are not cold and lifeless doctrines or theological positions to be argued and debated. This is rather what salvation is all about. Why the church exists. It is why there is grace, and it is why commandments are given.

These points are of such a grand nature that many have made them their emphasis, imagining that if any or all of these things are experienced, that is the end of the matter. But this is not true! If the stated objective is not realized, none of the things that have been mentioned will have been of any importance.

ALL THINGS GATHERED IN CHRIST. There is only one place all legitimate things can be gathered! I say "legitimate" because there are some things that cannot be united in Christ:-i.e. wheat/tares, Spirit/flesh, faith/unbelief, good/evil, the righteous/the unrighteous, truth/lie, etc. The only things that can be united are those that have the approval of God, and have been wrought in Him.

Whatever cannot find place and expression in Christ cannot be included in the "*all things*" that are united in Him. Everything that is truly sanctified in Him, and accepted and approved of God, will ultimately be united in the fulness of time, and in the same place. Even now, it is said of those in Christ Jesus, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal 3:27-28). There is an example of what actually takes place when we are "*baptized into Christ.*" Yet, that is not the unity of which our text speaks, for it is not obvious. God will be glorified when the oneness He intends is unveiled, and the truth of the matter is made known. Then, there will be no question, no contradictions, no doubt about what the Lord has done. Now is the time when we must become acclimated to this kind of unity. Surface unity will not hold up in that day. Unity that focuses on humanity and human causes will not be included. Only those things that can be successfully brought together in Christ Jesus will be included. Technically speaking, while the earth remains, it is not yet the time when all things are to be gathered together in Christ. As long as there are tares and wheat, wheat and chaff, those who live by faith and those who do not, the fulness of time has not yet come. But, it will!

THINGS IN HEAVEN AND THINGS ON EARTH

1:10c " . . . *both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him . . .* "

We should not expect small results from the great investment of God and of His Christ. Neither, indeed, is it in order for us to limit our thinking to this world and those who remain in it. Now the Spirit will expand our thought, calling upon us to stretch forward to the time when God's purpose - what He has willed and desired - is brought to fruition. A most precise unity will be achieved that can scarcely be imagined.

THINGS WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN. There are a number of things and personalities that are said to be in heaven. These will be included in the unity being described.

These are all things that we perceive by faith, and of which we presently enjoy the firstfruits. However, God's purpose is greater than what we presently possess, just as Canaan was larger than what Israel had when they defeated Jericho.

The "*mark*" toward which we are pressing (Phil 3:14) is not on the earth - it is in heaven! That is where the race will conclude and the crowns be given. There will come a time when we will "*see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God*" (Lk 13:26). There will not only be some who will be "*cast out*" when they behold these saints, but those who will be joined to them as well. We will be consciously and perceptibly joined together with the holy angels who ministered to us (Heb 1:13-14), and the great cloud of witnesses who beheld us running the race with patience.

THINGS WHICH ARE ON EARTH. There will also be things on earth that are joined together. There will be those who were alive and remained until the coming of the Lord (1 Thess 4:15,17). Bodies will be raised from the grave, and will put on immortality as death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:53-54). Nature and the impersonal creation will also be liberated from the bondage of corruption and be united with the glorified sons of God (Rom 8:21). They groaned with us while we traversed the earth, and they will rejoice and sing with us in the glory (Rom 8:22-23).

EVEN IN HIM. Other versions read, "*under one Head, even, Christ,*" ^{NIV} "*under the Messiah's Headship,*" ^{CJB} "*Then Christ would be Head of everything,*" ^{GWN} "*to be with Him in Christ, forever,*" ^{LIVING} "*should be unified through Christ,*" ^{WILLIAMS} and "*unify all things and head them up and consummate them in Christ.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

Actually, Christ is presently the "*Head over all things*" - but it is particularly for the church, to whom He has been given in the capacity of Head over all (Eph 1:22). For this reason it often appears as though Jesus is not really over all. The church is persecuted, Stephen is martyred, false prophets arise and deceive many, death appears to be the conqueror, etc. Yet, opposing powers are held in check, unable to thwart the purpose of God which is to bring the sons home to glory (Heb 2:10). However, wherever there is anything or anyone that comes against the purpose of God, it will be cast down for the sake of the elect. If Jesus did not presently have "*all power in heaven and earth*" (Matt 28:20), this would not be possible. He is fully "*able even to subdue all things to Himself*" (Phil 3:21).

However, our text is not speaking of subduing inimical forces, but of a harmonious working together of things in heaven and things formerly on earth - things that are together as they were intended. Then, in the fulness of the times, with His enemies being made His footstool, and no longer present, God will get on with what He purposed before He made the world. From the perspective of the redeemed, part of that activity will be reigning with Christ. From God's own perspective, it will involve expounding the magnitude of His grace throughout the ages to come (Eph 2:7). The church in its entirety, with all of it gathered together into one harmonious whole, will be the chief exhibit of the potency and effectiveness of the grace of God. I do not doubt that the work of grace will continue on in presently unknown ways. Salvation was only introductory.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 11

THE OBTAINING OF AN INHERITANCE

"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: ¹² That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."

(Eph 1:11-12)

In delineating God's great salvation, Paul has confirmed that God has special words to be delivered to *"the faithful in Christ Jesus"* (1:1). He has introduced us to the dispensing of *"grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1:1), and has faithfully informed us that God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (1:3). With spiritual expertise he has revealed what he has been given to see - namely that these things are in strict accord with a choice God made *"before the foundation of the world,"* and that this choosing is in order that we might be *"holy and without blame before Him in love"* (1:4). Further, this is the outworking of a predetermination that we should be His adopted children *"by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will"* (1:5). All of this required that we receive *"redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace in which He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence"* (1:7). Because, according to His purpose, it is necessary for us to know it, God has *"made known unto us the mystery of His will,"* in strict accord with *"His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself"* (1:9). The appointed outcome of all of this marvelous work, revelation, and participation is *"that in the fulness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him"* (1:10). It is inconceivable that God Himself would work with this in mind, all the while condoning a salvation that left man neither thinking nor planning for this outcome. Yet, the wheels of institutionalism has disregarded these things in favor of an earth-centered religious emphasis. Paul wrote to ensure that this kind of spirit will not capture the hearts of the saints, but that they will rather maintain a proper view of salvation.

WE HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE

Eph 1:11a *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance . . ."*

The spotlight is now shining on Jesus. He is the One in whom all of the following thoughts are to be considered. Paul has said he is *"an apostle of Jesus Christ"* (1:1). He confirmed that grace and peace come **from Him** (1:2). *"All spiritual blessings"* have been made available to us **"In Christ"**, (1:3). God chose us **"in Him"** (1:4). We were predestinated unto the adoption of children *"by Jesus Christ to Himself"* (1:5). God has *"made us accepted in the Beloved"* (1:6). We have *"obtained redemption through His blood"* (1:7a). We have *"the forgiveness of sins" through Jesus* (1:7b). God's purpose is to *"gather together in one all things in Christ"* (1:10).

When we begin to speak about salvation and all of the things included in it, Jesus Christ must be the prominent part of our speaking, and it must all be gathered together under the heading of the **purpose** of God. This is not a time to major on human response, but is rather the time to emphasize the One through whom salvation is acquired, and the One to whom He has reconciled us. I fear there is too much talk about salvation without a due emphasis upon the Savior and the God who sent Him.

IN WHOM. The "*whom*" of reference is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the required environment in which everything about salvation is realized. The prominence of this perspective in Scripture is staggering for its greatness. Things that are declared to be "*in*" Him are: faith (Acts 24:24), redemption (Rom 3:24), believing (Rom 3:26), the saved themselves (Rom 8:1), and "*the law of the Spirit of life*" (Rom 8:2). There is also "*the love of God*" (Rom 8:39), "*one body*" (Rom 12:5), approval (Rom 16:10), sanctification (1 Cor 1:2), hope (1 Cor 15:19), and establishment (2 Cor 1:21). There is also triumph (2 Cor 2:14), speaking truth (2 Cor 2:17), the doing away of the veil of obscurity (2 Cor 3:14), and new creatureship (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). Add to that liberty (Gal 2:4), the confirmation of the covenant (Gal 3:17), the oneness of believers (Gal 3:26), faithfulness (Eph 1:1), all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3), trust (Eph 1:12), and being made nigh (Eph 2:14). There are also God's promises (Eph 3:6), God's eternal purpose (Eph 3:11), the truth (Eph 4:21), rejoicing (Phil 1:26), consolation (Phil 2:1), the proper mind-set (Phil 2:5), the prize of the high calling (Phil 3:14), ultimate perfection (Col 1:28), the will of God (1 Thess 5:18), faith and love (1 Tim 1:14), the promise of life (2 Tim 1:1), and God's purpose and grace (2 Tim 1:9). Let us not forget grace (2 Tim 2:1), salvation (2 Tim 2:10), living godly (2 Tim 3:12), boldness (Phile 1:8), a good manner of life (1 Pet 3:16), and preservation (Jude 1:1).

I hardly see how the Lord could have made the absolute centrality of Christ more plain! Yet, this has been largely hidden from the nominal church. The average "Christian" has had to wait many years for this to dawn upon his soul. This has not been owing to any ambiguity of the truth, but because the professing church has embraced another man-made emphasis.

WE HAVE OBTAINED. There is a certain perspective that is unique to those in Christ Jesus. They are said to have obtained things of which they only have the firstfruits. We have, for example "*obtained mercy*" (Rom 11:31; Heb 4:16) - yet, not the whole of it. We have obtained salvation (1 Thess 5:9; 2 Tim 2:10) - but the greater part of it is yet to come (1 Pet 1:5). Abraham "*obtained*" the promise after he had patently endured (Heb 6:15) - yet, not the whole of it. We have "*obtained like precious faith*" (2 Pet 1:11) - and yet it continues to grow (2 Thess 1:3). The firstfruits are a pledge of what is to come. Forsake them, and the inheritance is forfeited.

AN INHERITANCE. What a statement is this: "*we HAVE OBTAINED an inheritance.*" The NIV omits this phrase, substituting "*we were also chosen.*" Other versions read, "*we were made a heritage,*" ^{ASV} "*we have a heritage,*" ^{BBE} "*we were given an inheritance,*" ^{CJB} "*made us His inheritance,*" ^{CSB} "*we are called by lot,*" ^{DOUAY} "*we have become gifts to God that He delights in.*" ^{LIVING} "*were made [God's] heritage (portion) and we obtained an inheritance.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

Although this expression is, in a sense, a difficult one, it must be considered within the context of God making a people for Himself (2 Cor 5:18; 1 Pet 2:9), and the church being prepared to be presented unto Christ (Eph 5:27). Our inheritance is within that context - what we will be to God and Christ. In its essence, salvation has to do with what is left after we have passed away, and the heavens and earth themselves pass away. Then God shall have the people He intended, Christ shall have the bride He was destined to have, and we will possess what salvation has suited us to have.

By saying we *"have obtained an inheritance,"* the Spirit is calling upon us to see the matter from God's perspective - -and that is precisely what He will develop in the following clauses. From heaven's point of view, the inheritance is sure because God has chosen the ones who will partake of it. From our point of view, we have *"obtained"* it by virtue of where God has placed us - *"in Christ."* Everything required for our adequate preparation is provided in the environment in which God has placed us. If we will abide there, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, the inheritance is sure. If we choose to leave the environment because of an inordinate love for the world, the inheritance is forfeited. Paul reasons from the standpoint of us abiding.

BEING PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO PURPOSE

1:11b " . . . *being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* "

When speaking of the sureness of obtaining the inheritance, Paul does not draw our attention to what we did. It is certainly not that our response to the Gospel is of no importance, and no person of understanding would presume such a thing. There was inestimable value in us calling upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21), coming to Jesus (Matt 11:28), believing on His name (Acts 16:31), repenting of our sin (Acts 3:19), confessing Jesus before men (Acts 8:37), being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38), and rising to walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4). It is a blessed thing when men turn to God from idols, to serve the living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess 1:9). Who does not know the worth of receiving the Word of God in truth (1 Thess 2:13). However, if the faith of the saints is to be so anchored that they will grow and mature, we must consider what God has done in the matter of our salvation. You cannot promote faith in God and commitment to Christ by speaking of what you have done! Even though what you have done in responding to the Gospel is good, it is not a suitable foundation for reasoning.

BEING PREDESTINATED. *"Being predestinated."* Other versions read, *"having been predestined,"* ^{NASB} *"having been destined,"* ^{NRSV} *"having been foreordained,"* ^{ASV} *"being marked out from the first,"* ^{BBE} *"who were picked in advance,"* ^{CJB} *"God also decided ahead of time to choose us,"* ^{GWN} and *"for we had been foreordained (chosen and appointed beforehand)."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

You will notice that Paul takes no time to provide an explanation concerning how this does not mean we do not have a free will, or that it does not violate man's free moral agency. He makes no attempt to harmonize it with any particular doctrine concerning man and his ability or freedom. One cannot read this text and

conclude that man in any way compelled or dictated this choice. This is the Divine explanation for why we have *"obtained an inheritance."* Viewing the inheritance from another point of view, Peter traces it back to God's work: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Pet 1:3-4).

In this first chapter of Ephesians, this is now the third time the Spirit has brought up the matter of being predestinated or chosen. *"He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself . . . being predestinated"* (Eph 1:3,5,11). In all three texts the means through which the choosing or predestination took place was Jesus Christ: *"in Him . . . by Jesus Christ . . . In whom."* The cause, then, was not what man did, or what God saw men would do! This will be further developed in the next clause.

ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM. Other versions read, *"the plan of Him,"* ^{NIV} *"God's sovereign plan,"* ^{LIVING} *"the intention of Him."* ^{WEYMOUTH} Most of the versions read *"purpose"* - not man's purpose, but God's *"purpose!"* The text does not say the predestination was according to Divine prescience - seeing what man would do. What kind of confidence would such a statement gender in the heart of men? **We are plainly told that the determination of those who would "obtain" the inheritance was what God had purposed to do.** No matter how many theological filters a person attempts to pass this text through, it is imperative that their conclusion be that it all was because God had purposed to do it. That is what the text says.

WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL. Now Paul elaborates on this statement. Other versions read, *"works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,"* ^{NIV} *"who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will,"* ^{NRSV} *"who does all things in agreement with His designs,"* ^{BBE} *"effects everything in keeping with the decision of His will,"* ^{CJB} *"which makes everything work the way He intends,"* ^{GWN} *"who guides all things as He decides by His own will,"* ^{NJB} and *"Who works out everything in agreement with the counsel and design of His [own] will."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

God does not work according to what He sees, but according to what He wills. It is His will that He is pleased to carry out, not man's will. There is such a stress on this that it is astounding that men have missed it so easily. This can only be missed if a corrupt view of Divine intentions is embraced, and, in view of the abundance of revaluation, that is not permissible.

By saying God "works all things according to the counsel of His will," ^{NKJV} **the Spirit is plainly saying that salvation is wholly God's work.** The driving power behind every aspect of salvation clearly belongs to God alone, and that power is employed in strict accordance with what He purposed before the world was ever formed. Thus Paul wrote to Timothy, *"God . . . Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"* (2 Tim 1:8-9). That is the very thing being affirmed in this text. The purpose for the affirmation is the establishment and maturity of the saints of God.

THAT WE SHOULD BE TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY

1:12 *"That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."*

Paul continues to underscore the ultimate purpose of salvation. If professing believers are to finish the race set before them, they must be made aware of the purpose for which they have been saved. They are primarily to be an exhibit of what God can **produce** by His grace. It is the work of grace that is being made known, not merely its reality. God is not showing the world and angels that He can overlook sin, or learn to live with it being lived out before His face. He is not showing principalities and powers that He can love the unlovable and treat men as though they were good, when they really are corrupt. Such views reveal a serious misapprehension of God!

THAT WE SHOULD BE. Other versions read, *"in order that we . . . might be,"*^{NIV} *"might live,"*^{NRSV} *"to the end that we should be,"*^{ASV} *"in order that."*^{NIB}

This, then, is the objective that compelled the choice of God and His predestination. It is why we have been called and justified, and why we have obtained an inheritance. It is the reason for salvation - from its initiation to its completion. This is the purpose for which we were chosen, adopted, redeemed, and forgiven. Actually, there is no salvation that is independent from this Divine determination.

TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. Other versions read, *"might be for the praise of God's glory,"*^{NIV} *"might live for the praise of His glory,"*^{NRSV} *"So that His glory might have praise through us,"*^{BBE} *"might bring praise to His glory,"*^{CSB} *"so that we might exist for the praise of His glory,"*^{NAB} and *"that we should praise God and give glory to Him for doing these mighty things for us."*^{LIVING} The "glory of God" is what has been revealed concerning His Person and purpose. **That is, the Person of God is made known in what He has done, and is doing.** If *"even a child is known by his doings"* (Prov 20:11), what may be said of the mighty God of heaven? The phrase *"to the praise of His glory"* is mentioned twice in Scripture - both times in Ephesians (1:12,14). Ephesians 1:6 speaks of *"the praise of the glory of His grace"* - that is, when God's grace is perceived, He is given glory for it.

Some versions read that *"we should praise God and give Him glory"* for what He has done in us.^{LIVING} While this is certainly true, it is not the meaning of this text. We are not the ones praising God's glory, but are exhibits of His grace, which prompts others to give God glory. This includes angelic hosts who *"desire to look into these things"* which are announced in the Gospel.

Ponder once again the things through which God has revealed Himself - things declared in this first chapter of Ephesians; (1) - God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (1:3). (2) - God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world (1:4). (3) - He predestinated us to the adoption of sons (1:5). (4) - He made us accepted in the Beloved (1:6). (5) - We have redemption through His blood, the

forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (1:7). (6) - He has abounded toward in His grace in all wisdom and prudence (1:8). (7) - He has made known unto us the mystery of His will (1:9). (8) - We have obtained an inheritance (1:11).

God is revealed in all of these matters. They constitute His "*glory*," or the manifestation of His Person. However, the "*praise of His glory*" is not rendered because we have read these things in the Scriptures, and that is not the intent of this text. It is the believers themselves that become the praise. That is, they themselves evidence the effectiveness of Divine provision, God's choice, His predestination, making men accepted, obtaining redemption and forgiveness, the wise and prudent work of God within, making known His mystery, and obtaining an inheritance. **These realities have produced a people that are exhibits of what the Lord can do with a body of believers that had no resources of their own.**

But what of a people that do not exhibit the "*good works*" that provoke men to give glory to God (Matt 5:16)? What of those who do not emit the fragrance of Christ in their lives (2 Cor 2:15), and who are not a suitable epistle from Christ, written with the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor 3:4). What of those who never cause a report of their faith and love, whose bodies have not been offered as a living sacrifice to God, and who refuse to set their affection on things above, and not on things on the earth? What kind praise is rendered to God because of them? What of those who argue about God choosing or electing? And, what of those who acknowledge God chooses and elects, yet provide no evidence of the effectiveness of God.

WHO FIRST TRUSTED IN CHRIST. Other versions read, "*we who were the first to hope in Christ.*" ^{NIV} Some feel this is a reference to the Jews, while others feel Paul is referring to himself and those laboring with him. It seems to me that he is rather referring to the appointed means by which Divine intentions are carried out. Paul himself and those with him are exhibits of the process. It all began with believing, then living by that faith. It is true that Paul and those with him believed "*first*" in the sense of being before the Ephesians believed. However, in so doing they were a living example of how God's glory is praised when his purposes are lived out before the people. The life of Paul, and the response of the Ephesians to it, praised God's glory.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 12

Eph 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, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."* (Eph 1:13-14)

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU HEARD THE WORD

RODUCTION

Paul is recapping the cause of our salvation. He traces it back to what the Lord has purposed, and what He has done in Christ Jesus. Only when this has been firmly established does he refer to the response of the Ephesians. In so doing he is providing a proper context for evaluating and comprehending the salvation of God. If our thoughts about our own salvation begin with our response to the Gospel, they will not be deep enough or extensive enough to give glory to God. Then, having accented the wrong thing, we will also be lulled into a false sense of security, which will rest upon what we ourselves have done. **While human response to the Gospel is essential, it is not foundational.** It is not the subject of preaching, but is always delivered as a secondary matter after a proper declaration of the Gospel of Christ in which Deity is the sole emphasis. Wherever "evangelism" and "making disciples" are considered the primary activities of the church, a different approach is taken to preaching. First an emphasis is adopted that is not set forth to any church of Scriptural record. Second, such priorities are an environment in which human creativity flourishes, and exploitation becomes common. Third, even though the mentioned emphases are based upon what Jesus said, neither of them make very much of the Person of Christ or living unto Him (2 Cor 5:15). However, both of them are fully addressed when the accent is placed upon God and Christ. Further, response is viewed from the standpoint of how heaven reacts to it, and what comes from it in those who rendered the correct response. These all may seem like nothing more than needless technicalities, but they are what is being stressed in this text. One additional thing will be seen in this text which highlights the necessity of a proper emphasis in preaching and teaching. A proper response to the Gospel results in an initial experience. The fulness of what the Gospel promises is something for which we must wait.

IN WHO M YE TRUSTED

Eph 1:13a *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation . . ."*

IN WHOM. The last clause of the preceding verse is, *"who first trusted in Christ."* Now Paul continues developing that thought. The meaning of that last clause is that the whole process of salvation is begins by trusting in Christ. That is how the experience of salvation is initiated. Everything prior to that, like conviction, resolution, etc., is but a prelude to the experience, and not the experience of salvation itself. Unless a person gets to the point where Christ is trusted, and dependency upon self and self-strength is terminated, nothing sure is even started. This means that there is a point where Christ is seen as having no competitors. The person then refuses to put trust, or confidence, in anyone or anything else. It is a "to whom shall we go" attitude that compels the person to refuse to seek salvation elsewhere. I will tell you that what I hear being preached these days is not leaving people with this kind of resoluteness. Professing Christians are

finding it too easy to trust in other things because they are hearing a flawed message.

YE ALSO TRUSTED. Here is where the doctrine is personalized. It is one thing to hear what is to be done, but it is quite another thing to do it. The original nucleus of disciples in Ephesus learned to trust Christ in the midst of a contentious synagogue (Acts 19:8). Perceiving the non-productive environment, Paul *"departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus"* (Acts 19:9).

Other versions read, *"you also,"* ^{NASB} *"you also were included in Christ,"* ^{NIV} *"all you others too."* ^{LIVING} The idea here is that the Ephesians came in the same way others did. There was not a special entrance designed for them. They too participated in obtaining *"the inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory."* That is the foundational reason why they *"trusted"* in Christ (1:11-12). Paul will now establish that this entire process was initiated by the preaching of the Gospel, which is God's exclusive power *"unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16). It is a power that is evidenced in the conversion of those who hear it, the ability to trust in Jesus, and believing the message wholeheartedly. It is a power that works repentance, and moves the individual to confess Jesus before men, works obedience in those who receive the record God has given of His Son, so that they gladly receive the message, being baptized (Acts 2:41).

To increase the faith and confidence of the Ephesian brethren, Paul does not step them through a plan - a series of sequential steps that they have taken. He rather shows them where they are, and reasons back to the cause of their situation. He now tells them why they trusted in the Lord Jesus - something that God Himself ordained as the means of carrying out His own predestination of the people to adoption, and to obtain the inheritance.

AFTER THAT YE HEARD. Other versions read, *"listening to the message,"* ^{NASB} *"having been given,"* ^{BBE} *"when you heard,"* ^{ESV} and *"listened to the proclamation."* ^{MONTGOMERY}

The experience of salvation necessarily comes **after** hearing the appointed message. Faith *"comes by hearing,"* and there can be no salvation that is independent of hearing, discerning, and receiving a specific message. From one standpoint, the hearing is the result of God sending a preacher (Rom 10:14). From another standpoint, God Himself has sent a word (Acts 10:35). From the standpoint of the one who delivered the Word, he is a minister, *"even as the Lord gave to every man"* (1 Cor 3:5).

THE WORD OF TRUTH. Other versions read, *"the true word,"* ^{BBE} *"the message of the truth,"* ^{CJB} *"the true message,"* ^{IE} and *"the proclamation of the truth."* ^{MONTGOMERY} What is heard is a message of reality - specifically, *"the record God has given of His Son"* (1 John 5:10). It is the proclamation of what God has done through Christ that has successfully addressed the matter of sin. It is *"the truth"* as it relates to God, and to the accomplishment of the will of God in the provision of salvation. It is referred to as preaching *"the Gospel of peace"* and bringing *"glad tidings of good things"* (Rom. 10:15). It relates to turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, in order that they may receive the forgiveness of sins

and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18).

THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION. Other versions read, *"the good news of your salvation,"*^{BBE} *"the Good News offering you deliverance,"*^{CJB} *"the Good News that he has saved you,"*^{GWN} *"the Good News about how to be saved."*^{LIVING} Although God has not divulged the particular identity of these people, this is a word delivered to those who were chosen in Christ (1:4), predestinated unto adoption (1:5), who have been appointed to receive an inheritance (1:11). It is their acceptance of the message of the Gospel by faith that reveals the identity of the chosen ones. The salvation of God belongs to them. That is why they are told it is *"your salvation."* This is the *"after you have believed"* view of the matter. When the Gospel is preached it is preached to everyone, not only to the ones who have been chosen. That is not something the preacher makes known. It is the work of the Spirit. That makes this a confirming word.

AFTER YOU BELIEVED, YOU WERE SEALED

^{1:13b} " . . . *in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . .* "

Now Paul brings home to the conscience of the believers what has happened to them - a work that has been done by God. He identifies when the work was done, and the objective that was met by it. I must say that this is a much neglected work in the modern church.

IN WHOM ALSO. The work of God is always tied to the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Ten times the Ephesian letter contains the words *"in Christ"* (1:1,3,10,12; 2:6,10,13; 3:6,11). Referring to Christ, the expressions *"in Him"* and *"in whom"* occur eight times (1:4,7,10,11,13, 2L22; 3:12). *"In Jesus"* occurs once (4:21). *"By Jesus Christ"* is found two times (1:5,9, and *"by Christ Jesus"* once (4:21). The *"Lord Jesus Christ"* is mentioned seven times, preceded by *"from"* (1:3(, *"in the name of"* (4:20), *"them that love"* (6:24), and *"the God and Father of"* (1:3,17; 3:14; 6:23). Jesus is referred to as *"the Savior of the body"* (5:23), and the One who *"loved the church and gave Himself for it"* (5:25). He is depicted as sanctifying and cleansing the church (5:25), and the One who will *"present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle"* (5:27).

This is the One in whom the believers are found. The expression *"in Christ"* is found 76 times from Romans through First Peter. And *"in Him"* 50 times. There can be no question about where the blessings of God are obtained and retained!

AFTER THAT YE BELIEVED. So far as spiritual life is concerned, it is precisely identified as *"after that ye believed."* Initially, that life was prenatal, or pre-birth, life. Eventually it had to be birthed by water (John 3:5), which took place when we were *"baptized into Christ"* (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27). In the epistles the Spirit refers to believing eighty times (believe, belief, believing, etc.). In most of the cases, it is what resulted from believing, or what took place at that time, that is the point. Believing, then, is an transcendent epoch in the life of those who are saved. It goes without saying that what is said to take place *"after that ye believed"*

could not possibly have taken place without believing taking place. Believing involves trust, reliance upon, receiving without equivocation, and conforming ones life to what has been believed. The teaching is corroborated by the record of those who believed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

YE WERE SEALED. Other versions read, "you were marked in Him with a seal,"^{NIV} "were marked with the seal,"^{NRSV} "were given the sign,"^{BBE} "you were signed,"^{DOUAY} "stamped with the seal,"^{NJB} "He identified you as His own,"^{NLT} and "marked as belonging to Christ."^{LIVING}

This seal was an official identifying mark - like the seal of a notary, of a government seal. In Scripture, official letters had a "seal" (1 Kgs 21:8); Neh 9:38; Esth 8:8). Circumcision was a seal in the covenant made with Abraham (Rom 4:11). Those who are in, and belong to, Jesus Christ are "sealed" - identified as belonging to Him.

WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE. The seal itself is "the Holy Spirit of promise." Other versions read, "the promised Holy Spirit,"^{NIV} "the Holy Spirit of hope,"^{BBE} "the Holy Spirit, who was promised,"^{MRD} "the Holy Spirit, whom, He promised long ago,"^{NLT} and "the long-promised Holy Spirit."^{AMPLIFIED}

Just as the Lord prophesied of the Messiah, enabling Him to be identified by the longing ones, and just as He prophesied of the people He would create, and the covenant in which they would be made accepted, so the Lord prophesied of the giving of His Spirit.

God would "pour out" His Spirit "upon all flesh," there being no discrimination among those receiving the Spirit. Both sons and daughters would prophesy, and insight would be granted to young and old men (Joel 2:28). Those upon whom the Spirit was poured would become "a fruitful field" (Isa 32:15). As a result of having the Spirit poured upon them, the people would "spring up," and say "I am the Lord's" (Isa 44:3-5). Jesus Himself said that "rivers of living water" would flow out from such people (John 7:38). This sealing would involve the creating of a new heart - a heart of flesh - and the removal of the stony heart (Ezek 36:26). By putting His Spirit "within" men, God would "cause" them to walk in His statutes, keeping His judgments and doing them (Ezek 36:27).

Where these promised benefits are not found, the Holy Spirit is not resident, for He always produces fruit in those in whom, He dwells (Gal 5:22-23). It is also written in that same passage, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24) This is precisely why it is written, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9). I hardly see how anything can be said on the matter with greater clarity.

It is what God has promised concerning the Spirit that enables those who have received Him to identify their true state. Those who teach men to assume they have the Holy Spirit have thrown confusion into the arena of thought. Those who take for granted that they have received the Holy Spirit of promise, having only the word of men to buttress that supposition, must learn to reason after the manner of this text, starting with them

believing, and examining the outcome of it.

THE EARNEST OF YOUR INHERITANCE UNTIL ...

1:14 *"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."*

Now Paul further identifies the Holy Spirit by more precisely defining why those in Christ have received Him.

WHICH IS THE EARNEST. Other versions read, *"which is the guarantee,"* ^{NKJV} *"whois given as a pledge,"* ^{NASB} *"who is a deposit guaranteeing,"* ^{NIV} *"the pledge,"* ^{NRSV} *"the first-fruit"* ^{BBE} *"the down payment,"* ^{CSB} *"the guarantee that we will receive,"* ^{GWN} *"the first installment,"* ^{NAB} *"God's guarantee,"* ^{LIVING} *"a pledge and foretaste,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"the firstfruits, the pledge and foretaste, the down payment."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Among other things, this language substantiates that we have not yet enjoyed salvation in its fulness. What we have is a prelude to what we will eventually possess. This puts the lie to those who affirm a salvation that is simplistic and is easily obtained. Being within reach, and being easy to obtain is by no means the same. In this world, the very best that we can receive is only the beginning - an earnest, pledge, down payment, or guarantee of what is to come. As long as we have the earnest, the fulness is guaranteed. However, if we resist (Acts 7:51), grieve (Eph 4:30), or quench (1 Thess 5L:19) the Holy Spirit - well, that is quite another story.

OF OUR INHERITANCE. Other versions read, *"our heritage,"* ^{BBE} *"all that He promised."* ^{LIVING} *"our common heritage,"*

^{MONTGOMERY} *"what God has stored up for his people,"* ^{CEV} and *"All that God has for us."* ^{ERV} This is now the second time the inheritance has been mentioned. The first affirmed, *"we have obtained an inheritance"* (1:11). The next time it is mentioned we will learn who will not receive that inheritance (Eph 5:5). The book of Acts declares the inheritance is for those who are *"sanctified"* (Acts 20:32; 26:18). Colossians announces that the inheritance is enjoyed by *"the saints in light"* (Col 1:12). Hebrews 9:15 identifies it as an *"eternal inheritance."* Peter states that it is *"incorruptible and undefiled,"* does not fade away, and is *"reserved in heaven for us"* (1 Pet 1:4). Obviously *"our inheritance"* is an important and indispensable facet of our salvation.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a portion of that inheritance. It is not the major part of the inheritance, but is a pledge or down payment of it. That gives us some idea of enormity of *"the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"* (1 Cor 2:9). The Scriptures speak of inheriting *"the earth"* (Matt 5:5), *"everlasting life"* (Matt 19:29), *"the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor 6:10), and *"all things"* (Rev 21:7). Our inheritance is nowhere represented as something associated with this world-i.e., healing, wealth, possessions, etc. Such things are often given to the saints, but they do not constitute their inheritance, either in part or in the whole.

Our inheritance - the whole of it - is eternal, and constituted of things that cannot pass away.

UNTIL THE REDEMPTION. Other versions read, "*redemption of God's own possession,*" ^{NASB} "*redemption of those who are God's possession,*" ^{NIV} "*the redemption of God's own people,*" ^{NRSV} "*till God gets back that which is his,*" ^{BBE} "*the redemption of that liberty,*" ^{GENEVA} "*until we are set free to belong to him,*" ^{GWN} "*in anticipation of its full redemption and our acquiring [complete] possession of it.*" ^{AMPLIFIED} In these texts there is a misrepresentation of the coming redemption. Some versions represent the redemption as applying to the people themselves. While God's own inheritance is His people, that is not the matter that is being addressed in this text.

The "*purchased possession*" is our bodies - the part that is not yet redeemed. Romans categorically identifies the body as yet to be redeemed: "*ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Rom 8:23). This precisely parallels the Ephesian text. Further, the fact that our bodies have been purchased is accented in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Cor 6:19-20). It is in this sense that our bodies are said to be "*members of Christ*" (1 Cor 6:15). That is, they are "*members*" by reason of purchase now, and their redemption at the resurrection of the dead.

Until the time these "*vile bodies*" (Phil 3:21) are redeemed, they are used by God as a temple for the indwelling Spirit. As it is written, "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*" ^{NKJV} (1 Cor 6:19). They can be used in this manner because they have been purchased, and will be redeemed at the time when this mortal shall put on immortality (1 Cor 15:53-54).

UNTO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. When our bodies are redeemed, with nothing left that is not redeemed, we shall be "*a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God*" (Isa 62:3) - a marvelous exhibit of what the grace of God can do. An understanding of this inheritance will compel a life that cannot be produced by a law - even a holy, spiritual, and good law! God be praised for the greatness of His salvation!

HOW DO YOU PRAY FOR FAITHFUL BRETHREN, #1

Eph 1:15 ***"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,"***¹⁶ ***Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;***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."***

(Eph 1:15-17)

INTRODUCTION

It is worthy to note what stirred the apostle Paul to write this letter to the Ephesians. It was not bad news, like that which he received from Corinth (1 Cor 1:11,18). It was not the disappointment that the people had departed from the Lord, as with the Galatians (Gal 1:6-7). It was not even the threat of philosophical and Jewish teaching to which they were being exposed, as in Colossae (Col 2:8). Such conditions require rebuke and correction - but that is not the theme of the letter to the Ephesians.

The person who speaks in the behalf of the Lord must have some cogent idea of where the people stand with the Lord - at least, he must arrive at this knowledge at some point in time. It is tragically true that some people are only exposed to the party-line - the thing that makes the group a unique denomination. Once Paul knew the people had a legitimate start, and had sustained their faith and love, he determined to assist them to reach higher, grow deeper, and participate more in the understanding of the purpose of God. It was not sufficient for them to simply maintain their present level of understanding.

There is a kind of holy logic that brings a person to this conclusion. If men have, in their initial conversion, triumphed over the devil - and that IS what happens - the adversary will re-group, so to speak. His tactics will change, and his aggression will increase. We know this is the case because of revelation. When Satan launched his initiative in the earth, it was not against the government, or the family, or the area of traditional morality. Rather it has been revealed that it was *"to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Rev 12:17). That, dear brethren, is the church!

I HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOU

Eph 1:15a ***"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints."*** Other versions read, *"having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints,"*^{NASB} and *"because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints (the people of God)."*^{AMPLIFIED}

When we are speaking of a body of believers, how should we speak of them? If you are from the house of Chloe, and you are reporting the conditions at the church in Corinth, you will report their deficiencies to a person of understanding (1 Cor 1:11). If you are Titus, and you are reporting the condition at Corinth, you will speak of their advancement, and how they responded to a severe rebuke and proper instruction from Paul (2 Cor 7:13).

There are no reports in Scripture of how large a congregation was, or how people attended the main, or a special, service. Their budget, however impressive, was apparently not the subject of discussion. When speaking of the brethren in Macedonia, Paul reported "*How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves*" " (2 Cor 8:2-3).

In every case, the truth was told about their status, and fruit unto God was duly recognized. Although it is a very cherished tradition, there is no report of how many souls a church won during the year. It is not that such reports are wrong of themselves. It is rather that it is apparent this simply is not the way holy men thought.

AFTER I HEARD. There is a hint here concerning how holy brethren spoke with each other - particularly how they spoke to the apostle Paul. It is apparent that he was known for having a keen interest in the churches - particularly if they had the marks of Divine working among them. Although it is certainly not a commendable thing, there are some professed religious leaders who have little interest in the progress of the saints. For Paul, someone told him about the present status of the Ephesian brethren. He had heard of their "*faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints*" (Eph 1:15).

FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS. Other versions read, "*your trust in the Lord Yeshua,*" ^{CJB} "*Belief in the Lord Jesus,*" ^{ABP} "*trust you have in the Master Jesus.*" ^{MSG} and "*strong faith in the Lord Jesus.*" ^{LIVING}

And, what exactly is "*faith in the Lord Jesus?*" Concepts related to faith include trust, dependency, reliance upon, confidence in, and complete assurance. Since faith is "*the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb 11:1), faith in the Lord Jesus involves a number of things. Faith perceives the reality of Jesus. He is not merely part of a creed, but it seen as "*Lord of all*" (Acts 10:36). This means that there is no person or circumstance that is not under His control. It also means there is no command issued by Him that can be ignored. His direction is the final word regarding life, and He will not maintain closeness to a person who insists on the priority of their own will. Faith in the Lord Jesus involves trusting His judgment, depending upon His word, and preferring Him above all others.

If Jesus is the "*Captain*" of salvation, then those who have faith in Him are following Him. If He is "*the faithful and true Witness*" (Rev 3:14), they are listening to Him. If He is the "*King of kings*" (1 Tim 6:15) they are obeying Him. All of this is made known in human conduct and preferences, else it could not be reported to another.

LOVE UNTO ALL SAINTS. This is a preferential love - one that especially does good to "*them that are the*

household of faith" (Gal 6:10). These are primarily Christ's brethren (Heb 2:11; Matt 12:30; Matt 25:40; Lk 8:21), and secondarily ours by virtue of our identify with Christ (1 John 5:1). Brotherly love includes *"in honor preferring one another"* (Rom 12:10). Loving one another is the evidence that we have *"passed from death unto life"* (1 John 3:14). It provides all men with evidence that we are Christ's disciples (John 13:35).

The word *"saints"* is not simply an appellation. It does not speak of a profession, but a possession. Saints are *"holy ones"* - separated unto God. These are the ones who have taken seriously the exhortation, *"Be ye holy"* (1 Pet 1:15-16). Those who have love *"unto all saints"* are those who are attracted to godly people, and place a high value on those who have set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2). They are the people with whom they can dwell together *"in unity"* (Psa 133). They are strangers and pilgrims in the earth (1 Pet 2:11), have crucified the flesh (Gal 5:24), and are seeking a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God (Heb 11:10).

What does a person who is living by faith do when he confronts such people? How does he react to those who are walking in the Spirit, and maintaining a walk in the strait and narrow way? What does He say to the living God about them? How does he pray for them? What does he seek for them? That is what this text is about. Here is the response of a leading member of the body of Christ to a report of the faith and love of a body of people.

GIVING THANKS AND MENTIONING IN PRAYER

1:16 *"... Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. . ."*

What kind of value does a man of God place on those whose faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all saints has been reported? The report that is here given reflects the manner of the Kingdom. This is the kind of response a walk with God will yield.

CEASING NOT. Other versions read, *"have not stopped,"* ^{NIV} *"give praise without end,"* ^{BBE} *"I never stop,"* ^{CSB} *"I couldn't stop."* ^{MESSAGE}

There is a certain characteristic that pervades the *"new creation"* (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). It is consistency, constancy, or steadfastness. Wherever men are *"partakers of the Divine nature,"* this trait shows itself. It reflects the unending nature of the Kingdom of God - an *"everlasting kingdom"* (2 Pet 1:11), and a dominion that *"has no end"* (Lk 1:33). It is written of this Kingdom, presently being administered by the exalted Christ, *"of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end"* (Isa 9:7). This circumstance is why those who are translated into this Kingdom are noted for their constancy.

The New Covenant within which believers live, is characterized by an increasing glory - one that never fades or diminishes (2 Cor 3:7-9). It is written, "*But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth **more and more** unto the perfect day*" (Prov 4:18). Whenever there is a waning of faith, and the diminishment of commitment, the individual has stepped outside the perimeter of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2). In this text, we find an expression of a growing light, an increasing life, and a fire that is burning more and more.

GIVING THANKS. Having heard of the Ephesians faith and love, Paul gave thanks - not to the Ephesians, but to God! God is thanked for what **HE** does, not merely what men do. Paul knew very well that the traits that were in the Ephesians had the hand-print of God upon them. They were evidence of God working within them "*both to will and to do*" (Phil 2:13).

Unfortunately, where there is an institutional environment this kind of understanding cannot exist. Like idol-worshippers those caught in the snare of Babylon the great ascribe what they have to the institution and not to God. It is the same kind of blunder that was found in Israel. God said it this way, "*For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal*" (Hosea 2:8). By way of comparison, Paul recognizes the work of God, and therefore he gives thanks to Him for the progress and consistency of the Ephesians.

MAKING MENTION IN MY PRAYERS. Other versions read, "*remembering you in my prayers,*"^{NIV} "*keeping you in mind in my prayers,*"^{BBE} "*making commemoration of you in my prayers,*"^{DOUAY} "*I pray for you constantly,*"^{NLT} and "*every time I prayed, I'd think of you,*"^{MESSAGE}

Prayer is an integral part of spiritual life. It is an appointed means of making our requests known unto God (Phil 4:6). Prayer is to be characterized by importunity - "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess 5:17). And again, Jesus taught that "*men ought always to pray, and not to faint*" (Lk 1`8:1). It is to be done while lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting (1 Tim 2:8).

For some, prayer is always for something personal - but here is a text where prayer is for someone else. It reveals to us the manner in which the kingdom of God is governed. Those who have been reconciled to God are said to have been made "*kings and priests unto God*" (Rev 1:6; 5:10). Some Kingdom benefits are realized through the prayers of insightful believers. That is simply is one of the means by which spiritual life is sustained.

Now, Paul says that he mentioned the Ephesians to God in his prayers. He thought of them in a parental kind of way. He was not "afraid" of them, as he was with the Galatians, who had left God for "*another gospel*" (Gal 1:6). Thinking of them and mentioning them to the Lord was a pleasant thing for him, while for others it was a painful thing. For some people, the primary concern was recovery, correction, and profound concern for their meager spiritual state. He knew he could not pray for their advance until they got back on the highway of holiness, and resumed their pilgrimage on the strait and narrow way.

However, for others he had noble aspirations, and confidence to pray for their advancement in the faith - their maturity, and their further conformity to the image of Christ. Actually, in Christ there is no plateau where one can settle down, take off the whole armor of God, and relax in spiritual abandonment. This is why, when Paul saw spiritual advancement, he taught and prayed for progress, growth, advancement, and further conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 12:1-2; Phil 2:5-16). This approach to spiritual life is virtually unknown in our time, and its omission is seen in the emaciated state of the modern church. Someone who is advancing in the faith and is free from fleshily encumbrances is generally removed from the prayer list. But with Paul, such people were put on the prayer list, so to speak. He knew they were the target of Satanic initiatives, and therefore he could not forget them.

It is good that each believer determine to live in such a manner as to provoke holy men and women to remember them when they pray, making mention of them to the Father.

THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION

^{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."***

How do you pray for those who are noted for their faith in Christ and love to all saints? We do not have to guess on this matter, or philosophize about it. Nor, indeed, do we have to generalize. There is a holy specificity in this request that is worthy of much exploration.

THE GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. You can tell a lot about a person's view of God by how he speaks about Him. Notice how Paul refers to God: *"The God of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Is that not an arresting thought? Jesus Himself referred to God as *"My God"* (Matt 27:46; John 20:17). This has special reference to Christ as *"the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim 2:5). In humbling Himself, He became subject to God (Heb 10:7), and trusted God (Heb 2:13). Paul referred to *"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 11:31; Eph 1:3). Peter did the same (1 Pet 1:3). God was also identified with holy men: *"the God of Abraham"* (Gen 26:24), *"the God of Isaac"* (Gen 28:13), *"the God of Jacob"* (2 Sam 23:1), *"the God of David"* (2 Kgs 20:5), *"the God of Hezekiah"* (2 Chron 32:17), *"the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego"* (Dan 3:28), and *"the God of Daniel"* (Dan 6:26).

However, never is God associated with anyone as great as *"our Lord Jesus Christ."* That is the pinnacle of all associations. By it the Scriptures mean that this is the God Jesus Christ loved and obeyed preeminently. That is the One Jesus sought to please and whose will he faithfully followed. Considering that Jesus is going to judge the world, how do you suppose He will look at those who did not love and obey God preeminently - after He set the example?

THE FATHER OF GLORY. This is a most intriguing phrase. If glory means what is known of God, then the meaning of this expression is that God is a God who reveals Himself - who makes Himself known, and shows Himself to men. As Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "*there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets*" (Dan 2:28). Amos declared, "*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets*" (Amos 3:7). These are descriptions of "*the Father of glory.*" Paul knew this, and thus made a special request for the Ephesian brethren. He knew they were in a position where this could happen.

GIVE YOU THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION. Other versions read, "*spiritual wisdom and revelation,*" ^{NET} "*the spirit of wisdom and open to you,*" ^{TNT} "*insight and a wise spirit,*" ^{LIVING} and "*spirit of wisdom and revelation [of insight into mysteries and secrets].*" ^{AMPLIFIED} The majority of the versions read "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation.*"

This is something that is given to men. It is not something they achieve. It is not the result of study, research, and meditation. All of these may be employed in the acquisition of the benefit sought, but in the end, it is God alone who gives it, and that is the One to whom Paul makes His appeal. Further, this is prayed for a church - a church noted for its faith in Christ and love to all the saints. This does not mean they had no wisdom and were void of revelation. It rather indicated that these were profound resources that had only been sampled.

What exactly is a "*spirit of wisdom?*" It has basically to do with knowing what to do. The tribe of Issachar, for example, "*had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do*" (1 Chron 12:32). The words "*the Spirit*" do not refer to an attitude, or frame of mind, but to the Holy Spirit Himself. That is, it is the Holy Spirit who imparts this wisdom. No man can strike on this marvelous resource on his own. This is a Spirit that must be given to men. While the Ephesians had already received the seal of the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13), now the more extensive ministry of the Holy Spirit was sought for them. This is why the term "**revelation**" is used. The Holy Spirit unveils things that already exist, yet are not perceived by any natural sense. Therefore Paul said of the Spirit, "*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, **the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God***" (1 Cor 2:9-10).

These are "things" God intends His people to know - being acquainted with them, perceiving them, and delighting in them. They do not have to do with this world, but are things God has "*prepared*" for those who love Him. They are not intended for anyone else!

IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. The key to the comprehension of what God has prepared for those who love Him is the knowledge of, or acquaintance with, God Himself. This has to do with an intelligent comprehension of His character, His will, and His ways. It involves the recognition of when and why God is working. It includes an understanding of where God is going with salvation, and what His objectives are for those who in Christ Jesus.

This is a knowledge that cannot be acquired academically. If it could, Paul would simply have admonished the Ephesians to go to school. He knew that all deficiency, whatever form it takes, is the result of not knowing God. Thus He prays for the Ephesians, that God would give them the kind of wisdom and knowledge that centered in Himself and His purpose.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 14

Eph 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."*** (Eph 1:18)

ENLIGHTENED EYES

Contemporary Christianity, for the most part, considers conversion, or becoming a Christian, the primary thing. This is driven by the misconception that the primary work of the church is "winning souls" - a phrase never used in Scripture for the conversion of sinners. Having adopted this stance, once a person is perceived as being "in Christ," they are, for the most part, abandoned. In doing this there is a deliberate ignoring of the Divine mandate to "feed" the sheep, or "the flock of God" (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2). The revealed purpose, of all the gifts Christ has given to the church, including "evangelists," is treated as though it did not even exist: "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry . . . come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . . be no more children . . . grow up into Him in all things . . . the whole body fitly framed together . . . maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph 4:11-16). By way of comparison, observe how Paul speaks of the Ephesians, who had not only been born again, but were noted for their faith in Christ and love toward all saints. He does not commend them for their decision to obey Christ, but rather informs them that he is praying for them. His prayer does not concern them faithfully winning others, or sharing the good news with others, or increasing their numbers. Whatever may be said in favor of those activities, they cannot be supported by any word addressed to the church. Paul's prayer is raised to God in view of the nature of spiritual life, which he clearly sets within the context of God's purpose. Pointing out the Divine provisions supplied for the saints, he begins to reason on their condition, doing so before the throne of God, and sharing his thoughts with the Ephesians. He does this to alert them to the nature of spiritual life, and what is required to sustain it. There is nothing shallow or juvenile about what he says. In fact any degree of the understanding of his words will require extensive reasoning and effort. Salvation is a very large undertaking, requiring the full time attention of God, the exalted Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the holy angels. Once this is understood, the necessity of his prayer will be clearly seen.

THE EYES OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Eph 1:18a *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened . . .* Other versions read, "the eyes of your heart," NASB "the eyes of your mind," NJB "your hearts," NLT and "eyes of your thought." ABP

THE EYES. A number of the versions leave out the word "eyes," but it is clearly in the text, being translated from the Greek word **ovfqalmou.j** [ofthalmous], which means "the eye" STRONG'S "the bodily organ for seeing eye." THAYER In a literal sense it refers to the bodily organ by which things are made visible to us. This is done in order to increase our awareness of the environment in which we find ourselves, acquainting us more fully with the temporal realities about us - more so than the ear and touch, by which we are always made aware of

material things.

As used here, it has to do with a spiritual faculty that enables us to "see" spiritual realities that cannot be perceived by the senses. By nature these "eyes" are closed, and must be opened by a means outside of the individual. Thus Paul was ordained "open men's eyes" (Acts 26:18), enabling them to perceive the matters relating to God's great salvation.

Fifty-seven times the Gospels refers to the "eye" or the "eyes." The epistles refer to them seventeen times, and to seeing sixty-four times. Obviously, this has to do with a very important facet of spiritual life.

OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING. The older versions associate the word "eyes" with "understanding." Most of the other versions use the word "heart," and a few use the word "mind." There are some disagreements about the Greek word used here, but they are not worthy of our time. The point of the text is the means through which understanding is appropriated. This is also related to comprehension and discernment. This has to do with obtaining the proper perspective, as opposed to merely knowing a technical meaning. It has to do with the scope of truth, or the landscape of the revelation that has been made known through Christ. "The eyes of your understanding" has to do with the effect of seeing, and "the eyes of your heart" has to do with the means through which that understanding is appropriated - the "inner man."

One thing we are going to learn in this discourse is that the redemption that is in Christ Jesus is not characterized by simplicity. Sin has introduced a complex situation. In order to resolve it, God must act in such a manner as will demonstrate His wisdom, all the while acting in strict conformity with His own nature. He cannot compromise His nature. He cannot ignore sin as though it did not exist. A savior must be found that can not only extricate men from the dilemma of sin, but keep them out of sin. The devil's power must be neutralized, and the people made adequate to resist his advances. Wicked principalities and powers must be held at bay. A route out of temptation must be provided. Provision for continual cleansing must be in effect, and be readily available at the moment sin occurs. A way must be made to re-create men, keep them from falling, and make them stand/ God's mercy must be exhibited without negating His wrath. A means must be made for mercy and truth to meet together, and righteousness and peace to kiss each other. A way must be made for man to pass the in-depth scrutiny of God without being condemned. There must also be provision for ongoing change that will be consummated in the people being conformed to the image of God's Son. There must be a righteous means by which mortality can put on immortality, and death be swallowed up by life. Satan must be bruised with a bruise that will cause his final demise. Men must be made righteous without God becoming unrighteous in making them so. These are just a few of the things involved in the salvation of men - and they are all things that must be done.

BEING ENLIGHTENED. Other versions read, "full of light,"^{BBE} "give light to,"^{CJB} "flooded with light,"^{NLT} "lightened,"^{PNT} and "receive light."^{IE}

The capacity to see is of no value or utility unless the matter seen is illuminated. An **environment** of

illumination is required for eyes to be enlightened. By saying "*the eyes of the understanding being enlightened,*" the text is affirming that God will show us the things that are to be seen - He will, so to speak, shine the spotlight upon them. The proclamation and exposition of the things of God put them within reach of those who have been given "*eyes to see*" (Deut 29:4; Matt 13:16). Yet, that is not enough! The people of God need eyes to see, and cannot do without them. There must be a proclamation and exposition of the things to be seen, else there is no need for the eyes.

Here is where the Lord Himself comes into the picture. Salvation does not remove the necessity of Divine working, or the "operation of God" (Col 2:12). He must illuminate, or shed light, upon the thing that is being declared. That, coupled with the appropriate "*eyes*" constitute the enlightening of the eyes of the understanding. There is something else that must be seen here. **What is declared must be something that God is committed to enlighten!** It is my persuasion that there is a lot being preached that can never rise above a "dead letter." It is something God will never illuminate, or that man can never truly understand - and even if they so, it will do them no good. The enlightenment of reference mandates that a true message be declared.

THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING

1:18b " . . . ; *that ye may know what is the hope of his calling . . .*"

Paul now states the objective of his prayer that they might receive from God "*the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*" (1:17). He now elaborates on the purpose for opening the eyes of the understanding. It is not in order that they may understand themselves, or their role in the Kingdom, or the world, or why things happen in the world that are difficult to understand. It is not that such knowledge is wrong. Rather, it can only be acquired within the greater understanding of God Himself. As it is written, "*For with Thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light*" (Psa 36:9). No person can drink the water of life until they have access to the Fountain. No person can "see light," until they are in the Source of light.

There is a phenomenal percentage of professed "Christian" teaching that actually obscures God's truth, and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to acquire the knowledge that is referenced in this text. Skewed teaching has always been the enemy of the church, but it has reached a crescendo in our time that has left the modern church in a state of blindness. It is what they teach that has produced this condition. Behold the difference of the Divine thrust.

THAT YE MAY KNOW. Other versions read, "*in order that you may know.*"^{NIV} Here is the objective Paul is addressing by his prayer that God would give the ephesian brethren the Spirit of wisdom and revelation on the knowledge of Himself. Remember, this is the kind of wisdom and revelation that is fulfilled by the enlightenment of the eyes of the understanding, so that people can reason correctly about the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

If the individual or a church is to live before God successfully, there are some things that must be known. This is not knowledge as in academics. These are matters that have to do with God Himself - "*the knowledge of HIM!*" It does not center in men, and does not deal with human traits or potential.

If it is true that ignorance alienates a person from the life of God (Eph 4:18), this ought to be abundantly evident within the "Christian: community - yet few professing Christians of our time have even a minuscule acquaintance with this fact.

What does God want His children to know? What is the heart of the matter? Being made in God's image, men have the ability to understand, comprehend, discern, and intellectually able to grasp truth. This innate ability is made eternally profitable in Christ Jesus, and is intended to prepare men for the future - after they die, or after Jesus comes - one of the two.

THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING. Other versions read, "*the hope to which He has called you,*"^{NIV} and "*the hope of his purpose.*"^{BBE} Notice how Paul refers to the initial involvement of the people with God - "*His calling!*" That is clearly something He did! He does not refer to "your obedience," "you calling upon the name of the Lord," or anything else believers have done. It is not that those things are unimportant. Rather, Paul is dealing with foundational matters, for that is the kind of knowledge required to ground and mature the people of God.

The people of God are referred to as "*the called*" (Rom 1:6; 8:28). Believers are admonished to consider their "*calling*" (1 Cor 1:26; Eph 4:4; 2 Tim 1:9; Heb 3:1; 2 Pet 1:10). This is not men calling upon the name of the Lord, but the Lord calling men to Himself.

Why did God call you? What was the objective of that call? What purpose intended to be fulfilled by that call? The critical thing to be known is not how many of your needs were met, or many of your desires were answered. There is a place for knowing those things, but it is not a primary place. In salvation, it is imperative to know what God is intending to do in that salvation. Whatever it is, that is why he called you!

When we were begotten by God, it was in order to have a "*lively,*" or "*living hope*" (1 Pet 1:3). That hope is a "*blessed hope*" that will be culminated at "*the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:13). That is the time when we will "*be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*" (1 John 3:1-2). It is when we will be "*ever with the Lord*" (1 Thess 4:17), and receive "*the crown of righteousness*" (2 Tim 4:8). That fulfilled hope involves reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), sitting with Him in His throne (Rev 3:21), being praised by God (1 Cor 4:5), and being given the Kingdom (Lk 12:32; Dan 7:18,22,27). The saints will "*inherit the earth*" (Matt 5:5), and be the very dwelling place of God (Rev 21:3).

This is WHY God called us! It is why He sent preachers to us (Rom 10:15). It is why He gave us ministers (1 Cor 3:5). It has been revealed that *"the God of all grace"* has *"called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus"* (1 Pet 5:10). We have been *"called into His Kingdom and glory"* (1 Thess 2:12).

To prepare us for this grand objective, He has initially *"called"* us *"into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Cor 1:9). We were *"called into the grace of Christ"* (Gal 1:6), and into *"liberty"* (Gal 5:13).

However, if these things are not comprehended there will not be sufficient incentive or strength to journey successfully through the world, and obtain the intended glory.

HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS

^{1:18c} *" . . . and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."*

Notice the priority of God Himself. It is *"HIS calling,"* and *"HIS inheritance in the saints."* It is essential to comprehend that growing up into Christ, maturing, and being separated from the ranks of the childish absolutely requires an understanding of what God is doing in the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. An ignorant church is a disgrace to Christ, a contradiction of God's revealed purpose, and is fertile soil for the work of the devil.

THE RICHES OF THE GLORY. Paul will again mention this kind of glory in 3:16: *"That He would grant you, according to His riches in glory."* He states to the Philippians that God shall supply all of their need *"according to His riches in glory BY Jesus Christ"* (Phil 4:19). To the Colossians he wrote of *"the riches of His glory"* that was made evident in the *"mystery"* made known to the Gentiles: *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col 1:27).

In all of these references God's glory is depicted as a repository out of which the various benefits of salvation are administered. In other words, the glory of God, which is the revelation of Himself, is like a spiritual goldmine in which all of the wealth required for spiritual and heavenly commerce is supplied. This being the case, you can have no more of God than You know of Him. The secret to obtaining more resources from God is to perceive more of His glory. From one point of view, this is being changed by the glory of God. Thus it is written, *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor 3:18).

Being changed *"from glory to glory"* involves more of God being in us - which is another view of being

conformed to the image of His Son. **Just as God breathed the breath of life into Adam, so He puts His glory in the new creation.**

That brings us to the consideration of this remarkable verse. However, there is a difference in the focus of this expression. In the others, the saved were the focus of the glory - receiving riches by it, having our need satisfied with it, and being changed by it. But that is not the focus here! We will be required to now look away from ourselves.

HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS. Other versions read, *"His glorious inheritance in the saints,"*^{NIV} *"His glorious inheritance among the saints,"*^{NRSV} *"His holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance,"*^{NLT} *"God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given to Him."*^{LIVING}

While the true meaning is what God receives, some versions grossly distort the passage by focusing on what the saints receive. *"the inheritance He has promised His people,"*^{CJB} *"the glorious wealth that God's people will inherit,"*^{GWN} *"the heritage He offers among His holy people,"*^{NJB} *"the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people,"*^{CEV} *"the blessings God has promised His holy people are rich and glorious,"*^{ERV} and *"the immensity of this glorious way of life He has for Christians."*^{MESSAGE}

The point these versions miss is that the redeemed people themselves are God's own inheritance. The doctrine of Scriptures makes this quite clear. It is God who *"hath reconciled us UNTO HIMSELF by Jesus Christ"* - who was in Christ *"reconciling the world UNTO HIMSELF"* (2 Cor 5:18,19). It is affirmed that we have been *"reconciled TO GOD by the death of His Son"* (Rom 5:10). God has adopted us *"by Jesus Christ UNTO HIMSELF"* (Eph 1:5). We are said to have been *"redeemed UNTO GOD"* (Rev 5:9), and are *"the firstfruits UNTO GOD"* (Rev 14:4).

Jesus is bringing us *"TO GOD"* (1 Pet 3:18). We are *"made acceptable TO GOD by Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet 2:5).

In the end, Jesus will deliver up the Kingdom *"TO GOD"* (1 Cor 15:24). At that time, God will personally take up His abode with the saints, who, in Christ, are now being made a habitation for God (Eph 2:22). As it is written, *"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God"* (Rev 21:3).

The glory of God's inheritance in the saints is to grand for men to comprehend now. They will be like jewels that have been gathered for Himself (Mal 3:17). In the hand of the Lord, they will be a *"royal diadem,"* displaying His glory from every possible perspective (Isa 62:3).

Once this is seen, or understood in any meaningful measure, the ones perceiving it will make themselves ready for display. They will not live for themselves, but *"unto Him who died for them and rose again"* (2 Cor 5:15). They will *"count it all joy"* when they are privileged to suffer for His name (James 1:2). They will be *"steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Cor 15:58) as their future becomes clearer and brighter to them.

God has made men to be motivated by incentives, which are encapsulated in His exceeding great and precious promises. There is no greater contemplation than that of being a trophy of God's grace, put on display for the assembled universe to see. The church is intended to be what God inherits - an inheritance that will bring Him glory, and absolutely no shame!

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 15

Eph 1:19 *"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead . . ."* (Eph 1:19-20a)

BEING ABLE TO PERCEIVE THE POWER

INTRODUCTION

Even before the great apostasy, or falling away (2 Thess 2:3; 2 Tim 3:1-5), there was a tendency for those in Christ to underestimate the greatness of salvation. This was owing to the "old man," and the nature of the flesh, which remains with us. It was compounded by the fact that the redeemed must "*work out*" their own salvation in a hostile realm in which continued and relentless pressure is applied to think on a lower level - where the things of God are not evident. For this reason, a considerable percentage of apostolic doctrine is spent enlarging men's perspective of God, Christ, and the great salvation that is now in place. The further a people were from the Lord, the less of this doctrine they received. Churches, such as Corinth and Galatia, received a minimum amount of the "*apostles' doctrine*" (Acts 2:42) - that is, of the teaching that effectively communicated what God intended for His people to know. Those occupying lower realms, and thinking more like men, were given rebuke and correction more than they were of stabilizing doctrine. When religious men prefer these epistles of correction, it betrays where they are living. If a person is going to be transformed, he must be brought to view the glory of the Lord, which is found in the doctrine of reference. That is what Paul is doing in this epistle. He does not deal with the problems of the church, as he did with the churches in Corinth and Galatia. The Ephesians were more deeply involved with the Lord, and thus could receive these lofty proclamations. What we are considering must not be viewed as deep things that are intended only for leading figures in the body of Christ. These are proclamations that make for the growth and stability of all of the body of Christ. It is imperative that professing believers occupy the spiritual realms where they have been placed in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:3; 2:6), maintaining a sensitive ear and a tender heart. If this is not done, these matters will be viewed as beyond the individual's capacity. The result of this will inevitably be spiritual retrogression, for whatever is not understood is snatched from the heart by the devil (Lk 8:12).

KNOWING THE GREATNESS OF THE POWER

Eph 1:19a *"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power . . ."*

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. The matter with which Paul is dealing is spiritual knowledge, also referred to as "*the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Col 1:9). This is not a reference

to the popular "will-of-God-for-your-life" view. It is rather the "will" that the Savior came to do (Heb 10:7-9) - the "will" of God as made known in "*the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 3:24) - that "*good and acceptable and perfect will of God*" (Rom 12:2). In a nutshell, it is what God is doing in His "*so great salvation*" (Heb 2:3).

Thus Paul is praying that the Ephesians might be given "*the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*" (Eph 1:17). In this, they will be enlightened concerning what God is doing through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God. This kind of knowledge is necessary to successfully negotiate the pilgrimage from earth to glory.

KNOWING. This is knowledge that can only be appropriated in Christ Jesus. It is more than mere intellectual knowledge, and is woven into the fabric of eternal life. Ponder the things that the saints of God are said to be "*knowing*." That will testify to the nature of this knowledge.

- *"Knowing that tribulation worketh patience"* (Rom 5:3).
- *"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Rom 6:6).
- *"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him"* (Rom 6:9).
- *"Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed"* (Rom 13:11).
- *"Knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation"* (2 Cor 1:7).
- *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences"* (2 Cor 5:11).
- *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ"* (Gal 2:16).
- *"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ"* (Col 3:24).
- *"Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance"* (Heb 10:34).
- *"Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing"* (1 Pet 3:9).

You see that this is the kind of knowledge that is active when we are living by faith. It is like a compass that points us in the right direction, compelling us to live with spiritual realities in mind. There really is no other way to live acceptably before the Lord.

This is a knowledge that includes familiarity with the manner of God and His Kingdom. It has to do with acquaintance with God, and a certain preference for the things of God. It causes those who possess it to correlate everything they do with what is known of God and His purpose. Those who have this knowledge are conversant with what is known. They see the sense and need of it, have a preference for it, and know how to use it.

THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF THE POWER. Here is the thing that Paul is praying for the people to know, realize, perceive, and comprehend: *"The exceeding greatness of the power."* Other versions read, *"surpassing greatness,"*^{NASB} *"incomparably great,"*^{NIV} *"immeasurable greatness,"*^{NRSV} *"unlimited is His power,"*^{BBE} *"extraordinarily great,"*^{NJB} *"incredible greatness,"*^{NLT} and *"the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of the power."*^{AMPLIFIED}

No one will ever know the adverse effects that small thinking has had on the Christian community. When the eyes of the people are turned to domestic, financial, health, and national concerns a certain cap, or limit, is placed upon the thinking. Things belonging to the this world do not require the kind of power that is here referenced. There are thousands of worldly organizations that specialize in such things, and can actually bring some form of temporary relief. However, when it comes to the things of God, pleasing God, knowing God, and walking in the light, men must break out of the bubble of carnality. The focus cannot be placed upon *"earthly things"* without the shrinkage of the perimeter of thought. The mind will not be able to reach far enough, nor the eye to see far enough.

The *"exceeding greatness of the power"* of which Paul speaks demands that it be used for transcendent purposes. It simply is not designed for the lowlands of the flesh. It is a power that cannot be harnessed to pull the affairs of this life. Unless the individual is moved to seek the things that are above (Col 3:1-2), there will actually be no perceived need of this transcendent power. It would be like having a gigantic steam roller moved into the house to crush bothersome gnats. Yet, if believers do not know this, they will live too low and access too little. All of this will impact directly upon the degree to which they are prepared to stand in the day of judgment.

TO USWARD WHO BELIEVE

1:19b " . . . to us-ward who believe. . . "

Paul is not dealing with this power in a theoretical way, tantalizing the intellect and awakening curiosity. This has everything to do with being saved, living by faith, and walking in the light. It directly relates to working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12), and making our calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10).

The carrying out of such mandates as *"put on the whole armor of God"* (Eph 6:10), *"be ye steadfast and unmoveable"* (1 Cor 15:58), *"fight the good fight of faith"* (1 Tim 6:12a), and *"lay hold on eternal life"* (1

Tim 6:12b), absolutely require the power of reference. Exhortations to *"be strong"* (1 Cor 16:13), *"resist the devil"* (James 4:7), and *"in understanding be men"* (1 Cor 14:20), necessitate the appropriation of this power. And what of words like, *"Be ye holy in all manner of conversation"* (1 Pet 1:15), *"sin not"* (1 Cor 15:34), and *"walk as children of light"* (Eph 5:8). Or dare we forget the challenges to *"run with patience the race"* (Heb 12:1), *"seek the things that are above"* (Col 3:1-2), *"be ye transformed"* (Rom 12:2), and *"glorify God in your body and in your spirit"* (1 Cor 6:20)?

None of these things are optional - and yet the modern church is not being apprized of their essentiality. Hardly a soul can be found who takes these words seriously - and yet they are attended with the greatest sobriety, urgency, and sense of necessity.

When a person - any person - takes these words seriously, the need for transcendent power will become obvious. One will search in vain through libraries and bookstores to find the secret of actually accomplishing these things. There are no speciality groups that can successfully enable a person to do what God requires of them. I frankly do not believe the average professing Christian knows or believes this. Unless that circumstance is resolved, they will be among those who *"deny the power"* (2 Tim 3:5), actually ignoring what God has provided in Christ Jesus. If that seems too strong, know that it is actually an understatement. There is no language that can state this case with the intended clarity. That is [precisely why Paul is praying for the enlightenment of the Ephesians - and for you.

TOWARD US. Other versions read, *"toward us,"* ^{NKJV} *"for us,"* ^{NIV} *"in us,"* ^{RSV} *"working in us,"* ^{CJB} *"exercised for us,"* ^{NJB} and *"in and for us."* ^{AMPLIFIED} I prefer the word *"us-ward,"* or *"toward us."* That places the emphasis on where God is directing this power. It is directed toward a certain body of people, and it simply is not possible for it to be experienced by anyone else.

The word "us" is used 277 times in the epistles, and almost always refers to those who are in Christ Jesus. These are the people God recognizes, and is *"not ashamed to be called their God"* (Heb 11:16). It is also the body of people whom Jesus is *"not ashamed"* to call *"brethren"* (Heb 2:11). The importance of being able to identify yourself with these people is apparent.

WHO BELIEVE. Paul does not take the intended recipients of this power for granted. It is not simply for all the people in a particular sect, or who belong to a specific institution. It is not directed to people according to their gender, or nationality, or social status. It might surprise you how much is being offered in the name of Jesus these days for particular groups of people. It may be men, women, or children. Perhaps it is a special measure of grace for those enslaved to some form of narcotic, or for the divorced, etc. However noble such things may appear, there is nothing like that in salvation. In Christ, everything is for everyone. All spiritual blessings are for all who have been seated in the heavenly places. All things pertaining to life and godliness are for all who are striving to live godly. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are for everyone who is in the Son - and there are no exceptions!

Here Paul affirms that this exceedingly great power is directed to those *"who believe."* Other versions read, *"who have faith,"* ^{BBE} *"who trust Him,"* ^{CJB} and *"are believing."* ^{YLT} Grammatically, the word *"believe"* is in the present-active voice. That is, it refers to those who are presently in the act of believing. This remarkable power is not directed toward those who have believed, or who will believe, but who are presently believing, trusting, and depending upon the Lord. Doctrinally, these are the people who are living by faith. This power is not toward those who are living *"after the flesh"* (Rom 8:1), minding the things of the flesh (Rom 8:5), or minding *"earthly things"* (Phil 3:19). It is not directed toward them, and is not intended for them.

This power is not for those who are **not** *"looking unto Jesus"* (Heb 12:1-2) - it is not toward them. When professing Christians are weak and vacillating, it is because they are not in the path of power. They are walking in a realm toward which the power is not focused.

But for all who are actually working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, making their calling election sure, and laying hold on eternal life, they are to be apprised of the fact that the *"exceeding greatness of the power"* is focused toward them! All they have to do is know this, in the sense of our text, and the power will do its work. Such people will not seek to do mediocre things. Their aim is not simply to get along, so to speak. To be sure, believing does have its indispensable benefits - and not believing puts one under the cloud of God's wrath.

THE WORKING OF HIS MIGHTY POWER

1:19c-20a " . . . according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead . . . "

This power is so superior that a special demonstration of it is required for it to be profitably known. In defining this power, Paul does not point to Noah being saved from the flood. He does not draw the attention of the people to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. He will not make us aware of Israel defeating the Amalekites while Moses hands were held up, or Joshua commanding the sun to stand still. This is not the place to mention David and Goliath, or Samson and the Philistines. The parting of the Red Sea and the River Jordan are not cited as examples of this mighty power. All of those displays go far beyond mere human strength, but they are not enough to ground the faith of the saints of God. In order to safely pass through this world, we will need more power than was displayed in those epochal events.

I want to again emphasize that this kind of power is necessary to live unto the Lord, perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord,

and live in a manner that pleases the Lord.

THE WORKING OF HIS MIGHTY POWER. Other versions read, *"the working of the strength of His might,"* ^{NASB} *"the working of His mighty strength,"* ^{NIV} *"the working of His vast strength,"* ^{CSB} *"the operation of the might of His power."* ^{DOUAY} How this power has been employed will dictate the manner in which we think about it. It will also determine how we seek to employ this power, and when we will especially endeavor to procure it.

HE WROUGHT IN CHRIST. Other versions read, "*worked in Christ*,"^{NKJV} "*brought about in Christ*,"^{NASB} "*exerted in Christ*,"^{NIV} and "*put this power to work in Christ*."^{NRSV}

It is absolutely essential that we perceive what is now affirmed. When delineating the employment of this power, Paul does not refer to the earthly ministry of Jesus. He makes no reference to the many miracles He did - casting out demons, healing the sick, multiplying bread and fish, walking on the water, or commanding two great catches of fish. He does not recall the calming of the storms, or the cursing of the fig tree, or a fish delivering a coin to Peter. That was surely power, but not the kind that has been directed toward those who are believing.

He certainly does not cite the feats of Moses, or Joshua, or Samson, Gideon, or David. Those were great works, to be sure, but what he now addresses is a different order of power.

WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. Here is where the exceeding great power that is toward believers was put on display - when Jesus was raised from the dead! Here was the greatest work of all - the overcoming of the last and greatest enemy: death. Jesus is the first One who was raised from the dead. That is the proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus is "*the firstborn from the dead*" (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). Again it is declared that He should "*be the first that should rise from the dead*" Acts 26:23).

One might object, saying others were raised from the dead: the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17-23), the Shunammite's son (2 Kgs 4:32-37), the young man at Elisha's grave (2 Kgs 13:21), the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:12-15), Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:49-55), Lazarus (John 11:43-44), saints that arose when Jesus died (Matt 27:52), Dorcas (Acts 9:37-40), and Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12). But none of those were resurrections in the proper sense of the word. True resurrection involves dying no more - which is the manner in which Jesus was raised: "*Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him*" (Rom 6:9). Jesus is the first one raised in that manner! His resurrection was a complete overthrow of death, which was not the case in the others who were raised from the dead. They were not raised to put on immortality, which resurrection shall occur at the end of time (1 Cor 15:53-56).

The kind of power it took to raise Jesus from the dead is the kind of power that is required "*live unto Him*" who died for us and rose again (2 Cor 5:15). That is the kind of power that is "*toward*" - focused upon - those who are believing. This assists us in understanding more fully why Jesus said those who believed on Him would do "*greater works*" (John 14:12). They would be works driven by the greater, and exceeding power that is toward them. "*Greater works*" are those that employ resurrection power.

Each person is responsible for comprehending the greatness of the power that is focused toward the believers. This begins by giving heed to the proclamation of the truth concerning this matter. The salvation of God must be seen as precisely that - the salvation of God. The power that is focused upon the believers was introduced by delivering them from the power of darkness - raising them from death in trespasses and sin.

However, the bulk of the work requiring this power is AFTER we were delivered. It is to be employed in maintaining the status of "*accepted*," going on to perfection, and becoming a vehicle through which this power can effectively work for the glory of God. Paul himself is an example of the successful employment of this power. It did not make him impressive after the flesh. In fact, he was not the center of attention, but rather what he was doing in the name of the Lord. His eyes had been opened to the power.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON #16

Eph 1:20b " . . . and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ 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." (Eph 1:20b-21)

THE PRESENT EXALTATION OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

In order to further establish the saints of God, the spotlight must be turned upon Jesus Christ and His present position and status. The nature of spiritual life demands that this be the case. Although the saints have been washed from their sins, have been accepted by God, and have received the earnest of the Spirit. Their comprehension of Christ must be matured. That is because they are opposed by an intelligent adversary who uses thoughts to draw the people under his dominion. The battle is so fierce we need the protection of "*the helmet of salvation*," which involves the extensive knowledge and comprehension of the accomplishments and ministry of Jesus Christ. That is the matter that Paul addresses in this portion of his prayer. This is not only something that is to be declared, it requires the enlightenment that comes from heaven. Further, this illumination is not sent automatically. It appears that a request must be made for it. This was even true under the Old Covenant. Moses, who spent forty consecutive days being tutored in the very presence of God, was the very one who asked God to show him His glory (Ex 33:18). One individual with unusual insight, was the very one that continued to petition God for understanding (Psa 119:34,73,126,144,169). Throughout history, this aspect of the Kingdom life has rarely been seen. It comes under the heading of knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). As Paul unfolds his prayer to us, it will be apparent that an unseen Christ tends to be a neglected one. The more people are in the flesh, the more unaware they are of unseen realities, the chief of which is Jesus Christ Himself. It is not enough to know that He exists, or that He is alive. It is the position He occupies, and how He is employing His power that is essential to know. That is the all-important matter to which Paul now directs our attention.

GOD SET JESUS AT HIS OWN RIGHT HAND

Eph 1:20b " . . . and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

Paul is in the process of expounding Christ Jesus - particularly of His activity and placement after He died and rose

from the dead. This is a facet of Christ that must be comprehended if the child of God is to mature, or come to the point where he is not vulnerable to the devices of the devil, being able to *"stand"* against his wiles. In some circles it is quite fashionable to limit any preaching about Christ to the period between His birth and His exit from post resurrection life upon the earth. However, the power of Christ that is experienced by the believer is directly related to His exaltation in heaven.

Technically the resurrection of Christ involved three distinct phases, all of which are considered as a composite whole: ¹ His resurrection from the dead, ² His ascension into heaven, and ³ His enthronement at the right hand of God. In the book of Ephesians Paul presents doctrine on all three of these phases: Resurrection (1:20), Ascension (4:8-10), and Enthronement (1:20,22; 4:10,15; 5:23). In this epistle Paul also delivers powerful teaching concerning the death of Christ (1:7; 2:13-16; 5:2,25-27). In all of this teaching Paul presents the facts, but not merely the facts. In proclaiming Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation he expounds their effects, or impact upon the fulfillment of the purpose of God and the salvation of His people. In this passage, the enthronement of Jesus is the matter being expounded. **It is something that is to be comprehended by the saints.** That is the reason for this prayer.

AND SET HIM. Other versions read, *"seated Him,"* ^{NKJV} *"made Him sit,"* ^{RSV} *"gave Him a place,"* ^{BBE} *"seating Him,"* ^{CSB} *"enthroning Him,"* ^{NJB} and *"put Him."* ^{IE}

This is something God the Father did to Jesus - seated Him at His own right hand! The fact that He was *"seated"* accents that His reign had commenced, for sitting on a throne denotes a kingly reign. Twenty-eight times sitting on a *"throne"* is mentioned in Scripture. This is what kings did when they commenced their reign, judged a matter, or executed their power.

Further, the promises relating to the coming Messiah that were delivered by the prophets spoke of Him being seated on a throne (Jer 33:17; Zech 6:13). Apostolic doctrine says of Jesus, "He sat down" (Heb 1:3; 10:12). Although He is waiting while seated (Heb 1:13), He is also reigning, for this sitting is a kingly posture.

AT HIS OWN RIGHT HAND. Other versions read, *"at His right hand,"* ^{NASB} *"on His right hand,"* ^{DOUAY} *"gave Him the highest position,"* ^{GWN} *"the place of honor at God's right hand,"* ^{NLT} and *"at His right side."* ^{CEV} This is a privilege no angel, however endowed with power, has ever experienced. As it is written, *"But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?"* (Heb 1:13).

From one perspective, the *"right hand"* of God is, so to speak, His working side. Thus we read, *"Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy"* (Ex

15:6). He is said to save by His right hand (Psa 17:7), and hold men up by it (Psa 18:35). There is also *"the saving strength of His right hand"* (Psa 20:6). Through His *"right hand"* He *"shall find out those that hate Him"* (Psa 21:8). God's right hand is *"full of righteousness"* (Psa 48:10). Now Jesus is declared to be *"by the right hand of God"* (Acts 2:33; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). This means that all of the things associated with the right hand of God are now being administered by Jesus, the glorified Man.

IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES. Other versions read, *"the heavenly realms,"* ^{NIV} *"in heaven,"* ^{BBE} *"the heavens,"* ^{CSB} *"heavenly things,"* ^{TNT} *"the heavenly world,"* ^{IE} *"heavenly heights,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} *"the heavenlies,"* ^{ABP} and *"deep heaven."* ^{MESSAGE}

The expression *"heavenly places"* comes from a single word, and means "above the sky," ^{STRONG'S} "properly, existing in or above heaven, heavenly." ^{THAYER} It is a vast region that includes a place where dark forces are located (Eph 6:12). Later it will be affirmed that God has seated those who are in Christ *"in heavenly places"* (Eph 2:6). At the highest area of this vast domain (all ruled by Jesus), there is heaven itself, where the Throne is located. There Jesus sits on the right hand of God executing His will, and bringing many sons to glory. There is a sense in which we have access to this realm by faith. There is also a sense in which we are not yet there, even though our inheritance is there (1 Pet 1:4). As compared to our experience on earth, we have a *"better substance"* there (Heb 10:34). Our manner of life is derived from there, which is the place from which Jesus will come to gather us (Phil 3:20).

The point here is that the *"heavenly places"* can be presently accessed by the saints of God, even though they do not yet possess their inheritance, which is there. Jesus has been seated there with that in mind, in order that He might *"bring"* us to glory (Heb 2:10). Speaking most precisely, Jesus is not where the conflict is - that is where we are. He has been exalted to the place that rules over everything that initiates and maintains conflict. It is essential that God's people know this in a living way. Faith will use this awareness to enable us to be victorious.

FAR ABOVE ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER

^{1:20} *"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."*

This is an exposition of what Jesus said: *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"* (Matt 28:18). It is also the fulfillment of His saying, *"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"* (John 5:22).

FAR ABOVE. Other versions read, *"far over,"* ^{BBE} *"above,"* ^{DARBY} *"high above,"* ^{MRD} *"Far, far above,"* ^{LIVING} and *"rules over."* ^{CEV} The words *"far above"* are translated from a single word that means, "above a thing - of place, of rank or power," ^{THAYER} *"far above,"* ^{FRIBERG/UBS} and *"high above."* ^{GINGRICH}

The idea here is that Jesus faces no aggression, and has no competitors. There is no personality that fights against Him, for He has soundly defeated them all in His death (Col 2:15; Heb 2:14). There is no personality or group of personalities that stand against any word delivered to them by Jesus. This was even true of Satan's hosts during Christ's earthly ministry. The only personalities that actively reject and oppose God are the weakest of all created personalities - men. And even this is because of the nature of salvation, and what God is revealing of Himself in it. In the end, we will find all who are saved are the result of God's drawing power (John 6:44,65), workmanship (Eph 2:10), and being brought to glory by Jesus (Heb 2:10).

Christ Jesus being "*above all*" is not referring to Him as a kind of figurehead. It is not that this is what He ought to be - a kind of rank that is not being honored. Jesus is actually "*above all*," both by location, and by influence. At His word men live or die, stand or fall, and are apprehended or abandoned. All of this is driven by the will of God - i.e. His "*eternal purpose*."

ALL PRINCIPALITY, AND POWER, AND MIGHT, AND DOMINION. Other versions read, "*all rule, and authority and power, and dominion*"^{NASB} "*every principality, ruling force, power or sovereignty*,"^{NJB} "*any ruler or authority or power or leader*,"^{NLT} "*any other king or ruler or dictator or leader*."^{LIVING}

Some of the versions appear to accent worldly power (NLT/LIVING). While Jesus is certainly over worldly powers, fulfilling the description of "*Governor among the nations*" (Psa 22:28), that is not the point being made here. This has primary regard to spiritual forces that dominate the world, and against which believers presently "wrestle" (Eph 6:12; Col 2:15).

Principality. A leader, the first of rank, invested with what is required to administer.

Power. Liberty of doing what he pleases, within Divine purpose.

Might. Inherent power residing in the personality. It is delegated power.

Dominion. One who possesses a realm, having power over it.

There is a certain ranking of unseen powers-i.e. Michael is over Israel (Dan 10:21; 12:1), an evil principality was over Persia, and another over Greece (Dan 10:20). National prominence is not determined on the earth, but is carried out on the earth by certain unseen "*principalities*." There are holy angels described as having "*power over waters*" (Rev 11:6), and "*power over fire*" (Rev 14:18). Jesus is "*above*" them all, and they are all subservient to Him.

EVERY NAME. Other versions read, "*every title*,"^{NIV} and "*every title that can be conferred*."^{AMPLIFIED} This is not a "name" like a given name, or a family name. It refers to an authoritative title that is conferred upon

some personality. Examples would be "king" (1 Kgs 1:34), "lord" (2 Kgs 6:26), "ruler" (Gen 45:8), etc.

ALL principalities, ALL power, ALL might, ALL dominion, and ALL who are named as rulers are under Jesus. To say it in the words of our text, the exalted Christ is "above" them all. That is, He presently exercises the rule over them. The same Jesus who is High Priest to us, is King of kings, and Lord of lords. There is nothing or no one who is not presently in subjection to Jesus (Heb 2:8). This is total dominion, as was revealed to Daniel (Dan 7:13).

NOT ONLY IN THIS WORLD, BUT ALSO IN THAT WHICH IS TO COME. Other versions read, "*not only in this age, but also in that which is to come,*" ^{NKJV} "*the present order . . . that which is to come,*" ^{BBE} and "*this age and in this world . . . also in the age and world to come.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

The point here is that Christ's superiority not only applies to time, but to eternity; not only in this world, but also in the world to come. The word "world" considers the matter from the standpoint of location and perception. "The word "age" considers it from the standpoint of time versus eternity. The word "order" depicts it as the present manner of things - the temporal as compared with the eternal order.

There is presently no domain, personality, or group of personalities, whether in heaven, earth, or under the earth, over which Jesus does not preside. An enlargement of His power is not possible, for He has "all power" now. The reason men have become confused about this is their failure to comprehend the purpose of the power. It is presently devoted to bringing many sons to glory. In that process, He holds inimical powers at bay, not permitting them to stop the progress of the sons to glory. From a practical point of view, all of this is being accomplished through the saints direct affiliation with Christ Himself-i.e. by grace through faith.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A RESURRECTED AND ENTHRONED CHRIST

Acts 4:33 "*And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*"

It is necessary to say a few words concerning the significance of a resurrected and enthroned Christ. In our time the reign of Christ is too often associated with the future, and not with the present. Jesus is being set forth as some day returning to the earth to reign, and doing so in Jerusalem. Apostolic doctrine does not support this teaching, which has been developed by putting together a hodgepodge of Scriptures, and binding them together with human wisdom. However, the apostles have spoken with remarkable clarity concerning both the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

- During their initial persecution, when the apostles delivered a powerful *witness "of the resurrection of Christ"* to the brethren, and *"great grace was upon them all."*
- Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power, *"by the resurrection of the dead"* (Rom 1:4).
- God has *"begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pet 1:3).
- Baptism saves us *"by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet 3:21).
- In Christ, there is such a thing as knowing *"Christ and the power of His resurrection"* (Phil 3:10).
- The resurrection of Christ is a *"rather"* matter, which is **even greater than His death**. *"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"* (Rom 8:34). It is greater because Jesus was *"crucified through weakness, yet He lives by the power of God"* (1 Cor 13:5).
- It is the resurrection of Christ that gives validity to both preaching and faith (1 Cor 15:14).
- The *"newness of life"* in which we are raised to walk, is traced back to the resurrected Christ (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12; 3:1).

All of the above require a resurrected Jesus. None of these things could be accomplished until death, the devil, and principalities and powers had been soundly defeated. Temporal matters, like those exhibited in Christ's miracles, and supernatural things worked in the natural realm (healings, etc) were not done by this kind of power. Transforming power is **resurrection** power.

THE ENTHRONEMENT OF CHRIST

- ENTHRONED, HE HAS DISPENSED THE HOLY SPIRIT. *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which*

ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33)

- EXALTED, HE NOW GIVES REPENTANCE. *"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).*
- EXALTED, HE WILL BE DULY ACKNOWLEDGED BY ALL. *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).*
- HE IS THE ONLY POTENTATE. *"Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim 6:15).*
- HE IS PRESENTLY OVER ALL. *"Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom 9:5).*
- HE IS NOW LORD OF ALL. *"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36).*
- AS EXALTED, HE FILLS ALL THINGS. *"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10).*

None of the above could be done if Jesus did not presently have total dominion. The new birth, bringing many sons to glory, keeping believers from falling, and the High Priestly ministry of Jesus all require His exaltation in heaven. That is the power that equipped Him to be the Captain of our salvation as a Man who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. It is also important to recognize that the exaltation of Jesus is presently acknowledged by every created personality, both evil and holy. The **only** present exception is found in humanity. However, that condition will not continue. Eventually, every knee will bow to Him, and acknowledge before an assembled universe that He IS Lord. It is imperative that these things be declared to the church.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 17

Eph 1:22 ***" And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, ²³ Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."***

(Eph 1:22-23)

GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

I want to again remind you of the remarkable references to Deity that are in this prayer - not to mention all of the preceding verses (1:1-14 - 32 references). In this prayer (15-23), there are 19 references. There are 51 references to Deity in the first chapter. Included in his prayer are *"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," "the Father of glory," "the hope of His calling," "His inheritance in the saints," "exceeding greatness of His power," "the working of His mighty power," "He wrought in Christ," "He raised Him from the dead," and set Him," "His own right," (He) hath put all things under His feet," "Head over all things," "His body," and "the fulness of Him."* Considering that Paul is writing to promote maturity in the saints - growing up into Him in all things - it ought to be apparent that this is done by declaring and expounding the wonderful works of God, not the required works of men. It is not that the people are not told what they must do, or what they should retain, and the kind of life they should live. However, such instruction is consistently based upon what the Lord has done. That is the appointed vehicle through which instruction is made effective. Paul does not resort to philosophy, and even seems to avoid earthly parallels in his introductory remarks and prayer. In our time there has been such a distortion in teaching that these foundational matters are rarely considered. As a result, fulfilling the will of the Lord and spiritual growth are generally approached from the standpoint of routine, regulation, and procedure. As Peter well says, we have been redeemed from that kind of approach to spiritual life (1 Pet 1:18). By way of contrast, the just live by faith, and faith requires the declaration of unchanging realities. All such things are exclusively related to God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

ALL THINGS ARE UNDER JESUS' FEET

Eph 1:22a ***"And hath put all things under His feet . . ."***

The subject is still God the Father, and "And what is *"the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power"* (Eph 1:19). In order for us to know what to expect from this power, He has affirmed that it was put on display, so to speak, *"when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all . . . "* (Eph 1:20-21).

We should not expect this kind of power to be required to resolve earthly problems, personal issues, and other mundane matters. If there is anything that can be accomplished by the wisdom, ingenuity, and extraordinary human effort, this power cannot and will not be employed. Knowing the greatness of this power has a great bearing on how we seek to use it. God has revealed enough about living by faith that we should not have to be taught extensively about these things. Spiritual life involves such things as being taught by Jesus (Eph 4:21), accessing God (Eph 3:12), wrestling against principalities and powers (Eph 6:12), casting down imaginations (2 Cor 10:3-4), going on to perfection (Heb 6:1), resisting the devil (James 4:7), and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit 2:12). We are expected to finish the race set before us (Heb 12:1-2), keep the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Heb 6:11), and have boldness in the day of judgment (1 John 4:17).

All of this, and more, requires the kind of power that is being described. That is why it is being declared. It is also why Satan seeks to divert our attention to our lives in the world rather than the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3).

THE PERFORMER OF THE DESCRIBED ACTION. The Subject of this sentence is *"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory"* (1:17a). **He** is the One who gives *"the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of **Him**"* (1:17b). It is *"**His** calling,"* and *"**His** inheritance in the saints"* (1:18). It is the *"exceeding greatness of **His** power to us-ward"* (1:19a), and *"**His** might power"* (1:19b). It is *"**He**"* that raised Jesus *"from the dead"* (1:20a), and it is **He** that *"set"* Jesus at *"**His** own hand in the heavenly places"* (1:20b).

A great disservice has been done to the Christian community by a lack of stress upon *"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor 11:31). He is the One who sent Jesus (Gal 4:4), enthroned Him at His right hand (Eph 1:20), and will send Him back (Acts 3:20-21). It is He who has *"sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts"* (Gal 4:6). We have been reconciled to Him (Rom 5:10). He is the One who is glorified with *"one mind and one mouth"* (Rom 15:6). When the enemies of Jesus have been publicly made Christ's footstool, Jesus will give the Kingdom back to *"God, even the Father"* (1 Cor 15:24).

A proper understanding of salvation requires the perceived centrality of God the Father, with Jesus Christ as the solitary means of access to and reception by the Father. Where this perspective is missing, theological confusion is inevitable.

WHAT ARE "ALL THINGS." Other versions read, *"everything,"* ^{NIV} and *"is in charge of it all,"* ^{MESSAGE} Every other version uses the expression *"all things."*

On the practical level, this refers to everything and everyone that has potential influence over us - whether for good or evil. From the adversarial view, it would be "*tribulation . . . distress . . . persecution . . . famine . . . nakedness . . . peril . . . sword . . . death . . . life . . . angels . . . principalities . . . powers . . . things present . . . things to come . . . height . . . depth . . . or any other creature*" (Rom 8:35-39). Focusing on higher orders of life, it includes "*angels and authorities and powers*" that have been "*made subject unto him*" (1 Pet 3:22).

From the standpoint of favorable influences "*all things*" also include the holy angels, who worship Him, and whom He sends (Heb 1:6; Acts 12:11; Rev 1:1; 22:6,16).

Having exalted "the Man Christ Jesus," God has made the Son fully adequate to carry out everything involved in bringing the sons to glory. There is nothing nor no one who stands between the sons and the glory that is not knowingly and obediently subject to Jesus Christ. They all will yield to His will without question or any form of resistance.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF "UNDER HIS FEET?" This is an expression denoting absolute dominion (Psa 8:6). The epistle to the Hebrews states the case well: "*For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him*" (Heb 2:8). Presently, this is fully realized in Christ Jesus (Heb 2:9). That is, everything is actually under His authority, which means there is no such thing as expressed and knowledgeable resistance of Jesus. Satan himself, all demons, and all principalities and powers yield to Jesus as soon as He speaks. This was confirmed during Jesus ministry, which introduced this kind of authority to men.

The fact that this subjection is not apparent by no means indicates that it is not real. Christ's present authority and ministry is not devoted to the overthrow of inimical powers. He already did that in the cross (Col 2:15; Heb 2:14). Now His authority is exhibited in His intercession, ministry to the saints, care of His people, and bringing them successfully to glory.

THE CAPACITY IN WHICH JESUS HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE CHURCH

1:22b "*. . . and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church.*"

Our text is still revealing the working of God the Father. He sent Jesus (1 John 4:14), delivered Him up (Rom 8:32), raised Him from the dead (Acts 13:30), received Him into glory (1 Tim 3:16), set Him at His own right hand (Eph 1:20), and put everything under His feet" (Eph 1:22). Now we read that He "*gave Him*" to be something.

WHO GAVE HIM TO BE? Other versions read, "gave Him as,"^{NASB} "appointed Him to be,"^{NIV} "made Him,"^{NRSV} "hath given Him,"^{GENEVA} and "placed Him."^{MONTGOMERY}

Because there is "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph 4:6), no one can effectively contest His placements, or say to Him, "What have you done?"^{NIV} (Dan 4:35). Although the heathen may rage against Divine appointments - particularly against the exaltation of Jesus - it is all in vain. God will laugh in derision at them (Psa 2:1-6), and proceed to do His will as though they did not even exist.

THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS. Other versions read, "Head over everything,"^{NIV} "high over all,"^{MRD} "above all things,"^{NJB} "the supreme Head,"^{LIVING} "universal and supreme Head,"^{WEYMOUTH} "supreme Lord over all things."^{GNB}

This is not a declaration of Jesus as a kind of Figurehead, nominal Head, or straw-man. It is not that this is what Jesus **should** be, but actually is not. The declaration of the Gospel is that "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). The cherubim and Seraphim know it, the angels know it. Satan knows it. The demons know it. Principalities and powers know it. It is only the blind among mankind that do not know it - and that has no bearing on the matter at all. Jesus now judges all things, and His judgment stands (John 5:22). If He commands someone to live, they do. If He commands someone to die, they do. If He commands Satan to depart, He does. If He commands angels to come, they do. If He makes a way of escape, it is effective. He is over circumstances, so that a powerful storm can destroy a ship, yet all of the people in it are saved (Acts 27:22,44). He can "command deliverances" (Psa 4:4), and they are always effective. The same power possessed by the Father has been conferred upon the Son, so that it may be said of Him now, "O LORD God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Tine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee?" (2 Chron 20:6). He now possesses "all power in heaven and in earth," and does so as a glorified Man (Matt 28:18).

TO THE CHURCH. Other versions read, "for the church,"^{NIV} "to the assembly,"^{DARBY} "over all the church,"^{DOUAY} "for the good of the church,"^{GWN} "to be Head of the church,"^{MRD} "gave him to the church as head,"^{NET} "Christ rules the church,"^{MESSAGE} and "the universal and supreme Head of the church [a leadership exercised throughout the church]."^{AMPLIFIED}

Here some of the versions introduce confusion referring to Jesus being given as the Head of the church. Although He is the Head of the church, that is not the point being made by this text. The Authorized Version says God has given Him "to" the church. The idea is that God has given Him TO the church in the capacity of "Head over all things." Other versions read, "FOR the church," which is also a proper rendering. That is, He has been made the Head over all things for the benefit the church. He has not been given to the church as a potential king who presently exercises His authority only in the church itself. Such a thought is

preposterous, and is unworthy of being entertained by the any believer.

An exalted Christ that is not the Head of everything is One that has not been exalted at all. The exaltation is not merely to manage the church - which He surely does - but to control its environment, its adversaries, its times, and its seasons. Jesus cannot bring us to glory unless He has authority over all that lies between us and the glory to which He is bringing us.

If this is not the case, what purpose is there in considering *"the Apostle and High Priest of our profession"* (Heb 3:1). Is this consideration only in order that we might know what we are to do? Or does the contemplation of Christ include the fact that nothing *"shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom 8:39). How is it possible to be *"saved by hope"* (Rom 8:24) if we have a Savior who is not presently over all, and under whose feet all of our enemies reside? How will we be able to maintain *"the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"* (Heb 3:6) if there is one of our foes who is not under Christ's feet?

Of course, before "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," He was already over all, being *"in the form of God,"* and who *"was God"* (John 1:1). But at that time He was not "the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:15,17), or "Christ" (Eph 1:20). He had not yet entered the world, died, been raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, or set down on the right hand of God. All of that has now taken place because salvation had to be through a Man - *"the Man Christ Jesus."*

Now, however, God has given the church what it needs - a glorified Man who possesses all power in heaven and earth, and yet is able to empathize with us in the feeling of infirmity, or human weakness. He safely negotiated through trial, and He will enable us to do the same.

THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S BODY AND HIS FULNESS

^{1:23} *"Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."*

This is the exposition of the word *"church."* The Spirit does not move Paul to refer to it as an assembly, The thrust here is not the gathering of the people. This is not a reference to appearance, or what is perceived outwardly. All of those things are found in apostolic teaching about the church. However, when it comes to foundational matters, the church is to be seen from heaven's viewpoint in general, and from the standpoint of Christ in particular.

HIS BODY, Paul is the only writer of Scripture that refers to the church as Christ's *"body"* (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12-20,22-25,27; Eph 1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30; Col 1:18; 2:19; 3:15) - 24 times!

While Jesus is "the Head of the body" (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19), that Headship is not the point of this text.

The "body" is the vehicle through which Christ works among men. So far as the earth is concerned "His body" is the appointed means through which He expresses Himself. This is where nourishment is ministered. It is where direction takes place. It is where comfort is ministered. It is where the knowledge of Himself and God the Father is possessed. This is what makes Christ accessible to men. So far as Divine activity upon the earth is concerned, Christ without the church is like a head without a body.

The body is singular, not plural. The "church" is not a compilation of bodies, but is "one body," possessing "one Spirit," and called in "one hope of" its "calling" (Eph 4:4). The picture being presented today is that of many bodies, not "one body." They can by no means be considered one unified whole - unless it is theoretically or philosophically. If this is a true assessment of the case, the modern church is a serious misrepresentation of what God is doing.

Within this body - the body of Christ - the Father determines the placement of every individual member. As it is written, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor 12:18). I understand this to be another way of saying they have been "given" to Christ (John 6:39; 17:7,9,11,24; Heb 2:13). Strictly speaking, God does not give the people to Christ individually, in isolation of all others, but does so by placing them in Christ's body. By **relation**, they are his "**brethren**" and He is the elder Brother (Heb 2:11). They are the "**children**" and He is the One who has begotten and raises them (Heb 2:14). They are His "**wife**," and He is their Husband (Rev 19:7; 21:9). So far as tutelage is concerned, they are His **disciples**, and He is the Master, or Teacher (Lk 11:1). From the standpoint of **productivity**, they are "**the branches**" and He is the Vine (John 14:5). Viewed from the aspect of what is done, they are "**servants**," and He is the Master, or Lord (Luke 6:40).

All of these relationships are fulfilled in "the body," and none of them is accomplished independently of "the body."

THE FULNESS OF HIM. Other versions read, "full measure of Him," ^{BBE} "full expression," ^{CJB} "completes Him," ^{GWN} "filled with Himself," ^{LIVING} "the totality of Christ," ^{IE} "completeness of Him," ^{WEYMOUTH} "filled with Him," ^{ERV} and "in which He speaks and acts." ^{MESSAGE}

If there is anything of Christ to be found in all of the world, it will be made available in the church. Christ does not pour out of His fulness into the government, or the domestic family, or any institution or organization separate from the church. He does not pour it forth into the entertainment or athletic world - even though men are fond of giving Jesus credit for their aptitude in these areas. It is true that natural aptitude comes from God, and is inherent in nature. But that is not the focus of Christ's government, or the gifts that He gives. This is a hard lesson for some to learn, but it is a necessary one. In Scripture, the administration of gifts is never disassociated from Jesus, and is never focused upon worldly life. Further, the gifts that Jesus gives are, strictly speaking, not learned attributes or the result of human disciples.

THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL. Other versions read, "fills everything in every way,"^{NIV} "all things are made complete,"^{BBE} "fills all creation,"^{CJB} "who fills all things everywhere with himself,"^{NLT} and "fills the universe with Himself."^{WEYMOUTH}

This is strictly related to the execution of God's eternal purpose, and is the direct result of Christ's redemptive work. Paul is not commenting on life in general, but is rather addressing matters having to do with the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. While the exalted Christ is omnipresent, I do not believe that is the point of this text. This has to do with Divine purpose.

Everything and everyone related to salvation is animated by the nature of Jesus Christ. This is especially true of the church itself, which is His body. His character and attributes saturate the whole of the church. Every gift is, in reality, an aspect of Christ's Person. He is to the individual components what the widow's bottle of oil was to the sorted vessels that filled her house (2 Kgs 4:8). Later Paul will mention growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15). This has to do with tapping into Christ's fulness, which equips the various members of the body to be used by Him in the fulfillment of God's purpose. This is heaven's way of developing the aptitude that is required to carry out the will of the Lord, and edifying the body in the process.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 18

Eph 2:1 ***" And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."*** (Eph 2:1)

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HEAD HAPPENS TO THE BODY

INTRODUCTION

Paul is speaking in the capacity of an apostle - one who has been sent forth by Jesus with a message to be declared - in this case, particularly to the church. This circumstance means that this is what the Head of the church wants the church to know. It is what the Captain has determined is essential knowledge for the saved. This necessarily implies that the life to which the saints has been called requires this kind of knowledge. How serious is it when these things are not being expounded to the saints - members of Christ's body? What can be said of those who withhold from the household of Christ the things He has determined they are to know? Those who handle the Word of God are custodians of it - appointed stewards. It is their business to declare *"all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27). If they fail to do this, they are *"wicked and slothful servants"* (Matt 25:26). This is why Paul urged Timothy, *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Tim 4:4). It was in view of a coming apostasy that Paul admonished Timothy to *"preach the word"* - in season and out of season. The need for instruction was to be detected quickly and appropriate action taken. The intrusion of sin was to be duly noted, and a proper response rendered. When the spirit of slumber began to settle on the people, a rousing call to godliness was to be issued. The preacher is like a watchman on the wall, positioned by God to keep the people in a state of informed alertness. When men face apostasy, it is not enough to simply say that is what God said would happen - as though apostasy was scheduled and men could do nothing about it. It is true that God sending *"strong delusion"* played a key role in the falling away. However, it is also true that it was largely owing to the failure of preachers and teachers to *"preach the Word."* Whatever may be said about men not receiving the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10-12), there is no excuse for the people of God not being taught the things recorded in this passage. On the other hand, when they hear such words and give heed to them, just as it is written, *"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord"* (Psa 64:10).

HE RAISED JESUS . . . AND YOU!

Eph 2:1a **"And you . . ."** Other versions reads, "as for you,"^{NIV} "you used to be,"^{CJB} "you were once dead,"^{GWN} "also you,"^{YLT} "To you Gentiles also,"^{WEYMOUTH} "you too were dead,"^{WILLIAMS} "In the past you were,"^{CEV} and "It wasn't so long ago that you were."^{MESSAGE}

I am persuaded that several of these versions have missed the point of the passage. Paul is not starting a new subject, but elaborating on what he has written about Jesus. The passage can best be understood by viewing verses 21-23 of chapter one as a parenthetical statement. In it Paul briefly elaborates on the power exhibited in Christ's resurrection from the dead, confirming that the power also exalted Him high above all. This is how Jesus is to be viewed by the church - as presently possessing all of the power there is, with all created personalities and things being made subject to Him. **The subject of exposition** - the opening of our eyes to "the exceeding greatness of the power to us-ward who believe" (1:19). That power has been primarily exhibited in the raising of Jesus from the dead, and His exaltation above every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the one to come. None of that was actually seen by any mortal! We only know it by revelation - a word from God.

Now, in the first verse of the second chapter, Paul returns to the affirmation made in 1:19-20. He affirms that He is praying the brethren will be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so they will know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places . . . **AND YOU!**"

That is, Jesus was not raised from the dead in isolation from the people of God. There is a sense in which they were raised with Him. Thus we read, "risen **with Him** through faith in the operation of God" (Col 2:12); "if ye then be risen **with Christ**" (Col 3:1). Later Paul will affirm that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

IDENTITY WITH CHRIST IS THE POINT. In salvation, identity with Christ is the point. In Jewry, so far as a mark was concerned, circumcision was the point. So far as life was concerned, keeping the Law, every jot and tittle of it, was the point. Now that "eternal salvation" is in place, the effective identity of the people with Jesus Christ is the issue. That is an identity that is accomplished by God, and is primarily recognized by Him. It is also an identity that is confirmed by both preferences and conduct.

This is an identity that cannot be exploited. It is not designed to make men rich, or gain a position of prominence in this world. It strictly has to do with how God regards the people, and the role they will play after the present heavens and earth have passed away.

"WITH CHRIST." Much is made of this identity in the apostles' doctrine. The saved ones are said to be "dead **with Christ**" (Rom 6:8), "joint heirs **with Christ**" (Rom 8:17), "crucified **with Christ**" (Gal 2:20),

"quickened together **with Christ**" (Eph 2:5), "risen **with Christ**" (Col 3:1), and their lives are "**hid with Christ in God**" (Col 3:3).

"IN CHRIST." Redemption is "*in Christ*" (Rom 3:24), there is "*no condemnation to them which are in Christ*" (Rom 8:1), the love of God is "*in Christ*" (Rom 8:39), believers "*being many are one body in Christ*" (Rom 12:6), we are "sanctified **in Christ**" (1 Cor 1:2), God has put us "**in Christ**" (1 Cor 1:30), and we are made to "*triumph in Christ*" (2 Cor 2:14). It is those who are "**in Christ**" that are a "*new creation*" (2 Cor 5:17), our liberty is "**in Christ**" (Gal 2:4), we are "*all the children of God by faith in Christ*" (Gal 3:26), all spiritual blessings are in heavenly places "**in Christ**" (Eph 1:3), and we are God's workmanship "*created in Christ*" (Eph 2:10). It is "**in Christ**" that we are "*made nigh by the blood of Christ*" (Eph 2:13). We are "*partakers of His promise in Christ*" (Eph 3:6). The "*high calling*" of God is "*in Christ*" (Phil 3:14), our faith is "**in Christ**" (Col 1:4), "*faith and love*" are described as being "**in Christ**" (1 Tim 1:14), grace was given to us "*in Christ Jesus before the world began*" (2 Tim 1:9), and our manner of life, or "*conversation*," is "**in Christ**" (1 Pet 3:16).

"THROUGH CHRIST." Christ is the appointed means of appropriating everything related to God's great salvation. We have trust, or confidence, "*through Christ to God-ward*" (1 Cor 3:4). Every believer is an "*heir of God through Christ*" (Gal 4:7). The exceeding riches of God's grace and kindness toward us is "*through Christ*" (Eph 2:7). The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds "*through Christ*" (Phil 4:7). In the Divine economy, we can "*do all things through Christ*" (Phil 4:13).

"BY CHRIST." Consolation abounds to us "**by Christ**" (2 Cor 1:5), glory is brought to God in the church "**by Christ**" (Eph 3:21), our need is supplied "*according to His riches in glory by Christ*" (Phil 4:19), and God has "*called us unto His eternal glory by Christ*" (1 Pet 5:10).

The centrality of Christ in the entirety of spiritual life is what makes the discernment of His present exaltation, and the means by which it was accomplished, so essential. Life without Jesus at the helm is really no life at all.

GOD HAS QUICKENED THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST

2:1b " . . . hath He quickened . . ." Other versions read, "He made alive,"^{NKJV} "to you did He give life,"^{BBE} "hath He revived,"^{WEB} and "has given life to you."^{MONTGOMERY} Most versions leave out these words, commencing with the statement "*were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

While it is true that the original text does not contain the words "*hath He quickened*," that is, in fact, the point that is being made. This is a continuation of the statement made in 1:19-20, which defines the power that is toward those who believe. It was chiefly displayed in God raising Jesus from the dead, and seating Him at His own right hand. At that point a parenthetical statement is inserted which continues through the end of chapter one (1:21-1:23). Chapter two continues the thought expressed in 1:19-20: "*which He wrought*

in Christ, and He raised Him from the dead . . . AND YOU." Thus, the point is that God **also** raised those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul will now explain the kind of death from which they were raised. This point will be expressly stated in verse five, together with its implications.

This is a pivotal point of apostolic doctrine - namely, that we have made been alive to God through our union with Christ Jesus in His death and resurrection. Colossians 2:13 makes the statement, "*you . . . hath He [God] quickened together WITH HIM [Christ], having forgiven you all*

trespasses."

ALIVE UNTO GOD. The point being made is that the saved are "*alive unto God*" - i.e. they are responsive to Him, draw near to Him, rely upon Him, and receive from Him. The life of reference is not institutional life, It is not fleshly camaraderie.

The doctrine concerning this life is found in the sixth chapter of Romans - **and living toward God is the point of it all.** A number of things are said to have taken place (Rom 6:1-11). (See the box to the right)

Being alive to God can only be coupled with being dead indeed unto sin. Where this death did not occur, there was no resurrection with Christ Jesus. If we did not die with Christ, we were not raised with Him. Life toward God postulates death, or a lack of responsiveness, toward sin.

It is God "*who quickeneth,*" or "*gives life to*" ^{NIV} "*the dead*" (Rom 4:17). He has given this ministry to the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself declared, "*the Son quickeneth whom He will*" (John 5:21). This will is not carried out in some arbitrary way, but focuses on those who willingly died with Christ, removing their allegiance from the flesh and self-will, and giving it to the Lord.

What is described in Romans as being "*alive unto God*" is the same thing as the life "*more abundantly*" that is mentioned in John 10:10. It is a life in which man's thoughts and ways are brought into harmony with the thoughts and ways of the Lord -something that was not realized under the Old Covenant (Isa 55:8-9).

Being quickened, or made alive unto God, is confirmed by the sheep hearing the voice of God's appointed Shepherd (John 10:27). It is verified in their refusal to follow strangers (John 10:5), and their eagerness to "*count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*" (Phil 3:8). The love of God's people for one another testifies to them being made alive by God, or having passed "*from death unto life*" (1 John 3:14).

Those who have been quickened "*reign in life BY ONE, Jesus Christ*" (Rom 5:17). By their faith, they overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5), and are "*more than conquerors*" (Rom 8:37). This life is maintained by putting to death the deeds of the body in the leading and strength of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13). This is a life that constrains the saints to not "*live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*" (2 Cor 5:15).

We have become "*dead to the law,*" that we "*might live unto God*" (Gal 2:19). This is a life that is lived "*by faith*" (Gal 3:11), and "*in the Spirit*" (Gal 5:25). It is characterized by a life that is "*godly in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim 3:12), compelling the quickened one to "*live soberly, godly, and righteously in this present world*" (Tit 2:12). There is a noticeable preference for God, and a willingness to suffer for righteousness sake rather than compromise one's faith.

This life was initiated by our union with Christ - when we became "*one spirit*" with Him (1 Cor 6:17). It continues through our fellowship with Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9). Well is it written, "*God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him*" (1 John 4:9). This is some of the involvements of being quickened, or made alive, by and unto God. Candidly, this is not a subject that is prominent in the professing church - which is a tragic circumstance.

DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS

2:1c " . . . **who were dead in trespasses and sins.** " Other versions read, "*dead in your trespasses and sins,*" NASB "*your transgressions and sins,*" NIV "*crimes and the sins,*" NJB "*disobedience and your many sins,*" NLT "*under God's curse, doomed forever for your sins,*" LIVING "*your offenses and sins,*" WEYMOUTH "*shortcomings and sins,*" WILLIAMS "*because you sinned and fought against God,*" CEV "*deviations and sins,*" LITV "*mired in that old stagnant life of sin,*" MESSAGE and "[*slain by [your] trespasses and sins.*" AMPLIFIED

The reason for our deadness toward God was the environment in which we were found: **trespasses and sins**. They were OUR trespasses and sins, even though the sinful nature itself came from Adam. The fact that a single sinful act by Adam caused many to be "*made sinners*" (Rom 5:19), in no way diminished our guilt. The fact that we must confess with David, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*" (Psa 51:5) in no way lessens our guilt or qualifies us for Divine consideration or leniency. No one can claim they did not mean to sin, or that, when they sinned, they acted out of harmony with their own will.

TRESPASSES. Lexically, "*trespasses*" are defined as "as a deviation from living according to what has been revealed as the right way to live" FRIBERG This is acting in contradiction of what God has **said**.

SINS. The lexical definition of "*sins*" is, "To miss the mark," THAYER "to act contrary to the will and law of

God - to sin, to engage in wrongdoing." ^{LOUW-NIDA} This is acting in contradiction of the **nature** of God - missing the objective for which man, who is in the image of God, was created.

TRESPASSES AND SINS. Spiritual death is evidenced by contradicting the Law of God, and being at variance with the nature of God. **Words and deeds are involved, but so are motives and desires.** The summation of these two terms is found in the word "*alienated*." Under the Law, God spoke through Ezekiel of alienation as a matter of the mind. Of Israel and her involvement with the Babylonians He said, "*her mind was alienated*" (Ezek 23:17-18), and "*thy mind is alienated*" (Ezek 23:22,28). Other versions read "*she became disgusted with them*," ^{NASB} "*She turned away from them in disgust*." ^{NIV} The idea is that Israel, repulsed by Babylon's immoral advances, pushed away from her in revulsion and filled with distaste.

ALIENATION FROM GOD. In the case of alienation from God, because of what He requires of men, they push away from Him, choosing to do their own desires, disgusted, as it were, with His demands. These demands are written upon their conscience (Rom 2:15), as well as in the Law (1 John 3:4).

Addressing the matter of alienation from the life of God, the Scriptures state, "*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*" (Eph 4:18). And again, "*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works*" (Col 1:21). By nature, man is repulsed by the Person and demands of the living God. His nature has been so corrupted that he obstinately chooses his own way over the ways of his Maker. This begins in one's youth, and continues until the new birth takes place. This is attested by God's own assessment of humanity before the flood, and after the flood as well: "*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . . from his youth*." (Gen 6:5; 8:21).

This condition is described by the words of our text: "*dead in trespasses and sins*." Not "*dead with Christ*" (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20), but "*dead IN trespasses and sins*." Death speaks of being unresponsive and unproductive. There is no ability to see, or comprehend, because *the "dead"* have not been given "*eyes to see*" (Deut 29:4). There is no ability to hear the Lord, for they have not been given "*ears to hear*" (Lk 14:35), and their ears are not circumcised (Acts 7:51). There is no sensitivity to God because their heart remains uncircumcised (Deut 30:6; Acts 7:51; Rom 2:29). Moses described the total condition in these words: "*Yet the LORD hath not given you an **heart** to perceive, and **eyes** to see, and **ears** to hear, unto this day*" (Deu 29:4). That is a description of spiritual deadness in trespasses and sins! This was the condition in which God found us - all of us. It is the state from which He raised us with Christ, as will be expounded in the verses that follow.

It is a tragedy beyond description that this condition exists in much of the professed church. There are all manner of explanations being given for the acknowledged condition. Notwithstanding these explanations, if one has ears to hear, there is a still small voice that is describing the condition. It is the condition of death in trespasses and sins. Men are not living right because they have not been raised up with Christ to "*walk in newness of life*." The power that raised Jesus from the dead, and set Him at the right hand of God invested with all power in heaven and earth, is not toward such people. That is why they do not have it! There is a willing barrier between them and God, and until it is removed, they will remain powerless. For some, it is true that they simply have not been told of the power. But for most, they are simply "*dead*."

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 19

Eph 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.*" (Eph 2:2)

WHERE WE WERE AND WHERE WE WALKED

INTRODUCTION

The proper assessment of who we are and where we have been brought is contingent upon a good understanding of where we were and whose interests we were serving prior to being joined to the Lord. A misassessment of our former condition will make it impossible to see where we are in Christ Jesus, and what a marvelous work has been done to get us there. If we fail to accurately assess where we were, we will not be able to truly see where we have been brought. For this reason, Paul does not ask the Ephesians to diagnose their past. Instead, he affirms a past that is common to all men. Paul includes himself and all other believers in this revealed appraisal, adding "*we all had our conversation in times past,*" "*He loved us,*" and "*we were dead in sins*" (Eph 2:3-5).

It should not be necessary to reason in this manner, seeing that salvation is traced to God Himself. How serious can a situation be to require Divine intervention? And, who does not know that salvation is God thrusting Himself into the situation. Without the will of God, the situation was so bleak that the entire human race is depicted as being in a moral and spiritual graveyard - "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (2:1). That condition was not descriptive of a domestic situation, a social state, or a spiritual condition that was obvious to the human eye. This had to do with man's relation to God, and his suitability for Divine approval and fellowship. From that perspective, the human condition was so bad that it brought no real concern to men. Although they were created and placed in both time and place to seek the Lord, this was not their vocation. Unbeknown to them, they had been captured by the enemy, and were serving his interests. By nature, no one was excluded from this circumstance. The only people who made any kind of progress toward God were those to whom He revealed Himself - and even then, the revelation was partial, and not sufficient to adequately address the universal guilt of sin. Men like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, and the prophets, were men that were noted for their faith - but they themselves were still in the category of men who had to be saved, delivered, and directed from above.

WHEREIN WE WERE IN TIME PAST

Eph 2:2a *"Wherein in time past . . . "*

Paul will now describe the former condition of those who are in Christ Jesus. It remains the condition of all those who are not in Christ Jesus. This is the fallen state - the condition in which men are not acceptable to God. It is a state that causes the wrath of God to be upon them, and in which they are condemned. It is the circumstance that demanded salvation and a Savior.

WHEREIN. Other versions read, *"in which,"* ^{NKJV} *"in the which,"* ^{MRD} The word *"wherein"* refers to the condition just mentioned: *"dead in trespasses and sins."* It is a condition in which the individual is dead toward God - insensitive to Him, and unable to live in a constant awareness of Him. It is a state in which there is no accord with God, no lasting benefits from Him, and no access to Him. As will be described in this section, it was a circumstance in which there was no hope. If God Himself did not make a move toward us, we would have been condemned. That is the condition we were IN - and we were held there by the wicked one.

WE WERE IN TIME PAST. Other versions read, *"you formerly,"* *"you used,"* *"you once,"* ^{NRSV} *"in the past,"* ^{BBE} *"you previously,"* ^{CSB} *"aforetime,"* ^{ERV} *"before,"* ^{MRD} *"were once habitual to you,"* ^{WEWYMOUTH} *"at one time,"* ^{ABP}

Here, then, we see that there is a line of demarcation in the life of a believer. Before that time, we were dead in trespasses and sins. It is the time before we were *"born again"* (1 Pet 1:23), experienced the *"washing of regeneration"* (Tit 3:5), or were *"reconciled unto God"* (Rom 5:10), were made *"a new creation"* (2 Cor 5:17), and were *"joined unto the Lord"* (1 Cor 6:17).

When describing those who are in Christ Jesus, it is apparent that a significant change has taken place in them. This is what enables the distinction now proclaimed to be made. Without the confirmed presence of that change, this passage has no utility. Ponder how the saints are described in the book of Ephesians alone. It is a salient testimony to the reality of moral and spiritual change.

It is within the context of what and who we are in Christ that makes the description of what we were before so meaningful. In spite of this, there are many professed believers that are not appreciative of where they are in Christ, or the condition from which such people are delivered.

By saying *"in time past,"* the point is made that this description no longer characterizes those who have raised up with Christ (Eph 2:6). It is imperative that this be seen. Those who insist on identifying "Christians" with the recalcitrant Israelites, and all other men, have betrayed their ignorance. If, in fact, there is no fundamental difference between those in Christ and those who are not, then believers have not been re-created, they are not the workmanship of God, and they have not passed from death unto life. Those who insist on saying we are all sinners - "it is just that in Christ are forgiven" may mean well (although I doubt it), but they have reproached God and demeaned Christ by suggesting the ineffectuality of what the Lord has

done.

TIME PAST. The time that is "*past*" is the time prior to being in Christ Jesus. It is the time when we were "*without Christ . . . having no hope, and without God in the world*" (Eph 2:11). It is the time when we were "*not a people,*" and "*had not obtained mercy*" (1 Pet 2:10). That period of time is described to have been sufficient for us "*to have wrought the will of the Gentiles*" (1 Pet 4:3). There is no justification in returning to a manner of life that is lived without an acute awareness of God. Living to please self and for the basic enjoyment of this world are not violable options for those who are in Christ Jesus. It is totally unreasonable to return to a way, or manner, of life from which we had to be delivered. That, Peter, affirms, is like a dog returning to its vomit, and a sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire (2 Pet 1:20-22). The state produced by such a return is described as "*worse with them than at the beginning,*" or "*than the first*"^{AMPLIFIED} - from which they had been retrieved (2 Pet 1:20). The condition of the modern church confirms a significant number have rejected this truth.

WE WERE IN THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD

2:2b " . . . *ye walked according to the course of this world . . .*"

This is a description of our condition before we were "*baptized into Christ*" (Gal 3:27), "*born again*" (1 Pet 1:23), or became "*a new creature*" (2 Cor 5:17). This condition had nothing to do with being male or female, bond or free, or Jew or Gentile. It was not related to our environment, parents, domestic circumstance, or social status. **This has to do with human nature.**

Furthermore, what does not impact upon our relationship; to God, cannot be a basis for restriction in the body of Christ. This is precisely why it is written, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal 3:28). What God has made a person in Christ Jesus becomes the basis for one's association with the other members of the body of Christ.

This is also a description of what took place "*in time past.*" It is the heavenly assessment of how we lived, and has no regard to how our lives may or may not have appeared to men.

YE WALKED. Other versions read, "*once walked,*"^{NKJV} "*formerly walked,*"^{NASB} "*used to live,*"^{NIV} "*used to live,*"^{NIB} "*passed your lives,*"^{MONTGOMERY} and "*followed.*"^{CEV}

The word from which "*walked*" is translated is **periepath,sate**. The lexical definition of this word is, "equivalent to make one's way, make progress, in figurative discourse equivalent to make a due use of opportunities,"^{THAYER} "how one conducts one's daily life behave, live,"^{FRIBERG} and "walk in the sense of live,

conduct oneself." ^{GINGRICH} Let us look more closely at this definition.

Make one's way. This has to do with establishing a purpose for living - establishing the primary reason for living, and going about to fulfill that objective.

Make progress. This is the result of deliberate and focused living. It involves one making progress in reaching the objectives, or goals, one has established as the reason for living.

Make due use of opportunities. Opportunities are here defined as a chance, or opening, to fulfill one's purpose for life - a period of time during which basic desires may be met.

Conduct one's daily life. "Walk" has to do not only with the entirety of life, but with everyday existence. One's "walk" has to do with what a person does every day.

Behave. One's behavior relates to how he responds to circumstance. Every reaction or initiative is an expression having to do with what is fundamental in the person's life. **No person of sound mind lives in contradiction of their purposes and preferences.** Man has been created with this nature - to live in harmony with what they feel to be most essential and advantageous.

In this text, then, Paul is addressing the manner in which we lived, which was really nothing more than the expression of what we were and what we wanted!

ACCORDING TO. Other versions read, "you followed," ^{NIV} "following," ^{NRSV} "went along with," ^{LIVING} "in accordance with," ^{WILLIAMS} and "you were following." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The words "according to" mean "1) down from, through out 2) according to, toward, along." ^{STRONG'S} The definition "down from" is to be viewed as something coming from a primary source - like the head of a stream. "Throughout" and "according to" emphasize that what comes from the source of reference is like that source in nature or character.

Therefore, what follows is a primary description of the manner in which we formerly lived. Contrary to the

notions of many, that manner was not driven by personal preference, although our preference was involved. The preference, however, was the result of both our nature and our delusion. Whether we could see it or not we were "deceived" (Tit 3:3), and in bondage (Gal 4:3).

THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD. Other versions read, "ways of this world,"^{NIV} "this worldly age,"^{CSB} "this world's present path,"^{NET} "by the principles of this world,"^{NJB} "like the rest of the world,"^{NLT} "the spirit of this present world,"^{WILLIAMS} and "the course and fashion of this world."^{AMPLIFIED}

"The course of this world" is described by Jesus as a "broad way" that "leadeth to destruction" (Matt 7:13). Concerning its nature, it has a "fashion" that "passeth away" (1 Cor 7:31). The course of the world is like the flow of a great river - it is headed in a certain direction, and it is not a good one. It is not toward God, nor is it toward as blessed eternity. Whoever follows "the course of this world" will end up like the world - destroyed!

To follow the course of this world is to live as though this world was going to continue forever. It is to plan and purpose without eternity being in clear view. It is to live for self, and be captured by the spirit of the age. The complicating factor in this kind of life is that one has to be "delivered" from it (Gal 1:4). It is not possible to live according to the course of this world without being enslaved by it. The dreadful thing about this kind of slavery is that the persons continue to think of themselves as being free, even though they are firmly shackled to the decaying order. Under such a bondage, everything one thinks and does is pointless, because it is headed in a direction that ends in futility. It seems important - even vital - but it is not. **Life becomes pointless and vain to the degree that it is lived after the manner of this world, or according to its course.** No mortal, nor any form of mortal wisdom, can deliver one from this dilemma.

WE WALKED ACCORDING TO . . .

2:2c " . . . , according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

ACCORDING TO. This phrase explains why, in our former lives, we walked according to the course of this world. It was owing to the influence of the wicked one who, though subject to Christ, is a very real authority.

THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR. Other versions read, "the ruler of the kingdom of the air,"^{NIV} "to the prince of the powers of the air,"^{ASV} "lord of the power of the air,"^{BBE} "ruler of the atmospheric domain,"^{CSB} "rule of the authority of the air,"^{DARBY} "prince that ruleth in the air,"^{GENEVA} "the prince potentate of the air,"^{MRD} "ruler who dominates the air,"^{NJB} "the commander of the powers in the unseen world,"^{NLT} "the governor that ruleth in the air,"^{PNT} "the devil, he rules the world,"^{CEV} "the ruler of the evil powers over the earth,"^{ERV} "the ruler of spiritual powers in space,"^{GNB} and "You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief."^{MESSAGE}

From one point of view, this is the same as "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). That is, the world is now his headquarters, or place of activity. Having been cast out of heaven, he has now taken up residency in the atmosphere in which humanity lives. There he dominates and rules over the world, the whole of which "is under the control of the wicked one" ^{NIV} (1 John 5:19).

The official definition of the term "air" is "1) the air, particularly the lower and denser air as distinguished from the higher and rarer air 2) the atmospheric region." ^{THAYER}

The idea is that these evil powers, over which Satan presides, fill the air that is breathed by humanity. I do not mean to suggest that we breathe into our bodies these wicked spiritual beings. Rather, it seems to me that the suggestion in the text is that there is no natural way to escape the influence of this wicked horde. There is no place where humanity can live where these powers are not present and dominant. If we could see them, we would fall down in fear because of their fierceness and authority.

One of the judgments of the Revelation is described as the pouring out of a "vial into the air" (Rev 16:17). This has particular regard to the judgment of spiritual Babylon, "the great city," which operated under the control of Satan.

Prior to being in Christ, we were under the control of Satan, who worked through spiritual authorities who make their habitation in "the air." There was no way we could contend with such forces. In fact, we were unaware of both their presence and their power. There are social trends that they instigate. There are false doctrines that they perpetrate (1 Tim 4:1). Babylon is one of their primary dwelling places (Rev 18:2). These are among the "principalities and powers" against which believers "wrestle" (Eph 6:12). Were it not for "the whole armor of God" the confrontation would be a hopeless mismatch in favor of the devil and his hosts. The degree of ignorance within the professed church concerning this host of wickedness is staggering.

THE SPIRIT. Satan is a "spirit," as compared with a personality that is corporal, or has a body. This gives him the decided advantage when dealing with natural, or unregenerate, men. Because they are spiritually dead, they are unable to contend with Satan - in fact, they have no desire to do so. In Christ. However, "because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4), the believer can overcome the wicked one, experiencing triumph.

THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE. In whom does the "prince of the power of the air" work? It is in "the children of disobedience." Other versions read, "sons of disobedience," ^{NKJV} "those who are disobedient," ^{NIV} "those who go against the purpose of God,:" ^{BBE} "children of unbelief," ^{DOUAY} "people who refuse to obey God," ^{GWN} "those who rebel," ^{NJB} and "the sons of disobedience [the careless, the rebellious,

and the unbelieving, who go against the purposes of God]."^{AMPLIFIED}

Being "*children of disobedience*" involved being born of disobedience - i.e. having disobedience in one's very nature. That is, the propensity of man is to disobey God. Compounding the whole matter, not only was man's inclination to disobey God, but Satan, who, as "*the God of this world*," rules in the worldly order, working in "*the children of disobedience*." That is where he carries on his insurrection against the Living God. Those two factors - the inclination to disobey, and the readiness of Satan to work in such people, forms a humanly hopeless situation. Apart from Christ we could not contend with either one of those conditions - even if we wanted to, which we did not.

Now, think of how our former lives have been described in this text. (1) We were "*dead in trespasses and sins*." (2) We walked "*according to the course of this world*." (3) We walked "according . . . to the prince of the power of the air." (4) We were associated with "*the children of disobedience*." That is how the Lord, so to speak, found us. There was nothing in us that recommended us to Him, and nothing that we could do about our situation.

That circumstance dictated the kind of salvation that was required - a salvation that included being quickened, or raised from death in trespasses and sins. There had to be a deliverance from the world itself, and from the despot who was its god and ruler.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 20

Eph 2:4 ***" Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph 2:3)***

THE COMMONALITY AMONG MEN

INTRODUCTION

Doctrinally, as well as in reality, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom 3:23). Some sinned with the Law, and some sinned without the Law - but *"all have sinned."* Some have sinned where the Gospel was not preached, and some have sinned where the Gospel was preached - but *"all have sinned."* Some have never slipped into deep immorality, and some have - but *"all have sinned."* Salvation is for sinners, whether they are male or female, Jew or Gentiles, or bond or free *"for all; have sinned."* Furthermore, Jesus Christ came *"to save sinners"* (1 Tim 1:15). While salvation and all of the benefits and provisions it provides is obtained by means of faith, it also is for those who were formerly classified as *"sinners."* As soon as men begin to present the Gospel as though it were fundamentally intended for the old, or the young, or men, or women, or Jew or Gentile, or bond or free, or rich or poor, they for are forced to distort the Gospel. When Jesus is presented as the answer to the various problems of humanity He is not being presented as God has revealed Him. As difficult as it may be to receive, God has never presented His Son as the means for healing marriages, finances, governments, and what men call psychological problems - like low self-esteem. He is never set forth as the means to good health or financial security - at least not in the *"record God has given of His Son"* (1 John 5:-10-11). Many find it difficult to receive sayings like this, but that is only because we are in a religious culture where Jesus has been misrepresented, and *"another Jesus"* has been set forth in His place. All of the various admonitions to believers are with Satan and sin in mind-i.e. making no place for the devil (Eph 4:27), putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11), putting off the old man, and putting on the new (Eph 4:22-24), having access to God (Eph 2:13), etc. The thrust of growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15) is against the backdrop of the capacity to sin. All slowness of heart Lk 24:25), failure to *"go on to perfection"* (Heb 6:1), and dulness of hearing (Heb 5:11) is owing to forgetting what we were when Christ found us. Further the presence of *"the old man"* is a stern reminder that the capacity to return to that life remains a threat to us."

WHERE WE MAINTAINED OUR MANNER OF LIFE

Eph 2:3a *"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh . . ."* Other versions read, *"conducted ourselves,"* ^{NKJV} *"formerly lived,"* ^{NASB} *and "once lived and conducted ourselves."* AMPLIFIED

Paul is speaking of our background from the standpoint of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He has already declared the category in which we were found: *"dead IN trespasses and sins,"* living according to *"the course of this world,"* and living in harmony with *"the prince of the power of the air,"* the spirit that is now working *"in the children of disobedience"* (2:1-2). He does not mention our occupation, race, gender, or worldly achievements.

The Gospel addresses people at this level. This is why the background of Scriptural teaching is never worldly culture or custom, and those who affirm that it is are serving some other agenda.

AMONG WHOM. Even though we may not have committed things reprehensible to men, we conducted our lives within the perimeter marked by death in trespasses and sins, a life lived according to the course of this world, in harmony with the devil's objectives, and fundamentally disobedient toward God. Whether men wish to admit it or not, this is where we lived prior to being born again. Although we may have occupied one of the supposed better rooms of the condemned house, the whole house was condemned, and there was no hope for the condemnation being rescinded. The only hope was to be delivered from that house, or place of confinement.

WE ALL HAD OUR CONVERSATION IN TIMES PAST. Paul brings up this line of demarcation once again. He has already said we *"were dead"* (2:1), and referred to *"time past"* (2:2). Now he refers to *"times past"* - a former era distinct from where we are in Christ Jesus. We were in a different condition, and occupied a different place. We lived differently in the past than we do now. We were headed in a different direction, and walking on a different road. Now, we have a different reason for living. In our past, we viewed ourselves differently. We viewed God differently, as well as His Son.

For Paul, his background was religious. He had not wallowed in immorality, or lived only to please self. He exercised himself to do what he thought pleased God, and maintained a good conscience in the process. But he was still on the wrong road, living for the wrong reason, and was fundamentally ignorant of God and Christ. He needed Christ no less than the idol worshipers of Ephesus or the demon possessed woman of Philippi. Like the Ephesians, his past life was one of death in trespasses and sins.

IN THE LUSTS OF OUR FLESH. Other versions read, *"The cravings of our sinful nature,"* ^{NIV} *"the passions of our flesh,"* ^{RSV} *"the pleasures of our flesh,"* ^{BBE} *"the passions of our old nature,"* ^{CJB} *"our fleshly desires,"* ^{CSB} *"expressing the evil within us,"* ^{LIVING} *"the evil desires of our human nature,"* ^{IE} *"governed by the inclinations of our lower natures,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"ruled by the selfish desires of our bodies and mind,"* ^{CEV} *"trying*

to please our sin ful selves,"^{ERV} "doing what we felt like doing,"^{MESSAGE} and "our behavior governed by our corrupt and sensual nature."^{AMPLIFIED}

Often, the prevailing thought about sins of the flesh associates them only with more base expressions, like murder, adultery, fornication, theft, witchcraft, and the likes. But there are also the revealed expressions of "uncleanness," "hatred, variance, emulations," "strife, seditions, heresies, and such like" (Gal 5:19-20). There are also the "covetous" and "revilers" (1 Cor 6:10). Jesus spoke of prayers that were made in "pretense" (Matt 23:14), and those who "love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues" (Matt 23:6).

The "lusts of OUR flesh" speak of desires that have only to do with self-gratification. They speak of a life that is lived as though there was no God, but only self and self-interests. Viewing the past from another perspective, Paul writes of the reason behind Christ's death, "And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth **live unto themselves**, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:15). Commencing with us being "joined to the Lord," our former lives abruptly ceased - i.e. living "unto" ourselves, or "for" ourselves.

Now we are governed by a higher and more God-honoring principle. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col 3:17). That is the opposite of living "in the lust of our flesh."

Conversion separates these two manners of living - living for self versus living for the glory of God. The separation is as real as the forgiveness of sins. A life lived for the glory of God is as certain as being washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:11). That is, when faith takes hold of the fact that God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (1:3), seeing that fact as being in strict accord with the reality of being chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" (1:4), and "predestinated" unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to God Himself (1:5), and being "made accepted in the Beloved" (1:6), **a very real change of character results**. But where these things are unknown or even rejected, the "power" of religion has been obviated, and no alternative is left but to live for self, and thus live in vain.

THE NATURE AND DIRECTION OF UNACCEPTABLE LIFE

2:4b " . . . fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind . . . "

Here Paul encapsulates what it means to live "in the lusts of our flesh." The word "flesh," as used here, has to do with the part of us that is traced back to Adam. Essentially, it is the human nature that is driven by desires and ambitions that have to do with the body, or living in this world. While there is an intangible nature that is derived from Adam, and it all centers in self-interest. It involves what is seen (the lust of the eye), what is experienced in the body and is for the body (the lust of the flesh), and the recognition of life in the body (pride of life).

These desires or longings constitute *"all that is in the world"* (1 John 2:15). They form the border of natural life in this present evil world. They also fall into the following categories of life: personal life, social life, domestic life, and religious life. Expressions of sin are in thought, word, and deed. These are also areas in which the adversary is active, seeking to lure men into a life in which God is not prominent.

FULFILLING THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH. Other versions read, *"following the desires,"* ^{NIV} *"desires of the flesh,"* ^{NRSV} *"desires of the body,"* ^{RSV} *"and obeyed the wishes of our old nature,"* ^{CJB} *"carrying out the inclinations of our flesh,"* ^{DOUAY} *"we did the pleasure of our flesh,"* ^{MRD} *"obeying the demands of human self-indulgence,"* ^{NJB} *"doing every wicked thing that our passions . . . might lead us into,"* ^{LIVING} *"carrying out the dictates of our senses,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} *and "obeying the impulses of the flesh."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

"The flesh" is a key expression in Scripture. It often has to do with things that are in the body. The *"motions of sin"* are found in this aspect of the human nature: *"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death"* (Rom 7:5). These are *"sinful passions"* that are actually *"aroused by the Law."* ^{NIV} That is, they are a natural reaction to the offensiveness of the Law to *"the natural man."* The natural man is so self-centered that he objects to being told what to do - even if the direction comes from his Creator.

The flesh *"serves the law of sin"* (Rom 7:25). It inevitably misses the mark, and veers from the strait and narrow way. That is, purely self-interests are always wrong, never consider God to be central, and never move one to prepare for death, the day of judgment, or eternity.

Notice that the description states we fulfilled the desires of the flesh. That is, we set out to implement our self-interests, aggressively seeking to gratify *"the desires of the flesh."* While we may have thought them to be honorable, God was not at the heart of them, and the very thought of Jesus was tangential.

FULFILLING THE DESIRES OF THE MIND. Other versions read, *"following the desires and thoughts,"* ^{NIV} *"senses,"* ^{NRSV} *"and obeyed the wishes of . . . our own thoughts,"* ^{CJB} *"our own whim,"* ^{NJB} *"doing every wicked thing that . . . our evil thoughts might lead us into,"* ^{LIVING} *"temperament,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} *and "and the thoughts of the mind [our cravings dictated by our senses and our dark imaginings]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the *"carnal mind"* or *"the mind set on the flesh,"* ^{NASB} which is *"enmity against God"* (Rom 8:7). It is not merely that it does not think with God at the heart of things, it **cannot** do so. This is a mind that is *"alienated"* from God (Col 1:21). It thinks in terms of self-will and personal advantages in this world. This is the mind that came into existence when Eve looked upon the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and concluded, *"that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be*

desired to make one wise" (Gen 3:6). From that day until this time, and eventually to the end of the world, this is the mind-set that dominates all men who have only been born once.

There is a way of thinking that not only competes with God, but is hostile toward Him. It is a way of thinking that does not arrive at proper conclusions, nor does it formulate proper incentives. It ignores the fact that God created the individual, and also purchased them with the blood of Christ. In our time, when religion has been conveniently adapted to the ways of the world, men have learned to speak with a carnal politeness about this kind of mind. They will say, "That is not the way I see it," or "We all have a right to our opinion." But at the root of the matter is the reality of a mind that does not desire the things of God, nor is God the Polestar of thought.

All of this might appear to be quite acceptable, but it is not. To live only to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind is wrong, and there is no way to make it acceptable. That kind of thinking is properly classified as being under the heading of *"trespasses and sins."* It is the result of walking *"according to the course of this world."* It is evidence that one is being controlled by the *"prince of the power of the air,"* that is now at work in *"the children of disobedience."*

It is difficult to conceive of anything being more serious, and yet one senses that these things are generally unknown in the professing church. If this assessment is true, the nominal church is not a church at all, but is a monstrous beast and a beautified harlot: Babylon the Great.

BY NATURE THE CHILDREN OF WRATH

^{2:4c} *"... and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."*

Paul extends himself to impress upon the saints how God regards people living strictly for themselves. There is a certain manner in which heaven regards a worldly church, and men need to know it. Jesus has targeted presenting the church *"to Himself to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"* (Eph 5:27). His messenger, Paul, has determined to present the church *"as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Cor 11:2). He aimed at presenting *"every man perfect in Christ Jesus"* (Col 1:28).

These objective compelled Paul to correct the misgivings of the Corinthians and the Galatians, who had embraced "another Gospel" (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6). It moved him to warn the Colossians of the encroachment of philosophers and those who taught empty and powerless traditions (Col 2:8). He instructed the Hebrews concerning the penalty of forsaking Christ as the centerpiece of religion Heb 6-8).

Now, with the Ephesians, who were noted for their faith in Christ and love of the brethren (Eph 1:15), he writes to firm up what must be accomplished in the church. It is imperative that they "*grow up into Christ in all things,*" that they be "*no more children*" (Eph 4:14-15). In order to drive his point home, he reminds them of the pit from which they have been dug (Isa 51:1).

For some, this might appear wholly unnecessary. After all, they had been re-created, and were the workmanship of God (Eph 2:10). Their sins had been forgiven (Eph 1:7), and they had been "*made accepted in the Beloved*" (Eph 1:6). Is that not enough? Are we not safe for evermore in that most blessed condition? Well, it is not quite that simple.

It is important that we consider what we were, for the remnants of that former self remain with us, constituted in "*the old man*" (Eph 4:22). He is crucified, but he is not yet dead. His nature has not been changed. He still seeks to dominate us, as he did before. He is the part of us to whom, Satan can speak freely, and should we give the old man some liberty, Satan can lead him about with scarcely any restraint! This is the factor that has become obscured by a skewed theology. It is why the saints must be reminded of what they were - because they still have to contend with that old nature. This does not equate with a defiled conscience, nor does it suggest that we are not justified and free from condemnation. It does mean that as long as we are in this world, we are in jeopardy. Faith will give us the total victory, but only if it is kept!

WERE BY NATURE. The phrase "by nature" refers to our state apart from Christ. It is having only the nature with which we were born in the flesh. It is possessing only the nature and attributes that were passed to us through Adam. Lest we imagine that being born again means the eradication of that old nature, Paul reminds us of its characteristics. There would be no need to do this if the remnants of that nature did not remain with us.

THE CHILDREN OF WRATH. Other versions read, "*were by nature objects of wrath,*"^{NIV} "*the punishment of God was waiting for us,*"^{BBE} "*In our natural condition we were headed for God's wrath,*"^{CJB} "*children under wrath,*"^{CSB} "*because of our nature, we deserved God's anger just like everyone else,*"^{GWN} "*We started out bad, being born with evil natures, and were under God's anger,*"^{LIVING} and "*We were then by nature children of [God's] wrath and heirs of [His] indignation.*"^{AMPLIFIED}

By nature, or according to our nature, we were locked into a certain future: the wrath of God, which is sure to come "upon the children of disobedience" (Eph 5:6; Col 3:6). Jesus said that presently, "*he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3:36). We read in Hebrews of a "*fiery indignation which shall consume the adversaries*" (Heb 10:27). This is another way of saying, "*for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction*" (Matt 7:13). That addresses the matter from the standpoint of where they are walking. The Ephesian text views it from the standpoint of what they are by nature, or of themselves. They are walking on the broad way because that is where their nature tells them to walk, and the sure end of that way is "*destruction,*" or tasting of the wrath of God.

These are souls that are condemned by God - not upon the basis of their deeds, but upon the ground of their nature. I do not know how it is possible to read the text any other way.

EVEN AS OTHERS. Other versions read, "*even as the rest,*" ^{NASB} "*like everyone else,*" ^{NRSV} "*like the rest of mankind,*" ^{RSV} and "*like all other people.*" ^{IE}

In other words, this is a universal condition, not an isolated one. The human nature itself, apart from regeneration, makes one a sure recipient of the wrath of God. I do not know how one can harmonize this statement with the affirmation that God loves everyone. We certainly do not discount the love of God with which He "*so loved the world*" (1John 3:16) - a love that had a definable "*manner*" (1 John 3:1). However, Paul has shown the Ephesians that God's love is undergirded by His purpose, and does not stand by itself. That purpose took into account that human nature mandated condemnation and Divine wrath. Only Divine wisdom can work with a scenario like that - and that is precisely what Paul will affirm in the verses that follow.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

ELSSON NUMBER 21

Eph 2:5 ***"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, ⁶ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)"*** (Eph 2:4-5)

BUT GOD!

INTRODUCTION

In accounting for our change in status, Paul takes care to describe the transition at the causal level, not the level of our conscious participation. This is a most important distinction. Our former state was described as being *"dead in trespasses and sins,"* living *"according to the course of this world,"* dominated by *"the prince of the power of the air,"* and identified as *"children of disobedience."* Our moral condition was one of deadness and insensitivity. The area of our wills, and what is required to make choices, was characterized by living according to the direction of the world at large - who was on the broad road that leads to destruction. The one who ruled over us was the devil who has a battery of powerful spirits at his command. So far as our association with the Living God was concerned, we were *"children of disobedience."* Our parentage, back to Adam, was noted for disobedience. At the basic level, and as a race, we were to "seek the Lord, groping, as it were for Him, if *"perhaps"* we might find Him. After all, He *"is not far from each one of us"*^{NIV} (Acts 17:27). **That was out intended vocation,** and yet not a single mortal viewed life in that manner. Our wills moved us to live in an indifferent and self-centered manner. The only people who rose above this general condition were those to whom, God made Himself known - men like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, and the Prophets. Now, I ask you, what is there that man - any man - can do about that circumstance? What natural resource or aptitude can enable men to climb out of that moral pit? What Law can be given that will so strengthen men that they can recover themselves from this fallen condition? That is the issue that Paul now addresses. He will trace the effective change of our status to the working of the Lord. He will affirm that God effectively and willingly interposed Himself into the situation.

THE GRAND DISJUNCTIVE

Eph 2:4 **"But God, who is rich in mercy. . ."**

BUT GOD. Other versions read, "And God,"^{YLT}, "However, God,"^{IE} "But the God,"^{ABP} "Instead,"^{MESSAGE}
All other versions read, "But God."

The word "but" is a disjunctive - a sharp intellectual cleavage, disunion, or separation. In this text it is a word that stands between a statement concerning two conditions that cannot exist simultaneously. The movement from one condition to another has a stated cause. In this case, the Cause is God Himself, and the movement is from death in trespasses and sins to life. It is from walking in the course of the world to moving in another realm. It is being taken away from being dominated by Satan, to being under the care of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is from the state of being disobedient, to one of obedience.

"But God" stands between those conditions. That is, He is the One who produced the change of condition (death to life), the change of environment (walking in the world's course to being in heavenly places), the change of master (from the Prince of the power of the air to the exalted Christ), and the change of response (disobedience to obedience). None of these changes were produced by human discipline, a system of law, or a perfunctory routine.

The expression "But God" occurs forty-one times in Scripture (Gen 20:3; 31:7; 45:8,21; 50:20; Ex 13:18; 21:13; Judges 15:19; 1 Sam 23:14; 1 Chron 28:3; Psa 49:15; 64:7; 68:21; 73:26; 75:7; Prov 21:12; Isa 17:13; Jonah 4:7; Lk 12:20; 16:15; Acts 7:9; 10:28; 13:30; Rom 5:8; 6:17; 1 Cor 1:27; 2:10; 3:6,7; 6:13; 1 Cor 7:15; 10:13; 12:24; 15:38; Gal 3:18,20; 6:14; Eph 2:4; Phil 2:27; 1 Thess 2:4,8).

Throughout the Scripture, in both doctrine and events, the Spirit teaches men to bring the working and reigning God into their thinking. There is no circumstance that is not under His control. Further, any change for the good is always traced to His working. Men do not climb out of the pit, they are "brought" out of it (Psa 40:2). If they are not consumed, it is owing to the "the Lord's mercies" (Lam 3:22).

The words "but God" speak of His intrusion into the affairs of men - an intrusion in which He has the absolute dominion. The invasion can be either for blessing or for cursing. In the case of the flood (2 Pet 2:5), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 1:7), and the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21:20-24), it was for cursing - and the intrusions could not be neutralized or aborted. In the case of Israel's deliverance from Egypt (1 Sam 10:18), the overthrow of the Amorites with hailstones (Josh 10:11-12), and the defeat of Sennacherib's massive army (2 Kgs 19:35-36), it was for blessing.

Throughout the ages, holy men have prayed for Divine intervention. They have known of the "but God" factor. The Scriptures and the Prophets made the people aware of the greatness of God, and of the subordination of everything to Him. Now Paul builds upon that sanctified awareness, tracing the change that is found in salvation to the God of salvation.

WHO IS RICH IN MERCY. Other versions read, "God was merciful,"^{CEV} "God's mercy is so abundant,"^{GNB} "immense in mercy,"^{MESSAGE} "abundant in mercy,"^{CSB} and "rich in faithful love."^{NJB} All other versions read "rich in mercy." Exactly what does that mean?

Lexically, mercy is defined as "mercy: kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them,"^{STRONG'S} To be "rich" in mercy is to abound in that trait. That is, God is especially inclined to be kind toward those who are in a miserable state. He does not look for meritorious qualifications for mercy. **It is a person's condition that qualifies them for mercy, not their achievements.** A person is made aware of their miserable state by the Law, which sets before them God's requirements for the human race. Once the reality of a person's condition registers upon them, all human hope is destroyed. It is at that point that "the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared" through the message of the Gospel, which testified to the Person of Jesus Christ.

It was not God's pity that moved Him, but His mercy - His inclination to be kind and good toward the individual. The experience of salvation is traced back to God, and particularly to His character. The point here is that the rescue from sin and its power is not initiated by men reaching up to God. It is rather traced back to God's merciful and kind disposition. Were it not for this, seeking the Lord, calling upon the name of the Lord, and obeying the Lord would actually have no value. In my judgment there is a lot of confusion on this matter in the Christian world. God is depicted as responding to human initiatives rather than to the human condition - and there is a vast difference between the two. The truth of the matter is that when man sees himself as God sees him he is in a position to receive God's mercy, for God is inclined to such a person.

That was precisely the point of Jesus' reference to a penitent publican and an arrogant Pharisee (Lk 18:13-14). The response of God to that publican's recognition of his condition was that he "*went down to his house justified*" (Lk 18:13). May God deliver sensitive souls from the notion that doing what they perceive to be right qualifies them for Divine goodness and consideration.

GOD'S GREAT LOVE

^{2:4b} "... **for His great love wherewith He loved us.**" Other versions read, "*the great love with which He loved us,*" ^{NKJV} "*His great love for us,*" ^{NIV} "*the great love which He had for us,*" ^{BBE} "*loves us with such intense love,*" ^{CJB} "*He loved us so much,*" ^{NLT} "*intense love which He bestowed upon us,*" ^{WEYMOUTH} "*the great love He has for us,*" ^{WILLIAMS} and "*with an incredible love.*" ^{MESSAGE}

At this point Paul is very precise, even though that precision is greatly obscured by several of the versions of Scripture. Because this is accounting for the genesis of our salvation, it is essential that we see it properly.

Throughout Scripture, the love of God for lost humanity is consistently presented in the past tense. He is depicted as loving His children whom He chastens (Heb 12:6). He is also depicted as loving the one He corrects (Prov 3:12), and loving the righteous (Psa 146:8). Jesus said God loves those who love Jesus, believing that He "*came out from God*" (John 16:27). God also "*loves a cheerful giver*" ^{NKJV} (2 Cor 9:7). However, all of that is quite different from what is being declared in this text, as well as the majority of other tests referring to God's love.

Generally, the love of God for mankind is used in the past tense. Jesus said God "*so loved the world*" (John 3:16). Our text states God "*loved us*" (Eph 2:4). Paul wrote that God the Father "*hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*" (2 Thess 2:16). John said that God "*loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:10). He reasoned that "*if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*" (1 John 4:11). He also said He "*first loved us,*" with our love for Him following it (1 John 4:19). Paul wrote that we are "*more than conquerors through Him that loved us*" (Rom 8:37).

John wrote of "*the manner of love*" that God "*hath bestowed upon us*" (1 John 3:1). Emphasizing that the comprehension of the love of God is a pivotal point, Paul declared "*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 5:5). He also affirmed that "*the love of God*" is "*in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom 8:39). Speaking of our actual experience of God's love, it is written that our hearts are said to be directed into "*the love of God by God*" Himself (2 Thess 2:5). John wrote "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us*" (1 John 3:16). He went on to say, "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him*" (1 John 4:9). It is also written, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom 5:8). Paul also wrote to Titus of the time when "*the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared*" (Tit 3:4). It was at that time that God, "*according to His mercy . . . saved us*" (Tit 3:5). The church is referred to as "*the beloved of God,*" or "*those who are loved by God.*" ^{NIV} (Rom 1:7).

There are several things we learn from these statements concerning the love of God. It is important that serious thought be given to this matter. This is chiefly because of the infantile ways in which men have been led to consider the love of God. It is generally not associated with a dramatic change in the nature and behavior of individuals. However, that is the point of our text, and it must be kept uppermost in our minds. If what we were, alienated from God, then we ourselves had to be changed. The love of God played a significant role in that change.

First, the texts about the love of God are not about how God felt or feels, but what He did. Ponder the magnitude of what God's love prompted Him to do. (1) Give His only begotten Son. (2) Give us everlasting consolation and good hope. (3) Sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (4) Laid down His life for us. (5) Sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him. (6) Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. (7) He saved us.

Second, it is always depicted as being because of Christ and through Christ. Take Jesus out of the scenario, and it is inappropriate to speak about the love of God. **It is inappropriate to tell anyone who is alienated from God that God loves him.** That is precisely why there is no record in Scripture of anyone outside of Christ being told that God loves them. That includes the prodigious earthly ministry of Jesus Himself. It also

includes the recorded ministry of John the Baptist, Peter, John, Stephen, and Paul. One may theorize about the matter, reasoning that God *"so-loved the world,"* but that is quite different from saying "God loves you."

In this text, Paul is not telling the Ephesians how God feels about them, but what He has done for and in them. His point is not God's attraction to them, but His provision for them. The love of God is not about having an affection for sinners, but is rather seen in providing a way to escape from that category of people.

This is why God's love is mentioned most frequently in the past tense. It is because it is related to what God did through Christ Jesus, taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29), reconciling men to God (2 Cor 5:18-20), making peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20), opening up a new and living way (Heb 10:20), destroying the devil (Heb 2:14), and liquidating the massive debt that had been created by sin (Eph 2:14). That is the context in which the love of God is mentioned in Scripture. It accounts for the provision and realization of the salvation of God.

WHAT GOD'S LOVE CONSTRAINED HIM TO DO

^{2:4c} *"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."*

The thing to see here is not merely that God was kind to us. His mercy, love, and kindness have transforming power. They found us in a despicable situation, but did not leave us there. A significant percentage of those who emphasize the love of God do not associate it with moral and spiritual change - transformation, and conformation. It is almost always associated with tolerance, fleshly understanding, and a kind of sympathy that leaves the individual in the same condition in which he was found. That perception, whether acknowledged or not, is what gave birth to the notion that once a person is saved, there is no possibility of being lost. Once the favor of God is enjoyed, there is no possibility that a person could no longer be favorable. There are at least three things such views fail to take into account. (1) The person holds the status of being *"saved"* by faith. Salvation is maintained the same way it is obtained - by faith. (2) That the love of God, when shed abroad in the heart, is transforming. (3) That God is repulsed by iniquity and cannot make peace with it. Now Paul reasons about the state of the redeemed.

EVEN WHEN. Other versions read *"even though,"* ^{CSB} *"while we were,"* ^{IE} *"though we were,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"even while,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} *"we being."* ^{ABP} The state in which we were found was death in trespasses and sins. In that state we were wed to the world and controlled by the devil. There was no possible way that we could change our state - and it was one that would, if not altered, summon forth the wrath of God. Hence we were referred to as *"by nature the children of wrath"* (2:3).

The language is emphasizing that if God had not intruded into our lives, we would never have been able to extricate ourselves from the situation. Even when, in the day of His power (Psa 110:3) we were willing to be delivered, the power or ability was not owing to our willingness. We were willing but helpless; desirous but impotent. Further, unless God was inclined to deliver us, He would not do so, for He cannot be coerced into raising the dead.

By saying *"even when we were dead in sins,"* he is emphasizing the impossibility of our situation. Our case was not one which required the mere change of habits, adopting a new way of living, or following a more rigid set of rules. We were not only dead in sin, but dead toward God as well. Like Israel, we were like a stillborn child. Of their condition God said, *"None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live"* (Ezek 16:6).

Unless had God entered into the situation of His own will, and through His own initiative, we simply were beyond any help. In order to appreciate salvation, that is how the matter must be seen.

HE QUICKENED US. There are a number of ways a change in our condition is described, and all of them are very real. We are taken from being enemies to being reconciled (Rom 5:10); from being guilty to being justified (Acts 13:39); from being alienated to being reconciled (Col 1:21); from not being a people to being the people of God (1 Pet 2:10); and from being defiled to being washed (Rev 1:5). These are just a few of the representations of very real change.

The representation here is from being dead in trespasses and sins to being quickened, or made alive unto God - from a state of insensitivity to one of sensitivity; from being unresponsive to being responsive; from being

repulsive to being beautiful.

TOGETHER WITH CHRIST. All of this took place when we were effectively identified with Jesus Christ. We were "*joined to the Lord*" (1 Cor 6:27), "*baptized into Christ*" (Gal 3:27), called into His "*fellowship*" (1 Cor 1:9), and "*added to the Lord*" (Acts 5:14).

It is not possible to be identified with Christ without an essential change taking place in us. Jesus has no fellowship with Belial, or anyone associated with him (2 Cor 6:15). For men to be joined to the Lord a change is essential. Either that change takes place in Jesus, or it does in them. Either He adapts to them, or they adapt to Him. Because we know that Jesus is unchangeable, remaining the same yesterday, today, and for ever (Heb 13:8), the change takes place in us, for God has "*called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor 1:9). **The point of our text is that this change is owing to the mercy and love of God.**

BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED. Here the grace of God is brought into the picture. This is the fourth time it has been mentioned in this letter (1:2,6,7; 2:5). It will be mentioned eight more times (2:7-8; 3:2,7,8; 4:7,29; 6:24). So far as this text is concerned, we want to see that grace includes both mercy and love - "*rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us.*" Both of these were exhibited in the coming, dying, resurrection, exaltation, and present ministry of Jesus. Grace takes people who are repulsive to God, and puts upon them "*the garments of salvation*" and "*the robe of righteousness*" (Isa 61:10). This does not simply cover up our former state, but rather adorns us in accordance with our new state. Further, grace is strictly the expression of God Himself, not a condescending response to the lowly. God Himself has willingly saved us!

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 22

^{Eph 2:6} *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."* (Eph 2:6-8)

BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH

INTRODUCTION

The matter of our salvation must be understood correctly. No individual can entertain basically flawed views of his salvation without it having an effect on the salvation itself. Although this subject is not easily addressed, it must be approached with all humility and thankfulness, mingled with faith. Is salvation the result of the efforts of men **and** the work of God? If it the result of **both** human and Divine input? If salvation is the outcome of both the works of man and the works of God, which has the priority, and why? Is it possible that God enables the one who is saved to do what is required of them? If so, how can man take credit for it? Will the salvation be withheld from those who reject it? If so, the whole of the matter has to be of God whose decision negated what men wanted, but did not seek to obtain it correctly. The phenomenal amount of confusion on this subject confirms that a great falling away has taken place - one that has left the people with a flawed view of God, His Son, and His salvation. It is a most serious departure from the faith. If God's salvation is not comprehended, how is it possible to have any degree of understanding God Himself? **If the most extensive revelation of God is found in His great salvation, as ministered by His only begotten Son, then there is no greater deterrent to possessing the knowledge of God than an ignorance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

In this lesson we will once again be exposed to the grace of God and its absolute preeminence in the salvation of God. In the seventh verse it is mentioned for the fifth time. We will see that the objective of this salvation reaches beyond this world, into the ages to co

The perception of this greatly assists to break free from both the attractiveness and the holding power of this world. It also is of immeasurable benefit to us in resisting the devil, who can only offer us things from this world. He never dwells on the things that will take place after the passing of the world, for he knows that is

the time he will be tormented (Matt 8:29).

IN ORDER THAT

^{Eph 2:6} ***"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷ THAT in the ages to come . . ."***

HATH RAISED US UP TOGETHER. The previous verse states clearly that we were *"quicken together with Christ."* Now he elaborates on that marvelous truth.

Regarding Divine purpose, when Jesus was raised from the dead, all of His people were raised with Him also, His death counted for their death, and hence His life also counted for their life. In that sense, *"together"* would mean all of the saints were raised together in Divine purpose. However, that is not the point that is being made here.

Here the point is being together with Christ by experience, The contact was made when we were *"baptized into His death"* (Rom 6:3). Being knit to Jesus in His death, that union produced the raising of reference. Thus it is written, *"If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him"* (Rom 6:8). No one who did not die with Christ can be raised up together with Him! This is another view of being *"translated into the kingdom of His dear Son"* (Col 1:13), or being put *"in Christ"* by God (1 Cor 1:30). By saying *"with,"* Paul means He joined us.

HATH MADE US SIT TOGETHER IN HEAVENLY PLACES. This is the experience of faith, and is not intended to refer to *"our gathering together unto Him,"* which shall occur at His Second Coming (2 Thess 2:1). Faith forges a very real, but not total, association with the risen Christ. It is in order that the benefits needed to safely negotiate from time to eternity, and from earth to glory, can be obtained. The first of these benefits is being raised from death in trespasses and sins, so that sin has no more dominion over us - even though we continue to inhabit a *"vile body"* (Phil 3:21).

This union with Christ cannot be perceived by the flesh or those who are living after the flesh. By way of comparison, when Jesus comes, the ungodly shall see our union with Christ, and well as their severance from Him. Notwithstanding the invisible nature of this seating together likeness to Him, it is something that is actually experienced, even though it is in measure. It is sufficient to work transformation, and to enable the believer to reject ungodliness and to live godly (Tit 2:11-12). Where this is not actually taking place, professed identity with Christ is nothing more than talk.

The *"heavenly places"* of reference are where the resources are located-i.e. *"all spiritual blessings in heavenly*

places" (Eph 1:3). We are there in the sense of having access to those resources. But we are not there in the sense of being totally free from jeopardy and the assaults of the wicked one. To many, this is a great mystery, for they cannot conceive of something being real that is not experienced in the flesh.

THAT. Other versions read, "in order that,"^{NASB} "so that,"^{NRSV} "to,"^{NET} "This was to,"^{NJB} "So God can,"^{NLT} "for to,"^{TNT} "and now,"^{LIVING} "God wanted,"^{IE} "God did this so that,"^{CEV} and "He did this to."^{GNB} The Greek word translated "that" is **i[na]**, which means "denoting purpose, aim, or goal in order that, that."^{GINGRICH}

In other words, God did one thing in order that He might do something else that was of even greater import. This first condition describes what was done, the second affirms WHY it was done. For example, He forgave us so He could make us alive, and He made us alive so He could seat us with Christ in heavenly places. Now He extends the border of our consideration. There is more involved than the here and the now.

IN THE AGES TO COME. Other versions read, "the coming ages,"^{NIV} "the time to come,"^{BBE} "the ages that are coming,"^{YLT} and "for all time."^{IE}

At this point we are dealing with God's purpose, or objective for what He did - raising us up together, and making us sit together with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6). **"The ages to come" are not limited to time.** While it is true that God is showing the power and effectiveness of His grace in time, it is little seen. Such a display cannot be the intent of this expression. We know God's purpose is an "eternal" one (Eph 3:11). Thus it cannot be fulfilled in the periods of time that are related to this present evil world. The audience is too small and obtuse to justify a Divine intention to show what is here declared. "The ages to come" have more to do with eternity than with time. They postulate an audience that will be able to perceive the greatness of is shown them - an aggregate body of people who are what they are by the grace of God. If this text was speaking about ages of time in this world, both the audience and the spectacle would be too small. No more could be displayed to mortals that what was existent before their eyes. That does not justify a work as great as salvation.

However, when it comes to the display of the grace of God in a magnificent trophy, we are not speaking of an individual, or a group of individuals during a certain period of time. Such a display is too partial, and it cannot be put forward within boundary of time. It is the complete body of Christ is His "fulness" (Eph 1:23), His "wife" (Rev 19:7), and His "body" (Eph 1:23). **This ultimate and eternal display is the foundational reason for our salvation!**

SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

^{2:7b} "... He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

HE MIGHT SHOW. Other versions read, "*might make clear*,"^{BBE} "*exhibit*,"^{CJB} "*might display*,"^{CSB} "*can always point to us*,"^{LIVING} "*demonstrate*."^{ABP}

Such an action cannot be fulfilled in this present evil world: making clear, exhibiting, displaying, pointing to, and demonstrating. This ought to be clear, for at this time, what has been done in the son's of God "*doth not yet appear*," and "*the world knoweth us not*" (1 John 3:1). We have the treasure of salvation in "*earthen vessels*" (2 Cor 4:7) - and that is all the world can see. Even the highest ranking members of the body of Christ, the apostles, have, according to appearance, been "*set forth*" as "*last*" - "*appointed to death*" and "*made a spectacle to the world*" (2 Cor 4:9). They have been made "*as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day*" (1 Cor 4:13). That is simply not the kind of context in which a resounding testimony of God's grace can be given. The display, or showing, is of a finished work, not one in progress. It is much the same as God showing Jesus at the end of time. As it is written, "*Which in His times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*" (1 Tim 6:15). The magnificent work that has been done in the saints will not be displayed before the glory of their Lord is made public. Thus it is written, "*when He shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him*" (1 John 3:2). That is the beginning of the display of which this text is speaking.

THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE. What will be displayed, and what will be seen, is what the Lord has done: "*the exceeding riches of His grace*." **Thus what has been done will be more clearly perceived by seeing the means through which it was done.** Other versions read, "*surpassing riches*,"^{NASB} "*incomparable riches*,"^{NIV} "*immeasurable riches*,"^{NRSV} "*the full wealth*,"^{BBE} "*abundant riches*,"^{DOUAY} "*extremely rich*,"^{GWN} "*magnitude of the riches*,"^{MRD} "*extraordinarily rich*,"^{NJB} "*incredible wealth*,"^{NLT} "*superior riches*,"^{IE} "*limitless riches*,"^{ISV} "*amazing riches*."^{MONTGOMERY} In other words, there is no way to adequately describe it at this time.

Is this what has been displayed before the eyes of the world - as many versions and commentators represent the verse? In nearly every way the modern church is like a stumbling beggar, falling repeatedly, being led astray, and asking for help from the unsaved. It certainly is not perceived as a glorious trophy of what the grace of God can do. The richness of grace is scarcely known, as a considerable percentage of the professing church questions the effectiveness of grace, and significant divisions exist over the matter of grace.

This is not what God intended to do when He saved us! He had another domain in mind, and eternity in view. The admonition "*Let your light so shine before men*" ((Matt 5:16) is not to be compared with the showing, or display, of "*the exceeding riches of His grace*." Even now, the primary display of God's "*manifold wisdom*" (which has to do with how he employed His grace) is set before "*principalities and powers in heavenly places*" (Eph 3:10).

IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARD US. When It comes to working a change in men, Divine kindness is infinitely more powerful and effective than God's judgment or wrath. Time and time again God judged Israel,

punished them, and consumed thousands of them in His anger - yet it wrought no effective change in them.

Salvation is depicted as *"the kindness and love of God"* toward man **appearing** (Tit 3:4). That perfectly parallels our text, which speaks of *"His kindness toward us"* -i.e. kindness directed toward and effectively working in us. God's "kindness" is very broad. Nehemiah said kindness was revealed in God not forsaking wayward Israel (Neh 9:17). The Psalmist spoke of God's *"merciful kindness"* (Psa 117:2). Isaiah spoke of God's *"everlasting kindness"* (Isa 54:8), and Joel of His "great kindness" (Joel 2:13).

God's *"kindness"* has transforming power that sets it apart from all other kindness. Men may be kind to a beggar, but it will not change his state. They may be kind to the infirm, but it will not change their condition. But it is not so with God's kindness. It does such a magnificent work that it will only be able to be suitably displayed in an environment in which there is no distracting evil, no debilitating obtuseness, and where all will have the capacity to understand what the Lord has done in salvation.

THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. When anything is said to be done *"through Christ Jesus,"* it has to do with His redemptive role. This is the Jesus who died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and has been invested with all power in heaven and earth. Identity with Jesus is not accomplished by simply adding someone's name to a list of saved ones. It is rather accomplished by dying with Jesus, and being raised with Him to walk in the newness of life. Where this has not taken place, nothing can really be passed from Jesus to the individual. This is the bane of false and dead religion. It forges no real relationship of the people to Jesus-i.e. they are not truly joined to the Lord. As a consequence, God's kindness cannot pass to them.

SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES

^{2:9} *"For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."*

BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED. It is what God does that saves us! - and that is epitomized in the word *"grace."* There is a lot in that word, including kindness, favor, love, tenderness, effective power, and Divine aptitude. The word *"saved"* means infinitely more than having your sins forgiven. It includes deliverance from the devil, the world, and the power of sin. There is Divine acceptance, moral and spiritual change, and heavenly recognition. The person who is *"saved"* is enabled to do anything and everything God requires of him. If he labors more abundantly than everyone else, grace enabled him to do so (1 Cor 15:10). If a person bears up under a severe hindrance, fulfilling his work, it is because grace *"is sufficient"* (2 Cor 12:9). If a person lives successfully in the world without being overcome by it, it is because of God's grace (2 Cor 1:12). We are *"justified by His grace"* (Eph 3:7).

Being saved by grace covers every aspect of salvation, from the beginning to the end; from its initiation to its

finalization. There is no point in the newness of life where we have no further need of grace - no point at which it ceases to be necessary.

THROUGH FAITH. This is the caveat - or explanation that prevents a misinterpretation - that is missed by many. Grace cannot be obtained where there is no faith. Faith is the hand of the soul that takes hold of grace, and faith involves a certain persuasion and conviction. The person who has faith is not stabbing in the dark. What is more, the very faith that is possessed and gives access to grace, was "*obtained*" (2 Pet 1:1). When it comes to obtaining the righteousness of God, or being justified, "*it is of faith that it might be through grace*" (Rom 4:16). Paul further says that "*we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*" (Rom 5:2). The situation is this: we cannot successfully finish our course without grace, and we cannot have any measure of grace without faith. I do not believe this has been seen by the professing church. One of the results of spiritual Babylon is the hiding of the truth of God's grace.

THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES. Other versions read "*not from yourselves,*" ^{NIV} "*not your own doing,*" ^{NRSV} "*not your accomplishment,*" ^{CJB} "*You had nothing to do with it,*" ^{GWN} "*not by anything of your own,*" ^{NJB} "*you can't take credit for this,*" ^{NLT} "*You did not save yourselves,*" ^{ERV} "*the result of your own efforts.*" ^{GNB}

Here again is a matter that is hotly disputed among men. Some say this includes the reception of faith, and others deny that this is the case. Others say it cannot mean what it says, because Peter clearly said to those to whom he preached on Pentecost, "*Save yourselves*" (Acts 2:40). First, let us dispense with these two shallow arguments.

First, the text is speaking about the whole of salvation, and not a part of it. Whatever is necessary to the reception of salvation comes from God, for that is a part of the salvation itself. If it is the conviction of sin, it came from God (John 16:8-9). If it is repentance, Jesus gives repentance (Acts 5:31). If it is believing, "*it is given*" to us to believe (Phil 1:29). If it is confession, no one can say Jesus is Lord "*save by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:3). If it is baptism, we were baptized having "*faith in the operation of God*" (Col 2:12).

There is nothing about salvation that is lacking the work of God. Because Jesus is in every aspect of it, He is called "*the Author and Finisher,*" "*Beginning and the End,*" "*First and the Last,*" and "*Alpha and the Omega*" (Heb 12:2; Rev 21:6; Rev 1:17; Rev 1:8). Nothing is done in those who receive the grace of God in which Jesus was not present.

Salvation is never viewed as the result of human **and** Divine efforts. No part of the salvation itself has the mark of man upon it. Even though men are required to do things, what they do is not a part of the salvation itself. Everything men are required to do has to do with obtaining salvation, and not the salvation itself. For example, when Israel was "*saved*" out of Egypt (Jude 1:5), what they did was not the source of the deliverance. Killing the passover lamb, applying the blood, eating the passover meal, packing all of their goods, obtaining goods from the Egyptians, etc is not what saved them. They came out of Egypt by God's leading (Ex 13:18,21,22).

"Not of works" is illustrated in Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Had Israel done all they were commanded to do unless God *"brought"* them out (Ex 13:3), they would not have come out. Further, they could not have walked through the Red Sea unless God brought them through it with His *"right hand"* (Ex 15:6,12). Salvation is like that.

IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. Other versions read, *"even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God,"* ^{LIVING} *"through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."* ^{NIV} Whether viewed as faith itself, or salvation - "by grace through faith" - the meaning is essentially the same. Salvation is not sold to us. It is not offered to us for a payment of any kind. It comes from God's grace and disposition to be kind. Further, His grace, or favor, is not owing to what we have done, but to what was accomplished by Christ in our behalf. Let us never forget it!

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 23

Eph 2:9 ***"Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*** (Eph 2:9-10)

NOT SAVED BY WORKS - THE SAVED ARE A WORK

INTRODUCTION

It is my persuasion that Paul had some depth of insight on this matter that was not vouchsafed to others. This has to do with the intricate Involvements of why salvation is *"not of works."* There is far too much bantering within the professed church about this subject. Basically the people have fallen into one of two trains of thought. Some assume that *"not of works"* means salvation is altogether divorced from works. Therefore, they have become tolerant of carnality, and pass off its existence in the church by saying we are saved by grace, and what we do really has little or nothing to do with it. The other group insists that the text does not mean what it says, taking the position that what it means is that we are not saved by keeping the Law. However, works are a requirement for obtaining salvation. It is noteworthy that this group says very little about WHY we are saved, and what salvation produces. The religion of both of these groups has little depth, and is sorely lacking in understanding. All of this indicates a lack of spiritual discernment concerning both the reason and nature of salvation.

No man should expect the salvation of God to be simplistic, because the human condition with which it deals, and resolves, is not one noted for simplicity. We should not require a lot of tutelage on this matter. Concerning the state in which we were found, and in relation to God, we were *"dead in trespasses and sins."* Concerning our focus, we *"walked according to the course of this world."* That manner of life was *"according to the prince of the power of the air,"* and it caused us to be *"the children of disobedience."* (2:1-2). It should be clear that we could do nothing about our situation. We were corrupt by nature, possessing no needed virtues. Both our circumstances and the one who ruled over us was superior to us. That is what salvation addresses.

NOT OF WORKS LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST

Eph 2:9 *"Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

This text will account for what has happened to us in Christ Jesus. Concerning the state of being "*dead in trespasses and sins*," God "*quickened us together with Christ*" (2:5). Concerning our **environment**, God "*made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places*" (2:8). The reason He did this was "*That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*" (Eph 2:7). In summation, that is being saved "*by grace*" "*through faith*" - and the entire process is "*not of ourselves: it is the gift of God*" (2:8).

You will be hard-pressed to find anyone today who views salvation in such a manner. I am quick to say, however, the ones who are really "*saved*" immediately recognize the truth that is stated in these verses. It only needs to be proclaimed for them to take hold of it. Their heart and their conscience will attest to the truth of these words, opening the wellspring of joy.

NOT OF WORKS. Other versions read, "*not as a result of works*," ^{NASB} "*not because of works*," ^{NRSV} "*not a reward for the good we have done*," ^{LIVING} "*does not come from human effort*," ^{IE} "*not the result of works*," ^{ISV} "*not the result of what anyone can do*," ^{WILLIAMS} "*It isn't something you have earned*," ^{CEV} "*You are not saved by the things you have done*," ^{ERV} "*We don't play the major role*," ^{MESSAGE} "*[not the fulfillment of the Law's demands]*," ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is one of the most misunderstood verses and concepts in all of the Scriptures. It deals with salvation in a manner virtually unknown to the nominal church.

"Do and live." The Law introduced the concept of life proceeding from doing. "*Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD*" (Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29; Ezek 20:11,13,21; Lk 10:28; Rom 10:5). The things to be done are what God has commanded. They are summarized in the Ten Commandments. This is not the same as the thought of earning, for obedience and earning are not synonymous terms or concepts.

When it comes to forgiveness and justification, there is no procedure that can obtain the benefit. It is conferred by grace, not by means of a routine. Here the promise of the Law must be seen for what it was. "*If*

ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa 1:19). This is not the principle through which salvation is either obtained or maintained. Even the godly prior to Christ knew this was true.

Obedience is essential, but it is not what saves us. Even the ancients knew this - people who lived before *"the day of salvation."*

Micah reasoned, *"Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7).*

David reasoned similarly, *"For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psa 51:16).*

Speaking through **Hosea**, God said, *"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).*

There is no work than can offset sin, remit it, cleanse the conscience, or justify. All such things require Divine favor, or grace, and that is accessed by faith. In the matter of believing, it is God who gives us to believe (Phil 1:29), and that is triggered, so to speak, by a hearing a message, not a work of man.

LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST. God's requirements are lofty - too lofty for men, however noble their works may be. Paul reasoned on this, using Abraham as a point of reference. *"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (Rom 4:2).* Although this is a hypothetical situation, it drives the point home. If Abraham was actually justified by works, he could rightly boast of such an achievement - BUT NOT BEFORE GOD. The nature of God will not permit Him to change the status of men because of what they do - even when it is good and right. The contrast here is with faith - with believing God. Therefore Paul reasons, *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom 4:3).*

While doing the will of God is necessary, it must not be allowed to trump believing God. So far as I know, there is not a recovery plan among men, or system of self-improvement, that does not rely wholly upon DOING something. I know of no human plan that relies upon believing to accomplish its aim. They deal with steps, routines, etc. And even in this, they are beneath the level of the Law, which dealt with DOING as a means of obtaining life at the highest possible level.

Think of the things associated with faith. They speak to us of its effectiveness. Understanding (Heb 11:3), living (Rom 1:17), trusting (1 Tim 4:10), persuasion (Rom 4:21), assurance (Heb 10:22), hearing (Gal 3:2,5), protection (Eph 6:16), joy (Phil 1:25), etc. **What "work" can appropriate such things?**

In its essence, salvation comes to us "by grace through faith" - and we cannot take credit for the presence of either. This circumstance is what makes Christ the "Author and the Finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:2). Oh, that men could see more of this!

WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP

^{210a} "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works . . ."

It will free men from unnecessary confusion when they realize the subject Paul is developing is not works, but salvation. When men turn this into a dialog about what men are to do, they obscure the marvelous truth that is being proclaimed.

HIS WORKMANSHIP. Salvation is a work of God, not the result of the work of man. A person that is saved is a product of Divine activity. Even when speaking of the nation of Israel in particular, and humanity in general, the Psalmist confessed, "Know ye that the LORD He is God: **it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture**" (Psa 100:3). He knew you could not thoroughly account for the children of Israel simply by tracing their genealogy back to Abraham. Nor, indeed can we account for humanity by only tracing it back to Adam.

It is even more so with the saved - the body of Christ. As individuals, and as "the body of Christ," the saved are God's "workmanship" - the result of His work, not their own. Other versions read, "what He has made us," ^{NRSV} "what God made," ^{IE} "God's own handiwork," ^{WEYMOUTH} "His masterpiece," ^{ISV} "God has made us what we are," ^{GNB} "God does both the making and the saving," ^{MESSAGE} and "God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship)." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word "workmanship" means, "the works of God as Creator." ^{THAYER} "only of the works of God as Creator." ^{FRIBERG} If men were saved by works, they would be the product, or result, of their own work, or activity. But that is not at all the case -even though the saved have done a number of things. Initially they included hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, calling on the name of the Lord, and being baptized. After the new birth the saved perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1), fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:19), put on the new man (Eph 4:24), put off the old man (Col 3:9), put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11), and run the race set before them with patient endurance (Heb 12:1-2), etc. Yet, we are not saved by these things. We are saved "by grace through faith," and that is summarized by the saying, "We are His workmanship."

This is why those in Christ are said to be a "new creature," or "new creation" ^{NKJV} (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). This new entity has been "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24), being "renewed in

*knowledge after the image of Him that **created** him" (Col 3:9). This is not the refurbishment of the Adamic nature. It is not developing more fully what man is by nature. It is not uncovering latent capacities that reside in fallen man. God's "workmanship" consists of things that were not possessed before. Both capacities and possessions are integral to the persons of the saved that were never possessed or experienced before conversion.*

This lifts the matter of salvation out of the realm of human ingenuity and accomplishment. Newness of life is not merely a different way of living, a new set of habits, or the cleaning up of our act, so to speak.

You have been blessed when you examine yourself to see if you are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5), and find what the Lord Himself has done! Some are content to examine themselves to see if any uncomely things are there. And, indeed, such an examination is necessary. Yet, it is not the superior examination. The findings that will themselves yield benefit are those that are wrought by God, and therefore can be kept and maintained. Jesus spoke of this when He said to Nicodemus, "*But he that doeth truth **cometh** to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21).*

CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS. Other versions read, "*given us new lives from Christ Jesus,*" ^{LIVING} "*in Christ Jesus we have been created,*" ^{IE} "*He has created us through our union with Christ Jesus,*" ^{WILLIAMS} "*in Christ Jesus God made us new people,*" ^{ERV} "*He creates each of us by Christ Jesus,*" ^{MESSAGE} and "*recreated in Christ Jesus.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

Stripped of the embellishments of human interpretation, Jesus Christ is the appointed environment in which the new creation is accomplished. This is why we are "*added to the Lord*" (Acts 5:14), "*joined unto the Lord*" (1 Cor 6:17), and "*baptized into Christ*" (Gal 3:27). God is holy, and He cannot recreate man in a defiled environment. The earth has been contaminated, together with all humanity. Therefore, in the salvation of God, all of the valid and effective working is accomplished "*in the Son.*"

UNTO GOOD WORKS. The aim of salvation is not simply to bring a cessation to "*dead works*" (Heb 9:14). Newness of life demands new expression - "*good works.*" These are works that are inherently good, and not mixed with corruption. "*Good works*" are mentioned 16 times in Scripture, and always in a good sense (Matt 5:16; John 10:32; Acts 9:36; Rom 13:3; Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10,25; 6:18; 2 Tim 3:17; Tit 2:7,14; 3:8,14; Heb 10:24; 1 Pet 2:12).

This means that salvation is designed to bring men to DO something - to participate in the working of the Lord. Ultimately this will involve reigning with Jesus (2 Tim 2:12). Now it involves God working in the saved both to "*do and to will*" (Phil 2:13).

WALKING IN WORKS VERSUS BEING SAVED BY WORKS

210b " . . . which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

It should become increasingly apparent to us that the salvation of God is not primarily about meeting human needs, raising the level of human potentiality, or meeting the fundamental needs of men. All of these things are addressed in salvation, but not at the foundational level. Rather, God sought a means to reveal Himself by the participation of other personalities in His work. This would require a strong inclination on His part, as well as a level of wisdom that was not known prior to *"the day of salvation."*

Men have debated endlessly on works - good works - whether they are necessary or not; or whether men can be saved apart from them or not. But that is not how God approaches the subject of *"good works,"* and neither should that be our manner to do so.

Note how Paul addresses the matter of *"good works."* It is not on the basis of Law, or their necessity. He rather traces them to Divine objective - the reason for the new creation. At this point, the professed church is very weak. It rarely deals with what God intends, but rather presents the Lord as One who demands, or requires, certain things of us. Paul rises higher than this and informs us WHY God recreated us in Christ Jesus. It was to do *"good works."*

GOD HATH BEFORE ORDAINED. Other versions read, *"which God prepared beforehand,"* ^{NKJV} *"which God prepared in advance,"* ^{NIV} *"and long ages ago He planned,"* ^{LIVING} *good works which He has predestined us to practice,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"He beforehand planned for us to do,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"God predestined us to make our daily way of life,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} *"God planned for us to do good things,"* ^{CEV} *"to join him in the work He does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

You can tell from the various versions that this is a very difficult concept for men to comprehend. Ordinarily men think of God joining them in the work they are doing. Here, however, the point is man joining God in what He is doing. The words *"before ordained"* refer to before the foundation of the world. **These works have to do with how we use our abilities, our time, our opportunities, and our resources.** I do not believe the stress of this teaching is on specific things that are done by the saints. Rather, this deals with the kind of works we do.

THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM. Salvation by grace is the appointed prelude to walking in good works. This describes the entirety of our lives, and every facet of them. These are works that are summarized in fulfilling a certain assigned stewardship.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS. The clear example of this kind of life is the Lord Jesus Himself. In His life He fleshed out what these works are all about. Jesus said, "the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do . . ." (John 5:36). Again He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me" (John 9:4-5). The strict harmony of His works with those of the Father is seen in His words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). He also affirmed that the works He did bore witness that the Father had sent Him: "*the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me*" (John 5:36). Again He said, "*the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me*" (John 10:25). He said that the "*many*" good works that He did were "*from My Father*" (John 10:32). For Jesus, His "*good works*" were summarized in the commission delivered to Him by God: "*I lay down My life, that I might take it again . . . This commandment have I received of My Father*" (John 10:17-18).

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL. Paul stands as an example of someone given a work to do - a work prepared for him before he was born (Gal 1:15). When Jesus called him, He summarized the works for which he was ordained. ". . . *I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness . . . To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me*" (Acts 26:16-18).

The "*good works*" of reference are not generic, referring to one's general deportment. They have particularly to do with being "*laborers together with God*" (1 Cor 3:9), and being "*fellow helpers to the truth*" (3 John 1:8).

It may be someone like Phebe, of whom Paul said "*she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also*" (Rom 16:2). The works range from giving a cup of cold water to one of the little ones (Matt 10:42), to laboring in the Word and in the doctrine (1 Tim 5:17) and relieving the afflicted (1 Tim 5:10). The point is that the work is directly related to what God is doing in Christ Jesus - working together with God (2 Cor 6:1). Scriptures reveal certain people who were raised up to do a work: David, Esther, Nehemiah, Barnabas, etc. When a person is born again, they are placed in the Divine work-pool, which is the church of the living God. They are expected to be at God's disposal when the time comes to fulfill their work. That is done by living by faith.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 24

Eph 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; 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."* (Eph 2:11-12)

AS GENTILES OUR FORMER STATE

INTRODUCTION

Paul continues to elaborate on what the saved were before the love and kindness of God appeared. This time, however, he fastens his attention on the Gentiles, while previously mankind was considered as a whole. The fact that there were Jews and Gentiles further complicated the matter of salvation - at least from the human point of view. For fifteen hundred years God had fastened His attention on the Jews. He isolated them from the other nations, and dealt with them as an separate people. Therefore it is written, *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth"* (Deut 7:6). And again, *"Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day"* (Deut 10:15). While the prophets did speak of the eventual acceptance of the Gentiles (Isa 11:10; 42:1,6; 49:6,22; 60:3,5; 66:12; Jer 16:19, etc), it was not at all clear to the people prior to Jesus. **This is because it was not an emphasis**, but was only mentioned. The emphasis was placed upon the Jews themselves. As Paul said, *"Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"* (Rom 9:4-5). The details of the conversion of the Gentiles were not provided. Therefore, the whole matter was glossed by the people. Notwithstanding this circumstance, God was going to accomplish His will, and the working would be marvelous. Now Paul will show how the saving of the Gentiles contradicted every form of human reasoning.

REMEMBER WHAT WE WERE IN TIME PAST

Eph 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."

REMEMBER. When the word of the Lord says "*remember*," it is always within a certain context. That is, what we remember is not a mere generality. Nor, indeed, are men to extract the things they want to remember without regard to Divine directives. Remembering is like selecting fruit for the soul. You must be in the right field, and viewing the proper tree of thought. The "*mixed multitude*" traveling with Israel once murmured when they "*remembered*" the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic that they ate in Egypt (Num11:5).

In this text, the Gentile believers are admonished to reach into the past and recall the condition in which Christ found them. It was, in reality, a hopeless one. The purpose for this recall is to highlight the magnitude of what the Lord has accomplished in our salvation.

IN TIME PAST. This language presumes a line of demarcation that separates the old manner of life from the new. It is a line that identifies a change wrought by God. "Time past: is not from today backward, but from conversion backward. It is a period that no longer exercises dominating power over us, and it is all owing to the marvelous working of the Lord.

Paul said his life outside of Christ was lived "*in time past*" (Gal 1:13). In the first part of the second chapter of Ephesians, Paul referred to life before the experience of salvation as "*time past*" (Eph 2:2). Peter writes that "*in time past*" we "*were not a people*" (1 Pet 2:10). He also writes, "*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles*" (1 Pet 4:3).

This language is more than a simple reference to the past - a kind of historical point in time. This is the language of confidence and assurance. It is a statement of faith, so to speak. It recognizes that those in Christ are no longer what they used to be. A every real change has taken place that redefined them, effectively separating them from alienation and enmity. This redefinition is not "*in word only*," but is matched by the expressions of newness of life. **There is too much being said these days about being Christian, in Christ, saved, etc., that is not attended by any observable evidence.** The "*newness of life*" realized in Christ Jesus is actually a domain in which we "*walk*," or live (Rom 6:4). It is not a mere formal designation, but a habitat in which living is acceptable to God.

All living prior to this "*walk*" is here defined as "*time past*." That means that those in Christ are no longer what they were, and do not lives now as they did then. Where this is not true, there is, in the sense of this text, no "*time past*." That time does not end until a person is born again. Until that time unacceptable life is contiguous, with wrath being treasured up day by day for the person, and will issue forth on the day of wrath (Rom 2:5). For those in Christ, each day is a new beginning. For the unreconciled, however, there is nothing but an extension of the time in which the state of the individual is one of condemnation.

GENTILES IN THE FLESH. Other versions read, "*Gentiles by birth,*" ^{NIV} "*nations in the flesh,*" ^{DARBY} "*carnal Gentiles,*" ^{MRD} "*gentiles by physical descent,*" ^{NJB} "*heathen,*" ^{LIVING} "*not Jewish,*" ^{IE} "*Gentiles as to your bodily condition,*" ^{WEYMOUTH} and "*heathen in a physical sense.*" ^{WILLIAMS}

The point here is that the Gentiles had no reason to hope - none at all. Prior to Christ the ONLY ones with whom God identified Himself were the Jews. Everything God gave, including the Law, the Prophets, and the promises, were to the Jews (Rom 9:3-5) - and they were the fleshly descendants of Abraham.

When God chose and called Abraham, and delivered the promise to Him and His offspring, there was a sense in which all other peoples were excluded. Technically speaking, there was no spiritual generation until Jesus. The Gentiles are classified as "*the Gentiles that know not God*" (1 Thess 4:5).

CALLED "UNCIRCUMCISION." The point here is that circumcision was the "*sign and seal*" of the promise God made with Abraham, and the "*righteousness of the faith*" he possessed before he was circumcised (Rom 4:11). This refers to "*the covenant of circumcision*" (Acts 7:8) which was the means of defining the people favored by God, and through whom the Messiah would come. All male Jews were to be circumcised on the eighth day after their birth (Lev 12:3).

The term "*uncircumcised*" was one of derision, and denoted an unacceptable people. (Judges 14:3; 1 Sam 17:26; Isa 52:1). As they were in the flesh, they had no formal identity with God other than that of being His creation. God made no covenant with them, gave them no written law, made no promises directly to them, did not provide a means of serving Him (like the tabernacle service), and gave them no prophet. All such things were given only to the Jews. It is difficult to imagine a more formidable hurdle standing between a body of people and God than this. The Gentiles may have had a Socrates and a Plato, but they did not have a Moses. A David, or an Isaiah. Their condition was most serious, and they ought to remember it.

WE WERE WITHOUT CHRIST

^{2:12a} "*That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise . . .*"

AT THAT TIME. The expression "*at that time*" does not refer to a juncture in time, but a period of time during which the following conditions prevailed. It was the period from birth until they were baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27), and became a part of His lineage. There were not ups and downs, seasons of acceptance interspersed with seasons of rejection. The following was the status of us Gentiles always and without exception until we were born again (1 Pet 1:213), and were "*joined unto the Lord*" (1 Cor 6:17).

WITHOUT CHRIST. Other versions read "*separate from Christ*,"^{NASB} "*separated from Christ*,"^{RSV} "*had no Messiah*,"^{CJB} "*without the Messiah*,"^{CSB} "*apart from Christ*,"^{YLT} "*utterly apart from Christ*,"^{LIVING} "*living apart from Christ*,"^{WEYMOUTH} "*without any connection with Christ*,"^{WILLIAMS} "*did not know about Christ*,"^{CEV} "*hadn't the faintest idea of Christ*,"^{MESSAGE} and "*Remember*] *that you were at that time separated (living apart from Christ [excluded from all part in Him]).*"^{AMPLIFIED}

The word translated "*without*" has the following lexical meaning: "separate, apart 1a) without any."^{THAYER} "at a space, i.e. separately or apart from."^{STRONG'S} It does NOT mean merely lacking knowledge, as represented by some versions.

CEV/ MESSAGE

To be "*without Christ*" is to be excluded from any of the benefits that are appropriated through and in Him. With one broad stroke, this would be "*salvation*." In its details it would be forgiveness, acceptance, Christ's fellowship, righteousness, reconciliation, sanctification, intercession, guidance, help, the new birth, Christ's love, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a host of other benefits. In our former lives, we Gentiles had none of these things in any form - either in promise, or in actual possession.

There was no remnant of our being that God could use to reshape or renew us. We were devoid of any association with Christ, and therefore spiritually impoverished with no ray of light shining into the place of our occupancy. No matter how morally good we may have appeared to be to others, or to ourselves, this was our true condition.

ALIENS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL. There was a body of people upon the earth who had been given certain promises, and had solid ground for hope. Here they are referred to as "*the commonwealth of Israel*." Other versions read, "*citizenship Israel*,"^{NIV} "*Israel's rights as a nation*,"^{BBE} "*the national life of Israel*,"^{CJB} "*conversation of Israel*,"^{DOUAY} "*the community of Israel*,"^{NAB} "*membership of Israel*,"^{NJB} "*enemies of God's children*,"^{LIVING} and "*outlawed from the rights of Israel as a nation*."^{AMPLIFIED}

Simply by virtue of their birth in the flesh, the Gentiles were excluded from all of the benefits of the Jews, who were the chosen people of God. Here we are being exposed to a Divine manner in which **the people trump the individual**. Sacred privileges were not vouchsafed because of the attainments of each individual - by works, so to speak. Rather, it was identity with the body of chosen people that became the basis for any kind of involvement with God. Further, the acceptability of the group was strictly based upon the acceptance of their progenitor - which, in the case of the Jews, was Abraham generally, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob specifically.

Those who have confidence in the flesh must learn from this circumstance that, of itself, flesh brings no

advantage in the matter of dealings with God. The only person in the flesh that experiences ultimate benefit from God is the person God chooses -and even then advantages are only in the flesh. However, the Gentiles lacked even these benefits.

STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANTS OF PROMISE. Other versions read, "*foreigners to the covenants of promise,*" ^{NIV} "*no Part in the covenants of the Promise,*" ^{NJB} and "*strangers with no share in the sacred compacts of the [Messianic] promise [with no knowledge of or right in God's agreements, His covenants.]*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

The "covenants of promise" were the unilateral covenants that were not contingent upon the obedience of the Israelites. They included the promise of a Seed through whom the whole world would be blessed (Gen 12:3); the circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6); a Son being born upon whose shoulders the government would be placed (Isa 9:6); the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:16-18,39); One upon whom the iniquities of us all would be laid (Isa 53:6); a new covenant in which God would write His laws upon the hearts of the people (Jer 31:31-34); and the rising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings (Mal 4:2). **None of these promises had conditions that were to be fulfilled by men.** There was no earthly condition, no matter how bleak it may have been, that could have stopped these things from occurring.

Yet, none of them were promised to the Gentiles. Any participation in them by the Gentiles was by virtue of their association with the chosen people. During the period of the Old Covenant, this was depicted as the Gentiles coming to the Jews (Jer 3:17; Isa 60:1-3; Zech 8:23). In the time of the New Covenant it is particularized as being grafted into the Jewish olive tree, and thus partaking of its root and fatness (Rom 11:7). This is a great work, indeed!

HAVING NO HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD

^{212b} "*... , having no hope, and without God in the world.*"

The situation of the Gentiles was simply this: God had made no commitment to them. He had made no agreement with them, or sent a prophet to them to assure them that good things were appointed for them. Other than being among the offspring of Adam, they had no formal association with the Jews, who had been selected by God as the premier people in the flesh. This was done in order that the Messiah might come through them. They were also the ones through whom the Law was given, that brings us to Christ, and among whom the prophets spoke who declared what God had purposed to do in the world.

Paul has already said they were "*without Christ,*" were "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,*" and having no "*covenant of promise*" addressed to them. Now he adds some chilling words to seal up the matter.

HAVING NO HOPE. Other versions read, "without hope," ^{NIV} "He had promised you no help," ^{LIVING} and "you had no hope (no promise)." ^{AMPLIFIED}

What does it mean to be "without hope?" Remember, this is a condition that exists outside of Christ, and especially for those who are not Jews. In the obtaining of salvation, the Jews have a distinct advantage. It is not because of anything they have done. From that perspective they are under the dominion of sin like everyone else (Rom 3:9). Yet, the promises delivered to them gave ground for hope. Therefore there were some - the Spirit refers to them as a remnant - who "looked for redemption" (Lk 2:38). Others were described as "waiting for the consolation Israel" (Lk 2:25). There was also a just man from Arimathaea who "waited for the kingdom of God" (Lk 23:51). Cleopas and his companion had been waiting for the One who would "redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21). These people had hope because they were Jews, and had familiarized themselves with the Scriptures, which were given to them.

The Gentiles, however, had no Scriptures - at least none that were given particularly to them. They could not look at the creation and obtain hope, for hope presumes a promise from God, and God had not spoken to them as a people.

Having no hope means there was nothing they could do about their situation. The requirement for extrication from their dilemma exceeded their ability. They could not study their way out of the condition. They certainly could not "will" themselves out of it. The pit in which they found themselves was too deep for them to devise a way to escape from it. There was no secret method that could be employed to salvage them from their condition. They were "without hope." Their condition would not improve with time, and finally just go away. No mighty deliverer could rise from the Gentile ranks to rescue the people. Although there was a multitude of Gentiles, they could not produce a Savior, one who could reconcile them to God, or One who could stand in the gap for them. There was not a shred of hope among them!

WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD. To be "without God" is a most dreadful consideration. **This is the only place in Scripture where this expression is used.** Paul told some Athenian philosophers that God "is not far from each one of us" ^{NKJV} (Acts 17:27). However, that is a far cry from being "with us," and it is worsened by the fact that the carnal man is not even aware that God is not far away.

There are some people before Christ of whom it is said, "God was with him." Solomon is so described (2 Chron 1:1). The same is said of Asa (2 Chron 15:8-9). Stephen said that God was with Joseph, even though his brothers sold him (Acts 7:9). But these men were all Jews, numbered with the chosen people. Paul affirms this cannot be said of we Gentiles. We were "without God." The situation is accentuated by virtue of the fact that we were "in the world." This is a world dominated by the devil (1 John 5:19), who is described as "the God of this world" 2 Cor 4:4). Truly, it is a "present evil world" (Gal 1:4), and we were in it "without God."

As Gentiles we had no access to Divine help, illumination, or comfort. We were locked into nature, with no way of getting out of it. All of the accumulated wisdom of men could not find a way out. Our adversary was more powerful and crafty than us. Our frailty, when compared to principalities and powers aligned against us, made us victims of our foes.

And what has Paul accomplished by accentuating what we were? He has reminded us that we were "*dead in trespasses and sins*," living in step with the world, and dominated by the prince of the power of the air. We were children of disobedience, and subjects of the wrath of God. We were a non-people: Gentiles. We were aliens to the only people on the face of the earth with whom God had identified Himself. No covenants of promise were directed toward us. We were without hope and without God in a world where both are sorely needed.

The truth of the matter is that if God did not take the initiative in salvation, there would have been none. If He did not send a Savior, there would have been none. If His kindness was not toward us, we would not have received any from anyone else. Salvation is wholly of the Lord, and there is absolutely no question about it. It is "*not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 25

Eph 2:13 ***"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us . . ."*** (Eph 2:13-14a)

BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Paul has established the reason for the saints in Ephesus being in Christ. He has done so from the highest vantage point in order that their faith and hope might be in God. He affirms that God has chosen "us" - the saved ones - *"in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world"* (1:2). This was not the result of foresight, or seeing in advance how the Ephesians would respond to the Gospel. Rather, it is owing to God *"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will"* (Eph 1:5). By Divine intention, this resulted in *"the praise of the glory of His grace"* in the heavenly realms, as well as among those who have spiritual discernment. This is owing to the fact that He *"made us accepted in the Beloved"* (Eph 1:6). This Divine working accounts for the fact that we *"have redemption through His blood,"* and that because of the *"riches of His grace"* (Eph 1:7). What we know about this the result of Him *"Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself"* (Eph 1:9),

These affirmations are not mere creedal statements to be embraced, as expressions of sectarian distinction and subjects of debate and discussion. They have wrought very real effects, which constitute the evidence of ones participation in them. At some point believers must be able to take advantage of the privileges that have been vouchsafed to them in Jesus. It is not enough to merely say they belong to us - a practice that is altogether too common among professed believers. It is no more right to boast in what we have received in Christ than it was for the Jews to boast in what they had received. The boasting, or glorying, is to be in the Lord Himself, not in our identity with the Lord - and there is a vast difference. We cannot boast in something we have received by grace. However, we can legitimately boast in the One who have it.

THE CAUSE OF DIFFERENCE - "IN CHRIST JESUS"

Eph 2:13a **"But now in Christ Jesus . . ."** Other versions read, "by Jesus the Messiah,"^{MRD} "But now you have been united with Christ Jesus,"^{NLT} "you belong to Christ Jesus,"^{LIVING} "through your union with Christ Jesus,"^{WILLIAMS} and "because of Christ-dying that death, shedding that blood."^{MESSAGE}

This is a technical point, and a technical point cannot be established by a general statement. Some versions are more an interpretation than a translation. For example, being "united with Christ"^{NLT} *belonging to Christ*,^{LIVING} *union with Christ*,^{WILLIAMS} and "because of Christ dying,"^{MESSAGE} are **not** proper representations of the text. While it is true that we have been united, or "joined unto the Lord," have union with Him, and belong to Him, that is **not** the point of this text, That our status is owing to the death of Christ cannot be denied. However, Jesus is not here declared to be a Companion, or an Owner. Although He is the Cause of our salvation, that is not the fact that is being affirmed. **Here, the point is that Jesus Himself is the Environment - i.e. we are IN Him.**

NOW, IN CHRIST JESUS. At this point we rise into a domain that cannot be accessed by the insincere and sectarian. We have become a part of Christ Himself. That is why the church is referred to as His "body" (Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12-27; Eph 1:23; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30 Col 1:18; 2:19).

It is God Himself who put us into Christ: "But of Him are ye **in** Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30). This was accomplished when we were "baptized into Christ" (Gal 3:27). At that time we were "added to the Lord" (Acts 4:14), becoming a part of Him. This is why whatever is done to the saints is done unto Christ (Matt 25:40).

The expression "in Christ," as used in this text (the environment in which we have been placed), is used sixty-five times in Romans through First Peter. Referring to Christ Jesus, the words "in Him" (speaking of Jesus as the Environment in which those who live by faith are located), are mentioned fourteen times (2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9; Col 2:6-7,10; 2 Thess 1:12; 1 John 2:5,6,27,28; 3:6,24; 4:13; 5:20). John particularly emphasizes **abiding**, or **dwelling**^{KJV} in Him (1 John 2:6,27,28; 3:5,6,24; 4:13). Jesus also accented abiding in Him, stating that it was a requisite for being saved: "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). Thus, when we speak of being "in Christ," it is understood to carry the connotation of abiding in Him.

A UNIQUE EXPRESSION AND EXPERIENCE. Both the statement and the concept of being "in Christ" is absolutely unique to the New Covenant, and the salvation that is "in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (1 Tim 2:10). Noah's family were saved because of him - but they were **not** "in Noah." The Jews were delivered from Egypt because of God's recollection of Abraham - but they were not "**in** Abraham." The Israelites were led by Moses, but they were **not** "in Moses." John the Baptist effectively paved the way for the coming of Jesus, but his disciples were **not** "in John the Baptist." Being "in Christ" is a new kind of thing in God's dealings with humanity. It is important that we have some understanding of this marvelous circumstance.

Much of the preaching of our time is **not** from the perspective of being "*in Christ*." The overabundance of references to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes flows from a lack of perception of this fact, as well as spending an ordinate amount of time in Moses and the Prophets. There are circumstances and experiences in Christ that did not exist before. They were foretold by the Prophets, but not expounded by them. The experience of being "*joined to the Lord*" or "*added to the Lord*," is totally unique. Enoch and Noah, for example, "walked with God" - but they did not walk or abide "*in*" Him - something that now occurs in Christ Jesus. As it is written, "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye **in Him***" (Col 2:6).

Receiving Christ and Christ being "*in*" us do not contradict the fact of being "*in Christ*." They rather set forth the experience within the framework of our total being spirit, soul, and body. Technically, Christ is in our hearts, by faith (Eph 3:17). As for our essential beings, which do not include our bodies, we are "*in Christ*." That this could take place while we are "*in the body*" is a most marvelous reality. **The doctrine of being justified and made acceptable is from the viewpoint of us being "*in Christ*."**

IT REVEALS THE HOLINESS OF GOD. This circumstance is necessary because of the holiness of God. God's holiness requires that those who are accepted by Him, themselves be holy. Before Christ, this requirement was met by faith, as exhibited in the saints of old - particularly Abraham (Heb 11). They were received by God in anticipation of Christ, who would take away their sins. Now that sin has been taken away, however, the believing ones are "*joined to the Lord*," becoming "*one spirit*" (1 Cor 6:17), or "*added to the Lord*" (Acts 5:14). They are, in fact, "*in Christ*," being put there by God Himself (1 Cor 1:30). This is a reality that is so profound that, while in this world, no believer will be satisfied with the degree to which he comprehends it.

MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

^{2:13b} "... *ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" Again, Paul contrasts what we were with what we now are in Christ Jesus. He has already developed this perspective. We were "*dead in trespasses and sins*," but God "*raised us up together with Christ*" (2:5-6). We were "*without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*" (Eph 2:12). Paul is now developing the opposite of the latter description, expounding our change in status and location.

SOMETIMES FAR OFF. This refers to our proximity to God. Even though He "*is not far from every one of us*" (Acts 17:27), in our former condition, we were "*far off*." From the standpoint of God's awareness of us, He was not far from us. Concerning our understanding and awareness of Him, we were "*far off*." **Being lost has much to do with a lack of the awareness of God** - not being persuaded that "*He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*" (Heb 11:). One of Isaiah's prophecies concerning the day of salvation is that the Lord would say "*Peace, peace to him that is far off*" (Isa 57:19). The criticality of that circumstance is seen in the words of David, "*For, lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish*" (Psa 73:27). In

speaking of the Lord pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh, Peter referred to the Gentiles in these words: *"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to **all that are afar off**, even as many as the Lord our God shall call"* (Acts 2:39).

Being *"far off"* does not refer to physical proximity, but to spiritual accessibility. If a person's arm is 33" long, something that is at, what is called, "an arm's length" is at a distance of not more than 33" Anything else is *"far off."*

The idea here is that we could not reach God - not because He was far away, but because we were *"far off."* No amount of resolution, ingenuity, or good works could effectively close that gap. By nature, we could move no closer to God drawing near to Him. On our own, we could not develop an awareness of God, or close the gap between us and Him.

MADE NIGH. Other versions read, *"have been brought near,"* ^{NKJV} *"are become nigh,"* ^{DARBY} *"are made near,"* ^{GENEVA} *"brought very near to Him,"* ^{LIVING} *"have come near,"* ^{IE} *and "are in on everything."* ^{MESSAGE}

This appears to contradict the exhortation to draw near: *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water"* (Heb 10:22). **If God has made us near, why are we exhorted to come near?**

Here we must think in terms of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. When they camped, the Tabernacle was set up, and all of the people camped around it. They were all, in that sense *"near"* to the Tabernacle, which was a figure of the presence of the Lord. They were near that Tabernacle by placement. However, during certain times, and whenever a sacrifice was made, they had to close the gap between them and the tabernacle, drawing near, so to speak. On an even more micro-basis, once inside the outer court, the priests drew near to the Tabernacle proper. And in an even more precise way, once inside the Tabernacle, the High Priest, at the appointed time, drew near to God by entering into the Most Holy Place.

This text is speaking of the placement that parallels the tribes camping around the Tabernacle. Like them, we have been put within reaching distance of the Lord, so that there is no excuse for failing to proceed towards Him.

BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. Lest we think that our own works have qualified us to come close to God, the means by which God has made us nigh is specified: *"the blood of Christ."* Other versions read, *"through the blood,"* ^{NIV} *"in the blood,"* ^{RSV} *"through the shedding of,"* ^{CJB} *"because of what Jesus Christ has done for you with his blood,"* ^{LIVING} *"through the death of Christ,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"Christ offered His life's blood as a sacrifice,"* ^{CEV} *"through the blood sacrifice of Christ,"* ^{ERV} *"dying that death, shedding that blood."* ^{MESSAGE}

I do not understand this to refer to Christ dying or shedding His blood. It is rather the presentation of that blood in heaven that is the point. It was *"by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us"* (Heb 9:12). This parallels the ministry of the high priest when he sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat, making an atonement for the people (Lev 16:14-15).

I suggest that the offering of the sacrifice, in the fullest sense of the word, was made in heaven, following Christ's resurrection. *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God"* (Heb 10:12). Christ's offering is likened to the high priest entering into the holy place with *"blood of others"* (Heb 9:25). Thus there are two offerings made by Christ: the offering of His body on earth, and the offering of His blood in heaven. It is the latter that relates most fully to us being able to draw near by the blood of Christ. The shedding of that blood was necessary for its presentation in heaven.

HE IS OUR PEACE

^{214b} *"For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."*

The particular aspect of our lostness as Gentiles, consisted of our lack of identity with the chosen people - "the commonwealth of Israel. All of the privileges had been vouchsafed to them: *"the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,"* as well as *"the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"* (Rom 9:5).

Before we Gentiles could be saved, that separation from the Jews had to be resolved, for all of the Divine commitments had been made to Israel - particularly those regarding a Messiah, Deliverer, and Savior. If we were to partake of those promises we had to be joined to those who had them. The means by which that was established will now be expounded.

HE IS OUR PEACE. Other versions read, *"He Himself is our peace,"* ^{NKJV} *"He is the peace between us,"* ^{NJB} *"Christ himself has brought peace to us,"* ^{NLT} *"Christ has made peace between Jews and Gentiles,"* ^{CEV} *"He is [Himself] our peace (our bond of unity and harmony)."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

At this point, Paul is not referring specifically to believers having peace with God. That is surely a truth, as it is written, *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 5:1). **But that is not the point here.**

Here the reference is to peace with the believing Jews. Our former condition was one of being "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise*" (Eph 2:12). Now God has, through Jesus Christ and the presentation of His blood in heaven, rectified that situation. This means that we can enjoy the promises that were made to them, and the Savior that came from them. All of the good things the Prophets foretold about Christ, the New Covenant, and the change of nature that would take place, can now be experienced by the Gentiles - even though they were not the ones to whom the promises were made. Now the Gentiles can be blessed by a Prophet to whom they will hearken (Deut 18:15,18), the circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6), a Deliver (Isa 59:20), One who satisfied God and now makes intercession for them (Isa 53:11-12), and a Righteous Branch that causes fruit bearing (Jer 23:5). Now they can participate in a new covenant in which the laws of God are put into the mind and written upon the heart, where God is willingly served, and iniquities are remembered no more (Jer 31:31-34). Now the promised Sun of righteousness can shine upon them (Mal 4:2). The Gentiles who believe can now receive a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26).

All of these promises were made to the Jews. None of them, nor any promises like them, were ever given to the Gentiles. God never said through any Prophet that there would be a new set of promises for the Gentiles. They were never promised another Savior or another covenant. There is no other Savior, no other condition, and no other change in the people declared than was spoken by Moses and the Prophets, both of which belonged exclusively to Israel. This being true, the Jew cannot have been completely cut off and replaced by a Gentile church.

The situation will be resolved by making the Jews and the Gentiles one body. That will explain why we believing Gentiles now have access to God through the blood of Christ.

MADE BOTH ONE. Other versions read, "*made both groups into one,*" ^{NASB} "*made the two one,*" ^{NIV} "*who hath made the two [become] one,*" ^{MRD} "*He united Jews and Gentiles into one people,*" ^{NLT} "*by making us all one family,*" ^{LIVING} and "*He has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one [body].*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

This means that, from heaven's perspective, there are three distinct bodies of people in the world. Paul alludes to them when writing of his determination not to intentionally cause offence: "*Give none offence, neither to the [unbelieving] Jews, nor to the [unbelieving] Gentiles, nor to [believing Jews and Gentiles] the church of God*" (1 Cor 10:32). We know this is the case because in Christ "*there is neither Jew nor Greek*" (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The only fleshly distinctions God ever recognized (Jew and Gentile) exist only outside of Christ. Those who contend that the Jews have been utterly cut off fail to recognize what God has done in Christ Jesus. To begin with, **God promised there would always be a remnant in Israel**, thus allowing, so to speak, Him to preserve the nation (Isa 1:9; 10:20-22; 11:11,16; 37:4,31-32; 46:3-4; Jer 23:3; 31:7; Joel 2:32; Mic 2:12; 5:7-8; Zech 8:12; Rom 9:27; 11:5) .

BROKEN DOWN THE MIDDLE WALL. And how did God accomplish this marvelous unity in Christ Jesus. He did it by breaking down a wall that separated the Jew from the Gentile - a "*middle wall of*

partition." Other versions read, "wall of separation," ^{NKJV} "barrier of the dividing wall," ^{NASB} "the dividing wall of hostility," ^{NIV} "tore down the dividing wall of hostility." ^{CSB}

The identity of this dividing wall will be the subject of our next lesson. It is a wall that God Himself erected, and one that He also tore down. Now, in Christ Jesus, there is no legitimate cause for division. Wherever it exists, it is because of the perceptions and messages of men - and it is always wrong, never right. These divisions, or "*heresies*," are a work of the flesh (Gal 5:20).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 26

Eph 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; ¹⁶ And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."* (Eph 2:15-16)

HAVING ABOLISHED IN HIS FLESH THE ENMITY

INTRODUCTION

From the moral and spiritual viewpoint, the entire human race is dead in trespasses and sins, and alienated from God (Rom 3:23; Rom 5:10; Eph 2:1). Culturally and positionally, men were divided by location and language - and this state resulted from God scattering the people at Shinar. It has been revealed that this was according to God's own determination (Deut 32:8; Acts 17:26-27). However, there was a greater division among people than this. This division existed within the frame work of everyone being sinners. Beginning with Abraham, there were two groups of people: the Jews and the Gentiles, One heard from God, and one did not. God revealed himself to one, and not to the other. One were a people God recognized, and the other was not. One group was preferred before the others, received before the others, and were given benefits that were not common to any other people. This was not intended to be a permanent or ideal division. It was a necessary prelude to a salvation that was greater that could be imagined by any mortal, or even any angel or Cherub. In order to show the magnitude and power of His mercy, kindness, and grace, God would save a people He had cultured, and one He had not. He would be found of those who sought Him (Jer 29:13), and those who sought Him not (Isa 65:1). He will make commitments to one people, then include others in the promised blessing to whom the promise was not given. This circumstance substantially demonstrates that salvation is not of works - for a whole body of people will experience it who not only did no acceptable works, but were not cultured by nature to do so. These are *"the heathen"* (Lev 26:33; 2 Chron 28:3; Psa 9:5), whose ways the Lord commanded Israel NOT to learn (Lev 18:3; Deut 12:20; Jer 10:2). He will accomplish this by enlarging the tent of the acceptable people to receive the ones who were not formerly accepted. That is the marvelous truth that Paul is now expounding with great power and spiritual expertise.

HAVING ABOLISHED IN HIS FLESH

Eph 2:15a *"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances . . ."*

What was involved in making one people out of the Jews and Gentiles? It was a much more challenging task

than men are prone to think. The accomplishment of this work is heralded among the greatest and most mysterious works of God. The wisdom that was necessary to accomplish this is so far above us that it can only be appreciated by faith. Keep in mind that a condition is being resolved that God Himself has created. In fact, it was created for the purpose that is now being expounded. Here again, the point being developed is that salvation is not of works. If it was by works, then men would have to accomplish what is now expounded.

HAVING ABOLISHED IN HIS FLESH. Other versions read, "put an end to," ^{BBE} "destroying," ^{CJB} "did away with," ^{CSB} "having nullified," ^{DARBY} "making void," ^{DUOAY} "He ended," "abrogating," ^{GENEVA} "done away," ^{YLT} "cleared away," ^{ABP} "ended," ^{LIVING} "cancelled," ^{IE} "setting aside," ^{WEYMOUTH} "to destroy," ^{CEV} "causing to cease," ^{LITV} and "repealing." ^{MESSAGE}

Two points are critical here. First, something was abolished, ended, terminated, annulled, and done away when Jesus died on the cross. Second, it was abolished, or terminated "in His flesh," when Jesus bore the sins of humanity "in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet 2:24). The thing that was abolished, was taken out of the way because it did not rectify the situation it rightly condemned. Salvation is not the mere removal of condemnation, but the rectification of the circumstance that necessitated that condemnation.

THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS CONTAINED IN ORDINANCES. Other versions read, "the Law with its commandments and regulations," ^{NIV} "the law with its rules and orders," ^{BBE} "The Torah with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances," ^{CJB} "the law of commandments in ordinances," ^{DARBY} "the law of commandments contained in decrees," ^{DOUAY} "the Law of commandments which standeth in ordinances," ^{GENEVA} and "the system of law with its commandments and regulations." ^{NLT} "the Law of commandments with its decrees," ^{NJB} "the law of commandments contained in the Law written," ^{PNT} "the Law of Moses with all its rules and commands," ^{CEV} "ended the law with its many commands and rules," ^{ERV} and "repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped." ^{MESSAGE}

What was "abolished?" Although the text is very carefully crafted, some versions thoroughly distort it, saying the Law itself was abolished, or the Law "with" its various ordinances. Colossians states this truth in these words: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us" (Col 2:14). The literal translation of the Ephesian text is, "the Law of the directions in decrees." ^{INTERLINEAR} The word "ordinances" means "doctrine, decree, rules and requirements." ^{STRONG'S}

This is NOT a reference to the Ten Commandments, but is rather a reference to what is commonly called the ceremonial law. It refers to the various ordinances in which the Ten Commandments were applied in human conduct. It included the various feasts, ceremonies, clean/unclean distinctions, priesthood, etc. The matter of keeping the Ten Commandments was not left up to the interpretation of men. The way they were lived out was described in the various Levitical laws. The Old Covenant was an agreement to live life in the precise manner prescribed by the various ordinances. They dealt with the necessity of circumcision, marriage, eating, feasting, making sacrifices, planting and reaping fields, honoring God, etc. If, for example, they did not honor the weekly Sabbath or the land Sabbaths, they had broken the covenant. The Law, which was the means through which righteousness was to be appropriated, was "**contained in ordinances.**"

The Ten Commandments were not "*abolished*" or "*blotted out*," but the convenantal application of them. The various ordinances were the points at which the guilt was established. I come from a background that taught the Ten Commandments were blotted out, and the commandments God wanted to keep were repromulged, or stated again by the Apostles. However, the Law was ended only as a means to righteousness. As it is written, "*For Christ is the end of the law **for righteousness** to every one that believeth*" (Rom 10:4).

In its ordinances, the Law required absolute consistency and regularity. People were told precisely how to live, what to eat, who to befriend, and how to serve God. Nothing was left up to the individual. Those detailed instructions - the "ordinances" - are called "*handwriting*" in Colossians. This was not a reference to God's writing, but to that of Moses, who put all of the ordinances in a book, as God commanded Him to do (Ex 34:27). God wrote on the tables the words of the covenant (Ex 34:28; Deut 10:2-5). Although Moses' writings included the Ten Commandments, the bulk of his writing was the ordinances, which our text states were "*abolished*."

Those "*ordinances*" contained the Law, but were not the Law itself. The Law was precisely "*the words of the covenant*" (Ex 34:28), but it was amplified and applied in the various "*ordinances*" that were imposed upon Israel.

ONE NEW MAN

2:15b " . . . *for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.*"

The abolition of the "*ordinances*," in which the Law was "*contained*," constituted the breaking down of the "*middle wall of partition*" that stood between the Jews and the Gentiles. An understanding of this moved the apostles and elders to write a special letter to the Gentile churches concerning some of the various ordinances of the Law that certain were attempting to impose upon them (Acts 15:28-29).

TO MAKE IN HIMSELF. The removal of the separating wall was in order to "*make*," or create, something - something new. Other versions read, "*create in Himself*."^{NKJV} By saying "*in Himself*," he means the stated outcome will take place when the people themselves are "*in Him*." The stated objected will be realized when there is an effectual joining of the people to the Lord (1 Cor 6:17). The people themselves do not create or negotiate this oneness. Jesus Himself creates it when the people have actually been joined to Him, becoming "*one spirit*" with Him.

OF TWAIN. The two being, the Jews and the Gentiles that are "*in Him*." This means that the distinction of the Jews was not destroyed. That distinction can only be eliminated in Christ. If this is not the case, then the text has no real meaning. For God to make a special provision to join Jew and Gentile together postulates a very real distinction outside of Christ. Those who say the Jews have been completely removed, and all promises to them abrogated have not assessed the situation properly.

ONE NEW MAN. Other versions read, "*one new humanity*,"^{NRSV} "*a single new humanity*,"^{CSB} "*one new person*,"^{LIVING} "*one new people*,"^{GNB} "*a new kind of human being*."^{MESSAGE}

Here we are introduced to a different use of the word "*new man*" - ordinarily applied to the individual (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Here, the point is not an individual man, like Adam, but a different kind of race, like those of whom Adam was the federal head (1 Cor 15:22). In this case, Jesus Himself is the federal head, being "*the Second Man*" and the "*Last Adam*" (1 Cor 15:45,47). This new kind of mankind is created "*in Him*."

By saying the Jew and Gentile become "*one new man*" in Christ, the text is accenting the sameness of their nature. Before being in Christ, the Jew and Gentile did not differ according to their nature - "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom 3:23). The difference was the "*middle wall of partition*" that was caused by God limiting His dealings, with very few exceptions, to the Jews. The ordinances, **which were the means of measuring the faithfulness of the Jews**, were given exclusively to them. They separated them from all other people, but they did not exclude them from needing the remission of sin, and Savior, and justification. If anyone could have been saved by works, it would have been the Jew. The necessary works were even spelled out for them. But they were no different in nature from the Gentiles, who did not know God, had no covenant with Him, and were consigned to darkness.

Even though this God-ordained distinction has been declared, men continue to erect middle walls of partition. It may be encapsulated in a creedal statement, or a religious tradition, or a name, or some other form of distinction. However, when you get down to the root of the matter, they are really no different than the people from whom they have separated themselves.

There has only been one people who were distinct because of appearance and what has been uniquely given to them. That is the Jews. They had a unique set of ordinances that separated them from other peoples. None of their holidays were the same as those of the world. Their ceremonies were unlike those of the world. Their food distinctions were unique. The sign of their covenant with God - circumcision - was unlike any other human distinction. Their altars were not the same. Their sacrifices were not the same. Their high days, like the day of atonement, were different. Their definition of clean and unclean were unique. Their priesthood was different. None of these, however, had to do with their nature, which was NOT different.

This "*one new man*" that is created in Christ Jesus, has the traits of Jesus. In general those traits are loving righteousness and hating evil (Heb 1:9). In particular that are found in the distribution of gifts that are designed to minister to His people, enabling them to grow up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:11-16). This new kind of man consists of both Jews and Gentiles.

SO MAKING PEACE. Other versions read, "*establishing peace,*"^{NASB} "*resulting in peace,*"^{CSB} and "*united us in peace.*"^{CEV} The peace of reference is **not** the peace that has been made between man and God (Col 1:20). This is peace between Jew and Gentile in Christ - "*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph 4:3).

After 1,500 years of hostility, by one act upon the cross, the cause of hostility- "*the middle wall of partition*" - peace was made in Christ between Jews and Gentiles. Let us be clear about this. This peace resulted from the abolition of a religion of ordinances, rules, and a spelling out of the details of living. In other words, the application of the Law was made through these ordinances, which effectively separated the Jews from the Gentiles. It was all on the basis of external things - not heart, not spirit, but how things were done externally - a system of works.

THAT HE MIGHT RECONCILE BOTH UNTO GOD

²¹⁶ "*And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*

There could not be two methods of reconciliation - one for one people, and a different one for the other people. In this case, God made it clear that there are not, and cannot be multiple roads to Him. Everyone must come to Him in the same way - a single way that is "*narrow*" (Matt 7:14), is "*new and living,*" and has been opened by to men by the Son of God Himself (Heb 10:20). In order to accomplish this, the people must be brought together.

THAT HE MIGHT RECONCILE. Here is a most interesting perspective. Here, reconciliation is not depicted as a individual matter. God has brought the Jew and Gentile together in Christ in order to the realization of reconciliation "*unto God.*" He made peace between the Jews and the Gentiles, creating a new humanity, in order that reconciliation to Him might be accomplished.

Because of the nature of God, reconciliation could not be achieved by different ways - one for the Jews, and another for the Gentiles. The enmity between God and man was common to all - being ignorant of God, sinning and coming short of the glory of God, being dead in trespasses and sins, living according to the course of the world, and being dominated the devil (Eph 2¹1-3).

There were not two ways to resolve the problem of man's alienation from God. With the Law, the Jews could not solve it, and without the Law the Gentiles also proved helpless. It became clear, therefore, that man was not capable of bridging the gap between himself and God. Prior to the Law. that was demonstrated on an individual basis. During the Law, it was confirmed on a collective basis. The grand conclusion, salvation could not be upon the basis of works, achievement, accomplishment, or any other form of human ingenuity. The condition of the Gentiles confirmed that God could not be found by searching, and the Jew proved He could not be found by doing - even when the doing was prescribed by God Himself.

I have noticed over the years that those who speak of salvation, or being saved, rarely refer to being reconciled *"unto God."* That involves being of one mind with Him, loving His truth, His commandments not being grievous, and finding delight in Him.

And what was absolutely essential for the reconciliation of both the Jews and the Gentiles unto God *"in one body?"* It was to bring an end to the Law as a means of righteousness (Rom 10:4). That involved the termination of a "how-to" approach to life, or *"the commandments contained in ordinances."* It was man's nature that was the problem, not merely what he did.

IN ONE BODY. This is not the body of Christ that was pinioned to the tree, but the mystical body of Christ that consists of the individual members, taken from both the Jews and the Gentiles. I gather from this that division voids reconciliation. It is for this reason that Paul said to the divided Corinthian church, *"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"* (2 Cor 5:20).

BY THE CROSS. The abolishing of the commandments contained in ordinances was not accomplished by a word, but rather by an act. Here it is made clear that while the death of Christ on the cross is the means whereby we perceive the love of God, it is what was accomplished on the cross, as compared to Christ submitting to the cross, that enabled us to be reconciled to God in one collective body, composed of Jews and Gentiles.

In one grand act, Jesus proved that the commandments contained in ordinances, which were what men did, could never take away the sin of the world. The entirety of sin - the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:6) - was laid upon Christ, when He was upon the cross (1 Pet 2:24). That proved that not a single sin had been taken away by the ordinances imposed upon the Jews through the Law. Until that time, the Law continued to pronounce the *"Guilty!"* verdict upon all men, both Jew and Gentile.

Once that sin as taken away, however, the entire system of ordinances as defined by the Law was abolished. The *"law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine"* (1 Tim 1:9-10). In Christ, because men are *"made righteous"* (Rom 5:19), and made *"dead to the Law"* as well (Rom 7:4) the Law can no longer condemn them, Hence, its ordinances, which presume sinfulness, have been abolished as a means to righteousness.

HAVING SLAIN THE ENMITY. The *"enmity"* is what was slain - the *"hostility,"*^{NIV} *"the division,"*^{BBE} *"hatred,"*^{PNT} and *"killing the mutual enmity and bringing the hatred to an end."*^{AMPLIFIED} Wherever division, hatred, or schism exists in the professed church, it is because people have ignored the cross. It was there that the only legitimate cause for division was abolished and the hostility ended. Those who are in Christ are, by virtue of that circumstance, *"one body."* They have a mutual hatred for sin and a love for righteousness. They have died to sin, been reconciled to God, and delivered from the evil one. There is no legitimate reason for division among believers.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 27

Eph 2:17 *"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."* (Eph 2:17-19)

JESUS IS INVOLVED IN THE GENTILE'S CONVERSION

INTRODUCTION

The extending of salvation to the Gentiles is a work of God. The Gentiles themselves had no part in it except that of receiving it. Their condition was such as forbade their involvement: dead in trespasses and sins, their lives solidly in the course of this world, and under the control of the wicked one. They had not been given a Law, a covenant, a means of serving God, or a promise that a Savior would come to them. From every vantage point they were without God and without hope in the world. The explanation for their participation in this great salvation is found in God's kindness, mercy, and grace. None of these traits would be considered by the world to be in any way productive. They would not be associated with either wisdom or power. And yet, they are some of the greatest exhibits of Divine power and productivity.

Some might point out *that the prophets said the Gentiles would "come"* in quest of learning of God. Through Isaiah God said, *"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light"* (Isa 60:3). And again, *"and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee"* (Isa 60:3). Jeremiah said, *"The Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth"* (Jer 16:19). While the will of the Gentiles was involved in this, the foundational impetus was the drawing of the Lord. The Father, Jesus taught, draws men to the Son (John 6:44). Jesus also associated this drawing with His death: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"* (John 12:32). Paul is delineating this drawing in the second chapter of Ephesians. It is couched in the salient phrase, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, hath quickened us"* (Eph 2:4-5). The richness of God's mercy and great love that He had could not be adequately expressed until sin was taken away. This was because God's righteousness had to be satisfied before any effective conveyance of the love, mercy, and kindness of God could be toward the Gentiles.

JESUS CAME AND PREACHED PEACE

Eph 2:17 *"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."*

Having *"slain the enmity"* *"by the cross,"* the Jews and Gentiles could be gathered together in one body (Eph

2:16). That *"enmity"* was between the Jews and the Gentiles, and it was formalized by the *"handwriting of ordinances"* which was a Divine wall between them. There could not be a diversity of members in this household - some that were taught by God, and some who were not; some that had access to God, and some who did not: some that could serve God, and some who could not. Men have grown accustomed to these kinds of destinations in the professed church. However, they are man-made divisions, not those imposed by Almighty God. In Christ, whether men can receive it or not, there is no division. There is no division at the national level: *neither Jew nor Greek*. There is no separation at the gender level: *neither male nor female*. There is no wall that separates believers on a social level: *neither bond nor free*.

"AND CAME." This is something Jesus did **after** He died, **after** He rose from the dead, and **after** He returned to heaven. It is distinguished from when He came *"in the likeness of sin ful flesh"* (Rom 8:3), and it is differentiated from when He will come the second time *"in His glory"* (Matt 25:31).

Jesus referred to this coming. When Jesus revealed to His disciples that He was going away, He told them He would come to them again - and He was not speaking of His second coming, as in John 14:3. After Jesus had told them they would receive *"another Comforter . . . even the Spirit of truth,"* He added, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you"* (John 14:18). He would not come to them in the flesh, but in the Spirit. That coming would be so real that He said to them, *"Lo, I am with you always, even, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt 28:20).

Paul mentioned this coming. Later, Paul will tell the Ephesians that there were those among them who had been taught by Jesus: *"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"* (Eph 4:20-21). This is the coming of which our text speaks.

Peter spoke of this coming. Peter spoke of this coming early in the history of the church: *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you"* (Acts 3:19:20). This is not referring to the second coming of Christ, for there is no condition attached to that coming. The condition relates to men looking for Him, which does not cause Jesus to come, but rather to come *"without si n unto salvation"* (Heb 9:28). The coming to which Peter referred involved Christ's communion with His people.

John wrote of this coming. John taught that Jesus *"is come,"* and effectively teaches His people. *"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life"* (1 John 5:20).

There is a very real sense in which Christ dwells in your hearts by faith (Eph 3:17), and is *"in you"* (Col 1:27). He does this through the Spirit, but this does not negate the reality of His indwelling. Jesus spoke of Him and the Father making their abode in the individual who loved His words and kept them (John 14:23).

Candidly, enough has not been said about the indwelling Christ to the modern church. How men need to hear a word like, *"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness"* (Rom 8:10).

AND PREACHED PEACE. And what did Jesus do when He came? He *"preached peace"* to both the Gentiles (*"which were far off"*), and the Jews (*"that were nigh"*). Other versions read, *"proclaimed,"*^{NRSV} *"announced,"*^{CJB} and *"bring the good news."*^{NJB}

Technically, the Jews heard of this peace first, and the Gentiles after that. But here the order is reversed, and that for a reason. Although the Jews heard the Gospel of peace first, it was expounded more fully to the Gentiles through Paul. Although Jesus Himself said He had *"other sheep"* which were not of Israel (John 10:16), yet He announced when on earth, *"I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matt 15:24). When He sent His disciples out, He even forbade His them to go *"into the way of the Gentiles"* (Matt 10:5-6).

The preaching of peace was accomplished through those in whom Jesus dwelt. They preached a Gospel that was not discriminating. Jew and Gentile heard the same Gospel. It is not as some allege, that Peter had a Gospel for the Jews, and Paul had one for the Gentiles. The Gospel is called "the gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15; Eph 6:15). Isaiah prophesied of those who would *"bring good tidings, and publish peace"* (Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15). The *"peace"* of reference is the peace Jesus *"made . . . through the blood of His cross"* (Col 1:20). **The idea here is that those who are themselves at peace with God can no longer be hostile toward one another.** Where such hostility exists, the truth of being at peace with God is not known.

THROUGH HIM WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS

^{2:18} *"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."*

At this point it is important to note how carefully and precisely Paul addresses the matter of having access to God. The holiness of God and the presence of *"the flesh"* does not allow for easy access to God. This is not a relationship like an earthly father and son, or a toddler sitting on the knee of his father. Those who advocate calling God "Daddy" appear blissfully unaware of this circumstance. You cannot approach unto God in a state of abject ignorance about these things. That is why this most precise language is required.

THROUGH HIM. Other versions read, *"by Him,"*^{DOUAY} *"because of what Christ has done for us,"*^{NLT/LIVING} and *"because of Christ."*^{ESV} All other versions read *"through Him."*

The meaning is not because of something that occurred in the past - although the foundation for this privilege

did occur in the past. The death of Christ on the cross is not like a key that unlocks the door, or something like a ticket that gives us access to God. Jesus Himself is involved in this access. When we come to the Father, He *"brings us to God,"* as opposed to authorizing us to come to God (1 Pet 1:21). When Jesus said *"No man cometh to the Father but by Me"* (John 14:6), He was not referring to the perception of what He has done - although that is required. Even after we are glorified, Christ will present us to God (Heb 2:13). How much more does He do this while we remain in divided condition - a treasure in an earthen vessel (2 Cor 4:7). Jesus Himself accompanies us to God, so to speak. At this time, and in the fullest sense of the word, the glorified Christ is the only Man God accepts without qualification. *"Through Him,"* therefore, speaks of identity with Christ, as opposed to having a password or ticket to come to God. Admittedly, this is a technical point, but salvation is a technical matter.

WE BOTH. The same requirement applies to both Jew and Gentile - who, in the past, *"were afar off,"* and those who *"that were nigh."* By *"afar off,"* the text means that the Gentiles were not a people with whom God had formal dealings. By *"nigh,"* the text means the Jews were at hand, close, or having received benefits designed to ready them for access to God. *"Nigh,"* or *"near,"* does not mean in the presence of. It is more of an outer court term. It does not include such things as fellowship, communion, and knowing God. It does not involve the writing of the Law upon the heart, the remission of sins, or reconciliation to God.

The death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ was *"for all"* - not the Jews alone. The sins of the Gentiles, as well as those of the Jews, were laid upon Christ. The atoning death, triumphant resurrection, and glorious exaltation of Jesus were not for a certain people. Therefore, their effects cannot be confined to any race, gender, or social status. All people - Jew and Gentile - come to God the same way.

Further, the word *"both"* applies to the status of the people before they were *"in Christ"* and Christ *"in"* them. Now, *"in Christ,"* the *"both"* have become *"one"* (Eph 2:14), reconciled *"unto God in one body"* (Eph 2:15).

HAVE ACCESS. Other versions read, *"our access,"* ^{NASB} *"able to come near,"* ^{ESV} *"have an entrance,"* ^{GENEVA} *"have free access,"* ^{NJB} *"can come to,"* ^{NLT} *"have an open way,"* ^{TNT} *"may come to,"* ^{LIVING} *"have an introduction to,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"have the right to come,"* ^{ERV} *"are able to come,"* ^{GNB} *and "have equal access."*
MESSAGE

What does it mean to have *"access . . . unto the Father?"* Again, this is not an outer court experience. It is not even a *"holy place"* activity, where God is served, and His will is done. This is prefigured by the High Priest, who entered into the presence of God when he went once a year into the Most Holy place. This glorious privilege is described in the epistle to the Hebrews. *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh"* (Heb 10:19-20).

When we draw near, it is to the *"Throne of all grace"* (Heb 4:16) - and that is something that is in the Most Holy place. It was prefigured by the mercy seat upon which the atoning blood was sprinkled. Even that

shadow was approached only one time a year. Yet now, since Jesus has reconciled us to God, we may come continually to this throne, which equates to coming to God.

The person who is not in fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), or in whom Christ does not dwell by faith (Eph 3:17) cannot approach unto God in the sense of this text. This is not speaking of approaching God like the publican, who called out for mercy (Lk 18:13).

BY ONE SPIRIT. This is an access that involves the entire Godhead. We have access to the Father. We come to Him THROUGH the Son. And we do so BY the Holy Spirit. This includes the Spirit's intercession (Rom 8:26-27), His leading (Rom 8:24), and the crying out of "*Abba Father*" (Gal 4:6). All three members of the Godhead are chiefly characterized by LIFE (John 5:26; John 14:6; Rom 8:2). This means access to God cannot be gained by a routine, or praying through, or fasting, or waiting. Access is gained by life - by holy response! We come to "*the Living God*" (Heb 12:22), through Him that "*ever liveth*" (Heb 7:25), and by "*the Spirit of life*" (Rom 9:2). That holy protocol is enjoyed in Christ by both Jew and Gentile - those who have been merged into "*one body*."

NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS

²¹⁹ "*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*"

NOW THEREFORE. Other versions read, "*So then,*" ^{NASB} "*consequently,*" ^{NIV} "*wherefore,*" ^{MRD} "*then,*" "*therefore,*" ^{YLT} "*sp,*" ^{IE} "*that is why,*" ^{ISV} "*take notice, then,*" ^{MONTGOMERY} and "*That's plain enough, isn't it?*"
MESSAGE

This is a form of holy reasoning. It is based upon the postulate that what God does has certain unavoidable effects. This is an area where many professed believers stumble. They tend to deal with the things of God theoretically, not realizing the impact of what God has done through Christ. Christ died, and there are certain things that have resulted from it - sin was taken away, the devil destroyed, principalities and powers spoiled, and a way opened to God. Jesus rose from the dead, and it worked certain things -- death was defeated, and His Sonship confirmed. He entered into heaven with His own blood, and that resulted in something - atonement. He is exalted, and that has resulted in certain effects - He is bringing many sons to glory.

All of that is easy enough to talk about. But what of the impact upon those who receive the Son? There really is such a thing as a new heart and spirit, the creation of a new man, having the law written upon the heart, his commandments not being grievous, and being willing to live wholly unto the Lord. Those effects are as real as the ones proclaimed in the Gospel. Yet, if they are not proclaimed the clouds of Babylonianism will hide them from the people, so that they will not see them. Further, when they are not seen falling away and being overcome by the wicked one are more likely to occur. This is because salvation is accomplished within the framework of spiritual understanding, knowing Christ, and the knowledge of God. Babylon the Great has

fabricated and preached a Gospel that omits these critical matters.

NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS. Other versions read "*strangers and aliens,*"^{NASB} "*strangers and sojourners,*"^{RSV} "*those who have no place,*"^{BBE} "*foreigners and outsiders,*"^{GWN} "*foreigners and noncitizens,*"^{NET} "*strangers to God and foreigners to heaven,*"^{LIVING} "*strangers and visitors,*"^{IE} and "*outsiders (exiles, migrants, and aliens, excluded from the rights of citizens).*"^{AMPLIFIED}

This involves not having a privileged status, or the right to have favorable dealings with God. It is being excluded from the spiritually elite, whose eliteness was created by Divine choice and blessing. It is not having access to what God has freely given.

This also involves the things of God being strange to them - like a foreign tongue. Being spiritually uncultured people, the Gentiles were not able to comprehend, discern, or distinguish the things of God. Now, Paul boldly announces that the Gentiles that are in Christ Jesus are no longer in that category. God is not strange to them. Jesus is not strange to them. The things of God are not strange to them. And what is even more blessed, they are not strange to God.

It has been my observation over the years that nearly all Gentile Christians appear to be "*strangers and foreigners*" in regard Divine manners. This is the reason for all of the sects in Christendom. It accounts for meager spiritual appetites and a lack of commitment to Jesus. This condition also contradicts the plain statements of our text.

FELLOWCITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS. That is, fellowcitizens of the heavenly kingdom where they have been translated (Col 1:13). The constituents of this kingdom are "*saints*" - holy ones. They are such as keep themselves "*unspotted from the world*" (James 1:27). Holiness is something they "*pursue*" (Heb 12:14) and "*perfect*" (2 Cor 7:1). God has "*called*" them to holiness, and they have taken the call seriously (1 Thess 4:7). An unholy "church" is really not a church at all. It is "*harlot*" who is unfaithful to the One who has called her (1 Thess 4:7).

There is a fellowship with all saints that includes the involvement of the understanding of, and communion with, all saints. While a sectarian people cannot have fellowship with the saints in all of the rights and privileges of heavenly citizenship, **holy people can** - whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

In this text, we Gentiles are taught what a marvelous display of Divine grace is seen in our acceptance. In the Son we have made the transition from being strangers and foreigners to that of "*fellowcitizens with the saints.*" It ought to be noted that every person is a stranger and foreigner in some sense. Either it is to the world (1 Pet 2:11; Heb 13:14), or it is to the saints.

AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD. The term "*the saints*" describes the people of God individually. Collectively, they are God's "*household.*" God provides a bountiful table for His household, foreshadowed by the provisions of Solomon for His household (1 Kgs 4:22-23), and Nehemiah for his (Neh 5:17-18).

The emphasis of the word "*household*" is provision, care, and employment. The people of God are referred to as "*the household of faith*" (Gal 6:10), "*the house of God*" (1 Tim 3:15). Christ is described as "*High Priest over the house of God*" (Heb 10:21). This "*house*" is also where the judgment of God begins setting order among His own "*family*" first (1 Pet 4:17). From the total perspective this is "*the whole family in heaven and earth*" (Eph 3:15).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 28

Eph 2:20 *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; ²¹ In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: ²² In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* (Eph 2:20-23)

THE DIVINE BUILDING PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

With great wisdom and spiritual understanding, Paul has shined the light of inspiration on the salvation experienced by the brethren in Ephesus. It was all anchored in God Himself, who had blessed them with *"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places"* (1:3). To drive home the point, He reminded them that God had *"chosen us"* in Christ *"before the foundation of the world."* The objective was that we should be *"holy and without blame before Him in love"* (1:4). He *"predestinated us unto the adoption of sons"* through Christ, *"according to the good pleasure of His will"* (1:5). Because of that *"we have redemption"* through Christ's blood, *"the forgiveness of sins"* (1:7). In His grace, God has *"abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence"* (1:8). He has made known to us His aim for the future: *to "gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are n earth"* (1:9-10). In Christ we have *"obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according" to His own purpose, "that we should be to the praise of His glory* (1:11-12). He has even *"sealed"* with *"the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the down payment of what He has determined for us to receive* (1:13-14). In accordance with that purpose, Paul is praying that the eyes of their understanding may be opened to see what they have in Christ, and what God Himself is to receive (1:15-20). The church finds its significance in that it is the body of Christ, into which all of His fulness is deposited (1:21-22). Having raised us from death in trespasses and sits, we have now been seated in heavenly places, and made accepted in the Beloved (2:1-6). Our rescue was wrought by God's mercy, kindness, and grace, and the result has been His *"workmanship"* - a people to do His works (2:7-10). He then opened up the mystery of the Jews and Gentiles being joined together in one body in Christ (2:11-19). The absolute prominence of Deity in this whole process is glaringly apparent - but only to those with faith.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

Eph 2:20 *"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."*

In order to properly assess and understand newness of life, its purpose must be delineated. The first question

to address in this matter is not "What should we be doing?" Rather, it is "What is God doing in the redemption that He has provided?" That is precisely the matter that Paul is addressing in this text. His message and methodology contradict much of what is being proclaimed in modern Christendom. Many professing Christians have never had an extended thought concerning what God is doing in Christ Jesus.

BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION. The salvation of God is a building project. The superintendent of the project is Christ Jesus Himself, who affirmed that He would *"build"* His church (Matt 16:18). He has also employed key men - faithful men - who are called *"wise master builders,"* of whom Paul is chief (1 Cor 3:10). As a *"wise master builder"* he lays down the foundation upon which the building can be appropriately constructed. Other laborers can build upon that foundation, but they are to *"take heed"* HOW they build on it. The materials, which are people, must blend with the foundation (1 Cor 3:11-15).

Our text continues to comment on *"the saints, and of the household of God"* (verse 19). These are the ones who are *"built upon the foundation."* They are properly integrated with the foundation, which is the cause for their stability and faithfulness.

Being *"built upon the foundation"* is another way of saying *"added to the Lord"* (Acts 5:14), *"joined unto the Lord"* (1 Cor 6:17), and *"members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bone"* (Eph 5:30). It is the collective way of viewing those who are *"in Christ"* (2 Cor 5:17), and in whom Christ dwells by faith (Eph 3:17).

ARE BUILT. The point of this expression is not our unity with Christ Himself, but is rather the outcome of it. The text does not say the *"the saints"* WERE built, but that they *"ARE built."* That is, they are being built - a work that is in progress. That work is called EDIFICATION.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS. This is the foundation declared by the Apostles and foretold by the Prophets. The Prophets identified the One on and in whom the work of God would be initiated and completed (i.e. Isa 9:6-7; 53:1-12; Jer 23:5; Acts 3:24; 10:43). The apostles proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth to be that Person, and expounded the kind of work He was doing (Rom 8:34; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:10; 7:25). Any Jesus who is not introduced by the Prophets and expounded by the Apostles is *"another Jesus"* (2 Cor 11:4).

While individual advancement is mandatory, that is not the point of this text. It is the collective building that is the point. This is where the word *"edification"* comes into play, which is an architectural term referring to the stability and functionality of the structure - the church. Considering the intended use of this building, it makes perfect sense that a work is in progress to make it strong and suitable, stable and functional. This will be developed at length in the fourth chapter. The point of mentioning it here is to confirm the reason for the work being done.

Are they on the foundation! Are they properly related to Jesus Christ? Are they being fitted together with one another? I must confess that when I came to this area I was struck with the lack of identity of professing Christians with Christ Himself. Few of them were "*grounded and settled*" (Col 1:23) - securely and knowledgeably meshed with Christ. Although it is not an easy thing to acknowledge, it seemed clear to me that they had not been "*built*" upon the proper foundation. I found that this was not always owing to a deficiency of desire among the people, but was largely due to the kind of preaching and teaching that had shaped their thinking.

JESUS CHRIST, THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. In the Kingdom of God, the foundation is not a set of words, a creed, a position, or a doctrinal summation. It is a Person - Jesus Christ. The foundational consideration is that Jesus Christ is "*the Son of God,*" and the perception of that is what the church is built upon (Matt 16:16-18). At the root of the matter is the truth that Jesus Christ is really the only Man who has the unwavering and full approval of God. He is the only One who has met all of the requirements, and who has fully addressed all of the challenges.

Salvation is the appointed means of men being identified with "*the Man Christ Jesus.*" This is the greater reason, not merely improving life upon the earth. Those who initially come to Christ must come to resolve the issue between them and God - the sin problem. To seek identity with Christ for any other reason is not honorable.

As "*the chief Cornerstone*" Jesus determines the dimensions and size of the spiritual structure built upon it. The glorified church was revealed to John as a city that was "*foursquare*" - a perfect cube (Rev 21:16). Nothing was out of proportion. Nothing detracted from God. There was no weakness, flaw, or imperfection. The twofold reason for this ultimate outcome is declared in our text. It is the result of the people being put on the established Foundation, which is Jesus Christ. It is also owing to the fact that Jesus Himself is the "*chief cornerstone*" which determines the shape of the structure, and holds it all together.

THE BUILDING IS FITLY FRAMED AND IS GROWING ^{2:21} "*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.*"

IN WHOM. This refers to the Christ foretold by the Prophets and expounded by the Apostles. That is the only Man in whom these Divine objectives are realized. Notice the priority of the Christ. He is the Foundation. He is the Cornerstone. Now He is set forth as the One in whom the building is being brought to completion. This is how God regards the matter, and it is the only acceptable mode of operation. No other foundation can be laid (1 Cor 3:11) - that is, God will recognize none other. The results that are here detailed cannot be achieved independently of an effective and productive union with Christ Jesus.

ALL THE BUILDING. Any "church work" that does not take "*all the building*" Into consideration is

suspicious, to say the least. Whatever facet of the work is being done must have a productive impact on *"all the building,"* else it is not valid. No people group, domestic group, or supposed specialty group, can forget about *"all the building."*

FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER. Other versions read, *"being joined together,"* ^{NKJV} *"being fitted together,"* ^{NASB} *"rightly joined together,"* ^{BBE} *"coupled together,"* ^{GENEVA} *"held together,"* ^{NAB} *"carefully joined together,"* ^{LIVING} *"fitted and closely joined together,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"harmoniously fitted together,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"that holds all the parts together."* ^{MESSAGE}

Being *"fitly framed together"* results from being *"in"* Christ - *"in whom."* I prefer the words *"fitly framed,"* *"joined together,"* *"coupled together"* to *"held together."* While there is a sense in which Jesus holds the members together, that does not seem to be the point of the text. Here the aim is to declare that they FIT together, or integrate together into one grand whole. How this is accomplished will be expounded in the fourth chapter.

There are few experiences that are as great as the realization that one fits together with other believers. This is elsewhere referred to as *"the unity of the Spirit"* and *"the unity of the faith"* (Eph 4:3,13). I have some very vivid memories of being among professed believers among whom I was as a stranger. I simply did not fit in, and it was my quest for the Lord and love of the truth that caused the condition.

Some people have grown accustomed to such associations. However, this cannot be right, for our text depicts the church as being *"fitly framed together"* - joined together in such a way as to promote growth and advancement in a Divinely purposed plan.

A building in which the several parts do not fit together is an unstable structure. Babylon has created a spiritual monster in which the parts are so diverse from one another that they cannot fit together. It has resolved the problem by shutting off the contributive part of spiritual life. A few people do all of the work, and provide all of the speaking - and many times they are professional people who have received special training. In other words, in Babylon the Great, the whole building is not the point. For this reason there is a lot of sloppy thinking concerning the foundation, the purpose for the church, and how the people actually fit together. Differences are addressed by the formation of additional groups, which cannot integrate with the other groups.

GROWETH INTO AN HOLY TEMPLE. Other versions read, *"is growing into a holy temple,"* ^{NASB} *"rises to become a holy temple,"* ^{NIV} *"comes to be a holy house of God,"* ^{BBE} *"increases to a holy temple,"* ^{DARBY} *"increase to a holy sanctuary,"* ^{YLT} *"constantly growing temple for God,"* ^{LIVING} and *"continues to rise (grow, increase) into a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary dedicated, consecrated, and sacred to the presence of the Lord]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Here is a concept that is virtually unknown in our time - the body of Christ, composed of regenerated Jews and Gentiles, is growing into "*a holy temple*." Unholy people in this temple are no more welcome than moneychangers and those who sold doves were in the Temple in Jerusalem. The church is not a hospital, but a Temple! It is a place where God is served, not man. The Temple of old (which shapes our concept of a temple) was not a place of distribution for the community. It was not a place where political events were held, or social activities were provided for the young. Jesus referred to it was "*My Father's house*" (John 2:16), and "*the house of prayer*" (Matt 21:13).

Here the picture is that of a holy temple that is under construction - like the ancient temple was constructed by Solomon, and rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The fact that it is a holy temple in the Lord determines how it will be built. A building that is being constructed as a place of business is constructed differently than one intended to be a family dwelling. A structure for a circus differs from a library.

When the church is seen as a "*holy temple*" under construction, it makes a significant difference in its emphasis, the thrust of its work, and the frequency of its gatherings. It makes a difference what is adopted as its message, and how it views the individual members. The collective people of God are a sanctuary, dedicated to be place where God can dwell without it endangering the people, as when He came down on Sinai. That is an arresting consideration.

BUILT TOGETHER FOR A HABITATION OF GOD

²²² "*In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*"

While the text may appear to be repetitious, it is not. This is an example of emphasis, not mere redundancy. The thought of Jesus Christ being both the hub and the environment of everything God is doing is so strange to human thought that it must be affirmed again and again. Satan is tireless in his efforts to obscure this fact.

IN WHOM. That is, "*in Christ.*" If what is being done is not bring wrought "*in Christ*" it will not have the results now specified. When, therefore, the stated objective is not being realized, the work is **not** being done in Christ, the building is **not** on the Foundation, and the proper Cornerstone has **not** been used. This is the unvarnished truth of the matter.

BUILDED TOGETHER. Other versions read, "*united together,*"^{BBE} "*joined with him and with each other,*"^{LIVING} "*in union with Him, in fellowship with one another,*"^{WILLIAMS} and "*continuously built together.*"^{MONTGOMERY} Any supposed "church" activity that does not involve the members being "*built together*" is off-center, to say the least.

As will be confirmed in the fourth chapter, the process of being built together involves the expression of the various members of the body. These are not opinionated expressions, but the manifestation of the various measures of faith that have been given to the members (Rom 12:3). Stated another way, it is the expression of the grace of God that has been allotted to every member (1 Pet 4:10). Also, keep in mind that the building project is being managed by Jesus.

It is not often that we hear about a body of believers growing, as opposed to the individual members growing. Of course the growth of the body requires that the several members grow. Here, however, the point is that the growth is synchronized, so to speak, so that each persons advancement complements the advancement of the other members. In the average American church, a person who is growing in the Lord distances himself from the rest of the people. In a church that Jesus is administering, such a person blends with and advantages the other members. **FOR A HABITATION OF GOD.** Other versions read, "*a dwelling place for God,*"^{NKJV} "*a dwelling in which God lives,*"^{NIV} "*a living-place of God,*"^{BBE} "*a place where God lives,*"^{GWN} "*a fixed abode for God,*"^{WEYMOUTH} "*a home of God,*"^{ABP} "*in which God is quite at home,*"^{MESSAGE} and "*to form a fixed abode (dwelling place).*"^{AMPLIFIED}

Here again is a thought that will radically change ones perception of the church. It is not placed here to be a beacon to men - although it does serve that purpose. The primary reason for the church, and the objective for which it is being built together, is so God may dwell in it. That is the overriding purpose for the church, both in this world and in the one to come.

It is fashionable in some circles to ask God to come into the meeting. There are songs and prayers that raise this petition to God - and, to some, it sounds very holy. However, how holy is it if the reason for the church being built up is that God may dwell in it? If the church has been placed on the Foundation, and if it is being built up, God will be there. Jesus said this of Himself, and it surely applies to His Father as well: "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst of them***" (Matt 18:20). The Psalmist said, "*God is in the generation [company^{NIV}] of the righteous.*" (Psa 14:5).

Paul once wrote to the Corinthians about the presence of the Lord in the assembly. "*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that **God is in you of a truth***" (1 Cor 14:23-25). The presence of God in the congregation moved upon many members to prophecy something that struck the heart of the visitor. The people may not have known him, but God did, and being present in the assembly He addressed the person through the various members.

If the church is being built as a place in which God dwells, then its activities must take that into consideration. If this representation is true, then the primary work of the church is not to reach the lost, but to minister to the Lord - as the early church did (Acts 13:2). This does not rule out reaching the lost but actually

guarantees that it will be accomplished within the framework of God's will. This is what happened at Antioch, which Paul and Barnabas were called into a work by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-3). It also occurred in Troas, where Paul and company were directed to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:8-10).

THROUGH THE SPIRIT. Because the heavenly treasure is now contained in an earthen vessel, God dwells in the church by means of the Holy Spirit, who abides within the believers (Gal 4:6). Although it is a vicarious indwelling, it is a very real one, and is designed to prepare us for the ages to come when "*God Himself shall be with them*" (Rev 21:3). Until then, He can be found among His people, who have been built together as a place for Him to dwell. Blessed thought!

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 29

Eph 3:1 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, ² If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." (Eph 3:1-2)

HEARING ABOUT PAUL

INTRODUCTION

Paul is laboring to establish the Ephesian brethren in the Gospel - confirming that it is, indeed, *"the power of God unto salvation."* Whatever power is necessary to initiate, maintain, and bring the salvation of God, is resident in the Gospel of Christ - the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). That is, this is the means through which God has chosen to bring His power within the range of human experience. It is by means of a message - the report of what the Lord has done. Therefore Paul says elsewhere, *"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (1 Cor 1:21). Here, the word *"preaching"* is a noun, not a verb. It is not something men do, but the message that is proclaimed - as in the record of Jonah: *"preach unto it [Nineveh] the preaching that I bid thee"* (Jonah 3:2). From the beginning of the church, this has been difficult for men to perceive. In fact, it not only requires the message itself to be declared. God Himself must open the eyes of men's understanding to see it - i.e., for it to make enough sense to them that they subject themselves to the Gospel, meditate upon it, and live in harmony with it. Proportionately speaking, very few professing believers have an acceptable view of the Gospel. They tend to associate it with what other people need, not themselves. In the *"apostles doctrine,"* it was the Gospel that was expounded, or opened up. The Gospel is like a spiritual treasure house that must be opened up. That is what Paul is doing in the first three chapters of Ephesians. This kind of preaching and teaching is so radically different from the contemporary representations of preaching, that some view it as being cultic in nature. They imagine that a message like this has no relevance to real living, and thus they squat in the tent of their own daily experience, supposing that the Kingdom of God revolves around what is happening to them, rather than what God has provided for them. Those who break out of this restrictive way of thinking have experienced a great deliverance, and are basking in *"the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free"* (Gal 5:1).

PAUL, THE PRISONER

Eph 3:1 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles."

FOR THIS CAUSE. Other versions read, *"for this reason,"* ^{NKJV} *"it is a consequence of this,"* ^{CJB} *"on this*

account,"^{MRD} "because of this,"^{NAB} "when I think of all of this,"^{NLT} and "this is why."^{IE}

Paul will now explain **why** he is in his present circumstance. No doubt his critics had represented his incarceration as something that was just, for they had represented him as a rabble-rouser and insurrectionist (Acts 16:19; 17:6). As he wrote to Timothy, "*I suffer trouble, as an evil doer*" (2 Tim 2:9). However, this was not the case, and the Ephesians needed to know it.

I PAUL. Why does Paul draw attention to himself? Simply because there was a single thing for which he had been noted since he was apprehended by Jesus. He also made tents (Acts 18:3) - but that is not what he was noted for! He also ministered to his own necessities, as well as those who were with him (Acts 20:34) - but that is not the thing for which he was noted.

When men heard of Paul, they did not think of his education, his craft, or his willingness to work. They thought of what he preached and taught. That is why the elect gave thanks to him, and his enemies opposed him. It was because of consistent message that he preached, and his faithful exposition of the purpose and salvation of God.

There is a tendency in men to major on minors, and seek to benefit from lesser things. A person who has an understanding of spiritual things is not always sought for that reason. If there is something else he can do, men will generally seek to gain from that aspect of the person's life. Many a saint of God, who has had the truth burning in his heart, and a fervent desire to make it known, have been disappointed when others had no interest in those things.

THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST. Other versions read, "*in the bonds of Jesus Christ*,"^{TNT} "*Christ Jesus made me His prisoner*,"^{CEV} and "*in jail for Christ*."^{MESSAGE}

Does the text mean Paul is in prison because of His stand for Christ, or that Christ has put him in prison? The latter is the case. Paul is not a prisoner of Rome, but a prisoner of Jesus Christ. On the surface, it looked as though he was being held by Rome, but he was really in the grip of the Son of God - and he knew it.

It is possible that some of the Ephesians may have blamed themselves for Paul's imprisonment. After all, his original arrest in Jerusalem was because of the charge of some of the Asian Jews, that Paul had brought Trophimus, one of their own, and a Gentile, into the Temple (Acts 21:29). However, at this time, Paul will have them know that he was not in prison because of men, but rather because of Jesus Christ. He does not speak of this imprisonment being unjust, as his imprisonment in Philippi was (Acts 16:37).

From **heaven's** point of view, Paul's imprisonment provided time to write the churches, and thereby supply a rich resource for the body of Christ throughout subsequent history.

From **the devil's** point of view, it was a time when the old serpent sought to stop the preaching of the Gospel. However, through the Sovereignty of the reigning Christ, his intentions were thwarted.

From **the churches** point of view, it was a time when Paul developed a profound care for the churches, and could pray for them and write to them.

We have a similar example of this kind of imprisonment in John the beloved. He was exiled to Patmos *"for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Rev 1:9). That is, he was there in order that he might receive an extraordinary revelation from Jesus that would, when comprehended, impact the church for all remaining history. On the surface, it looked as though he had been exiled by the government of man. Really, however, that government was nothing but a tool, in the hand of the Lord, who is *"the Governor among the nations"* (Psa 22:28).

FOR YOU GENTILES. Other versions read, *"for the sake of you Gentiles,"* ^{NASB} *"on behalf of you Gentiles,"* ^{RSV} *"for those of you who are not Jewish,"* ^{GWN} and *"for the benefit of you Gentiles."* ^{NLT} One version wholly misrepresents the verse by saying Paul was in prison because he had been preaching the acceptance of the Gentiles: *"am here in jail because of you--for preaching that you Gentiles are a part of God's house."* ^{LIVING}

There are several letters known to have been written to the churches while Paul was in prison: Ephesians (3:1; 4:1), Philippians (Phil 1:7,13-14,16), Colossians (Col 4:3,18), and Philemon (1:9,10). Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are especially rich with unique teaching and insights into the nature of salvation and the purpose of God. It appears as though Jesus had Paul isolated from contentious Jews and hostile Gentiles so He could open to him certain matters the churches needed to know - matters that were not being expounded by others.

It was in the crucible of suffering that these things could become best known. The sufferings of Paul had distanced him from dead religion, confirming that hearts cannot be changed by Law. This worked a kind of spiritual refinement in Paul that apparently enabled him to apprehend the truth more quickly, and see deeper into it. It seems to me that a person who is basking in the favor of the world cannot see as deeply into the things of God as can an alien.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD

^{3:2a} *"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me . . ."*

Once again, it is necessary to point out that Paul is not merely defending himself against false charges that had been raised against him. Rather, he is confirming the legitimacy of the Gospel that he preached. Almost all disputation among theologians and churches revolves around the teachings of Paul - i.e. election, predestination, the grace of God, the futility of works, the danger of falling away, the purpose of the church, spiritual gifts, the Lord's supper, baptism, etc. His essential message is what is doubted. Thus Paul holds up his message as one of God-given insight.

IF YE HAVE HEARD. Other versions read, *"If indeed you have heard,"* ^{NKJV} *"surely you have heard,"* ^{NIV} *"assuming that you have heard,"* ^{RSV} *"certainly you have heard,"* ^{GWN} *"if, as I suppose, you have heard,"* ^{MRD} and *"no doubt you already know."* ^{LIVING}

Only a man who preaches a consistent message that is in synch with the revealed purpose of God can speak in this manner. If you were to ask the average church member what their preacher knew about the

grace of God and the purpose of God, they would probably be nonplused, for most preachers are not noted for what they preach. There are well known preachers in this very city who are not noted for the message they preach and the understanding of the purpose of God that it reflects.

This very language confirms that early believers spoke to one another about what they had heard. They were not talking about the number of people who attended their gatherings, or the number of souls that had purportedly been won, or the kind of building in which they were meeting. Their work among the youth, the poor, and the community was not the topic of conversation - at least there is no record of such communications.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD. Other versions read, "*stewardship of God's grace,*"^{NASB} "*administration of God's grace,*"^{NIV} "*commission of God's grace,*"^{NRSV} "*ordering of the grace of God,*"^{BBE} "*the work God in His grace has given me to do,*"^{CJB} "*how God gave me the responsibility,*"^{GWN} "*the way in which God entrusted me with the grace,*"^{NJB} "*God gave me the special responsibility of extending His grace,*"^{NLT} "*this special work of showing God's favor,*"^{LIVING} "*the plan of God's gracious love,*"^{IE} "*the responsibility of administering God's grace,*"^{MSV} "*God's favor has been entrusted to me,*"^{WILLIAMS} and "*the stewardship of God's grace (His unmerited favor).*"^{AMPLIFIED}

If the koine Greek language is so precise and exacting, why is it that the translators cannot agree on their representation of what it says? It should be increasingly apparent to you that spiritual understanding comes down from heaven. It is not acquired through academics.

Paul is speaking about a message: a core message - what he preached. It was a profound and liberating message that had been given to him by the grace of God. God gave the Law to Moses, who faithfully declared it. He made known to Abraham that the world would be blessed by a single Person, and he made it known. He revealed certain aspects of His Savior and salvation to the prophets, and they declared it. He revealed to John the Baptist the identity of the Savior, and he declared it.

Now Paul affirms that the thing he consistently preached, declaring its basis, and expounding its effects, was given to him by God, and through His grace. He did not obtain this insight through study - although he was a prodigious student. He did not acquire it through a structured form of education, like when he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

WHICH IS GIVEN UNTO ME. The message he received was a stewardship that had been "*given*" to him. That is, he was given insight and understanding that was to be faithfully declared with discretion. It was a pearl that was not to be cast before swine, yet was not to be withheld from the flock of God.

Paul said of the Lord Jesus, "*He has judged and counted me faithful and trustworthy, appointing me to [this stewardship of] the ministry.*"^{AMPLIFIED} The message was of such a nature that it stirred up animosity among the Jews, and contempt among Gentile philosophers. Yet, he preached it anyway, being faithful to his calling. He not only knew that "*it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Cor 4:2), but lived within an acute awareness of that fact.

For most preachers and teachers, this means preaching what the Bible says, and declaring the whole counsel of God. And, indeed, this is a truthful assessment - but it is not an exhaustive one! This text is speaking about declaring what you have been given to see, comprehend, or understand. Part of that responsibility is making it known to those who are ready to hear it, which involves some kind of assessment. For example, Paul did not declare these matters to the Corinthians or Galatians. Most of his teaching to these churches was corrective in nature. Faithfulness in handling what one has been given to see requires an assessment of the spiritual nature of those to whom one is speaking - whether they are sheep or swine, wheat or tares. There is a message that is declared to all, which is the Gospel of Christ. But the insights to which Paul refers are only for those who have grown sufficiently to receive them.

GOD REACHING OUT TO THE GENTILES

^{3:2b} "*. . . to you-ward.*" Here Paul deals with the intended recipients of the word and insight he has received. It particularly pertains to the Gentiles being made fellow-heirs with the remnant of Israel - the true Israelites.

The Ephesians are representative of all Gentiles. There really is no word delivered to them that is not intended for all Gentiles.

PROMISED THROUGH THE PROPHETS. Through the Prophets, God said that He would extend His hand to the Gentiles. *"Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles . . ."* (Isa 49:22). How would the Lord do this? In prophesying of the coming Messiah to the Jews, the prophets foretold that a special messenger would be sent to prepare *"the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert a highway for our God"* (Isa 40:3). But what of the means through which the Lord would draw the Gentiles into this great salvation? It is only declared by the prophets that this would be done through the Jews (Isa 2:3; 13:10; 50:3).

THROUGH PAUL. Although the Gospel was first preached to the Gentiles by Peter (Acts 15:7), a special apostle was chosen by Christ for the Gentiles. Even as Peter also preached to Gentiles, so Paul preached to Jews, as he was commissioned to do (Acts 9:15). However, his primary ministry was to the Gentiles. Therefore he referred to himself as *"the apostle of the Gentiles"* (Rom 11:13), *"a teacher of the Gentiles"* (1 Tim 2:7), and *"an apostle and teacher of the Gentiles"* (2 Tim 1:11).

By strict definition, an *"apostle"* is "a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders," ^{STRONG'S/THAYER} This is one sent forth with a message - a word to be delivered. For example, an angel that has been sent to destroy a city is not an apostle, or messenger. The apostles, and in this text particularly Paul, were authoritarians, but not only authoritarians or leaders. Their power or authority was primarily in their words. The *"signs of an apostle"* (2 Cor 12:12) were intended to confirm that the word delivered by them was sent by the Lord Jesus Christ. It was binding upon the people just as though Jesus had spoken it personally to them, as He did when He taught upon the earth.

Now that Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God, His primary means of delivering the truth to the people is through those who have the Word He wants to deliver, and insight to deliver it precisely and effectively. A true preacher cannot preach unless he has been sent to preach (Rom 10:15). That sending includes a word that is to be delivered. The messenger is not sent to deliver merely what he thinks is proper. There must be a message - a burden - that is upon his heart from the Lord. The prophets would often refer to their message as a *"burden"* - *"the burden of Babylon"* (Isa 13:1), *"the burden of Moab"* (Isa 15:1), *"the burden of Damascus"* (Isa 17:1), *"the burden of Egypt"* (Isa 19:1), *"the burden of Nineveh"* (Amos 1:1), etc. That *"burden"* was a message to be delivered to the people of reference. The message was identified with the prophet delivering it - i.e. *"the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see"* (Hab 1:1).

God was very particular about who affirmed they had a message from the Lord. There were some people he commanded Jeremiah to forbid to say *"the burden of the Lord."* *"But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall **not** say, The burden of the LORD"* (Jer 23:38).

Therefore, Paul establishes that he is, in fact, a true messenger, and that he has a message to be delivered. He is detailing that message in his epistle to the Ephesians.

TO YOU-WARD. Other versions read, *"for you,"* ^{NKJV} *"for your benefit,"* ^{CJB} *"towards you,"* ^{DARBY} *"among you,"* ^{MRD} *"for your sake,"* ^{NJB} *"to you Gentiles,"* ^{NLT} *"on your account,"* ^{RWB} *"in regard to you,"* ^{YLT} *"that the Gentiles, too, are included in his kindness,"* ^{LIVING} and *"[to dispense to you] for your benefit."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word *"you-ward,"* or the words *"towards you,"* indicate where the messenger has been pointed, and to whom the word is to be delivered. It speaks of the people upon whom this word is focused. It is inconceivable that God would give a word to be delivered to the people that was not relevant for and essential to life in Christ Jesus.

Yet, the words of Paul are being treated today as though this was the case. A casual perusal of the Gentile churches in our land would never lead one to suspect that Paul was their apostle, or that he had been given a message that it was imperative for them to hear. This condition is a great contributor to the tendency to question the authenticity of Scripture. A church that pays little or no heed to what Paul says - the chief writer of New Covenant times - has no business talking about the inspiration of the Scriptures, the necessity of believing God's Word, or living by every word of God. There may have been some believers in early times who had not heard of Paul, and were unaware of his writings - although that is highly unlikely, as our text strongly suggests. But what of today, when his writings can be obtained with little effort. May we never

forget that Jesus put Paul in prison for the churches, so they could be exposed to the exposition of the purpose of God, and the greatness of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 30

Eph 3:3 "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"

(Eph 3:3-4)

MADE KNOWN BY REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

There are key words in apostolic doctrine that give us some idea of the nature of the message of the Gospel, what was involved in obtaining it, and what is associated with perceiving it. Some of those words are expressed in this third chapter - words pertaining to his message: "*dispensation*" (3:2), "*revelation*" (3:3a), "*made known*" (3:3b), "*the mystery*" (3:3c), "*understand*" (3:4a), "*knowledge*" (3:4b), and "*the mystery of Christ*" (3:4c). This is a message that focuses on what the Lord has done: "*blessed us*" (1:3), "*chosen us*" (1:4), "*predestinated us*" (1:5), "*made us accepted*" (1:6), "*abounded toward us*" (1:8), "*made known unto us*" (1:9) "*His exceeding great power is toward us*" (1:19), He "*loved us*" (2:4), "*quicken**ed us*" (2:5), He "*raised us*" (2:6), and "*made us sit together in heavenly places*" (2:6). *In the ages to come, He will show "the exceeding riches in His grace in His kindness toward us"* (2:7). *We are, indeed, "His workmanship"* (2:10). This accents the fact that the condition into which men were cast by sin cannot be resolved by them doing something - even though there are things that are to be done. Our state, or condition, however has been changed by God, not by us, or what we have done. This has proved to be a very difficult thing for men to see - even the best of men. Yet, all of this is in the message - the Gospel of Christ, the preaching of Christ, and the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. God has so arranged things that the only way men can be effectively changed into the likeness He has determined is through a message - the message that Paul was ordained to preach to the Gentiles. Any success men have in being holy, pleasing the Lord, presenting their bodies a living sacrifice . . . etc, is directly related to their understanding of the word, the message that God has ordained as the means of saving men (1 Cor 1:21). This is why Paul is speaking so extensively concerning the message he was given to preach. It is lofty, but not too lofty. Faith, which obtains grace, can take hold of it.

HOW PAUL CAME TO KNOW THE MYSTERY

Eph3:3 "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery . . ."

HOW. Paul will now elaborate on **how** he received "*the dispensation of the grace of God*" (3:2). That is, God's grace, which was dispensed to Paul, also comes to us by means of a message, and the faith that is required to take hold of that message -i.e., "*by grace through faith*" (2:7=8). Today, there is too much nebulous talk about the grace of God. Grace is not like a blob of kindness that is thrown upon the person suddenly, so that God does not condemn them anymore. It is true that, in Christ, we are delivered from condemnation and the wrath of God. That is a preparatory work, not a consummate one. At its core, salvation does not consist of the absence of condemnation, but of the possession of something that pleases God and changes us.

The appointed means by which we come to an understanding of this marvelous change is not our feelings, or even our outward manners. Anything that is confined to the natural part of man can be emulated, or fabricated. Satan can duplicate such things, causing people to appear to be something that they are not. For those in Christ, the message of the Gospel contains all of the ingredients required to reason soundly and conclude that Christ is in them, of a truth (2 Co 13:5). However, which message are we Gentiles to believe? Paul affirms it is the one he preached. Now he writes to explain why this is a proper conclusion.

It is tragic to acknowledge that this is not the manner in which men are commonly being taught today. However, if anyone will give heed to what Paul says, and carefully examine and believe his message. It will result in them having a satisfying and productive understanding of their position and acceptance in Christ. They will also find this will give them a powerful incentive to do and be everything God requires of them.

BY REVELATION HE MADE KNOWN UNTO ME. Other versions read, "*God himself revealed,*"^{NLT} "*direct revelation,*"^{AMPLIFIED} "*God has shown me,*"^{CEV} "*showing it to me,*"^{ERV} "*I got the inside story on this from God himself,*"^{MESSAGE} All other versions read "*by revelation.*"

Lexically, the word "*revelation*" means, "1) a laying bare, making naked 2) a disclosure of truth, instruction 2a) concerning things before unknown 2b) used of events by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all 3) manifestation, appearance."^{THAYER} This speaks of something that exists, yet cannot be seen - it is something that has been purposed, yet is not known. The "*mystery*" is here depicted as something hidden behind a curtain of obscurity. That curtain is so thick and formidable, that it can only be pulled back by God Himself, so that the can be clearly seen. It is not the intellectual complexity of the mystery that hides it (although some of that is involved). Rather, it is that something stands between "*the mystery*" and those who need to see it. Boiled down to its essence, that obscuring factor is "*the flesh.*" Sin has rendered humanity stupid concerning the things of God, and particularly the mystery of what He is doing in the earth. God is the only One who can effectively deal with this situation - and He did so for Paul. **He pulled back the curtain of ignorance and showed Paul a mystery that had been put in place before the foundation of the world.**

At this point it is important to see that all of this relates to being "*blessed*" (1:3), "*chosen*" (1:4), being "*holy and without blame*" (1:4b), being "*predestinated unto adoption*" (1:5), being "*accepted*" (1:6), receiving "*the forgiveness of sins*" (1:7), obtaining an "*inheritance*" (1:11), and being "*sealed*" with the Spirit (1:14). **In other words, salvation has to do with what God intends for us to have and be in Christ, and before Him. It is not simply a rescue operation!**

THE MYSTERY. In Scripture a "*mystery*" is not merely something that cannot be comprehended. Rather, it is something that man cannot comprehend by his own ability. In our text, "*the mystery*" is something that has been revealed, opened, and made understandable - so much so, that it can be proclaimed. Further, the thing that causes "*the mystery*" to be hidden is not the Divine intention itself-i.e. something that is so deep it cannot possibly be known. God is the One who has concealed "*the mystery,*" purposefully hiding it from those who have not been initiated into the Kingdom of His dear Son. It is as though He put blinders on "*the flesh,*" and man is not able to remove them. Thus, Jesus said God "*hid these things from the wise and the prudent*" (Matt 11:25). Paul described this as a veil over the faces of those who are not accepted in the Beloved (2 Cor 3:13-16).

The fact that the thing concealed is a "*mystery*" is strictly controlled by God Himself. He does not intend to allow anyone to see what He is doing unless He grants them the ability to do so. This mystery cannot be comprehended accidentally. People do not stumble upon its meaning. Paul was shown this mystery because he could be trusted with it - to handle it properly (1 Tim 1:12). We can see it because Paul declared it in "*words which the Holy Spirit teaches*" (2 Cor 2:13). Through the Spirit, he could properly correlate the words of Moses and the Prophets with the Gospel of Christ (Acts 26:22; 28:23). In doing this, He would elaborate

on this great salvation, confirming that it is what God had purposed before He created the worlds.

READING AND UNDERSTANDING

3:3b-4aa " . . . *as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge . . .* "

Why is Paul writing in this manner to the Ephesians? Should not the Gospel have been sufficient to clarify these matters to them? And, was not their faith adequate to decipher these things effectively? Some of the complexities of salvation requires this kind of approach. God has determined that salvation will be worked out (Phil 2:12) in the crucible of conflict and warfare. It will be done in a cursed world that is dominated by the devil (2 Cor 4:4; 1 John 5:19), and filled with false prophets (1 John 4:1). Heresies, or divisions, exist in order to find out who has real faith, and who has been accepted (1 Cor 11:19). This type of environment demands that an authentic message be put before the people - a message by which all other messages will be measured. Such a message was revealed, or manifested, to Paul - a message he was commanded to preach and teach, particularly to the Gentiles (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11).

I WROTE BEFORE IN FEW WORDS. Other versions read, "*as I have briefly written already,*" ^{NKJV} "*as I wrote before in brief,*" ^{NASB} "*as I wrote above in few words,*" ^{GENEVA} "*I have just described briefly,*" ^{NJB} "*I have already briefly explained it to you,*" ^{LIVING} and "*I have already written a little about this.*" ^{ERV}

Paul does not mean that he had written them an earlier letter, for there is no evidence of such a writing. He is referring to what he had written earlier in this epistle - specifically the first two chapters. There He made known that "*the mystery*" included Divine provision (1:3), the election, or choosing of the people (1:4), the predetermination of God (1:5), redemption (1:7), regeneration (2:10), the administration of grace (2:7-8), the joining together the Jews and Gentiles into "*one body*" (2:15-20), and the preparation of the church to be a "*habitation of God*" (2:22). **These are essential components of salvation** - which means there is no salvation without them, and that they are present by Divine choice and objective.

Notice that in all of those "*few words*" the One who does the determining and the effective working is the Lord. The saved are recipients, and are more noted for what they have received than what they have accomplished.

To this day, this kind of salvation remains hidden to the masses. The number of "Christian" plans, techniques, courses, routines, and laws that are being set forth as a remedy for human failure are nearly beyond count. Routines have been established for building a congregation, evangelizing, training the youth, having a pleasant and productive home, marital success, knowing how to fast, knowing how to pray, knowing how to read your Bible, knowing how to order your time . . . etc. None of these marketed plans capitalize on the "*few words*" Paul wrote concerning the salvation of God in the first two chapters of this book - and certainly have nothing to do with what we are now reviewing. In other words, the rank and file of professing Christians remain in a state of abysmal ignorance concerning the text to which we are now exposed.

WHEN YE READ. Paul does not envision a church that is ignorant of what was made known to him. He assumes that the epistle he has written will be read, particularly since it is so vital to spiritual understanding. Yet, today we have a professing church that has very little, if any, understanding of this epistle - even though it was written for the Gentiles, and particularly pertained to them. It explains what they have received in Christ, and how it relates to the Jews and the Law that was given to them.

It is an enormous sin for a professing Christian to be ignorant of what is declared in this epistle. Only a falling away can account for this ignorance - a condition that resulted from not being able to "endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim 4:3).

YOU MAY UNDERSTAND MY KNOWLEDGE. Other versions read, "*understand my insight,*" ^{NASB} "*perceive my understanding,*" ^{NRSV} "*be clear about my knowledge,*" ^{BBE} "*grasp how I understand this,*" ^{CJB} and "*you can judge of my insight,*" ^{WEYMOUTH}

Paul knows there are at least two advantages every believer has. First, they have received the Spirit (1:13). Second, as he prayed, God will open the eyes of their understanding (1:15-20). It is within the awareness of these glorious realities that Paul writes, knowing that if they will not quench the Spirit, and if they draw nigh

to God, He will show them the truth of what he has written to them. That is how God has ordained salvation to be brought to completion. Being a "*God of truth*" (Psa 31:5), He will always work within the perception of "*the word of the truth of the Gospel*" (Col 1:5). That is the Gospel Paul preached, and their perception of it will confirm its truth.

Salvation is also worked out in a united environment, where each member of the body is, in some way, contributing to the whole. The sphere of operation for each member is "*the measure faith*" they have been given (Rom 12:3), or the spiritual gift that is resident in them (1 Cor 12:7,11,18), or the measure of grace that has been distributed to them (1 Pet 4:10).

Paul knows that wherever this environment exists, the people will see the truth of what he has written. It is within that perception that salvation will be brought to its intended conclusion.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

^{3:4b} "*... in the mystery of Christ*" Other versions read, "*secret of Christ*," ^{BBE} "*secret plan concerning the Messiah*," ^{CJB} "*plan regarding Christ*," ^{NLT} and "*truth of Christ*." ^{WEYMOUTH}

The fact that "*mystery*" surrounded Christ is confirmed in the manner He was received. As it is written, "*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not*" (John 1:10-11; Acts 13:27). Even though Moses and the Prophets had foretold the coming of the Christ, yet when He came, the people at large did not recognize Him or receive Him as the Messiah. Every devout Jew knew that a Messiah was coming, but they could not associate Jesus of Nazareth with the prophecies of the Christ. With a very few exceptions, they were looking for a military deliverer that would free them from the Roman yoke (Acts 1:6).

No one associated Jesus with a Messiah upon whom the sins of the world would be laid, who would be "*cut off*" without any progeny, and would be "*despised*" by men (Isa 53) - even though it was revealed vaguely in Isaiah's prophecy. Who was the individual who looked for a Messiah who would be "*the Lord our righteousness*" (Jer 23:6; 33:16), or one who would be given as a light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6). In fact, there is no record of anyone prior to Christ's appearance who looked for a Messiah who would bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). Although to those who are in Christ, these prophetic references might be clear, to others an inhibiting veil is over their face so they cannot perceive these texts. That veil substantiates their alienation.

In our time, the veil has grown even thicker, and the real Jesus has been largely hidden to the masses - the churches masses. Mind you, an apostle and teacher has been given to us Gentiles, to whom the "*mystery of Christ*" has been revealed, and he has communicated that revelation to men through his epistles. Ponder some of the mysterious things about Christ that have been cleared up by Paul. Here are a few of them.

1. God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ (Rom 2:16).
2. Men are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24).;
3. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1).
4. We joy in God through the Lord Jesus, by whom, we have not received the atonement (Rom 5:11).
5. We reign in life by Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17).
6. Grace reigns through righteousness by Jesus unto eternal life (Rom 5:21).
7. Christ is the Head of the church, and the Savior of the body" (Rom 5:23).
8. We are alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 6:11).

9. We are dead to the Law by the body of Christ that we might be married to Him (Rom 7:4).
10. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1).
11. If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life (Rom 8:10).
12. If we are children of God we are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17).
13. The love of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39).
14. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness (Rom 10:4).
15. Christ died and rose again that He might be the Lord of the dead and the living (Rom 14:9).
16. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom 14:10).
17. Christ has received us to the glory of God (Rom 15:7).
18. God has called us into fellowship with His Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor 1:9).
19. Christ is the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor 1:24).
20. Christ "is God's" - i.e. the Lord's Christ, or Anointed One (1 Cor 3:23).
21. Christ has delivered us from this present evil world (Gal 1:4).
22. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).
23. Christ has made us free, in order that we might walk in freedom (Gal 5:1).
24. The blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works (Heb 9:14).

These realities are actually an exposition of things introduced by Moses and the Prophets. However, they could not be seen because they had been hidden, *"kept secret since the world began"* (Rom 16:26). In revealing them to Paul, He provided someone who could correlate the real Jesus with Scripture. This was necessary because salvation requires this kind of cognition. We live by *"every word of God"* (Lk 4:4). In Christ, this does not have to do so much with instruction as it does with a proper view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation hinges on this kind of knowledge - *"the light of the glory of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor 4:6). That is, through Christ we come into acquaintance with God, and begin to participate in what He is doing through Christ. This participation, however, cannot exist where there is a fundamental ignorance of God. Further, the knowledge of God is acquired by walking in the light with Him through Jesus Christ - and that is salvation. The salvation of God begins with the remission of sins, but it certainly does not end there. Paul is illuminating the marvelous scope of salvation.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 31

Eph 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; ⁶ That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."
(Eph 3:5-6)

A MYSTERY NOT MADE KNOWN IN OTHER AGES

INTRODUCTION

What is God doing in Christ Jesus, and precisely what is the identity and nature of the New Covenant that He is mediating? Some would answer that God is basically rescuing the lost. Others would affirm that He is invading society in order to change it and make it acceptable in His sight. Still others have no concept of God doing something in the world. They can only think of what God expects men to do in this world. In all of these varied views, and many more, rarely is anything said about eternity, or displaying the wisdom of God to heavenly personalities, or preparing the saints to judge both men and angels, and take the Kingdom. As soon as men pose any question concerning God's purpose in Christ, or what Christ is doing for God, men tend to revert to philosophical and personal opinions. It seems to me that the truth of the matter is that unenlightened men are not at all prone to consider what God is doing - His "*eternal purpose*," or His "*good, and acceptable, and perfect*" will. They had rather get down to matters having to do with men living in the world, making the world a better place to, or some other matter related to those things. However, let us think this out for a moment. Consider what God has done so far without any human assistance whatsoever. The vast creation, with all its various complexities was the start - and it really had to do with forming an arena in which His determined work would be done. The creation itself is not the work. Then there was the devastating flood that destroyed every living person except for eight, all of the impersonal animal life except the animals in the ark, and all of the vegetative life. This was followed by God aborting the project in the plain of Shinar, and scattering the people by confounding their languages. Then one man is singled out and told many nations would come from him, one of which would be a dominant nation in His sight. From that nation would come a Man through whom all the world would be blessed. The sins of the world would be laid upon that Man, and He would take them away, rise from the dead, and be given all power in heaven and earth. That brief summation alone should confirm that something was on the horizon of Divine purpose. How else can the involvement of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the vast multitude of angels be seen as necessary in the appointed work? How can such a staggering investment be required to merely make men better? Paul is addressing this matter by revealing a purpose that was unknown before Christ.

OTHER AGES DID NOT KNOW

Eph3:5a "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men . . ."

Paul now opens further what he has just referred to as *"my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."* He will not commence a rehearsal of the indispensable things Jesus has accomplished: the taking away of sin, the destruction of the devil, the spoiling of principalities and powers, the reconciling of the world, the ending of the Law as a means to righteousness, etc. He will rather commence an exposition of WHY Jesus did these remarkable and necessary things. He will not tell us that all of this was done in order that the world might be saved. He will not launch into a dissertation concerning the marvelous love of God. He now shines the spotlight on the objective of salvation, the intention of Divine love, and the reason for justification. **There is a purpose that has driven all of these things, and it is not at all what shallow thinking religious men suppose.** In fact, it will sound absurd to the carnal mind, and appear unworthy of the staggering investment that has been made by God, and the ongoing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. **We are considering a purpose that required the removal of sin, a new creation, and a continual change that consummates in being conformed to the image of God's Son.** It necessitated the giving of the Law, and the formation of a distinct people through whom the One who would execute God's will would come. This people required a special progenitor, special land, a special Law, and a special covenant. They were all preparatory for the Progenitor of a generation that would never die, the giving of a new and better covenant, and an eternal inheritance. But Paul will now focus on a mystery that was not formerly made known.

WHICH IN OTHER AGES. Other versions read, *"other generations,"* ^{NASB} *"former generations,"* ^{NIV} *"past generations,"* ^{CJB} *"in the past,"* ^{GWN} *"previous generations,"* ^{NJB} *"times past,"* ^{TNT} *"olden times,"* ^{LIVING} and *"earlier ages."* ^{WEYMOUTH}

The language itself suggests there are inferior and superior generations. There are unacceptable and acceptable generations. There are generations to whom God will not reveal what He is doing, and generations that will come to know such things. Ponder the "other ages."

There was the age prior to the Law, from "Adam to Moses." Great men living during that era included Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Minimal revelation was given during this age. Nothing concerning an *"eternal purpose"* was made known.

There was the age from the giving of the Law until John the Baptist. More great men lived during this time - men like Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, David, Solomon, and the Prophets. More was revealed during this time. Still, an *"eternal purpose"* was not clearly made known, and the things revealed about a coming Messiah were not comprehended - even by men who earnestly sought to know who the Messiah would be, and when He would appear (1 Pet 1:11). It was during this age that a major division in humanity took place by Divine action: Jew and Gentile. One group heard from God and one did not. One was favored of God, and one was not. One was given all the advantages necessary to be able to identify right and wrong, and the other only had the testimony of an uncultured conscience.

There is a purpose - a Divine purpose - that was intended to be announced to a certain generation, and carried out through succeeding generations. Further, in all of this it must be remembered that, in God's sight, generations that experience superior Divine workings must never go backward. They are held accountable for surpassing the generations before them.

WAS NOT MADE KNOWN. In all of these generations there existed a mystery of Divine objective that was purposefully concealed. It *"was not made known."* Other versions read, *"not given,"* ^{BBE} *"not opened,"* ^{GENEVA} *"not disclosed,"* ^{NET} *"was unknown,"* ^{NJB} *"God did not share,"* ^{LIVING} and *"were not told this."* ^{IE}

THE SONS OF MEN. Other versions read, *"to men,"* ^{NIV} *"humankind,"* ^{NRSV} *"people,"* ^{GWN} *"human beings,"* ^{NAB} *"humanity,"* ^{NJB} and *"human race."* ^{WEYMOUTH}

Although man has been made in the image of God, he does not know the purpose of God intuitively - before or after the fall. Although he is the most intelligent of all terrestrial creature, he cannot discover the purpose of God by reasoning, deducing, or piecing together the details that he does know. There are things that cannot be known except by God making them known. So far as we know, God did not make known the details of the resurrection to Job. Yet, he reasoned that even though his body decayed, yet in his flesh he would *"see God"* (John 19:26). There is no record of God telling Abraham about a city whose Builder and Maker is God, yet he sought one (Heb 11:10). So far as we know, God did not reveal anything about a heavenly country to the saints before the Law, yet the sought one, concluding that it was *"better"* than any country upon earth (Heb 11:16). **There are holy conclusions that can be reached, as these cases confirm.** However, when it comes to the mystery that was made known to Paul, no one had in any way seen it before

it was revealed. It was a mystery that could not be unraveled, even by men of great faith and understanding.

When it comes to the matters relating to God's "*eternal purpose*," and the means through which that purpose is being carried, even the holy angels, excelling in wisdom, and even desiring to look into these things, are not able to do so on their own (1 Pet 1:12). An angel could identify a great multitude of saved people to John (Rev 7:14), but he could not of himself divulge God's "*eternal purpose*." The mystery has been, however, revealed, and it is imperative that it be told.

IT HAS NOW BEEN REVEALED

^{3:5b} "... as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Paul writes very precisely at this point, for he is addressing a mystery that has not been made known unto the sons of men. Here he uses a modifying clause, suggesting that something of the mystery had been made known, but not sufficient to disclose the fulness of it.

AS IT IS NOW REVEALED. All of the standard versions (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, and NRSV) read "*as it has now been revealed*." Other versions read, "*but the revelation of it has now been made known*," ^{BBE} "*as the Spirit is now revealing*," ^{CJB} "*as fully as now*," ^{WILLIAMS} "*as now it was revealed*," ^{ABP} "*until God's Spirit told it*," ^{CEV} and "*but God has revealed it now*." ^{GNB} Here, the words "*as it is now*" mean **to the extent that it is now revealed**, or as fully as it is now made known. Before, what has now been revealed was wrapped in mystery, so that a full idea of it could not be possessed.

THE WORD "NOW." The word "*now*" is not one relating to strict chronological time - as men would ordinarily use the expression "right now." This is a Kingdom way of referring to the period that commenced with the exaltation and enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God. It is essential that men learn to think in this manner. Some people think of "*now*" as since the spiritual gifts ceased, or since the Scriptures were completed, or since the church was established. A significant number of teachings revolve around Scriptural views of "*now*."

It is critical that men learn to reason from the perspective of an exalted, reigning, interceding, and mediating Christ. This is because Kingdom effectuality is all traced back to the present position and ministry of Jesus Christ. The glories of the New Covenant are never traced back to the day of Pentecost. No primary doctrine is established upon the passing away of spiritual gifts, or the completion of the Scriptural canon. The era of the New Covenant is never represented as having two stages - one while the apostles were alive, and the other after they had passed from this world.

As used here, the word "*now*" is defined as the period during which the mystery that was formerly hidden is being revealed, or made known. It commenced with the exaltation of Christ, which followed the removal of sin, the mortal wounding of Satan, the plundering of despotic principalities and powers, and the ending of the Law for righteousness. Only when these were accomplished could the veil of obscurity be removed from the hearts of men. Even then, God will employ means through which the saved will come into the knowledge of what He is doing.

HOLY. The word "*holy*" means "pure, blameless," ^{STRONG'S} "set apart for God," ^{THAYER} "dedicated," ^{FRIBERG} and "Morally pure, upright." ^{UBS} The loftiness of the word is seen in the fact that God Himself is said to be "*holy*" (Psa 99:5,9; Isa 5:16) - in fact, He is thrice holy (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8). This is not a casual term, or a word that speaks of a condition that does not really exist, but is only a way that God condescendingly views someone. The word is like a two-sided coin. One side involves personal holiness and purity, while the other side involves being especially used by God - set aside for His employment.

HIS . . . APOSTLES AND PROPHETS. Other versions read, "*His emissaries and prophets*," ^{CJB} and "*His holy apostles (consecrated messengers) and prophets*." ^{AMPLIFIED}

An "*apostle*" is "a delegate, a messenger, one sent forth with orders." ^{THAYER} Of special note were "*the twelve apostles*" to the Jews (Rev 21:14; Matt 19:28; Gal 2:7), and Paul, the "*apostle of the Gentiles*" (Rom 11:13). Two other men are called "*apostle*" - Barnabas (Acts 14:14), and James, the Lord's brother (Gal 1:19). Although these were not numbered with the twelve, they were men sent forth with a message, who had

special insight into the things of God.

The "*prophets*" of reference were among those placed in the church, as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 - given for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph 4:12). Paul referred to these prophets, saying they ranked second only to the apostles (1 Cor 12:28). They were noted for their ability to discern truth what was difficult for others to receive (1 Cor 14:37). They also were noted for speaking "*to men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*" (1 Cor 14:3).

BY THE SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit revealed this secret to these apostles and prophets, and enabled them to articulate it precisely and in a way that could be understood.

THAT THE GENTILES SHOULD BE FELLOWHEIRS

^{3:6} "*That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.*"

This is the "*mystery*" that has been made known. I would venture to say that it would be very difficult to find a single person who would, from his own understanding, give this description of the mystery. In fact, if this was not written in Scripture, it is difficult to explain how any of our contemporaries would know it.

SHOULD BE. Other versions read, "*are,*" ^{NASB} "*have become,*" ^{NRSV} "*were to be,*" ^{CJB} "*have,*" ^{GWN} "*be,*" ^{YLT} "*will have,*" ^{LIVING} "*are now,*" ^{IE} "*to be,*" ^{ABP} "*has given,*" ^{CEV} and "*are now to be.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

The words "*should be*" are translated from a single word meaning, "to be, to exist, to happen, to be present," ^{STRONGS} It must be remembered that this is the language of Divine determination. While what has been determined is now taking place, the point here is that it is taking place because it was determined by God. He will tell us by what means this is being accomplished, but the point is that God is accomplishing what He determined before the foundation of the world. Therefore "*should be*" is not said after the Sinaitic manner, as "ought to be." It is rather the language of Divine Sovereignty - "this shall be!" The fact that this is the accomplishment of God Himself forbids any other interpretation of the expression.

FELLOWHEIRS. Other versions read, "*heirs together,*" ^{NIV} "*have a part,*" ^{BBE} "*co-heirs,*" ^{CSB} "*inheritors also,*" ^{GENEVA} and "*have the same inheritance.*" ^{GWN}

OF THE SAME BODY. Other versions read, "*members of the body,*" ^{NASB} "*members together of one body,*" ^{NIV} and "*members of the same body.*" ^{NRSV}

The church, or body of Christ, is also described as a single olive tree (Rom 11:17-24), a single household (Eph 2:19), a single family (Eph 3:15), "*one body*" (Eph 4:4), and "*one new man*" (Eph 2:18).

If this is a purpose conceived before the foundation, or blueprint, of the world, then the acceptance of the Gentiles is not God's reaction to the failure of the Jews to recognize and receive Jesus when He entered into the world. Rather, this was His plan all along, determined before men had done neither good nor evil. This means that Israel has not been wholly cut off, rejected, and consigned to the trash-heap of humanity. The nation has been preserved by a holy remnant (Rom 9:27; 11:5). Neither the prophets nor the apostles spoke of a time when the Jews would not be a part of the church, or would be fully stripped out the tree of Divine purpose.

God did not cut off part of the body (Eph 2:15) - which He would have to do if the Jews ceased to be a people.

PARTAKERS OF HIS PROMISE IN CHRIST. God's promise in Christ refers to what He has accomplished in Christ, being promised of old time. It include the demise of the devil (Gen 3:15), being blessed by God (Gen 12:3), being protected by Jesus (Isa 32:2), experiencing the benefits of His intercession (Isa 53:11), iniquities being remembered no more (Jer 31:34), and the Lord being our righteousness (Jer 23:6). Those, and many other, promises were not given to the Gentiles, but to the Jews, to whom they "*pertained*" (Rom 9:3-5). Yet, here is a category of people whom God determined to partake of benefits that were never clearly promised to them.

BY THE GOSPEL. The means through which this marvelous work is accomplished is *"the Gospel."* It is not, and cannot be, accomplished by *"another Gospel."* The Judaizers could not cause it to happen by their insistence on circumcision. This word cannot be confidently delivered by any other message, for the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, is *"the power of God unto salvation."*

This is the Gospel that Paul preached - a Gospel that led Gentiles into an acute awareness that the word of blessing that was delivered to the Jews was fully realized in Christ Jesus. This was not a word that affirmed the Gentiles would also be given what was promised to the Jews. It was rather an announcement that they be brought into the household and made fellow-heirs!

This is a word that cannot be found in the prophets of old time. They spoke of the Gentiles coming to the Lord (Psa 86:9), seeking the Lord (Isa 11:10), the Messiah would be given for a light to the Gentiles (Isa 42:6), the Gentiles coming to the Jews (Isa 60:3,5), coming to Jerusalem (Jer 3:17), inquiring of the Jews (Zech 8:23), being giving to the Messiah as an inheritance (Psa 2:8), turning to the Lord (Psa 22:27), and God being exalted among them (Psa 46:10), etc.

Isaiah gave a hint of the oneness declared in our text, but in a very limited sense. *"In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance"* (Isa 19:24-25). But that, although wonderful, is nothing to compare with *"fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."* That is a benefit for which they were not prepared. It is one they did not seek. And yet, there is not a single benefit promised in Christ that cannot be realized by any Gentile that believes on Him. The difficulty of our time is that very few people have any commendable idea of the magnitude of what is realized in Christ Jesus. Paul is laboring to dispel such ignorance.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 32

Eph 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.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"*

(Eph 3:7-8)

I WAS MADE A MINISTER

INTRODUCTION

The measure of one's value to the Lord is determined by the degree to which his works are in synch with, and complementary of, the purpose of God. In the heavenly order of things, natural human ingenuity and creativity count for nothing. Further, those who labor in the vineyard of the Lord must know what He is doing, what He is raising, and the intended use of that which is harvested. So far as the work is concerned, the objective, integrity, greatness, and satisfaction of the Owner is essential. The sum of those takes place when God is said to be "glorified." **The message that is proclaimed by those who are "laborers together with God" (1 Cor 3:9) must have its genesis with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and must have Jesus Christ as its epicenter of power.** The work must be one in which the hand of the Lord is present, and can be clearly seen by principalities and powers in heavenly places. Those among whom the laborer works, and who receive and rely upon His message will prove to be among those in whom the Holy Spirit will work, changing them from one increasing stage of glory unto another (2 Cor 3:18), until at last they are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), or Christ is "*formed*" in them (Gal 4:19). Further, the qualification of the laborers is determined by their commission from God, and their faithfulness to that commission. For those with eyes to see, these are matters that Paul is establishing in this third chapter. He has said that the church is being made a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph 2:22). Now he is confirming that this is not mere philosophical babble. He is revealing how **God** is doing this.

A MINISTER ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF GRACE

Eph3:7 *"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."*

WHEREOF. Other versions read, "of which," ^{NKJV} "of this Gospel," ^{NRSV} "of this," ^{NAB} "For this cause." ^{ABP} The point of reference in the word "whereof," or "of which," is the last expression of the previous verse: "the Gospel." That was the stewardship that was given to him - "the Gospel of Christ," which IS "the power of God unto salvation." That was the matter concerning which he had the most extensive illumination. He knew about other things, such as the nature of the flesh and its militancy against the Spirit (Rom 7-8). He knew what should be done when the "old leaven" of wickedness was found in the church (1 Cor 5:1-5). He could give excellent counsel concerning marriage, and its various ramifications (1 Cor 7). He had insight into spiritual gifts, what they were, and how they were to operate (1 Cor 12-14). He had extensive understanding of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15). He could trace the history of the Jews, show when they stumbled, and expound on their rejection (Acts 13). He could speak extensively about edification and its critical role in the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 14). He could delineate the function of elders and deacons, and even declare the qualities to be found in the wives of deacons (1 Tim 3). But they were not the focus of his ministry.

Paul was not raised up to correct the church - although he did it better than anyone else. He was not raised up to ensure that the domestic lives of believers were honoring to God, although he did some work in that area. However, his primary ministry pertained to the Gospel, and whatever area he touched, he cast the light of the Gospel upon it.

I WAS MADE A MINISTER. Other versions read, "became a minister," ^{NKJV} "became a servant," ^{NIV} "made a preacher," ^{BEB} "made a servant," ^{CSB} "I have been appointed to serve," ^{WEYMOUTH} "I was called to serve," ^{WILLIAMS} "it became my job," ^{CEV} "this is my life work." ^{MESSAGE}

The literal rendering of the phrase is, "of which I became dispenser." ^{INTERLINEAR} The word "made" comes from a word that means to come into existence, to begin to be. It carries the idea of Divine creation, or making. Jesus "apprehended" Paul, or took hold of him, in order that he might declare and expound the Gospel of Christ. That was, so to speak, his field of expertise. Not only was he able to handle the Scriptures with unequalled expertise, He was given "visions and revaluations" concerning the great work of redemption (2 Cor 12). He was able to communicate it words the Spirit could use to bring the understanding of it within the reach of God's people.

Elsewhere Paul affirms that Jesus "put" him into the ministry (1 Tim 1:12). Here Paul is declaring the purpose or objective of that ministry. As a faithful steward he opened up the significance of removing sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, having access to God, being free from a condemning conscience, the inner conflict created by newness of life, the involvements of being the children of God, the inheritance of the saints, and the exaltation of Jesus and the reason for it. This included the intercessory and mediatorial ministries of Jesus, the present reign of Jesus, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit who is given to the children of God.

These are aspects and implications of the Gospel of Christ. They are the ministered means by which the eyes of men are opened, and they are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This is the message through which they learn that their sins are forgiven, and that they have an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18).

ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF GRACE GIVEN UNTO ME. Other versions read, "by God's gracious gift, which He gave me" ^{CJB} "the gift of the goodness of God, which was imparted to me," ^{MRD} "by the gift of God's grace that was granted me," ^{NAB} and "according to the gift of God's free grace (undeserved favor) which was bestowed on me." ^{AMPLIFIED}

Often, serving God in a particular capacity is declared as an obligation, necessity, or even the result of special training by men. Here, however, Paul refers to his ministry as a "gift," given to him by the grace of God. Elsewhere he confessed, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor 15:10). An effective minister has been endued with capability by the Head of the church. That being true, whether or not men should hear what he says is a pointless question. Once it has been established that a person has been gifted by the Lord, and given insights into what is summarized in the Gospel, all controversy about whether or not he is to be heard is brought to a grinding halt.

ACCORDING TO THE EFFECTUAL WORKING OF HIS POWER. Not only was Paul's ministry a gift, given to him by the grace of God, it was according to God's effective power, which sees to it that His will is done. Once the power of God undergirds a matter, it becomes a sure thing. This means that anywhere

and everywhere Paul's message is heard and embraced, the objectives of God will begin to take place: conformity to the image of Christ, establishment in the faith, a display of the wisdom of God to heavenly personalities, etc. In the Kingdom of God, a powerless messenger is no messenger at all. If a message can be heartily embraced without the ordained changes taking place in the individual, the message is flawed. And, if the message is flawed, it did not come from God. The effects of Paul's ministry prove it was of God.

LESS THAN THE LEAST OF ALL SAINTS

^{3:8a} *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given. . ."*

In Jewry, Paul had impressive credentials, and the Scriptures fully support that claim. *"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"* (Phil 3:5-6). However, in Christ none of those circumstances are of any lasting value. Paul now refers to that state - highly esteemed among men - which actually disqualified him from being given such a marvelous stewardship.

UNTO ME. There comes a time when individual assessment trumps the assessment of others. This is especially true of those who labor in the vineyard of the Lord. They must have a proper view of themselves, especially in regard to any ministry they may have. Keep in mind that we are speaking of an effective ministry, not mere human activity. How will Paul account for his own understanding, and the ability to open the eyes of others to see what he saw?

LESS THAN THE LEAST. Other versions read, *"the very least of all saints,"* ^{NASB} *"the least important,"* ^{CJB} *"the least deserving people,"* ^{NLT} *"the most useless Christian there is,"* ^{LIVING} *"the least important of all the holy people,"* ^{IE} *"I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians,"* ^{MESSAGE}

This expression of humility is matched by at least two others. One to the Corinthians: *"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"* (1 Cor 15:9). The other to Timothy: *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (1 Tim 1:15). Elsewhere Paul also traces his unworthiness to the fact that he opposed and persecuted those in Christ Jesus: *"beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it"* (Gal 1:13). He also spoke of his aggressive stance against the church: *"Concerning zeal, persecuting the church"* (Phil 3:6).

In heaven, this is counted as being done to Jesus Himself. Speaking of those who refused to come to the aid of His people, Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me"* (Matt 25:45).

The awareness of these things is what moved Paul to refer to himself as *"less than the least of all saints."* He was not blessed with a key role in the body of Christ because he was the most familiar with the Scriptures, or because he was raised up from a youth in a spiritually disciplined environment. It was not because of his keen mind, or because he could be more easily molded, constrained, and directed.

The point is that with all of the information Saul of Tarsus had, and with all of the advantages that were given to him in Jewry, he concluded that Jesus of Nazareth was nothing more than an imposter, and that he ought to persecute His followers. So far as ranking was concerned, that moved him to the bottom of the category of *"least."*

There is certainly something to be learned from all of this. When a person's professed commitment to Christ, joined with his commitment to the Scriptures, leads him to the conclusion that he ought to oppose the people of God - for whatever reason - he falls to the bottom of the ranks of the ignorant and undeserving. Why? Because to whom much is given, much is required!

IS THIS GRACE GIVEN. The *"grace"* that was *"given"* was his ministry - his custodianship of the revelations that were given to him. Grace has to do with seeing and comprehending as well as with saving and justifying. In this case, grace has to do with seeing and comprehending as well as with saving and justifying. It specifically relates to insight into the nature of salvation, as well as its benefits. The cause of

salvation, and its objective was vouchsafed to Paul - not for himself alone, but for propagation to the people. His audience, according to the commission given to him, included *"the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel"* (Acts 9:15). His objective was not merely to tell the people what he knew by revelation. Rather, it was *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:18). Paul was given a message that was conducive to that end, and the ability to expound it.

Right here a means of measuring valid ministries is disclosed. **A valid message, delivered by a valid messenger will yield spiritual insight to the people.** There are some messages that may sound good, but they are not able to open men's eyes and turn them from a declining position to an advancing one. There are some messages that may sound good, but they are not able to open men's eyes and turn them from a declining position to an advancing one. No matter how long the people embrace such a message, they will not progress, for neither the messenger nor his message was given by the grace of God. The perception of this will cause bitterness in the belly, even as it did to John. *"Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"* (Rev 10:9-11).

PREACHING THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

3:8b *" . . . that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."*

Paul now summarizes his ministry, which was comprised of a message to proclaim, and the insight to proclaim it fully and effectively. Both of these came to him by the grace of God.

THAT I SHOULD PREACH. Other versions read, *"bring . . . the news,"*^{NRSV} *"to make clear,"*^{BBE} *"announcing,"*^{CJB} *"proclaim,"*^{CSB} *"to spread,"*^{GWN} *"telling,"*^{NLT} *"preaching and writing."*^{MESSAGE}

Paul was given a message to announce, proclaim, declare, or preach. He was not a researcher or a problem solver. He was not sent to "plant" churches - although they sprang up wherever he preached. He was noted for his message, as well as his understanding of it.

It should not surprise you that a great number of ministers have no authentic message. Their message often consists of the things that have impressed them intellectually. Some have messages of novelty, and attract people because they are intellectually different. Still others spout a party line, or a sectarian emphasis. Many bring a message that is driven by social, political, and domestic situations. Still others are fond of asking the people what they want to hear.

However, here was a man who had a message that was not updated by circumstance, or changed by human desires. It was a fixed message of staggering size and proportions. It was like a great warehouse of wisdom and provision that had to do with man's relation to God Himself.

AMONG THE GENTILES. The focus of Paul's ministry was the Gentiles - the nations among whom the light of God had not shone. These were the people who had not been prepared for the coming Messiah as the Jews had been. They were a people to whom the oracles of God had not been committed, and from whom not a single prophet had come.

The man sent to the Gentiles had not been trained in the customs and characteristics of those people. What he knew about them had been shaped by Scripture, not familiarity with their manners. He was not an expert in their gods, their religious ways, or the philosophies that compelled them to do what they did.

The message Paul had been given would address every critical factor. It would expose every false way. It would set before the people the meaning of life, and what was involved in being created in the image of God. He required no special training in Gentile manners to be effective.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST. And what was it that Paul declared to the Gentiles? It was *"the unsearchable riches of Christ!"* Other versions read, *"unfathomable riches,"*^{NASB} *"boundless riches,"*^{NRSV} *"unending wealth,"*^{BBE} *"incalculable riches,"*^{CSB} *"immeasurable wealth,"*^{GWN} *"inscrutable riches,"*^{NAB} *"endless treasures,"*^{NLT} *"untraceable riches,"*^{YLT} *"exhaustless wealth,"*^{IE} and *"unending*

(boundless, fathomless, incalculable, and exhaustless) riches of Christ [wealth which no human being could have searched out]." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The "*riches of Christ*" are like the universe - no matter how much is seen, and no matter how much searching and inquiry is made, there is still more to see. It is all contained in the circumference of the Gospel, and is staggering for its size and complexity. No matter how long a person is in Christ, or how astute they become in their perceptions, they will still be amazed at the quantity and depth of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

Now, we come to the very heart of Paul's ministry. It has to do with declaring "*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" To whom did Paul make known this marvelous abundance? Was it before the deputy of the country of Cyprus (Acts 13:7-12)? Was it before the Lycaonians (Acts 14:14-18)? To what Gentiles did he declare these things? Was it before the Philippian jailor and his household (Acts 16:29-33)? Was it before the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:22-31)? Was it to Felix (Acts 24:24-25)? Was it to Festus (Acts 25:9-11; 26:25-26)? Was it before king Agrippa (Acts 26:1-29). Was it before the inhabitants of the Island of Melita (Acts 28:10).

IT WAS TO THE CHURCHES. It was to the churches among the Gentiles that Paul declared "the unsearchable riches of Christ" - The Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians. To these he opened up the imputation of righteousness (Rom 3-4), the purpose of God (Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:9-11), and victorious warfare (Rom 7-8), the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15), the superiority of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3), and the reconciliation effected by Christ (2 Cor 5:15-21). He proclaimed what was involved in Jesus coming to earth and dying (Phil 2:7-13), what took place when Jesus died (Col 2:11-15), what grace has accomplished (Eph 2-3), how the body of Christ is formed and works (1 Cor 12; Eph 4:8-19), how the saved are illuminated (Eph 1:15-20; 3:15-20), and the impact of the second coming of Christ (Col 3:4,20-21; 1 Thess 4:14-18; 2 Thess 1-2).

Paul's primary ministry was to the church - and he "*labored more abundantly than they all*" (1 Cor 15:10). Yet, we are faced with a contemporary generation of professing Christians that are abysmally ignorant of Paul's ministry. How will such fare on the day of judgment when they confront the God who made such a gracious provision for their understanding and participation? Let us see to it that we avail ourselves of Paul's indispensable ministry.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 33

Eph 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."*** (Eph 3:9)

WHY PAUL WAS MADE A MINISTER

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Paul reveals the purpose of God, and accents the present ministry of Jesus. As we look into these things it will become apparent they do not mesh with the agenda of the modern church. Wherever this circumstance is true, the people are being misdirected. If what is here declared is not resulting from the ministries of church leaders, then they are no leaders at all, for this is the Divine agenda. This is true for all men, and especially for the Gentiles, to whom Paul was *"ordained a preacher and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and in verity"* (1 Tim 2:7). Other versions read *"in faith and truth,"*^{NKJV} *"the true faith."*^{NIV} Amidst a hodgepodge of erroneous teaching that was already beginning, and would increase unto this very day, Paul introduced **a clarifying message**, informing those in Christ of what the Lord was actually doing in Christ Jesus. The reason for this is that God's salvation is worked out in the environment of spiritual light and understanding. That is why Jesus Himself is called *"the Light of men," "the light"* that *"shineth in darkness,"* and *"the light of the world"* (John 1:4-5; 9:5). Conversion is by means of *"the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ"* (2 Cor 4:4), and salvation itself is referred to as *"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God"* (2 Cor 4:6). The walk of faith is *"in the light"* (1 John 1:7) - a state of spiritual illumination. The New Covenant is one of greater glory, shedding light upon God and His purpose (2 Cor 3:7-11), involving knowing God (Heb 8:11); and spiritual growth is linked to beholding the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18). Ignorance has no place in Christ Jesus, and maintaining spiritual life apart from *"wisdom and spiritual understanding"* is nothing more than a myth (Col 1:9). As Paul will now acknowledge, his assignment from the glorified Christ involved making people see, or understand, what God is doing in Christ Jesus. Because of the nature of God and the staggering investment that has been made in the salvation of men, we ought not expect a simplistic environment in which we work out our own salvation. We will find that the more keen our spiritual vision is, the closer we will draw to the Lord, and the more thoroughly we will live for him. This will be confirmed in all who grow in understanding.

TO MAKE ALL MEN SEE

Eph3:9a ***"And to make all men see . . ."*** Other versions read, *"to bring to light,"*^{NASB} *"to make plain,"*^{NIV} *"to*

shed light for all," ^{CSB} "to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is," ^{DARBY} "to make clear unto all men," ^{GENEVA} "to explain to everyone," ^{NLT} "help everyone understand," ^{CEV} "bring out into the open," ^{MESSAGE} and "enlighten all men and make plain to them." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The phrase "make all [men] see," is translated from a single word which means, ""1) to give light, to shine 2) to enlighten, light up, illumine 3) to bring to light, render evident 3a) to cause something to exist and thus come to light and become clear to all 4) to enlighten, spiritually, imbue with saving knowledge 4a) to instruct, to inform, teach 4b) to give understanding to." ^{STRONG'S}

Paul is explaining why he was called of God. Ponder what he has said regarding this matter. This was not a novel piece of information. It was something that God intended for "all" believers to know. It is associated with a "revelation" that came from God, the grace of God, God's "promise in Christ," "the Gospel," the "gift of grace," and the "unsearchable riches of Christ." It is difficult to conceive of anything being more important, more vital, more essential for those in Christ to know. **Here is a matter that God intends for His people to understand.** It was a mystery, but it was never intended to remain a mystery. The dominance of sin, and the exclusion of the Gentiles prohibited this from being known. It could not be comprehended while sin had dominion over the people. Sin removes from people the capacity to discern the things of God.

This is why it is so foolish for the church to adapt its message for sinners, and those who remain outside of the body of Christ. We have in the Epistles an example of how the church is to be addressed, and how it is to be taught.

THE PLACE OF PIVOTAL KNOWLEDGE. By "pivotal knowledge," I mean principle facts that support sound reasoning, exposing the people to pillars that support the temple of truth. The context for these matters is the Gospel of Christ. The principle Person in them is Christ Himself, and the primary works are the ones He has accomplished. If one comprehends that eternal life is **knowing** God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent (John 17:3), all of this makes perfect sense. God is not best known by mere description, but by what He does. His works are an index to His character, and are the canvas on which He paints a portrait of Himself. Thus we read "His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psa 145:9), and "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Psa 145:17). The substance of Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost is said to have been "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

When it is said that Jesus "is come to give us an understanding," and that this relates to "the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20), the relevance of a proper understanding is seen. Those who are confused about God cannot know they have eternal life - even though they may well have been taught that this is possible. Knowing one has eternal life is not intended to be a theological statement. Rather, it is the fruit of knowing God Himself. A person can really be no more sure they possess eternal life than the extent of their knowledge of, or acquaintance with God.

MAKE ALL MEN SEE. This statement perfectly correlates with what Jesus personally told Paul to do - "to open their eyes" (Acts 26:18). Those included in this objective were identified as "the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). The things that open the eyes of men, or make them see, are contained in the Gospel of Christ. There is where God delineates His purpose, revealing His "eternal purpose."

Once a person perceives this purpose, his vocabulary changes significantly. Prayers contain more "we" than "I" - i.e. "Our Father . . . give us . . . forgive us . . . lead us . . . deliver us" (Matt 6:9-13). Individuals are seen as "members" of a body, and not individuals that stand by themselves (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:18; Eph 1:23; 4:25; 5:30). What brings more glory to God? Is it a single person routing the enemy - like Samson, or young David? Or is it a body of individuals held together by what each one supplies, and being built together for a Temple of God? Which calls for more grace, more Divine working, more Divine power and wisdom? Think of the greater glory that will be brought to God when the entire body stands united before His throne, insightfully ascribing salvation to God and to the Lamb, and then is given in their entirety to Christ as His wife.

In this world one can hardly find an individual congregation that is "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" - even though that is a Divine requirement (1 Cor 1:10). Any failure of this to take place is owing to being ignorant of the mystery that has been revealed. This is also the cause for moral failure and spiritual sluggishness, or slowness of heart. Unless the message to which Paul refers is seen as essential, it has no power for the person.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

3:9b "... *what is the fellowship of the mystery* . . ." Other versions read, "*the administration of the mystery*," NASB "*the plan of the mystery*," NRSV "*the dispensation of the mystery*," ASV "*the ordering of the secret*," BBE "*the way this mystery works*," GWN "*God's secret plan*," NET "*the inner workings of the mystery*," NJB "*that God is the Savior of the Gentiles too*," LIVING "*the meaning of the secret plan*," IE "*the stewardship of the truth*," WEYMOUTH "*how is to be carried out the trusteeship of this secret*," WILLIAMS "*the plan for His secret truth*," ERV "*what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along*," MESSAGE and "*what is the plan [regarding the Gentiles and providing for the salvation of all men]*." AMPLIFIED

FELLOWSHIP. As used in this text, the word translated "fellowship" comes from the Greek word "koinonea" and means, "(1 Fellowship, association, community, joint participation: (1A the share which one has in anything, participation.)" STRONGS This is not the same word translated "*dispensation*" in other passages (1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1:10; 3:2; Col 1:25). That word has to do with administration, or stewardship. It is something that God does through another personality, such as Paul. But that is not the central point of this text, although it is involved. Here the point is HOW the individual comes to participate in what the Lord is doing.

This is a facet of religion that is only found in the working of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. No other religion results in the people **participating** in what their god is doing. Strange gods, who are the creation of demons (1 Cor 10:20) do not even divulge what they are doing to the people. They only tell them what they are to do, and thus keep them in fear.

Here, the effect of Divine working is underscored. That is, men participate in it, or become a part of it. In particular, they join in the understanding, and the actual working out, of the mystery that was hidden from the foundation of the world. They also are brought to participate in the purpose, being among those who are joined together and being formed for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

The mysteriousness of this purpose relates more to how it would be carried out. How is it that God will join otherwise irreconcilable people (Jews and Gentiles) into one harmonious body, working together for His glory? What would make them capable of being united together, to say nothing of being productive in such a unity? How can they be brought to speak the same thing, glorify the same God, embrace the same faith, and strive for the same eternal destiny? For some, this is like destroying personal identity and removing personal rights. However, it is actually quite to the contrary. Through this great salvation men are receiving an unparalleled identity. In the end, they will receive a personal name known only to themselves (Rev 2:17). Even now they realize liberty and a satisfaction that is unknown to the natural man. And yet, even that satisfaction will be enhanced exponentially when we awake with God's likeness (Psa 17:15).

In spiritual Babylon, joint-participation is an unknown thing. The extent to which people are joined together is in singing, or in giving to some common cause. Even this is not the result of Divine orchestration, but is rather the outcome of human organization and wisdom. If a nucleus of people within a given congregation become thoroughly united, it is generally considered to be a threat to the welfare of the congregation. The only way it will be tolerated is if it is not brought into the whole congregation, and is maintained outside of the totality of the members. Most calls to unity have to do with some purpose of man - a personal ministry, a media ministry, assisting the poor by contributing to an organization, etc. But that is not at all what Paul is considering.

The saved are brought into the "*fellowship of the mystery*" by means of a shared message. It is accomplished in a context of "*many members*," each one of which is given a personal measure of faith, and a stewardship of grace, that is designed to raise both the knowledge and participation of the other members. Instead of a one-on-one methodology, it is through the church, into which Jesus pours His "*fulness*" (Eph 1:23).

As though this was not enough, some of the members (the Jews), have had a history of profitable and conscience dealings with God, while the others (Gentiles) were given no such privilege (Eph 2:1-12). Yet these two groups are addressed by a common Savior (Rom 3:29), a common faith (Tit 1:4), and a common salvation (Jude 1:3). They all possess one "*hope of His calling*" (Eph 1:18), have a common Intercessor (Heb 7:25), and have "*all been drink into one Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:13). Although their backgrounds were radically different, they were called the same way, cleansed the same way, transformed the same way, and made

acceptable the same way.

Because of the seeming lack of preparation of the Gentiles, Paul was made a special apostle, preacher, and teacher to them to bring them into the "eternal purpose" of God. In the beginning, unlike the Jews, they did not have to overcome a purely traditional background. Now, owing to the rise and prominence of spiritual Babylon, most Gentiles have to overcome a powerless religion and various disciplines by which they were told they could improve. The seriousness of this circumstance cannot possibly be overstated.

THE MYSTERY WAS FORMERLY HIDDEN IN GOD

^{3:9c} ". . . , which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD. This phrase takes us back to Genesis 1:1. The "beginning" was the point at which the environment for humanity, and humanity itself had its genesis. By saying the mystery was hidden from that time delivers the firm idea that everything intended in salvation was solidly cast in the stone of Divine purpose when the "worlds" and the human race were created. In other words, though unrevealed, natural creation and humanity itself were made with this "mystery" in mind. They were, so to speak, adapted for this purpose.

IT HAS BEEN HID IN GOD. Other versions read, "hidden in God," ^{NKJV} "kept in God," ^{BBE} "kept hidden for ages by God," ^{CJB} "hid up in God," ^{MRD} "secretly planned," ^{LIVING} "concealed in the mind of God," ^{WEYMOUTH} "hidden away in God," ^{WILLIAMS} "concealed . . . by God," ^{ABP} "hidden in His mind," ^{CEV} and "hidden through the ages and concealed until now in [the mind of] God." ^{AMPLIFIED}

Keep in mind that Paul is affirming that he is now making known what had been hidden in God from the beginning of the world until that time - something that God has revealed to him. Here it ought to be noted that, in my own understanding, prophets have various aspects of this purpose revealed to them, while Paul had the whole of the matter revealed to him.

Something hidden in God is hidden from men, but not from God. That is, He did not conceive of this purpose, then put it on the shelf, so to speak, until the time Jesus entered into the world. **Although He did not make His intentions known to men, all of His words and works were expressed with this purpose in mind.** That includes the creation of man, the judgment of flood, the judgment at Shinar, the calling of Abraham, the creation of Israel, the giving of the Law, and the dividing of Jew and Gentile. It all had to do with preparing for the fulfillment of this purpose. This is even why the universe was created.

Something that is "hid in God" cannot be discovered by any created intelligence - neither angels nor men, and certainly not the devil and his angels. This was known in ancient times by Zophar the Naamathite, and, we assume, by others also. Although he had not assessed Job properly, he stated the case well when he asked, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). Although stated crudely by Zophar, finding out God involves knowing His thoughts and purposes. These cannot be concluded by observing what the Lord has created, or how He has worked. Angels, for example, know well what God has done, yet they do not understand the Gospel (1 Pet 1:12). If God does not reveal it, it cannot be known. Then, it also follows, if what He has revealed is not declared, it still cannot be known. That, of course, is what Paul is doing - declaring what God has given him to see.

When we speak of God's intentions, purposes, or objectives, we are speaking of things He determined in Himself, without regard to any circumstances He foresaw. That is stated like this in Scripture: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which He hath **purposed in Himself**" (Eph 1:9). And again, ". . . according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things **after the counsel of His own will**" (Eph 1:11).

When this fact is discerned and embraced, it makes perfect sense to deny self (Lk 9:23), crucify the flesh (Gal 5:24), and seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). However, when this truth is **not** perceived, the person cannot be "armed" with a proper mind (1 Pet 4:1), and subordinating natural inclinations makes no sense at all. **This being true, what Paul is making known is like a required key to**

living acceptably and with Divine approval.

Although the Message Bible does not always do so, it provides an excellent interpretation of this text: "*My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all alone.*"^{MESSAGE}

WHO CREATED ALL THINGS BY JESUS CHRIST. Why does Paul bring up the creation at this point? There is an excellent reason for drawing our attention to the fact that God created everything through the pre-incarnate Jesus - a fact that is often stated (John 1:1-3,10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2,8-10; Rev 3:14).

Since Jesus was "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev 13:8), and since in the counsel chambers of eternity, He agreed to come to earth and do what was necessary to save men (Heb 10:5-9), who was better qualified to create the worlds - **that is, create them with the purpose of God in mind?** Who could better arrange the creation, set it in motion, and cause it to continue? Would this not be required if God was going to "*work all things together for the good*" of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28)? If the world is, in fact, a stage on which the drama of redemption is being played out, is it not clear that it had to be created in a certain manner so that men could be strategically placed in it, so they could seek the Lord (Acts 17:26-27)? If God is going to eventually join together things in heaven and things in earth (Eph 1:10), it should be obvious that the creation of the world itself should blend with that purpose in the sense of being an appropriate place for required preparation.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 34

Eph 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,"*¹¹ *According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Eph 3:10-11)

THE DIVINE INTENTION

INTRODUCTION

Most of man's approach to salvation, or man's identity with God, deals with purported obligations - what men are to do to be saved, live, etc. While these things are necessary to know, they are largely for the unconverted or novice, neither condition being intended to continue. At some point, the individual who has been experientially reconciled to God must come to know what God intends in salvation, and what He is actually doing in the process of that salvation. Man has been created so he wants to know things in which he has interest. There is a kind of inner compulsion that demands this kind of knowledge. Thus, it is extremely difficult to find a person who has a driving interest in something, yet knows nothing about it. The propensity to inquire into a matter regarding personal interest, is brought to its pinnacle in Christ Jesus. Jesus Himself was driven by what He knew concerning His mission. He knew why He came into the world. He stated this to the Father (He came to die - John 12:27), and to Pilate as well (He came to bear witness to the truth - John 18:37). Paul knew why he was an apostle (Acts 26:18), and he desired that those to whom he ministered would know why they were saved by grace through faith. This is what he is opening up in our text. He knows it is necessary for believers to know this, else their lives will be turned aside to objectives other than the one God has established. It is a purpose that cannot be known intuitively, and it is not inherent in the knowledge of God. The ultimate objective of God must be taught to men by someone to whom it has been revealed. For us Gentiles, Paul is the one to whom it was made known, and his writings are the appointed means through which we come to an understanding of Divine purpose. Even then, we must be given an understanding of what Paul has written, which requirement was expressed to Timothy: *"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things"* (2 Tim 2:7). The perspective of Divine attentions that is stated in this text is rarely communicated in our time. For that reason, it may appear strange at the first. But it will not remain strange.

TO THE INTENT

Eph3:10a *"To the intent that now . . ."* Other versions read, *"in order that,"*^{NASB} *"His intent was that,"*^{NIV} *"so that,"*^{NRSV} *"This is so that,"*^{CSB} *"the purpose of this enlightenment,"*^{NET} *"the purpose of this,"*^{NJB} *"God's purpose in all of this,"*^{NLT} *"And His reason? To,"*^{LIVING} and *"The purpose is."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul will now give a reason why he is making "*all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery*" - why men, fallen men, are caused to consciously participate in the mystery hidden from the beginning of the world. That "*fellowship*" is seen in the blending of two bodies of people - one preciously informed, one previously uninformed; one a formerly chosen people, one not formerly a chosen; one cultured, one uncultured. The harmonious blending of these people will not be accomplished by them both following the same set of rules. It will not be the mere result of them all doing the same thing. Wonder of wonders, it will be accomplished by them having the same nature - not only as one another, but as the Lord Jesus Himself. This will be accomplished by the grace of God, through faith - which has its genesis with God Himself. This body of people will not merely be acted upon. God will work IN them, both to will and do to of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13). They will be willing people, made willing in the day of His power (Psa 110:3). They will not be driven to God, but brought to Him (1 Pet 3:18).

The words "*to the intent*" mean "for this reason," "in order that," or "for this purpose." God has revealed there is a reason behind everything He does. As it is written, "*ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD*" (Ezek 14:23). The actions of God are not mere reactions - although He does have reactions, both to godliness and godliness, to belief, and to unbelief. Behind them all there is something greater than what is going on in the earth. There is a grand objective that is being worked out - an objective that was established without any input from men or angels. That is why it could be kept secret.

This aspect (purpose), of "*only the true God*" (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20) cannot be found in any of the gods of man's making, or demonic origin. All false gods, regardless irrespective of their origin, are **not** represented as doing all things according to a purpose. This includes false gods, a false Jesus and spirits that have been accepted by professing churches (2 Cor 11:4).

IS THERE A SUPREME REASON FOR THIS WORK? Our text is declaring there is an lofty purpose that is driving the entirety of salvation. It is a Divine objective, intention, aim, design, or plan. This speaks of something intended to be accomplished, achieved, or brought to completion. **God's intentions, or purposes, are driven by His will, not the need of another.** Therefore we read of God working "*all things after the counsel of His own will*" (Eph 1:11). This even applies to the matter of the new birth. As it is written, "*Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*" (James 1:18). In keeping with this concept, God is depicted as a Builder: "*He that BUILT all things is God*" (Heb 3:4). He is also depicted as One who finishes what He does: "*For He will FINISH the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth*" (Rom 9:28). Both of these words - "*built*" and "*finish*" - speak an objective that is being accomplished. The objective itself was established before the work started. Further, because of the nature of God, there is no possibility that the plan will go awry, or not be finalized. Although this is rather rudimentary, it is not the manner in which religious men normally consider God.

The existence of an objective is why we read of something being "*fulfilled*" - i.e. "*the Scripture must be FULFILLED*" (Mk 14:49). It is why we read of something taking place "*until*" - i.e. "*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*" (Rom 11:25). It is why the qualifier "*lest*" is used - a word that is used to set forth a situation that contradicts God's purpose: - i.e. "*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; LEST any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb 3:13).

When something is said to be according to the will of God, it means infinitely more than something that God desires for you - i.e. He wants the best for you. Rather, the expression "*will of God*" relates to His purpose, and doing the will of God means you are doing what God intended to be done (Mk 3:35). When it is said that David "*served his own generation by the will of God*" (Acts 13:36), it means his life was lived as God intended it to be lived. When men are admonished not to be conformed to this world, but rather to be "*transformed by the renewing*" of their mind, it is in order that they might "*be able to test and approve what God's will is*" (Rom 12:2, NIV). That is, they might know what God is doing, as opposed to knowing what God wants them to do.

Jesus referred to this kind of knowledge when He told His disciples, "*Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you*" (John 15:15). The fact of the matter is that Jesus is still making

known what the Father is doing to those who are in Him (1 John 5:20). Paul is clarifying this matter in our text - showing what God is doing.

MAKING KNOWN GOD'S MANIFOLD WISDOM

^{3:10b} " . . . unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. . . "

Here we will see that God's stated objective pertains to something that is accomplished in "heavenly places" - not on the earth. What God is doing on earth is in order to something that is being carried out in heaven. For the earthly-minded (Phil 3:19), this will make no sense, for they are focused on the world, as though that is the focus of God Himself. However, this text confirms such a view is erroneous. God is, indeed, working in the earth, for it is filled with His glory (Isa 6:3). However, that work has more to do with heaven than with earth!

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS. Now the focus shifts to the heavenly realms, and to some tutelage that is taking place there. The particular personalities involved are referred to as "*principalities and powers*." Other versions read, "*rulers and authorities*," ^{NASB} "*principalities and ruling forces*," ^{NJB} "*all the rulers in heaven*," ^{LIVING} "*sovereignties and to the authorities*," ^{ABP} "*angelic rulers and powers*," ^{GNB} "*this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels*," ^{MESSAGE} and "*the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers)*." ^{AMPLIFIED}

Lexical definitions. Lexically, "*principalities*" means "leader," or the one in "first place." ^{STRONG'S} "*Powers*" means "the leading, more powerful among created beings . . . having jurisdiction, with the power to make judicial decisions." ^{STRONG'S}

In Divine government there is a hierarchy of authority, whether among men, or among the hosts of heaven. This is even true of the domain over which Satan presides. All personalities are not on the same level - this is true of both heaven and earth.

These "*principalities and powers*" are not the personalities against which saints "*wrestle*" (Eph 6:12), as some allege. Rather than teaching such fallen spirits, God has consigned them to "*the chains of darkness*" (2 Pet 2:4). Jude reads, "*everlasting chains under darkness*" (Jude 1:6). This refers to a state in which the light of understanding cannot possibly penetrate. In other words, Satan and his angels cannot learn, or advance in knowledge. They cannot be taught, or in any way profit from either their own experience or that of others. When God frustrates their efforts, they do not learn a thing. When they are thrown down, they do not become more wise. These are not the personalities that God is enabling to know.

While these principalities and powers may be of the angelic order, there is another sense in which they are distinguished from angels. Angels are principally messengers - heavenly beings sent forth with a message (Mk 16:6-7). But this is not the distinguishing nature of "*principalities and powers*." We have no record of such lofty rulers delivering a message to men. Take, for example, "*Michael, the archangel*" (Jude 1:9). He is over a number of angels, and thus we read of "*Michael and his angels*" (Rev 12:7). But we never read of Michael delivering a message to men. I take it that this is indicative of the principalities and powers of our text. They are not messengers, but rulers, leaders, and authorities over other celestial spirits.

MIGHT BE KNOWN. There is something about God Himself that is to be known by these exalted personalities. It is not something God will personally teach them, nor will the exalted Christ do so as He sits enthroned among them.

This means that what God is doing in Christ Jesus is so marvelous that superior heavenly personalities must be taught about it - an activity being worked out upon the earth.

BY THE CHURCH. The vehicle for this learning is a body of people on the earth. One might think the ones through whom the teaching is accomplished would be in heaven. But it is not. The vehicle is a single entity, but not a single person. It is "*the church*" - the ones Christ is bringing to glory (Heb 2:10). Although a larger part of this body has left the earth, the part remaining on the earth are the appointed means of principalities and powers learning. The reason should be obvious. It is because the earth is the place where they are being

"changed" (2 Cor 3:18). It is here they are "*washed, sanctified, and justified*" (1 Cor 1:30). It is where they are "*born again*" (1 Pet 1:23), and where they become "*partakers of Christ*" (Heb 3:14). It is where they are taught by the grace of God "*that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:12-13). The earth is where they are located as Jesus intercedes for them in heaven (Heb 7:25), and the Spirit intercedes for them from within (Rom 8:26-37). But the reason for all of this is the instruction of heavenly beings.

MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD. And what is it that these exalted beings are coming to know, or comprehend? "*The manifold wisdom of God!*" -i.e. "*The wisdom of God in its rich variety.*"^{NRSV} and "*many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects.*"^{AMPLIFIED} In spite of the fact that fallen men are powerless of themselves, and their foe has worked as though he was invincible, God is conforming His children to the image of His Son - and He is doing it though wisdom. This is a wisdom that is superior to every conflicting influence. Through wisdom God can make a way of escape, and cause a person to stand. This is, and other things, are what God is making known now.

IT IS AN ETERNAL PURPOSE

^{3:11} " . . . *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

ACCORDING TO. This expression ("according to") is mentioned one hundred and two times from Acts through Revelation. It is a clause that explains WHY something is being done, or the principle upon which something is founded. Thus, we read phrases like "*according to the flesh*" (Acts 2:30), "*according to his ability*" (Acts 11:29), "*according to the Spirit of holiness*" (Rom 1:4), "*according to truth*" (Rom 2:2), "*according to the will of God*" (Rom 8:28), "*according to election*" (Rom 9:11), "*according to the grace of God*" (1 Cor 3:10), and "*according to the promise*" (Gal 3:29). This phrase is found in the book of Ephesians fifteen times (1:5,7,9,11,19; 2:2; 3:7,11,16,20; 4:7,16,22; 6:5). It teaches us there is something more to a matter that what appears to the eye, or even the reasoning faculties of men. The entirety of salvation, including all of its objectives and workings, is driven by an objective, aim, purpose, or intention. Paul is here opening up that objective. The particular facet upon which he has fastened his attention is making known the multifaceted wisdom of God to heavenly principalities and powers "***through the church.***" That is, the church is the circumference within which God's wisdom is being specifically displayed. Some of the areas include, the justification of sinners, the reconciliation of the alienated, the sanctifying of those who were unclean, and the changing of that which was unacceptable. The individuals through which this wisdom is being made known are not men like Pharaoh, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Darius, or Cyrus. Such men were used by God, but not for the stated purpose. They were exhibits of His power.

Paul knows that the display of the wisdom of God to transcendent principalities and powers will not take place through a people who are fundamentally ignorant of God and His ways. Those who remain nescient, or unenlightened concerning Divine objectives are not a suitable means of instructing others in the "*manifold wisdom of God*" - and Paul knows it.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE. Although this purpose involves men, it is higher than men. It is an "*eternal purpose*" - like God is "*the eternal God*" (Deut 33:27). At this point, we are being exposed to something that faith alone can grasp. An "*eternal purpose*" can only conceived by an eternal Being. Someone who is in any sense temporal, cannot conceive of something eternal.

But there is more to the matter than this rather cursory observation. **There has never been a period in which God did not have this purpose.** It did not have its genesis within the framework of time. Further, **one cannot have a proper perception of God that excludes the purpose of God,** for it is part of His very being. Also, being an "*eternal purpose,*" it is not subject to alteration or obsolescence. It cannot in any way be changed.

God's "*eternal purpose*" is inherent to His nature. He cannot be properly understood independently of this purpose. This is precisely why Jesus, in teaching His disciples, made known to them "*all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*" (John 15:15). In order for them to carry out their role in the Kingdom, they would have to know what God was actually doing in salvation. The same was true of Paul, as

well as those who were taught by Paul.

If this assessment is correct, then we have a most serious situation within the professed church. It appears as though there is hardly a grain of knowledge extant in the average church concerning what God has purposed in Christ. If this knowledge is essential to the working out of our salvation, then a staggering hindrance is in place, making it virtually impossible for people to live in a pleasing or an acceptable manner before the Lord. Much of the deficiencies that continue to surface in the modern church is directly traceable to this ignorance. Add to this the arresting statement that those who "*know not God*" will be destroyed by flaming fire as God takes vengeance upon them, and you see the seriousness of the situation (2 Thess 1:8).

PURPOSED IN CHRIST JESUS. Here is what guarantees the completion of the purpose. **It is not placed into the hands of men, but is in the hands of Jesus.** As Jesus Himself said, "*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*" (John 3:35). It is said of Jesus alone, "*Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God*" (John 13:3). 86 times the expressions "in Christ," "by Christ," and "through Christ" are found in Scripture. "*In,*" "*by,*" and "*through Jesus*" are found 31 times. That is 117 times we are reminded of what is attainable only through Jesus Christ. He is the appointed Administrator of salvation (Heb 2:10), the Dispenser of grace (Acts 15:11; Rev 22:21), and the Author and Finisher of the faith, which is the means of appropriating salvation (Heb 12:2). He is the appointed Expositor of God (Matt 11:27; John 5:20). He is the One who is bringing us to God (1 Pet 3:18), and to glory as well (Heb 2:10).

It is no wonder that God purposed His "*eternal purpose*" in Christ. So far as the purpose is concerned, Jesus is more important than the people He is saving. He is the key Person in the purpose, the one who established its foundations, and the One who is carrying it to its intended completion. Now, "*principalities and powers in heavenly places*" can learn about "*the manifold wisdom of God*" under an administration like that - and, consequently, that is taking place!

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 35

Eph 3:12 *"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."*¹³ *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."* (Eph 3:12-13)

BOLDNESS AND ACCESS WITH CONFIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

In Christ Jesus God has purposed something that pertains to men, and it is so transcendent that its nature or details have never entered into the heart of man. Thus it is written, *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"* (1 Cor 2:9). This Pauline statement is a kind of summary of a word delivered by Isaiah more than seven hundred years before Christ: *"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him"* (Isa 64:4). Even with that revelation, Isaiah himself did not have the faintest idea of what God had purposed. After hearing John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Himself, it could still be said that the greatness of God's purpose for men had not entered into their hearts. Men and women of faith knew God could work miraculously among them. They knew their enemies could be subdued, and they could survive impossible circumstances. Barren women could be caused to bear children, grievous illnesses could be healed, and men could be given supernatural strength. A boy could fight and defeat a giant, and an army, staggering for size, could be eliminated in a single night without any involvement of men. Bread could fall from heaven, rivers of water could come out of a rock, and men could survive a furnace of fire. But the things God had purposed for men were far greater than those earthly experiences. Paul is in the process of describing these transcendent objectives, and they all have to do with men experiencing a new and previously unknown experience with God Himself. It is not something that is for one man, but for a vast multitude of men, made up of those from diverse backgrounds, locations, and abilities. If nothing could be restrained from the united people in Shinar, who is capable saying what those united in Christ Jesus are, and will be, capable of doing? See, it is something that goes beyond natural human aptitude!

WHAT WE HAVE

Eph3:12a *"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence . . ."*

IN WHOM. The concept of being *"IN"* someone else is a large one, indeed. The closest thing men can imagine that corresponds with this is an infant in the mother's womb. In any other religion, the advantage is

being found in being "with" someone superior. There is, of course, a sense in which we are said to be "with Christ." Such an identity accounts for us being "dead" with a productive death: "dead with Christ" (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20). We have also been "raised with Christ" (Col 3:1), and our life "is hid with Christ" (Col 3:3). This all accents the means by which we were delivered from death and brought into life. Christ is the One who accomplished our rescue from death and deliverance into life. It was our association with Him through faith that brought it all to pass. Now, however, we are faced with a different dimension - being "in Christ." That is the outcome of dying with Jesus and being raised with Him.

Spiritual life is birthed when we are baptized "into Christ" (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27) - not baptized into an association with Christ, but "INTO Christ." By being in Christ we become an integral part of Him - the part that is called His "body" (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:23). This is such a marvelous unity that it is said of the saved, "For we are members of his body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph 5:30). We are also said to be "one spirit" with Him (1 Cor 6:17).

Ordinarily, when we speak of something being "in Christ," it is the benefits in Him that are accentuated- i.e. "Redemption in Christ" (Rom 3:24), "sanctified in Christ" (1 Cor 1:2), "liberty in Christ" (Gal 5:1), "faith in Christ" (Gal 3:26), "created in Christ" (Eph 2:10), etc.

By referring to us being "in Christ," Paul means that Christ is not viewed by God in disassociation from us. The things that are hidden in Christ are accessible to us. "The fulness of God" (Col 2:9) that is in Christ Jesus is available to those who are in Him. Christ Jesus is the One "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3) - and they are accessible to all who are in Him.

Now we read of a body of people who are "in Christ." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:1). "Therefore if any man be **in Christ**, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). It is this circumstance of which Paul now writes. A person who has not heard the word of God pertaining to being "in Christ" will not be able to glean much from what is now said. Also, those who have associated being in Christ primarily with what they have done, will also fail to see much in these statements.

To this point, Paul has labored to bring the people to a place where they can gain the advantage by his words. He has addressed the saints as those "in Christ" (1:1). To create incentive, he has said they were chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame (1:4). God has predestinated them to be adopted (1:5). He has made them accepted (1:6). He has abounded toward them in a wise manner (1:6). He has revealed what God intends in salvation (1:10-11). He announced they had been "sealed" with the Holy Spirit of promise (1:14). They have been made alive by God (Eph 2:1-6). They were God's own workmanship (2:10). Now, that is the God of whom Paul now writes.

WE HAVE BOLDNESS AND ACCESS WITH CONFIDENCE. Other versions read, "may approach God with freedom and confidence,"^{NIV} and "we dare to have the boldness (courage and confidence) of free access (an unreserved approach to God with freedom and without fear)." ^{AMPLIFIED} In other words, we can come to God expecting to receive our petitions - particularly when they are in accord with His will (1 John 5:14).

I am confounded that most professing Christians spend more time praying about things concerning which we have no guarantees, than for those that God has declared belong to us. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to direct people into a proper emphasis in prayer. This by no means suggests we should not pray for matters pertaining to life in this world. It does mean that we ought to pray from the posture of someone in Christ, seeking to approach the subject with proper priorities in mind. If we have access to God, accompanied by a confidence, or assurance, why would we spend the majority of time on matters concerning which we have no confidence? Why didn't the apostle Paul record prayers for circumstances existing in the churches? Why did he pray as he did for the Ephesians (1:15-19; 3:15-20), the Philippians (Phil 1:9), the Colossians (Col 1:9-11), and the Thessalonians (1 Thess 5:23)?

"Boldness and access" have to do with approaching the Lord. "Confidence" has to do with the assurance that we will be heard, and that we will receive our petitions. It is possible that some have not advanced as far as they could in newness of life because their prayers have been consistently at a low level. This statement concerning boldness and access with confidence is not like having an unlimited credit card. Paul has spent considerable time establishing the purpose of God - an "eternal purpose." It is not possible that at this point he departs from that purpose to focus on the various perceptions of the people who have been reconciled to God.

THE FAITH OF HIM

3:12b "... **by the faith of Him.**" Other versions read, "through faith in Him," ^{NKJV} "through our faith in Him," ^{NRSV} "through his faithfulness," ^{CJB} "by the faith of him," ^{DARBY/DOUAY} "through our faith in Him," ^{ERV} "through faith in Christ," ^{GWN} "because of Christ's faithfulness," ^{NET} "by faith of Him," ^{PNT/RWB} "by faith on Him," ^{TNT} "through the faith of Him," ^{YLT} "the belief of His," ^{ABP} and "through His faith." ^{LITV}

You see from the various translations that there is a significant difference in how this verse is seen. The phrase "faith of Him" is seen as meaning, our faith in Christ, Christ's faithfulness, or Christ's own faith. The literal translation of the verse is "through the belief of Him." ^{INTERLINEAR} Grammatically speaking, the word "Him," being singular, refers to Christ: "by Whom" we [plural] have access with confidence to God. From a purely grammatical point of view, this is what the text affirms. However, this does not suggest that Jesus believes for us? Obviously not, for Jesus is never taught to do our believing for us. To avoid the readers coming to this conclusion, several of the translators interpreted it to mean our faith in Christ.

The text is **not** referring to Christ's own faith, for He no longer lives by faith. That was something He did when He was on the earth, putting His trust in God (Heb 2:13). Rather, this is the faith of which He is "the Author and Finisher" (Heb 12:2).

Jesus is the Administrator of faith. To be sure, it is the kind of faith by which He lived when He walked among men. It is "our faith" (Heb 10:23; 12:2; 1 John 5:4) because it has been given to us - not because we are the ones who originated it. Therefore it is written that it was "given to" us to believe (Phil 1:29). We are also said to have "obtained like precious faith" (2 Pet 1:1). Faith came to us through the faculty of spiritual hearing (Rom 10:17), and was supplied to us by the grace of God (1 Tim 1:14).

This same kind of expression ("faith of Him") is found two other places. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by **the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by **the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal 2:16). Again, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through **the faith of Christ**, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 3:9). The various translations of these verses follow the same grammatical path as our text:-i.e. faith in Christ, faithfulness of Christ, Christ's faith.

Although elementary, it is good to briefly review what the Scriptures say about our possession of faith:- i.e. the faith by which, according to this epistle, we are "saved" (Eph 2:8), by which Christ "dwells" in our hearts (Eph 3:17), which is our "shield" in the whole armor of God (Eph 6:16), and which is said to be "from God" (Eph 6:23). Elsewhere faith is affirmed to be the means by which our "hearts are purified" (Acts 15:9), we are "sanctified" (Acts 26:18), receive righteousness from God (Rom 3:22), have "peace with God" (Rom 5:1), have access into grace (Rom 5:2), by which we "stand" (2 Cor 1:24), and are "the children of God" (Gal 3:26).

Faith is said to "come" to us (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:25), and is "obtained" (2 Pet 1:1). We are said to be "given to believe" (Phil 1:29), to "believe in God" by Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:21), and to have "believed through grace" (Acts 18:27).

Now, in addition to all of these remarkable effects, we are said to "have access with confidence" through "the faith of Him." **Where is man by nature depicted as having such an ability?** Faith is described as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). Other versions read, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," ^{NASB} and "the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]." ^{AMPLIFIED}

These are all realities that are outside of the realm of nature, and therefore cannot be obtained or access by any natural aptitude. That ought to be apparent to every honest soul. What does man have through Adam that can gain access to the "invisible God" (Col 1:15) - and that is what we are addressing in this text.

This access perfectly comports with the revealed purpose of God. We have been predestinated to obtain an

inheritance that is eternal (Eph 1:11; Heb 9:15). The objective on earth is to *"make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery"*- i.e. what it means to participate in it. In heavenly places, the aim is to make known the manifold wisdom of God through the church. What better way can that be done than by so creating men in Christ Jesus that they have access to God Himself, even working with Him in the fulfillment of His hitherto unknown objective. It ought to be obvious to every one in Christ that the faith that brings us into the process of God's will, and keeps us there, working together with God, is given to us by Christ.

PAUL'S DESIRE

3:13 *" Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. "*

WHEREFORE. Other versions read, *"Therefore,"* ^{NKJV} *"I ask you, therefore,"* ^{NIV} *"I pray therefore,"* ^{NRSV} *"For this reason it is my prayer,"* ^{BBE} *"Wherefore I beseech you,"* ^{DARBY} and *"so, I beg you."* ^{NJB}

Paul started this segment of his epistle by referring to his imprisonment: *"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles"* (Eph 3:1). He will mention it again later: *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"* (Eph 4:1). Again he will write, *"For which I am an ambassador in bonds"* (Eph 6:20).

He knows that this may appear to contradict what he has declared. After all, he has affirmed *"the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power"* (Eph 1:19). Yet, according to appearance, and with him being in prison, it seems like weakness is prevailing, and power is absent. Mindful of this apparent contradiction, and knowing of their concern for him, he gives this timely word.

I DESIRE THAT YE FAINT NOT. Other versions read, *"not become feeble,"* ^{BBE} *"not become discouraged,"* ^{GWN} and *"not to lose heart"* ^{NAB} The word *"faint"* means, "to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted." ^{STRONG'S}

There is a condition in which the people of God wear out, become spiritually exhausted, and become feeble. It is not a good condition, and it is not an inevitable circumstance. It is a common condition, but it is not normal - not for people of faith. Paul wrote to the Galatians, *"in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Gal 6:9). Speaking for all saints he wrote, *"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day"* (2 Cor 4:16). Fainting, then, is not a desired posture, and therefore Paul makes it clear that it is not in order for the Ephesian brethren to faint, become spiritually frail, or be weakened.

MY TRIBULATIONS FOR YOU. The cause that could move the Ephesians to *"faint"* did not pertain to their own experience, but to Paul's: *"my tribulations for you."* Other versions read, *"my tribulations on your behalf,"* ^{NASB} and *"my sufferings for you."* ^{NIV} In other words, in order for the Ephesians to receive the needed instruction, Paul had to do it under severe restrictions. Even during his stay in Ephesus an uproar occurred that endangered his life (Acts 19:24-40), forcing him to leave the area (Acts 20:1).

Now, he is in prison because of his preaching, and he fears the Ephesians will misinterpret the reason for his imprisonment. Perhaps some will think it is their fault. Whatever the cause, the suffering of Paul would be viewed incorrectly - in a manner that would result in faint-heartedness, or discouragement among the Ephesians.

Both Jesus and the apostles took care to inform believers not to balk at suffering. Jesus plainly told His disciples, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation"* (John 16:33); *"And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake"* (Mat 10:22). Paul declared, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Tim 3:12). Peter wrote, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"* (1 Pet 4:12). John wrote, *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"* (1 John 3:13).

Still, professed believers have stumbled at the experience of suffering. Jesus spoke of those who, *"have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended"* (Mark 4:17).

If believers have a wrong view of suffering, it will be to their detriment. If they perceive spiritual life as one of insulation from trouble, or one in which life becomes basically pleasurable in the flesh, they will be at a great disadvantage. It has often happened that in order for people to hear the Word of the Lord, the one bringing it to them had to go through suffering. The natives on the island of Melita heard the Word of the Lord because Paul had been shipwrecked (Acts 28:1-9). The Philippian jailor heard the Gospel because Paul and Silas had been beaten and thrown into prison (Acts 16:22-34). Onesimus was saved by an imprisoned Paul (Phile 1:10). Our afflictions are working for us "*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor 4:17). However, if they are not perceived in that way, we will be hurt by them.

WHICH IS YOUR GLORY. Paul's sufferings was their glory! That is a most profound statement. The same Gospel by which the Ephesians were saved is the one that caused Paul to be imprisoned. One result was a savor unto life, and other a savor unto death (2 Cor 2:16). The fact that the Gospel Paul preached caused an adverse reaction among those who knew not God confirmed that it was the truth. More particularly, it proved that what the Ephesians had heard was the "*power of God unto salvation.*" Both its acceptance and rejection prove this to be so. Thus Paul's imprisonment became an honor to the Ephesians, highlighting how they had heard the same message, believed it, and experienced being raised from death in trespasses and sins.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 36

^{Eph 3:14} *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ^{16a} That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory . . ."* (Eph 3:14-16a)

ANOTHER INSIGHTFUL PRAYER BEGINS

INTRODUCTION

Paul is intent upon the Ephesians having a more thorough grasp of the nature and intent of salvation. This intention is exhibited in his teaching, and it also has played a significant role in his prayers. Already, he has told them of his prayers for the opening of the eyes of their understanding - the broadening of their spiritual perspective of foundational matters: the reason why they were "*called*" by God, how God is developing His own inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of the Divine power that has been focused on them (1:18-20). Now, in strict keeping with the advancing nature of the Kingdom, Paul will pray that certain Divine effects will be wrought in the lives of the people. Before, he said that the Ephesian brethren were in his prayers. Now he approaches prayer in even more aggressive action. He does this because of the things God is accomplishing in salvation. It is the nature of God's work to be wrought in an environment of light - not merely being accomplished in the background, and remaining in the unknown, so to speak. The postulate is that while it is God who is working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13), He does so while we are working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. That work cannot be done in the dark, or without a due knowledge of what God is doing, why He is doing it, and what is expected as an outcome. What Paul will set before the people in this passage is of such magnitude that it will stagger the human intellect. It will confirm that a major work must be done upon the mind before it can begin to see the greatness of salvation. This is why salvation involves the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2), which takes place within the circumference of the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5). It will become increasingly apparent why salvation requires a Captain, and Author and a Finisher, and a Leader.

I BOW MY KNEES TO THE FATHER

^{Eph3:14} *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

FOR THIS CAUSE. Other versions read, "*For this reason,*" ^{NKJV} "*When I think of the wisdom and scope of His plan,*" ^{LIVING} "*This is why,*" ^{IE} and "*For this reason [seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are*

built together in Christ]." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The "cause" that has prompted Paul to pray was stated in the previous verses: "*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Eph 3:10-11). That is, that since Jesus has been exalted ("now"), higher heavenly intelligences might come to know the extensive and multifaceted ("manifold") wisdom of God, as it is being revealed "by the church" - i.e., by the Divinely granted willingness that is being made known in the protection and progress of the church. All of this is according to God's "eternal purpose"- i.e. a purpose that is not being updated, and will never become obsolete.

Once what God is doing is perceived [through Christ, and within the church], which is His body, it has a significant impact upon how we think about the church and its role in redemption. One's view of the purpose of the church, the function of the church, and the activities within the church are seen differently. The "mission" of the church is no longer seen as mere activities in the world. When it is perceived that the church is involved in the tutoring of superior personalities in heavenly places, an interest in the realization of that purpose becomes dominant. Now Paul shares how this has impacted his own thinking.

I BOW MY KNEES. Other versions read, "I kneel," ^{NIV} "go down on my knees," ^{BBE} "fall on my knees," ^{CJB} "on bended knee," ^{WEYMOUTH} and "get down on my knees." ^{MESSAGE} This is the posture of submission - in this case, willing submission.

In a society that boasts of personal freedom and rights, the very idea of submission has been decidedly neutralized. Submission postulates the superiority of the Person to whom one is submitted. Pharaoh made all of Egypt "bow the knee" before Joseph (Gen 41:43). Of old time, God swore that unto Him "every knee shall bow" (Isa 45:23). Paul refers to this in Romans 14:11). It is also affirmed "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil 2:10). People who besought mercy from Jesus are often represented as kneeling before Him (Matt 17:14; Mk 1:40).

Thus, in humble submission to the Lord, and desirous of seeing His will fulfilled in the people, Paul unashamedly bows His knee before God. He is not only submitting Himself to God's purpose, but taking measures to ensure that purpose is fulfilled in others. He comes before the Lord as one who has been washed from his sins, and made a king and a priest unto God (Rev 5:10). He will use the privilege that has been vouchsafed to all saints - that of having "access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph 2:18) - "boldness and access with confidence" (Eph 3:12).

Here is an excellent example of handling the Word of God correctly (2 Tim 2:15) - of knowing how to use the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17). His use of the Word will also confirm that it does, indeed, search out the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12).

THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Paul is very precise in the manner in which he speaks of God Almighty. You will never read where he said such things as, "The Edomites (descendants of Esau) and the followers of Jesus worship the same God." In our day, some say that the Muslims and the Christians worship the same God - just under a different name.

But here Paul speaks of God as a solitary Deity with a solitary Son. He is "*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This expression is found several times in Scripture (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Eph 1:3; 3:14; Col 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3). Three of those texts refer to "*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor 11:31; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3). Ephesians 1:17 refers to "*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Jesus Himself, in Matthew through John, referred to God as "My Father" 47 times. He also referred to Him as "My God" (Matt 27:46; Mk 15:34; John 20:17,28).

This means that there is no such thing as a proper thought about God that excludes the consideration of Jesus Christ. It means that the mission, accomplishments, and ongoing ministry of Jesus cannot be considered independently of the knowledge of God.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are inextricably linked together. It is not possible to come to God apart from Jesus, and it is not possible to receive from God without Jesus. There is no valid thought concerning Jesus that is not set within the context of the purpose and will of God. God the Father is the reason for the Son of God, who is the Savior of the world. Remove God from the thought process, and there is no reason for Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the One who makes God knowable, for He is the only One who knows the true identity

of the Father (Matt 12:26-28).

When Jesus was among men, He trusted in God (Heb 2:13). He prayed to God (Matt 26:39; Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16; Lk 9:29; Lk 22:32). That is the God before whom Paul bent his knee. That is the God to whom he now makes an insightful request - a request that has been driven by his perception of the working out of God's own eternal purpose.

THE NAMING OF THE WHOLE FAMILY

^{3:15} ***"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.***

OF WHOM. Other versions read, *"from whom,"* ^{ASV} *"For whom."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Theologians have disagreed concerning the identity of *"Whom."* Some have said it is the Father, while others have said it is the Son. However, this is a needless argument. The point of the expression *"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"* is to confirm they cannot be divorced from one another in our thoughts. In matters pertaining to redemption, the Father never operates independently of the Son, and the Son never proceeds without the Father. Thus the expression *"of whom"* refers to God as He is working through the Lord Jesus Christ, and without whom He cannot work for the eternal benefit of anyone.

THE WHOLE FAMILY. Other versions read, *"every family,"* ^{NASB} *"all paternity,"* ^{DOUAY} *"every fatherhood."* ^{NJB} The prevailing percentage of the various versions read *"every family"* (ASV,NASB, RSV, NRSV,BBE,CJB,CSB,DARBY,ERV, NAB,NAU,NET,AMPLIFIED). Notwithstanding this circumstance, that is not what the passage is saying. **Such a view contradicts the doctrine that is being developed by the apostle.**

Paul has boldly announced that the purpose of God is to gather into *"one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth"* (Eph 1:10). In developing this thought, he does not view humanity as a conglomeration of different families. Rather he narrows it down to two bodies of people: the Jews and the Gentiles (Eph 2:11; 3:1,6,8; 4:17). He also refers to these two bodies of people as *"the circumcision"* and *"the uncircumcision"* (Eph 2:11).

Paul then affirmed that the separating wall between these two bodies of people has been *"broken down"* by the Lord Jesus Himself (Eph 2:14). Now, in Christ Jesus, the two bodies of people are made *"one new man"* (Eph 2:15). In Christ, both have been *"reconciled"* unto God, now forming *"one body"* (Eph 2:16). Later he will affirm that there is *"one body"* (Eph 4:4).

For Paul to now affirm that God has especially named all the families of the earth is an absurdity unworthy of embrace. He has not brought the Edomites, the descendants of Ham, etc, into one great family. All of them were already a part of the family termed *"Gentiles."* Every member of that category of people were *"aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise"* that were given to Israel (Eph 2:12).

The subject now under consideration pertains only to those who are in Christ Jesus. It includes those who are *"in heaven"* - *"the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Heb 12:23). It also includes all who *"died in faith"* (Heb 11:13), and those who are *"absent from the body, and present with the Lord"* (2 Cor 5:8). The souls John saw *"under the altar"* are in this number (Rev 6:9), as well as the *"great cloud of witnesses"* that are beholding us run the race set before us with patience (Heb 12:1-2). There are knees that are bowing to Jesus in heaven, as well as on earth (Phil 2:9). In Christ they are all *"one."*

Some particulars of this great "family" are provided in the book of Hebrews. This informs those who have come to Jesus of the greatness of the society with which they are now identified. *"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Heb 12:23). The "family" to which our text refers includes *"angels,"* those whose *"names are written in heaven,"* and *"the spirits of just men made perfect."* Together, these personalities in heaven and on earth are called *"the general assembly."* This means there is some sense in which they are gathered together. That would be *"in Christ,"* where they are joined by *"God the Judge of all," "Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,"* and *"the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than*

that of Abel."

IS NAMED. The fulness of this name has not yet been revealed. I gather that it is synonymous with what Jesus referred to as *"the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name"* (Rev 3:12). In general, it will no doubt parallel the name God said He would give a renewed Israel: *"but thou shalt be called Hephzibah [My delight is in her], and thy land Beulah [married, or wife]: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."* (Isa 62:4).

Some are of the persuasion that the name *"Christian"* is the name of reference, basing their conclusion on an etymological view of Acts 11:26, where the disciples *"were first called Christians."* But this cannot be so, for this is a name for the whole family, which includes angels as well as men, and past generations of those with faith who lived prior to the inauguration of the New Covenant.

You see how, with godly expertise, Paul is stretching the minds of the elect, moving them to think outside of the narrow boundaries of time and this present evil world. He is lifting us upward into a realm where time and circumstance pale away into insignificance.

REQUIRED STRENGTHENING

3:16a *"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory . . ."*

Let it be clear that Paul is speaking of salvation itself - not in its initiatory state, but in its intended maturity. This has to do with God blessing us with *"all spiritual blessings"* (1:3), God choosing us in Christ *"before the foundation of the world"* (1:4), and God predestinating us *"unto the adoption of sons"* (1:5). It relates to Him making us *"accepted in the Beloved"* (1:6), having *"redemption"* and *"forgiveness"* (1:7), and Him abounding toward us *"in all wisdom and prudence"* (1:8). It has to do with what He has *"purposed in Christ Jesus"* (1:10), the obtaining of *"an inheritance"* (1:11), and being *"sealed with the Holy Spirit"* (1:13-14). What Paul now prays relates to what he first prayed - the opening *"the eyes of the understanding"* (1:15-20). It relates to being *"quicken together with Christ"* (2:5), and being *"raised up to sit together with Him in heavenly places"* (2:6). This has to do with what God has intended for *"the ages to come"* (2:7). It is connected with being *"saved by grace through faith"* (2:8), and being God's *"workmanship"* (2:10). This is the intended result of breaking down the middle wall of partition and abolishing the law of commandments contained in ordinances (2:14-15). It is why Jesus *"made peace"* (2:15-16), then came and *"preached peace"* (Eph 17). This also has to do with the church being *"built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit"* (2:20-22).

I say these things because of the tendency of certain men to speak of these lofty realities apart from a consideration of Christ's coming into the world, and the salvation that is being implemented by grace through faith. Too often men tend to speculate about the things Paul prayed for, treating them as though they were independent from being saved. Quite to the contrary, they are an exposition of salvation, being a perspective that is sorely needed - *yea, required!*

THAT. Again, this is a word that states the objective, or subject, of Paul's prayer. He was not simply talking with God about this and that. He had a purpose or objective for praying, and it specifically related to the commission that Jesus had given him. This was part of opening men's eyes, making them see things that must be seen if we are to overcome the world.

HE WOULD GRANT. Other versions read, *"give you."* ^{DARBY} Lexically, the word *"grant"* is defined as follows: "1) to give 2) to give something to someone 2a) of one's own accord to give one something, to his advantage 2a1) to bestow a gift 2b) to grant, give to one asking, let have 2c) to supply, furnish, necessary things 2d) to give over, deliver 2d1) to reach out, extend, present 2d2).

Paul prays that *"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* would grant, or give, something to those who have been *"accepted," "seated in heavenly places,"* and *"sealed with the Holy Spirit."* They have been addressed as *"saints"* and *"faithful in Christ Jesus"* (1:1). Yet, there was something more that was needed in order for the purpose of God to be fulfilled in them. They needed a *"grant"* - an advantage from heaven, a gift they had not yet received - at least not in its full measure.

Right here we see something of the magnitude of salvation. It is uncomely for people to speak glibly about being "saved" - especially when they are glaringly lacking in the things for which Paul prayed. These are not luxuries, but necessities.

ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY. The grant, or gift, will be in strict accordance with "the riches of His glory." Other versions read, "glorious riches,"^{NIV} "wealth of His glory,"^{BBE} "treasures of His glory,"^{CJB} "abundance of His glory,"^{NJB} "glorious, unlimited resources,"^{LIVING} "wealth of His glorious perfections,"^{WEYMOUTH} "riches of His perfect character,"^{WILLIAMS} "wonderful and glorious,"^{CEV} "with His great glory,"^{ERV} and "the rich treasury of His glory."^{AMPLIFIED}

The glory of a person or thing is what can be seen of it. Thus we read of the differing glory of the sun, the moon, and the stars (1 Cor 15:41) -i.e. they appear differently. Jesus referred to Solomon's glory - how he appeared (Matt 6:29).

The riches of God's glory refers to the plentitude that is **perceived** when one is consciously and perceptibly in the presence of the Lord. Paul elsewhere reminded us that we are "*changed*" by that glory - both initially (2 Cor 4:6), and on an ongoing basis (2 Cor 3:18).

What now follows will not be experienced independently of the knowledge of God. It is as we are exposed to God Himself that this prayer will be answered. Let it be clear that we are speaking of the God who is declared and revealed by Jesus Himself, for no else knows the identity of the Father, or can position us in the path of His glory. This is why "*eternal life*" is defined as knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath send (John 17:3).

The "*glory of God*" is reflected "*in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor 4:6). It is as we gaze at that glory (2 Cor 3:18) that the richness referred to in this text becomes accessible to us. If, for any reason, Jesus Himself becomes obscure, or is not seen clearly, less of the glory of God is perceived, and where less of it is perceived, fewer of the needed resources are attainable. This provides some understanding for the spiritual impoverishment of many poor souls.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 37

Eph 3:16b " . . . *to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.*" (Eph 3:16b-17)

STRENGTHENED, ROOTED, AND GROUNDED

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant things believers can learn is that salvation involves more than extricating them from a state of condemnation. Justification and the remission of sins is unparalleled in greatness, and yet they are only the introduction to what God intends to do. They are a necessary prelude to the fulfillment of God's purpose within the believer. Realizing that this is a matter that requires more than sound doctrine, Paul now informs the Ephesians that he has not only exercised diligence to communicate the knowledge he has received, he has also taken their case to the God of heaven. There are things that will not happen unless they are earnestly sought from the Lord. While the people are in the process of gaining such knowledge, Paul is not content to simply sit back and wait until the Ephesians have a good grasp on these things. There is a work of God that must be performed, and the nature of it is not yet clear in the minds of these brethren - noted for their faith in Christ and love of the saints. While those two virtues - faith and love - are absolutely indispensable, there is something that must take place within them that requires Divine strength. Thoughtful men should be able to reason this out, concluding that such a staggering investment by God must lead to results that are complementary of such an outlay of Divine plentitude. But, alas, this kind of reasoning is not at all common. Babylon the Great has produced a kind of thinking that basically inhibits spiritual development. It leaves people quite content to remain fundamentally ignorant of God, Christ, and God's eternal purpose. The quest of such benighted souls is to understand life in this world, and be able to capitalize upon life in the flesh. Thus, problems are primarily related to fleshly concerns, and blessings are assessed as pertaining to life in the body. The text we are now considering is moving us into the theological holy of holies. Here we will learn something of the magnitude of God's "*eternal purpose.*" It is so large that it requires ongoing and contiguous Divine involvement.

STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT

Eph3:16b " . . . *to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.*"

The revealed purpose involving the tutelage of heavenly principalities and powers concerning the manifold wisdom of God, and doing it "*by the church*" has prompted Paul to begin praying for the Ephesians - not because they had, at that time, some glaring fault, but because the purpose of God was bigger than where they were at that time. Compared with their peers, they had made significant progress, having trusted in Christ and been sealed with the Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13-14). For many, that is quite sufficient, but for Paul, it was not. He knew that these were qualifying conditions, not ultimate ones.

TO BE. Other versions read, "that you may be."^{NRSV} The idea is that of altering the state or capacity of the individual. It involves becoming something, versus merely receiving something. In the salvation of God, what is received alters the person receiving it. It is similar, yet superior, to the experience of king Saul. Samuel told him he would become "*another man*" (1 Sam 10:6). After that it is written that "*God gave him another heart*" (1 Sam 10:9). While Saul himself is not a suitable example for the saints (for he went backward), what God did to him was introductory **to the greater work of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. It** involves making the people different - a "*new creation*" (Eph 2:10). Yet, even in that working, there is progression, as our text will plainly affirm.

STRENGTHENED. Other versions read, "*make you strong,*"^{BBE} "*strength and power,*"^{GWN} "*enable you to grow firm in power,*"^{NJB} "*empower you,*"^{NLI} and "*to be strengthened and reinforced.*"^{AMPLIFIED} The word "*strengthened*" means "to be made strong, to increase in strength, to grow strong."^{THAYER}

Here Paul is speaking of a process, not a fixed state. That is, becoming strong is involved in spiritual growth - increasing in strength, power, and ability. This is not a seasonal strength like that of Samson, whom the Lord moved "*at times*" (Judges 13:25). Paul is not praying that the Ephesian brethren may be made strong when strength is need, or at special times - like "*the evil day.*"

Remember, this work will be "*according to the riches of His glory,*" which is its source. **That is, the condition for which he prays will be directly proportionate to what the Ephesians can perceive of God's glory.** The condition for which he prays is that they will grow stronger and stronger. The purpose for this strength will be specified later in this passage.

WITH MIGHT. Other versions read "*with power.*"^{NASB} The lexical meaning of the word translated "might" is: "1) strength, power, ability 1a) inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth 1b) power for performing miracles 1c) moral power and excellence of soul 1d)."^{THAYER} Simply put, this is miraculous power - power that can only come from the Lord. Yet, even though the source of the power is God, yet it can work within man - which itself is a most arresting consideration.

BY HIS SPIRIT. The means by which this power is experienced is the Holy Spirit of God. He is the One who actually imparts the "*might,*" making it effectual in the individual. Knowing this, and the criticality of this need, it is no wonder that believers are admonished, "*grieve not the Spirit of God*" (Eph 4:30), and "*quench not the Spirit of God*" (1 Thess 5:19).

The requirement of the Holy Spirit is seen in the work He performs. He leads us in mortifying the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). He washed, sanctified, and justified us (1 Cor 6:11). He changes us from glory unto glory (2 Cor 3:18). He enables us to "*wait for the hope of righteousness*" (Gal 5:5). He renders us capable of obeying the truth (1 Pet 1:22).

Yet, with all of this, Paul is speaking of yet another facet of the Spirit's work. As necessary and essential as all of these things are, there is even a high consideration - one that includes all of these things, yet is not confined to them.

IN THE INNER MAN. The place where strength is imparted by the Holy Spirit is "*the inner man.*" This is synonymous with "*the inward man,*" in which the saved "*delight in the law of God*" (Rom 7:22). This is the unseen part of the redeemed that is renewed day by day. As it is written, "*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*" (2 Cor 4:16).

This is "*the new man*" (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), the "*new creation*" (2 Cor 5:17), and what has been "*created in Christ Jesus*" (Eph 2:10). It is "*whatsoever is born of God*" (1 John 5:4), and "*he that is begotten of God*" (1 John 5:18).

This new creation is not sufficient of itself. It is a growing creation, not a static one like the sun, moon, and stars. It is a life that grows, advances, and matures. It is totally reliant upon the Lord, and has no life of itself. I do not believe this is generally known in the Christian community. In our time, there is altogether too much indifference toward spiritual strengthening and growth. This kind of indifference cannot be seen in any of the apostolic writings. The apostles' doctrine never leads to indifference or casualness. It always represents the need for ongoing and productive affiliation with the Godhead: The Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY FAITH

3:17a *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . ."*

THAT CHRIST. This is the "Christ" made known in the Gospel (Rom 1:16). It is the One into whose hands all things have been delivered (Matt 11:27). He is "the Christ" that God reveals (Matt 16:16-17). It is the One of whom it said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1). As made known in the epistle to the Ephesians, this is the Christ in whom "the faithful" are found (1:1). He is the one who sends grace and peace (1:2). He is the One in whom are found "all spiritual blessings" (1:3), by whom adoption is realized (1:5), and in whom "all things" will be gathered (1:10). He is the primary exhibit of Divine power (1:20), in whom we have been quickened (2:5), and in whom we have "made to sit together" in heavenly places (2:6). It is the One in whom we have been "created" anew (2:10), who is "our peace" (2:3), who is the chief Cornerstone of the church (2:20). The promise associated with God's "eternal purpose" is in Him (3:6). The "unsearchable riches" that Paul was ordained to preach are all "of Christ" (3:8).

Paul has spent considerable time identifying the Christ, not taking for granted that his readers will think properly concerning the Christ. In our day, a considerable percentage of the preaching and teaching concerning Christ has been omitted. The Christ of whom great numbers of professing Christians are identified is not the real Christ. He is rather one that is identified with the affairs and experiences of this present evil world.

This is not the Christ of whom Paul writes - which means it is not the real Christ. What Paul now says will simply not fit into modern theology. What he associates with the working of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit is largely taken for granted in the modern churchman. Therefore we often hear of asking Jesus to come into your heart. While the Word of God does speak of men receiving Christ (John 1:11-12), Paul now extends our thinking beyond an initial experience to one that is ongoing. It is an experience that is facilitated by the Holy Spirit imparting strength to the inner man of those who have been made "accepted in the Beloved" (1:6).

MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS. Other versions read, "may have His place in your hearts,"^{BBE} "may live in your hearts,"^{CJB} "will make His home in your hearts,"^{NLT} "make His permanent home in your hearts,"^{WILLIAMS} "that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in,"^{MESSAGE} and " [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts!"^{AMPLIFIED}

I want to draw especially attention to the miserable representation of The Message Bible. "that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite Him in." Mind you. Paul spoke of the condition as being accomplished by God strengthening the people by the Holy Spirit. Yet, the Message Bible represents the indwelling Christ as the result of opening the door and inviting Him in. That perfectly depicts much of the theology of our day, but seriously conflicts with what the text actually says.

It at once becomes obvious that Jesus coming into the heart is not the point, but Him **remaining** there, making it His abode. This is not accomplished by initially receiving Christ (John 1:11). All of this postulates that there is a possibility that as Jesus left Nazareth, so He can leave the individual who is not duly strengthened to retain His presence. As difficult as it may be to receive, Jesus will not dwell, or abide, where moral and spiritual weakness prevail. This is why He was depicted as being outside the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:14). Paul alluded to the qualified presence of the Lord when he wrote, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor 6:17).

The indwelling Christ is not to be assumed. Christ in "in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27), is not an unqualified guarantee. There is a work within you that must be done if Jesus is to remain in you. Sin has had such an impact upon all men, that an ongoing work must take place in us until we are liberated from the body. That work is here defined as God Himself strengthening us with power - the power that brought Jesus back from the dead - and that by the Holy Spirit. Paul is praying that this will take place because, left without this strengthening, there is no hope of participating in the salvation is "ready to be revealed in the last day" (1 Pet 1:5). This is, in fact, the outcome of being strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

BY FAITH. Christ dwells in our hearts "by faith" - i.e. His indwelling is directly proportionate to our faith. The stronger our faith, the more secure is Christ's indwelling. It is possible for professing believers to live by

fits and starts, becoming more aware of their need for Christ during crises. Whatever influences or thoughts that do not harmonize with Christ neutralize His presence. The idea that Deity is sensitive concerning environment is often forgotten by men - but it should not be. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, and the removal of Israel from Canaan is proof enough that the condition of the one in whom the Lord is to dwell is of critical importance. All of this postulates that faith is growing stronger and stronger, and more and more dominates the individual. This is all related to Christ making His abode in us. In our text it was necessary for someone with spiritual insight to seek this benefit for others. That is something to be considered.

ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE

3:17b " . . . *that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.* "

Now, we come to the aim of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith - this being owing to God strengthening us with might by His Spirit in the inner man. What follows is not a recommendation, but is an intention that is integral to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. This is something salvation is calculated to produce.

BEING. Other versions read, "will be," ^{CJB} "may be," ^{GWN} "because you have been," ^{NET} "having been," ^{YLT} "will have," ^{IE} "You must be," ^{WILLIAMS} and "May you be." ^{AMPLIFIED}

There is a vast difference between *being* and *doing*. Both are necessary, to be sure. However, in Christ **doing depends solely upon being. That is, what we ARE is responsible for what we do.** Paul has labored to identify what we ARE in Christ Jesus: faithful (1:1), chosen (1:4), predestinated (1:5), accepted (1:6), sealed (1:13), enlightened (1:18), quickened (2:1-5), raised up and seated (2:6), His workmanship (2:10), made nigh (2:13), fellowcitizens (2:19), and built (2:20).

According to the letter to the Ephesians to this point, things that we do or have done are fewer in number, including "trusted" (1:12), and "believed" (1:13). The **accent** has clearly been on what we ARE in Christ Jesus, **not** what we do! This certainly does not eliminate doing, as the rest of the letter will confirm. However, it does determine the things that are to be done. In my opinion, very few professing Christians have a proper view of what we ARE in Christ Jesus, and what salvation is calculated to cause us to BE.

ROOTED AND GROUND. Other versions read, "rooted and established," ^{NIV} "rooted and based," ^{BBE} "rooted and founded," ^{CJB} "rooted and firmly established," ^{CSB} "the ground into which you sink your roots," ^{GWN} "planted and built," ^{NJB} "Your roots will grow down into," ^{NLT} and "with both feet firmly planted." MESSAGE

Some of the versions completely miss the point, representing the text as though it was an exhortation to get grounded, or attain a deep root. This text is not about what men do, but what they ARE - and it is all owing to the working of Deity, who strengthens us with might by His Spirit in the inner man, in order that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. "Rooted and grounded" is something we are - something we become - **not** something we do.

While the implications of this text are rather alarming, it seems to me that we must consider them. Where professing believers are not rooted and grounded, it is because Christ is not dwelling in the hearts by faith. If Christ is not dwelling in their hearts by faith, it is because they have not been strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man. If that circumstance is true, and they are really in Christ, then they are either ignorant of what God is doing in Christ Jesus, or they have quenched and grieved the Spirit, deferring to the flesh.

IN LOVE. The rooting and the grounding take place "in love." And, what "love" is this? Is it our love for the brethren? Is it our love for God and Christ? Is it our love for those outside of Christ? Are the people of God ever depicted as being solid and unmoveable because of their own expressions? It should not be necessary to say that this is not possible. **Rooting and grounding, like all other salvational conditions are owing to our participation in the Divine nature.**

This is the love of God, not our love for God. After all, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). This letter emphasizes Divine love. God has determined we will be "without blame before Him in love" (1:4). There is "His great love wherewith He hath loved us" (2:4). He refers to knowing "the love of Christ"

(3:19). Christ is said to have *"also loved the church"* (5:25). While our love is included indirectly, the focus is on the love of God that drives salvation, and is manifested within it. If we love one another, John writes, *"God dwelleth in us, and **His love** is perfected in us"* (1 John 4:12). We can view God as a demanding God (which He is), or as a God who has provided salvation because of His love. The former stance will not produce spiritual maturity. The latter will.

The idea is that if our salvation is itself rooted in the love of God (Eph 2:4; 5:2; Rom 8:37; 2 Thess 2:16; 1 John 4:10-11), then as we perceive that love, walking in it and abiding in it (John 15:10), we will become spiritually stable, leaving erratic and inconsistent manners behind us.

Paul knows that if growing ever ceases in the believer, falling is imminent. Satan always exploits continued spiritual childishness. As confirmed by this text, Divine activity is the cause of spiritual growth and its attending stability. This is not something for which we must simply wait, saying to ourselves that in due time those in Christ will grow up. There is a total absence of this kind of thinking in Paul's words. He knows the criticality of growing, and of the established objective of being presented to the Lord *"without blame"* (Eph 1:4). He therefore teaches the brethren of the purpose of God, and of the appointed means through which it is being carried out. He then supplements his teaching with strong prayers and supplications for the people, that God will so work in them that they may increase their participation in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The absolute necessity of this approach will be verified by the words that follow, which are startling for their depth.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 38

Eph 3:18 " *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;* ¹⁹ *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*" (Eph 3:18-19)

THE ABILITY TO COMPREHEND

INTRODUCTION

Because man is made in the image of God, possessing a capacity to be in accord with God, the heart and mind are chief properties of humanity. Both have to do with thought, perception, and expression, together with the ability to receive and to give. Salvation is intended to bring these capacities to their highest level, sanctifying the heart and mind for involvement with God and employment in His purpose. Owing to this arrangement, life in Christ Jesus has very much to do with understanding, comprehension, perception, discernment, judgment, evaluation, discretion, and recognition. Such activities as meditation, pondering, and musing are primary in spiritual life. This is also why the mind is the battle field of spiritual life, and the heart is used to process truth and develop godly preferences. In Christ Jesus, not knowing what has been revealed is a most dangerous circumstance, giving the advantage to the devil. The inability to recognize truth puts one in jeopardy. The failure of any individual to see God, Christ, salvation, and Divine purpose puts one at risk. A person who does not think like God cannot walk with Him. The one who does not have some perception of Christ and His accomplishments will be limited in his participation in the benefits flowing from Him. It is a most tragic circumstance, but it seems as though the majority of professing Christians do not have a satisfactory degree of understanding in these things. This is largely because true understanding and comprehension cannot be achieved naturally. Divine aid is required. This is the reality that is driving the apostle Paul to write in this manner to the Ephesians. Since the purpose of God has been revealed to him, together with a commission to declare it, he engages in an energetic and sanctified effort to enable the brethren to see what God is doing in His Son. In the end, He knows how their understanding will be received. Therefore, he is praying for them as an **informed** teacher would do. Further, as a **concerned** teacher, he is also informing the brethren of the content of his prayers. He knows that the soil of ignorance yields no fruit.

ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS

Eph3:18 " *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.*"

In this text we are exposed to a different and higher kind of prayer. There is a kind of prayer that is described in Philippians 4:6: "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Phil 4:6). Note, the prayer is to be accompanied with "*thanksgiving.*" This type of prayer, though necessary, is not guaranteed a positive answer - unless it is

accompanied by faith (Matt 21:22). There is a guarantee that attend such a prayer: "*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Phil 4:7). Nearly all prayers that are offered by the modern church are this kind of prayer. This is NOT the kind of prayer Paul is praying. This is more than Paul making his request known to God. He is praying within the conscious framework of God's "*eternal purpose*" (Eph 3:11). He prays with an acute awareness of what God is doing in Christ Jesus.

MAY BE ABLE. Other versions read, "*have the power,*"^{NRSV} "*be strong,*"^{ASV} "*have strength,*"^{BBE} "*fully able,*"^{DARBY} and "*may be strong enough.*"^{WILLIAMS} **Just as the believer has to be strengthened in the inner man so Christ can dwell in his heart by faith, so he must be strong and able to participate in the intent of this prayer.**

Even though men are born again, created in Christ Jesus, and partake of a new nature, their ability, aptitude, or power, needs to be developed - not created, but developed. This is why there is such a thing as a "*novice*" (1 Tim 3:6), beginner, or spiritual "*little children*" (1 John 2:13). This beginning state refers more to the realm of knowledge and expression than doing certain works. **Spiritual ability parallels spiritual understanding.** As ability, aptitude, capacity, adequacy, or competence increases, there is a corresponding increase in the area of expression, which involves the will, words, and works. No person can "*do*" beyond their level of "*wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Col 1:9). Let it be clear that this is not intended to denigrate any doing or working that is prompted by faith.

Now Paul prays for a maturing of the saints ability, capability, capacity, or aptitude. He does so because salvation not only provides for such an expansion, it assumes advancement in this area because of the thoroughness of its resources and supplies - "*all spiritual blessings*" (1:3).

TO COMPREHEND. Other versions read, "*to grasp,*"^{NIV} "*apprehend,*"^{DARBY} "*understand,*" "*to explore,*"^{MRD} "*completely understand,*"^{IE} "*perceive,*"^{ABP} "*to take in ,*"^{MESSAGE} and "*apprehend and grasp.*"^{AMPLIFIED}

The word translated "*comprehend*" has the following lexical meaning: "1) to lay hold of 1a) to lay hold of so as to make one's own, to obtain, attain to, to make one's own, to take into one's self, appropriate 1b) to seize upon, take possession of." ^{THAYER} There is a two-fold view in this meaning. First, the individual becomes able, or strong enough, to actually take hold of the truth and maintain his hold upon it. Second, he is able to handle, or use correctly, the truth that he holds.

Anyone, with any degree of understanding of the church of our times, knows that this is by no means an area of strength among professing Christians. A lack of "spiritual understanding" is so pervasive that it viewed as the average condition. Few people are concerned about a lack of understanding, or the glaring absence of growth in this area.

WITH ALL SAINTS. Paul prays with a mind-set that considers what "*all saints*" are expected to do. This is what salvation equips them to do. Here is an area where one saint is not expected to outdo the other saints. It is also clear, that this is something in which God expects "*all saints*" to participate. Every minister is expected to work with this objective in mind.

THE BREADTH, AND LENGTH, AND DEPTH, AND HEIGHT. Other versions read, "*wide and long and high and deep,*"^{NIV} and "*extravagant dimensions.*"^{MESSAGE}

This is a perspective that is altogether missed by the champions of simplicity. There is really no way to simply state the profound things to which Paul refers. An understanding of them is not attained by a childish expression of them. Something that is multi-dimensional, having breadth, and length, and height, and depth, cannot be properly seen by flattening it to one a single or two dimensional thing.

Paul knows that there are Divine perspectives in the purpose of God and the accomplishments of Jesus that cannot be taught in a kindergarten class. They are not intended to be seen by children, for they could do nothing with them if they did see them. God must so empower the believer that he will be capable of discerning what the Lord has planned, and how He is carrying out that plan , or purpose. Children play, but they do not construct. They cannot handle the "*deep things of God,*" and God does not expect them to. In the Kingdom of God, the people must get out of the "*little children*" category, and only God can enable them to do so.

It seems to me that the lack of comprehension suggests there has not been many prayers lifted up to God like

the one we are considering. I believe people still need to be taught how to pray.

TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST

3:19a *"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge . . ."*

Here we are introduced to the focus of Paul's prayer for the comprehension of the Ephesian brethren.

AND TO KNOW. Other versions read, *"to have knowledge of,"* ^{BBE} *"experience,"* ^{NLT} *"completely understand the meaning,"* ^{LIVING} *"know all about,"* ^{CEV} *"come to know,"* ^{GNB} *and "really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

As used in the Scriptures, there are two different kinds of "knowing." One is intellectual, and the other is experiential. The same is true of the English word "know," for which one listed synonym is "experience." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} - One English word with two different meanings. In the Greek language, however, there are two distinctly different words for "know." One is "eido," which refers to intellectual knowledge. Examples of its use (668 times) are 1 Cor 13:12 and Titus 1:16. The other word is "ginosko"- and is the one used in our text. This is a deeper word with the following lexical meaning: ""1) to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive, feel 1a) to become known 2) to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of 2a) to understand 2b) to know 3) Jewish idiom for [relations] between a man and a woman 4) to become acquainted with, to know." ^{THAYER THAYER} This is the word used in Matthew 1:25 that says of Joseph, he *"knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn."* It is also used for knowing God (Heb 8:10), and knowing His mind (Rom 11:34).

This text is not speaking of intellectual knowledge - like knowing mathematical tables, or the daily news. It is not being aware of certain facts. To put it plainly, this has to do with actually experiencing the reality under consideration - learning of it, we might say, *"first-hand."*

THE LOVE OF CHRIST. Here is the matter that has breadth, and length, and depth, and height - *"the love of Christ."* This is not an intellectual acquaintance with the fact of Christ's love. It is not theorizing about His love, which the natural man is prone to do. This is the kind of love Jesus Himself spoke of when He said, *"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him"* (John 14:21). When that happens, the person *"knows"* the *"love of Christ."*

This is a love that produces something. When Adam *"knew Eve his wife,"* she conceived and bore a child (Gen 4:1). It is written concerning the birth of Seth, *"And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth"* (Gen 4:25).

From the experiential point of view, we read that *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again"* (2 Cor 5:14-15). That is, Christ's loves compels and enables us to live solely for Him, knowing that He died for us and rose again. The kind of living that is intentionally directed toward Him is the most profitable life, advantaging the most people, and bringing the greatest personal benefits.

WHICH PASSETH ALL KNOWLEDGE. The fact that this is a transcendent knowledge means that it cannot be obtained by natural means. It is not something into which believers naturally grow - and woe to the person who imagines that this is so. Some are of the opinion that if we wait long enough people will eventually take hold of the love of Christ. However, this is not necessarily so. The apprehension of the love that passes all knowledge must be preceded by the opening of the eyes of our understanding (Eph 1:5-20), God strengthening us with might by His Spirit in the inner man (3:16), Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith (3:17a), and being rooted and grounded in His love (3:17b).

To add further perspective to this, the above must be preceded by the Divine provision of *"all spiritual blessings"* (1:3), God's choice (1:4), being *"predestinated"* to be adopted (1:5), being made acceptable (1:6), *"redemption"* and *"the forgiveness of sins"* (1:7), and God abounding toward us *"in all wisdom and prudence"* (1:8). It even requires that God make known *"the mystery of His will"* (1:9).

Additionally, it involves knowing the objective that is driving this great salvation: "*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*" (Eph 1:10), and being cognizant that we have "*obtained an inheritance*" (1:11).

Talk about staggering dimensions! And with all of that Paul still prays for the Ephesians to be strengthened so they can comprehend the largeness of it all, and experience the love of Christ that transcends all knowledge! Now, how does it sound to speak of a simple salvation, or it being able to be understood by a child? In view of all of this Divine investment, how can anyone champion the statement that we are saved by what we do? How can idleness be justified when we have been told of such Divine investments, provisions, and intentions?

FILLED WITH THE FULNESS OF GOD

3:19b " . . . *that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*"

THAT YE MIGHT BE. One might be tempted to think the apex of Divine intent has not been fully proclaimed - but that would be a wrong conclusion. All of what has been said to this point was in order that we might "*be*" in a certain circumstance. Notice that the pronoun is in the plural: "*ye*" -i.e. the whole church, or the entire body of believers. More specifically, the brethren at Ephesus, for it cannot be that one body of believers has a lesser standard than the whole of the church. What God intends for all of Christ's body, is the intention for local gatherings, and for individuals as well - each in their own measure.

It goes without saying that no body of believers, nor any individual believer, can be content with coming short of this intention. Further, considering that those in Christ are in a state of growth and enlargement, the idea of filling becomes perpetual.

FILLED. This is a unique term in Scripture. No other religion in the world confesses or appeals to this characteristic. The word "*filled*" means, "to fill to the full, supply liberally, to make complete in every particular, fill to the brim." ^{STRONGS} This presumes that those in Christ are, in some sense, containers. It also indicates that what is put into those containers is useful in ways related to God's "*eternal purpose.*"

The idea of being "*filled*" with anything pertaining to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is repulsive to "*the flesh.*" The reason is straightforward: the flesh centers in self, and filling postulates the emptying of self. In his subtlety, Satan has promoted the idea that ridding oneself of especially wicked tendencies equates to satisfactory improvement. But this is a wholly incorrect view. Jesus once spoke of a man out of whom an "*unclean spirit*" was "*gone out.*" After leaving and wandering about for a season "*through dry places,*" the spirit resolved to return to the one he had formerly inhabited. He found the dwelling well decorated, yet "*empty.*" He then brought with him "*seven other spirits more wicked than himself,*" and re-occupied the house. The Lord said, "*the last state of that man is worse than the first*" (Matt 12:43-45). The problem was that the house had not been "*filled*" after it was vacated by the wicked spirit.

Let it be clear that salvation is intended to "*fill*" the one possessing it. In it, Jesus is not given one of many rooms in which to dwell. God's "*great salvation*" is not a kind of management system where ones religious posture allows for other entrants, but controls them so they supposedly do not dominate the individual. This is a common view in our day, and is the backbone of all self-acclaimed recovery systems.

Let us see once again the matter for which Paul is praying. He is asking that all the congregation at Ephesus be strengthened by the Holy Spirit - so Christ could dwell in their hearts by faith - so they could be rooted and grounded in love - in order that they might comprehend the magnitude, and experience the reality of, the love of Christ. All of this is in order that they might be "*filled.*" Does anyone imagine that the stated objective will be realized independently of the means by which it is ordained to take place?

WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD. And what is the spiritual substance with which the whole of the congregation is to be "*filled?*" It is "*the fulness of God.*" Other versions read, "*the measure of all the fulness of God,*" ^{NIV} "*made complete as God himself is complete,*" ^{BBE} "*be completely filled with God,*" ^{GWN} "*with all manner of fulness which cometh of God,*" ^{TNT} "*the totality of God,*" ^{IE} "*God's own standard of completeness,*"

WEYMOUTH *"the perfect fullness of God."* WILLIAMS *"the 'plentitude' of God,"* MONTGOMERY *"with all that God is,"*
CEV *"everything God has for you,"* ERV *"the very nature of God,"* GNB *"Live full lives, full in the fullness of*
God," MESSAGE *"filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of*
the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!" AMPLIFIED

This would be related to being made *"partakers of Christ"* (Heb 3:14), and *"partakers of the Divine nature"* (2 Pet 1:4). It has to do with the *"measure of faith"* (Rom 12:3), and being stewards of *"the manifold grace of God"* (1 Pet 4:10).

Think of it as being sanctified *"spirit, soul, and body"* (1 Thess 5:23), or reckoning ourselves to be *"dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God"* (Rom 6:11). The idea is that all of our capacities - especially those identified with the new creation - are to be filled with the Divine nature. Whether we are speaking of an apostle like Paul (Rom 1:1), a servant-woman like Phebe (Rom 16:1), an encourager like Barnabas Acts 4:36), or a helper like Urbane (Rom 16:9) - **the ministry is to be conducted like the Lord would do it.**

This is another view of being *"complete in"* Christ (Col 2:10). To be *"filled with all the fulness of God"* means that required resources are not sought from any other origin. It means that the Spirit is not quenched, and the Lord is not *"limited"* in doing what He intends through the individual (Psa 78:41).

This is a fulness that will be experienced if the conditions of the prayer are realized: strengthened within, Christ's indwelling, rooting and grounding, and blessed comprehension.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 39

Eph 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, Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21)

THE PLACE OF BRINGING GLORY TO GOD

INTRODUCTION

With relentless and fresh ways, Paul continues to expound the great salvation in which men by grace participate. While he does, from time to time, deal with the responsibilities and commissions pertaining to the saved themselves, he first anchors their faith in God by telling them what He has done. Then he lays out the objectives of salvation. All of this is done to provide a setting for the exhortations that follow in chapters five and six. While it is not generally known, much is expected from the saved - and that for a revealed reason, They are the means through which heavenly personalities are being instructed concerning the *"manifold wisdom of God"* (3:10). This target demands that something be seen in the saints that will testify to the wisdom of God. You can see what a devastating work Satan has accomplished through Babylon the Great. The general perception of salvation is that of having our sins forgiven. Some even ponder the fact of continuing on with Jesus after death. That, however, is generally shrouded in mystery. The truth of the matter is that very few professing Christians think of salvation as something that is intended to bring glory to God - to draw attention to what is revealed of Himself in that salvation. Because so little is known of the purpose that drives salvation minimal attention is given to feeding the flock. Things like *"the unity of the Spirit"* (4:1), and *"the unity of the faith"* (Eph 4:13) are not frequently mentioned, and even less understood. Paul, however, is developing the reason for the church -the whole body of Christ. The truth of the matter is that the preaching of the Gospel, and the opening of men's eyes, will not occur until professing Christians are *"one"* with both the Father and the Son (John 17:21). For that oneness to occur, there cannot be differing, and often competing agendas. You will note that what Paul is writing has everyone involved in the same things, seeing the same things, and striving for the same prize. **Everything he has said to this point is for everyone in the body of Christ.** It is critical that this be known.

UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE

Eph3:20 "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . ."

With his gifted spiritual expertise and thoroughness, Paul is developing what God is doing in salvation, His intentions in doing so, and the determined outcome of it all. His ministry confirms that God's people make advance **when their understanding is fruitful**, and fail to grow when it is not. In our day Christian leaders

are content for ignorance to remain. Paul was not.

NOW. This is the translation of a Greek word meaning, *"it is joined to terms with a certain emphasis, and with such additions as tend to explain and establish them more exactly."* ^{THAYER} In other words, this sentence elaborates on the expression *"filled with all the fulness of God"* (3:19). By itself, that phrase staggers the human intellect, for its statement extends beyond the abilities of natural comprehension. Therefore Paul introduces a unqualified fact that puts the stated objective within the sphere of our understanding. God Himself will do what has been stated! **Being "filled with all the fulness of God" does not refer to something we do, but to something that is done within us.** God will strengthen us with might by His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith, in order that we might be rooted and grounded, so we can comprehend the magnitude of salvation, so we may be filled with all the fulness of God. As you can see, salvation is not simplistic!

The word *"now"* also carries the idea of a contemporary work - what is taking place **after** men have been justified, joined to the Lord, and made righteous. The postulate of Scripture is this: God must Himself be involved in what men are required to do.

UNTO. Paul now points our minds upward to the consideration of the God of salvation, for when we think about salvation, we must conclude in thinking about the God who effects it. Think of the word *"unto"* as an intellectual arrow, directing the manner in which we think. When it comes to pondering God's great salvation, we are in the midst of a gigantic maze of twists and turns that require Divine guidance. The word *"unto"* is like an intellectual marker pointing out the proper way to navigate through the maze of truth. The human intellect itself is not capable of sound thought without Divine guidance. The word *"unto"* occurs thirty-seven times in the book of Ephesians alone. It is found 545 times in the Epistles. As I see it, *"unto"* is a more precise way of directing thought than "context." This is not to denigrate the idea of context, for that is a valid view of things. However, context is often seen through interpretation and wherever interpretation is used, error is possible. That is precisely why we have the word *"unto."* It points us to the proper way of thinking about the matter under consideration.

HIM. In our text, when we think about being *"filled with all the fulness of God,"* our minds must immediately turn to the Lord Himself - as compared with what He does. We dare not think about such a lofty thing without God being preeminent in our minds. I am astounded at the amount of theological thought that does not have the living God as its epicenter.

A PERSPECTIVE. Paul will not have us consider salvation without Deity being at the center of our thoughts. Mentionings of Deity in Ephesians include: *"God"*=33 times; *"Father"*=8 times; *"Lord"*= 25 times; *"Jesus"*=21 times; *"Christ"*=45 times; pronouns referring to Deity (*"He," "Him," "His"*) = 48 times; *"Spirit"* = 12 times. That is a minimum of 192 references to Deity. There are 3,022 words in Ephesians, and 226 sentences. That means 3.5% of the individual words refer to Deity, and an average of 84% of the sentences contain some reference to Deity. By way of comparison there are 50 pronouns that refer to the people to whom Paul is writing. The emphasis ought to be obvious!

THAT IS ABLE. When Paul speaks of ability, he turns our attention to God Himself. The ability of which he speaks pertains to being *"filled with all the fulness of God."*

TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY. This means that being *"filled with all the fulness of God"* is a transcendent consideration. It is in the *"exceeding abundantly"* category of things. It should be apparent that this is outside the boundary of human aptitude, also having nothing whatsoever to do with casualness, and half-heartedness.

ABOVE ALL WE ASK OF THINK. Other versions read, *"beyond,"* ^{NASB} *"more than,"* ^{NIV} *far more,"* ^{RSV} *and "far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]."* ^{AMPLIFIED} This being true, our personal ambitions are not to be the focus of our petitions - although God graciously encourages us to make our requests known to Him (Phil 4:6-7).

However, when it comes to our life-focus, and the things for which we consistently seek, we are to be directed by revelation, not imagination. I do not believe that most professed believers do well in this area. In fact, left to ourselves, and in a state of immaturity, we will simply go astray in the focus of our prayers. This is precisely why Paul is writing these things to the brethren. He is shaping the thoughts of the saints on the matters of prayer, living, and purposing. He has told us that the intention of God is that we be *"filled with all the fulness of God."* Now he proclaims that this will not, and cannot be done without the involvement of

God Himself. It requires a Divinely empowered aptitude.

ACCORDING TO THE POWER

3:19a " . . . according to the power that worketh in us."

Paul now identifies the power of which he speaks. He will not leave us speculating about this matter. In fact, he will inform us that it is the power that is associated with what God is presently doing in the saints. He will not speak of an additional power, or a different kind of power - this is not a power that is on another plateau, and is not available to all saints.

ACCORDING TO. This another one of those reasoning expressions that direct the way in which we think. Whereas, "unto" points us forward, "according to" points us backward, confirming that the work of salvation is one of progression. That means that the resources are all made available at the beginning of salvation, although the reality of them is not apparent at that time. This word ("according to") is used fourteen times in Ephesians, when a more precise consideration is necessary (1:5,7,9,11,19; 2:2; 3:7,16,20; 4:7,16,22; 6:5). This expression is never used in reference to human wisdom or ability, or any form of natural aptitude. **The engine driving everything pertaining to salvation is found in Divine power, not human wisdom, strength, or aptitude.** While this may be formally acknowledged by many, it appears that it remains a relatively unknown reality. Men have provided a room for things originating with men that is too large. If such things are provided a place at all, it should be very, very small. Even then, it must be bounded by faith and hope, and facilitated by prayer and supplication.

THE POWER THAT WORKS IN US. Other versions read, "the power that is at work within us,"^{NIV} "by the power,"^{RSV} "whose power is at work in us,"^{GWN} "God uses the power that is working in us,"^{IE} "according to the power that is working among us,"^{ISV} "the power operating in us,"^{ABP} and "by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us."^{AMPLIFIED}

It is necessary to define what is meant by the word "power." This **cannot** be thoroughly defined lexically: "1) strength power, ability 1a) inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth 1b) power for performing miracles."^{THAYER} This does little in the task of comprehending the meaning of this text. As used in Scripture, this is **productive power**, as compared to a mere display of strength - like a strong man lifting an extremely heavy object. The Spirit uses the word in association with doing or achieving something - particularly something related to salvation as being implemented by God. This is a power that is not unrelated to God, or to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. In particular, this text is declaring the means through which we are "filled with all the fulness of God." The fact that the means are specified suggests this is something that is to be known.

This is an objective that cannot be accomplished by human ingenuity, will, or ability. It simply is too great to be achieved by those who must be purchased, delivered, and justified by God. This is a power, ability, or aptitude that is resident in God alone. He alone can dispense it, and He alone can employ it. This is the "power" that will be employed to strengthen us, enable us to comprehend, root and ground us, and enable us to be "filled with all the fulness of God."

This is not a power that works on us, but "in us." It is not a power that works with us, but "in us." It is not a power that we employ, but a power that is used by God Himself. It is not a power external to us, but within us. It is not a bodily power, but a power that works in the essential person - in the spirit of man.

This is not a power that must be appropriated by the saints. Those within whom Christ dwells already possess it, for "all power" has been given unto Him (Matt 28:18). As it is written, "Christ [is] the power of God" (1 Cor 1:24). I do not know that it can be established that those in whom Christ does not dwell by faith actually possess this power. Men may theorize about the matter, but this power will not be realized by those who have not been strengthened with might by God's Spirit, have Christ dwelling in their heart by faith, are rooted and grounded in love, and comprehend with all saints something of the greatness of the love of Christ. If this has to do with being "filled with all the fulness of God," then it must be preceded by the necessary requirements.

What utility would this power have in those who are immature, or in whom Christ does not dwell, or who are not rooted and grounded, or characterized by comprehension? Is there anyone of sound mind that is willing to say God will fill such people with all of His "fulness?" If this is the case, warnings concerning spiritual maturity would be pointless. It would not be a serious matter to not be teachers, although sufficient time had been allotted to be in that category (Heb 5:12). Warnings about the dangers of falling way (Heb 6:4-6) would be pointless if this exceeding power worked in the people anyway.

It is alarming to consider how many people imagine they can have the benefits of God's "fulness" without meeting the conditions. Further, God has nowhere represented Himself as doing what is stated in this text where the people are worldly, earthly minded, weak in the faith, or lacking in assurance and confidence. Where the people remain fundamentally unlearned, this Divinely revealed purpose will not be carried out. The fact that this is generally unknown confirms the effects of Babylon the Great. It is no wonder that God has mandated its fall.

UNTO HIM BE GLORY

^{3:21} ***"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."***

Paul now breaks forth in praise to God. It is the nature and reality of the things he has just declared that prompts this spontaneous expression. While men are busy rejoicing and attempting to praise God for what men have achieved, Paul is set to praising God because of what He has determined to do, and how He will get it done. He knows that this is a sure thing for the readers if they are properly taught, and respond to that teaching in faith.

UNTO HIM BE GLORY. This is a bottom-line expression. After all of the facts are in, and all of the work has been accomplished, this will be the result. This includes all that was involved in hearing the Gospel, coming to Jesus, being joined to Him, being justified, being sanctified and living for Him, resisting the devil, perfecting holiness, etc. God will be seen in it all - not in the role of a Spectator, but as He that "*worketh all in all*" (1 Cor 12:6) - who worked "*both to do and to will of His good pleasure*" in His people (Phil 2:13).

"*To Him be the glory*" involves ascribing the credit for the entirety of salvation to God. It involves the showing of His manifest wisdom to principalities and powers in heavenly places (3:10). This will be the result of perceiving the hand of God. The devil and his angels will not join in ascribing such glory to God, nor will those who have been conquered by them. This will not be the expression of the "*principalities and powers*" against which the saints wrestled (Eph 6:12).

By ascribing the glory to God now, Paul is acknowledging that he sees this as the joyful outcome of salvation, and acquiesces fully to this arrangement. He knows that the only men who will be praised are those whom God praises (1 Cor 4:5).

IN THE CHURCH. Other versions read, "*in the Messianic Community,*" ^{CJB} "*in the assembly,*" ^{DARBY} "*in the congregation,*" ^{TNT} and "*because of his master plan of salvation for the Church.*" ^{LIVING}

Here, the church is viewed in the aggregate. A single congregation, city, country, continent, or age, will not be sufficient to ascribe this glory to God. The totality of the saved will be perceived as a single entity - motivated by faith, and cleansed and taught by Christ Jesus.

This is not speaking of the totality of weak and uninformed churches. There is no way that several minuses can add up to a God-glorifying total. In salvation the individuals partake of a measure of the fulness. While it is a technical point, it must be remembered that the traits of the whole body do not rub off, so to speak, on the individual members. God intends that each member, though differing in capacity, is filled with the fulness of God. That circumstance is what allows for the whole body to be filled with all of the fulness of God. In other words, the "*body*" is never considered separate from its "*members,*" which make up the "*body of Christ.*"

BY CHRIST JESUS. Here is the reason Christ is to "*dwell in our hearts by faith.*" **The consummate result will be the outcome of His work.** He "*dwells*" in our hearts to work. By way of illustration, one of the chief works is that of teaching us (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20). **This work cannot be accomplished by an**

occasional visit. Rather, it is the result of Him taking up residence in the believers individually, and as a whole. From this perspective, God will get the glory for what His Son has done! Not only did He reconcile us, He intercedes for us (Heb 7:25), is bringing us to glory (Heb 2:10), and is the *"one Mediator between God and man"* (1 Tim 2:5).

THROUGHOUT ALL AGES. Other versions read, *"to all generations,"*^{NKJV} *"from generation to generation,"*^{CJB} *"for all time."*^{GWN} The literal translation is *"to all the generations of the age of the ages."*

There is a possibility that this means the praise begins in this world, and will blend in with the world to come. However, although many versions express this idea, I do not believe that is the intention of the expression. **This is an idiom denoting eternity.** The reason for its use is that human language does not have a word that precisely speaks of eternity.

The idea here is that salvation is so large and complex in its commencement, development, and consummation, that the praise for it that is rendered to God cannot be assigned to a period of time. In the *"ages to come,"* as this great salvation continues unfold, I do not doubt that it will be like the universe is to us now. Men cannot find an end of this universe. When they have seen what they conceive to be the furthest view, they only see that there is more. Thus will intelligent and insightful praise be rendered to God without any cessation.

WORLD WITHOUT END. To nail down the meaning, Paul adds the words *"world without end."* Other versions read, *"forever and ever,"*^{NKJV} *"forever,"*^{CJB} *"age of ages,"*^{DARBY} *"eternity,"*^{GWN} *"from time to time,"*^{TNT} *"endless ages."*^{LIVING}

Here again, language breaks down, being incapable of expressing *"eternity"* or *"eternal."* There will never be a period, throughout all eternity, when insightful praise will not be increasingly given to God for this great salvation. **That greatness begins here and now, while we are in the body, and it is to steadily increase until "the regeneration"** (Matt 19:28).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 40

Eph 4:1 *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."* (Eph 4:1-2)

LIVING IN A WORTHY MANNER

INTRODUCTION

Paul has laid the groundwork for the exhortations that follow. He is going to call the saints to an aggressive stance - one in which they advance toward the prize steadily, successively resist the foe, and accomplish their ordained purpose in the body of Christ. This is not a call to child's play! It will require rising out of the ash-heap of mediocrity. It will not allow for dullness of hearing, slowness of heart, or hardness and unbelief. There will be no admonition to "try" this or that, or to simply do "the best" we can. He will not state goals that are not really expected to be reached. Paul will put himself forward as an example, to confirm that there will be repercussions from the world when we embrace the will of the Lord. **The premise behind these exhortations is that the grace and gifts of God are intended to produce results.** Where there are no results, there really is no point to the things that are given of God, for they are designed to bring glory to Himself. So far as the perception of His gifts are concerned, it is wholly dependent upon them working in those who receive them. The means through which they work is faith, and the intention of them working is two-fold: to bring glory to God (Eph 1:6,12,14; 3:21), and to manifest to principalities and power in heavenly places God's manifold wisdom (Eph 3:9). Paul knows that if this does not take place in the church, great reproach is brought upon both God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not honored in this world by ungrateful wretches who are willing to receive from Him, yet do nothing with His gifts. Such results will bring forth the judgment and wrath of God if they are not corrected in this world. Further, knowing that spiritual growth and advancement is the appointed means of producing this kind of fruitfulness, Paul will now press the matter of some observable results being found in the body of Christ - results that bring glory to God, tutor the heavenly hosts, and provide a bright and shining light that will draw those of tender heart.

A REASONABLE DEDUCTION

Eph 4:1a *"I therefore . . ."* Other versions read, *"then,"* ^{NAB} *"So,"* ^{IE} and *"In light of all this."* ^{MESSAGE}

"THEREFORE" - AN EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL LOGIC. There is a certain rationale or logic that is inherent in spiritual thought. Valid thinking leads to certain established conclusions. It is also founded upon a solid foundation. Such thought is never founded upon some form of intellectual analysis that had its genesis with men. It never leads to a conclusion that is acceptable to the flesh, or promotes a sectarian line of thought. It is essential that this be discerned to some degree. Otherwise the professing believer will stumble and fall, and possibly come short of the intended goal.

Even during the early days in which Paul ministered, this was not a common perception. Peter alluded to this circumstance when he said of Paul's epistles: *"in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction"* (2 Pet 3:16). **It was the lofty logic of them that made Paul's words "hard to understand."**^{NKJV} Peter was not referring to intellectually complicated words or technical words. Rather, he was referring to Paul's flow of words - the thoughts that were developed by his words. They were words that reflected Divine purpose, and spoke of heavenly intentions

In the heavenly economy, justification makes perfect sense. Predestination is thoroughly reasonable. The grace of God, as defined and declared in Scripture, is logical. Abstaining from all appearance of evil, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God are clearly perceived as the proper thing to do. No one who understands what the Spirit is saying to the churches will fail to see the necessity of fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), running the race with patience (Heb 12:1-2), or pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14). Where this posture of life is absent, there is a lack of wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col 1:9) - things that come down from heaven, and are given to men by the exalted Christ.

This is precisely why Paul has prayed in a most precise manner for the Ephesians. It all targets the honing of their understanding, so they will be able to perceive what God has purposed, what He has done, and what He is doing - all through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, and through faith. He has prayed for the opening the eyes of their understanding (Eph 1:18-20), and that they would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man (Eph 3:16-20).

In the beginning of the letter, Paul stressed the Person of God, and what He has done through Christ Jesus. He has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places"* (1:3), "chosen us in Christ *"before the foundation of the world"* (1:4), predestinated us to adoption (1:5), and *"made us accepted in the Beloved"* (1:6). In Christ we *"have redemption through His blood,"* He has abounded toward us *"in all wisdom and prudence"* (1:7-8), and made known to us *"the mystery of His will"* (1:9-10). We have *"obtained an inheritance"* that we should be *"to the praise of His glory"* (1:11-12), and we have been *"sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"* (1:13-14). Based upon the foregoing, God has *"quickened us"* (2:1-2), *"raised us up together with Christ"* (2:4-5), and *"made us sit together in heavenly places"* (2:6). We are *"His workmanship,"* created in order to do good works (2:10). We have been *"made nigh"* to God (2:13), and joined together with the Jews, to whom the promises were given (2:17-19). God has made provision for *"all men to see"* and *"comprehend"* (3:9,15-2), teaching principalities and powers in heavenly places of *"His manifold wisdom"* (3:10) - all in order that God might receive *"glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages"* (3:21).

WHAT IS EXPECTED NOW? Does the God of heaven expect any results from this magnanimous display of His grace, power, and wisdom? There is a form of reasoning, or logic, in the modern church that has left the people thinking that He does not. Men have crystalized theological positions and tenets that lead those receiving them to neglect God's *"great salvation."* In distinction to religious pretenders, Paul now labors to convey godly conclusions to the brethren. He is, so to speak, connecting all of the dots, as men would say - showing the Divine logic that is resident in salvation. **If all that Paul has taught to this point is true, then it is totally unreasonable to have a dead and inactive church on our hands.** Stumbling Christians who lack understanding are a living contradiction of salvation, for it has provided both the reason and the power for spiritual solidity and dependability to flourish.

Let it be clear that what follows is not a suggestion, or a call to "be the best Christian you can." This is what is expected as a return on the Divine investment that has been made in our salvation. All of the things God has done, and what He has given to us in Christ Jesus, are calculated to produce these results. Where these results are not found, regardless of profession, another Gospel has been embraced - just as it was at Corinth (2 Cor 11:4) and Galatia (Gal 1:6). The words that follow must be seen as a summons to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, not to quench or grieve the Spirit, and zealously stop an evil heart of unbelief from entering into us. What follows is a most vivid description of the work of faith with power (2 Thess 1:11).

THE PREFERENCE OF BESEECHING

4:1b " . . . *the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you . . .* "

THE PRISONER OF THE LORD. Other versions read, "a prisoner for the Lord,"^{NIV} "the prisoner united with the Lord,"^{CJB} "the prisoner in the Lord,"^{CJB} "being prisoner in the Lord,"^{GENEVA} "a prisoner for serving the Lord,"^{NLT} "in bonds for the Lord's sake,"^{TNT} "a prisoner here in jail for serving the Lord,"^{LIVING} "the prisoner for the Master's sake,"^{WEYMOUTH} "I who am a prisoner because I serve the Lord,"^{GNB} "While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master."^{MESSAGE}

Paul began the third section of the letter by referring to himself as "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles" (Eph 3:1). Now he mentions it again. He wrote to Timothy that he was "His" (our Lord's) prisoner" (2 Tim 1:3). When writing Philemon he referred to himself as "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ" (While 1:1,9). To the Corinthians he write that he was "in prisons more frequent" than others (2 Cor 11:23). What did he mean?

Paul was, in fact, in a prison when he wrote this letter, but he wants the Ephesians to know WHY he was here. It was not because he was a malefactor, or had broken the laws of the government, or incited a rebellion against the rulers. He had not been found guilty of a crime, nor was he prosecuted for doing something fundamentally wrong.

The fact that Paul was imprisoned was a confirmation that he was actually an alien in the world, having been delivered from it (Gal 1:4). His citizenship was in heaven (Phil 3:20-21), which citizenship is not recognized by those who are primarily of this world. It further confirmed that he had been separated from the kind of religion that left people morally and spiritually unchanged. His most avid opponents, who were responsible for him being cast into prison, were opposed to him because of what he preached. This confirmed that he had not embraced a Law-system of religious regimentation and empty procedures.

The same things that he has shared with the Ephesians are what motivated Paul to "labor more abundantly" than even the other apostles (1 Cor 15:10). While "spiritual blessings" had been heaped up and made available in Christ Jesus, they did not bring the approbations of the world. All of the lasting advantages pertained to access to God, fellowship with Christ, and adequate preparation for the world to come.

Paul is not calling the Ephesians to a happier life, as ordinarily perceived. He is not calling them to worldly advantages, riches, acclaim, or some other form of worldly success. He points to himself as an example - "the prisoner of Jesus Christ." It is not that Jesus had imprisoned Paul, or that he had placed shackles and chains upon him. Rather, it is that in direct proportion to his identity with Christ, he was experiencing adversity in the world. It is not that the Ephesians would necessarily experience precisely what Paul was experiencing. However, he would have them to understand that they have participated in a "high calling," and are to expect what God has "prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor 2:9-10), as compared things that those who are wed to this present evil world expect. Great spiritual blessings cannot be successfully merged with the passing things and fads of this world!

I BESEECH YOU. Other versions read, "entreat,"^{NASB} "urge,"^{NIV} "beg,"^{NRSV} "make this request from my heart,"^{BEBE} "exhort,"^{DARBY} "pray,"^{GENEVA} "encourage,"^{GWN} "implore,"^{NAU} "call upon,"^{YLT} "summon,"^{MONTGOMERY} "appeal to,"^{ABP} "here's what I want you to do,"^{MESSAGE} and "appeal to and beg."^{AMPLIFIED}

Lexically the meaning of the word "beseech" is "To address, speak to (call to, call on), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction."^{THAYER}

This Greek word used here is found 61 times in the epistles, and is translated in a variety of ways-i.e. "Beseech," "exhorteth," "entreat," "desired," "comfort," etc.

This is a family word, so to speak. As used here, it assumes the people being addressed are in "the whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph 3:15). As such, all of the resources that are required to fulfill the word delivered to them are available to them, and they presently have the means to appropriate them.

This circumstance is not true of some professing believers - even those who are called a legitimate church by Jesus Christ, the Head. For example, the church at Laodicea had fallen to such depths that they had to make some purchases before they could progress forward. Jesus said to them, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev 3:18). However, this was not the condition of the Ephesian congregation, who were aptly described as possessing "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints" (Eph 1:15).

Not only were the ephesians living in faith and love, Paul had reminded them of what they had experienced in Christ Jesus, and of the provisions that belonged to them. Now, they must be motivated to extend their response to the Gospel in a manner that will exhibit God's manifold wisdom to principalities and powers in heaven. You might say, you can beseech spiritually sensitive people. Hard people are commanded, rebuked, corrected, and instructed in righteousness.

LIVING IN A WORTHY MANNER

4:1 " . . . *that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.* "

In his instruction Paul frames his words so the people will see that the resources He has already mentioned will be perceived as necessary to the accomplishment of the stated objective.

WALK WORTHY. Other versions read, "walk in a manner worthy,"^{NASB} "live a life worthy,"^{NIV} "lead a life worthy,"^{NRSV} "see that your behavior is a credit,"^{BBE} "live the kind of life which proves,"^{GWN} "live and act in a way worthy."^{LIVING} "live as though you were worthy,"^{IE} "live and act as becomes,"^{WEYMOUTH} "live the way God's people should live,"^{ERV} "I want you to get out there and walk - better yet, run! - on the road God called you to travel."^{MESSAGE}

The word "worthy" means becomingly, appropriately, befittingly, and suitably.

There is a manner of life that precisely matches the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. Lives will give glory to God, or credit to Satan. They reveal the working of God, or the working of the wicked one. Remember, the purpose of salvation has been stated a number of ways in this letter. **(1)** That we should be holy and without blame before Him - 1:4; **(2)** That He might gather into one all things together in Christ - 1:10; **(3)** That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace - 2:7; **(4)** There are good works in which we have been ordained to walk- 2:10); **(5)** To show His manifold wisdom to heavenly personalities through the church - 3:10; **(6)** That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith - 3:17; **(7)** That we, being rooted and grounded, might comprehend-3:18; **(8)** That we might be filled with all the fulness of God - 3:19); **(9)** That glory might be brought to Him through the church - 3:21.

Considering that we have been redeemed, made alive, justified, forgiven, delivered, reconciled, and sealed - what kind of life could be referred to as walking worthy? How should a person who has been cleansed live? What should be the manner of life of those who have been joined to the Lord. And created unto good works?

Would you refer a life as being "worthy" that requires constant correction, frequent rebukes, and continual instruction in righteousness? Shouldn't there be some kind of harmony between why we have been saved and how we live? Is it really justifiable to claim to embrace a salvation that called for Christ to empty Himself, and respond with a self-centered life? Is it really comely for a person to say they have experienced a "so great salvation," while they live a so mediocre life? Does a church that is described as a hospital for sinners match the description of one being "filled with all the fulness of God?"

The professed church has too long tolerated people among them whose lives consistently contradict the salvation they claim to have embraced.

OF THE VOCATION. Other versions read, "calling,"^{NKJV} "those who have been chosen,"^{LIVING} "God's invitation,"^{IE} "the standard God set when he called you,"^{GNB} "the road God called you to travel,"^{MESSAGE} "the summons to God's service."^{AMPLIFIED} As used here, the word "vocation" means "the station in life to which one has been called,"^{THAYER} "to accept responsibilities for a certain task, implying a new relationship to the One who does the calling."^{LOUW NIDA}

It is written that we have been "called to be saints," or holy ones (Rom 1:7). We have also been "called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). We were also "called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor 1:9), and called "into the grace of Christ"(Gal 1:6). We were "called into liberty" (Gal 5:1), and "called into His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:12). We are also reminded that we have been "called . . . unto holiness" (1 Thess 4:7), and "unto eternal life" (1 Tim 6:12). Jesus is mediating the New Covenant in order that "they which are called might receive the promise of eternal; inheritance" (Heb 9:15). We were called to "inherit a blessing" (1` Pet 3:9), and "unto His eternal glory" (1 Pet 5:10).

WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED. Other versions read, "*the calling with which you have been called,*"^{NASB} and "*the calling you have received.*"^{NIV}

The call came to us by means of the Gospel. As it is written, "*Whereunto he called you **by our gospel**, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thess 2:14). Because of its origin, purpose, and means by which it was carried out, this calling is appropriately referred to as a "*holy calling*" (2 Tim 1:9) - a calling by which we were summoned, "*out of darkness into His marvelous light*" (2 Pet 2:9).

Whether people knew it or not, this calling is to be followed with holiness, and a manner of life that is befitting of such a summons. This is why Peter admonished those who asked what they should do, "*Save yourselves from this untoward generation*" (Acts 2:40). **Where the Gospel has not been correctly preached, a calling has not even been issued.** Where the Gospel has been preached in truth, it is a summons to holiness, separateness, the crucifying of the flesh, and a relentless pursuit of holiness. The fact that this is little known in our time testifies to what has and has not been preached. Even though Paul had preached the truth of the Gospel, he now exhorts the people to see to it that their lives are an appropriate complement to being saved by grace through faith. He does not assume this will happen, but presses the matter upon them.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 41

Eph 4:2 " *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;* ³*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" (Eph 4:1-2)

THE NOBLE ENDEAVOR

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to spiritual growth, there are at least three things that are essential. **First**, the truth pertaining to God and His great salvation must be declared, or affirmed. This includes the preeminence of "*the Lord*" and "*His Christ*" (Acts 4:26), the revealed purpose of God, and the objective of that purpose. These three pillars support all sound proclamation and reasoning of the salvation of God. **Second**, the imperative of faith - of believing what God has declared of Himself, His purpose, and the objective of that purpose. **Third**, the shaping of ones life around the revelation of God, His purpose, and the aim of that purpose. To this point, Paul has strongly and clearly affirmed God and Christ. He has expounded what is purposed in salvation, and what the intended yield of that salvation will be. No religious thought or action that does not blend with the Person, purpose, and objective of the Almighty God is true, helpful, or spiritually practical. Even more than during the time our text was written, there is a phenomenal amount of "Christian" activity that has nothing whatsoever to do with what has been revealed about God and Christ, God's "*eternal purpose*," and the determined outcome of salvation.

A religious culture has been developed that has rendered the people incapable of perceiving the truth. As a result of this near- total ignorance of the absolute necessity of the truth of God being lived out deliberately, consistently, and in a manner that is acceptable to God, the modern church is in the grip of lethargy. The seriousness of this condition cannot be overstated.

Commencing with this chapter, Paul is opening up the kind of human involvement in this salvation that is necessary. Further, he will establish that spiritual resources have been provided that are guaranteed to initiate, undergird, and bring to completion these requirements. The logical nature of these things is seen against the backdrop of God and Christ, Divine purpose, and what salvation is intended to produce. I want to emphasize that these are not mere goals, as ordinarily perceived. They are not options. **Salvation will not be finalized without these being done.**

ALL LOWLINESS AND MEEKNESS

Eph 4:2a **"With all lowliness and meekness . . ."**

The subject under consideration is walking *"worthy of the vocation wherewith ye have been called,"* or living in a manner that is consistent with, and complementary of, our calling. That is the calling that came by the *"Gospel"* (2 Thess 2:14). Let us be clear in our thinking about this. There is no salvation promised to those whose lives are lived in contradiction of their calling *"unto the fellowship of His Son"* (1 Cor 1:9), *"into the grace of Christ"* (Gal 1:6), *"unto liberty"* (Gal 5:13), *"unto His kingdom and glory"* (1 Thess 2:12), *"unto holiness"* (1 Thess 4:7), and *"unto His eternal glory"* (1 Pet 5:10). **Any manner of life that conflicts with this calling is wrong.**

WITH. Other versions read, *"be,"*^{NIV} *"in"*^{TNT} and *"Living as becomes you."*^{AMPLIFIED} The word used here has the following lexical meaning: "with, after, among, hereafter, afterward."^{THAYER} The idea is that what is now declared is what is to be found in us following our *"calling."* Properly received, the calling will awaken a keen interest in these characteristics, which will drive the relentless pursuit and maintenance of them. We must look for these things to be in us.

ALL. Other versions read, *"completely,"*^{NIV} *"always,"*^{CJB} *"in every way,"*^{GWN} *"perfect,"*^{WILLIAMS} and *"not in fits and starts, but steadily."*^{MESSAGE} The word *"all"* is translated from a word that means "1) individually 1a) each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything 2) collectively 2a) some of all types,"^{THAYER} and "all, any, every, the whole: -- all (manner of, means), always."^{STRONG'S} The idea is that everything now mentioned is to be used to accomplish the exhortation. It is not one of those things that requires a little of this, and a little of that. The words that follow are to be considered in their completeness, with no aspect of them being intentionally left out. Remember, we are speaking of walking *"worthy of the vocation wherewith ye have been called."* This is not something that can be accomplished casually, or by fits and starts. It is also something that is required by God, and cannot possibly be accomplished by human resources. A hearty and consistent effort will also be required.

LOWLINESS. Other versions read, *"humility,"*^{NASB} *"completely humble,"*^{NIV} *"gentle,"*^{BBE} *"humbleness of mind,"*^{GENEVA} *"perfect humility,"*^{WILLIAMS} and *"complete lowliness of mind."*^{AMPLIFIED} The word *"lowliness,"* as used here, means, "having a humble opinion of one's self 2) a deep sense of one's (moral) littleness 3) modesty, humility, lowliness of mind."^{THAYER} This is antithetical to pride, or thinking of oneself *"more highly than he ought to think"* (Rom 12:3).

This is the same mind that was first found in the Lord Jesus Himself, *"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil 2:6-8). This description of our Lord is preceded by the words, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 2:5).

In our Lord, *"lowliness"* was lived out, and the idea of it set in stone. It involved forfeiting certain rights, becoming a servant, humbling Himself, becoming obedient, and suffering death on the cross. He did not do this out of any sense of personal obligation, for He was equal to God, being in His *"form"* (Phil 2:6), and being God (John 1:1).

For Paul, having this mind ("all lowliness") involved counting *"all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,"* counting them *"but dung."* It involved forgetting *"the things that were behind"* in the perception that he had not yet *"apprehended that for which"* he was *"apprehended of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 3:8-12).

This is speaking of self denial (Matt 16:24). Jesus also referred to it as losing one's life for His sake (Lk 9:24). This equates to crucifying the flesh (Gal 5:24), putting off *"the old man"* (Eph 4:22), and not thinking only of personal things (Phil 2:4). From another perspective, it is seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, as opposed to purely self-interests. It is precisely at this point that many professing believers are locked into carnality. They are too self-centered.

MEEKNESS. Other versions read *"gentleness,"*^{NKJV} *"quiet behavior,"*^{BBE} *"mildness,"*^{DOUAY} *"unselfishness,"*^{WEYMOUTH} and *"unselfishness, gentleness, mildness."*^{AMPLIFIED} As used here, the lexical definition of meekness is "unselfishness, gentleness, mildness."^{THAYER} This definition, however, is not thoroughly adequate. **Meekness assumes the existence of strength that is held in check.** It does not postulate a weak and incapable person who merely acknowledges their lack of strength. It presumes the individual who is meek could assert

himself, and run roughshod over people if he pleased. Our Lord is the ultimate example in this. He said, "*I am meek and lowly in heart*" (Matt 11:29). He was fully capable of destroying the world and all that was in it through His strength and power. Instead, He devoted that power to saving those who had rebelled against Him.

A practical example of meekness is found in a strong horse or ox. Instead of using its strength to destroy, that strength is harnessed for good, being channeled into profitable areas. So it is with those who use "*all*" meekness. **Their strengths are directed to serving the Lord and ministering to His people, as opposed to developing personal careers and advantages.**

THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF FORBEARANCE

4:2b "*. . . with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*"

We must keep before us the fact that this text is **not** speaking of personal attainments and disciplines. This is not an outline of what must be done to be a better person - although that result will be realized when this exhortation is heeded. The objective is to "*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye have been called.*" And why is this posture necessary? **Because this worthiness is required to maintain Divine acceptance.** Notice with care that Paul does not spell out specific areas of human accomplishment - like feeding the poor, etc. He rather speaks of a certain frame of mind that must be maintained. A failure to have this kind of mind-set will, so to speak, clog the channel of communication between heaven and earth, so that supplies and direction will not be able to be effectively transmitted to the individual. Where these virtues are not developed, the heart become hard, the eyes dim, and the hearing dull.

WITH LONGSUFFERING. Other versions read, "*with patience,*"^{NASB} "*taking whatever comes,*"^{BBE} "*Be patient with each other,*"^{GWN} "*with leniency,*"^{ABP} and "*pouring yourselves out for each other.*"^{MESSAGE}

The lexical meaning of "*longsuffering*" is "1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance 2) patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs."^{THAYER} and "a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation and misfortune, and without complaint or irritation."^{LOUW-NIDA} The suffix "*suffering*" indicates that there is a certain irritation and pain that is being endured - something that could be interpreted as a personal assault or lack of respect.

Part of denying self (Lk 9:23), crucifying the flesh (Gal 5:24), dying daily (1 Cor 15:31), or taking up one's cross (Matt 10:38), is not taking difficult things to be personal attacks. In delineating the nature of love Paul wrote, "*Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*" (1 Cor 13:7). This is not a description of what men do, but of what **love** does and does not do. **The person who lacks these qualities is not simply lacking certain characteristics, but lacks love, regardless of what they may say.**

The truth of the matter is that if we cannot be longsuffering one another, God will not be longsuffering with us. With this in mind, ponder some of the words of Jesus. "*But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses*" (Mark 11:26). And again, "*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*" (Matt 7:2). If we are harsh with others, God will be harsh with us. If we are merciful, we shall experience mercy. Therefore Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*" (Matt 5:7).

This is how the Divine government works, and it is not possible to violate these admonitions and yet retain favor with God. Israel was chastened when they rebelled (Num 20:34; 27:14; Psa 107:11). Paul now elaborates briefly on this word.

FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER. Other versions read, "*bearing with one another,*"^{NKJV} "*showing forbearance to one another,*"^{NASB} "*putting up with one another,*"^{BBE} "*accepting one another,*"^{CSB} "*supporting one another,*"^{GENEVA} "*showing tolerance,*"^{NAU} "*making allowance for each other's faults,*"^{NLT} "*enduring one another,*"^{ABP} "*pouring yourselves out for each other,*"^{MESSAGE} and "*bearing with one another and making allowances,*"^{AMPLIFIED} For the flesh, this is an impossible demand. However, for those who are in Christ, it is

quite doable.

This word postulates sincerity and devotion on the part of all of the members of the body of Christ. It is not a word that takes into consideration fornicators (1 Cor 5:9-10) and those who cause division (Rom 16:17).

Rather, this views the brethren as in a state of development. Perhaps there are some, like those in Philippi, who did not yet see the truth of throwing all of one's energies into knowing Christ. To such, Paul was "longsuffering," and wrote: "*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing*" (Phil 3:15-16). There are brethren who must overcome a past that is fraught with dangers and misconceptions. While they have received new hearts, and have been made acceptable in the Beloved, they have a lot of growing to do. Forbearing one another allows for that growth to take place, assuming the role of a helper, not one who hinders.

IN LOVE. This is the kind of love that is an environment in which faith can flourish. As it is written, "*faith which worketh by love*" (Gal 5:6). This is also the "*love of the brethren*" into which the Holy Spirit leads us (1 Pet 1:22), and which God Himself teaches us (1 Thess 4:9). It is the attraction to and preference for the people of God, and is what distinguishes us as Christ's disciples (John 13:35). We are not longsuffering and forbearing with our brethren because it is our duty to do so - although it is. Rather, it is because we have a common Father and Savior.

KEEPING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

^{4:3} "*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

Every aspect of the Kingdom of God is driven by an objective - an aim, a purpose. God has chosen us in order that we might be "*holy and without blame before Him in love*" (1:4). The entirety of salvation is "*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*" (3:10). He "*predestinated*" us in order that "*we should be to the praise of his glory*" (1:12). We have been created in Christ Jesus in order to do "*good works, which God hath before ordained*" (2:10).

Now Paul introduces a similar thought. He tells us the reason for being lowly, meek, longsuffering, and forbearing one another in love. It is not merely to be obedient, or to fulfill a moral requirement, although that is involved. Here is a matter that has to do with the body of Christ - the repository into which Jesus pours all of His "*fulness*" (1:23). From another point of view, the church is a dispensing station for the truth and grace of God. This is the body of people to which certain gifts have been given, and where the knowledge of God is cultured. Jesus gave Himself for the church (Eph 5:25), and is building the church (Matt 16:18). At this present time God is receiving glory "*in the church by Christ Jesus*" (Eph 4:21). Those with no deep and lasting interest in the church are actually living in contradiction to both God and Christ, as well as angels.

ENDEAVORING. Other versions read, "*being diligent to,*"^{NASB} "*make every effort,*"^{NIV} "*Eager to,*"^{NRSV} "*taking care,*"^{BEBE} "*do your best,*"^{GWN} "*striving,*"^{NAB} "*Try always,*"^{LIVING} "*Try hard,*"^{IE} "*continuing with eager earnestness,*"^{WILLIAMS} "*hurrying to,*"^{ABP} "*do all you can,*"^{ERV} and "*Be eager and strive earnestly.*"^{AMPLIFIED}

The word "*endeavoring*" means, "1) to hasten, make haste 2) to exert one's self, endeavor, give diligence."^{THAYER & GINGRICH} There is a two-fold idea inherent in this word. First, there is the notion of making haste to do what is said - getting to the work at hand. Second there is the idea of the consistent exertion of effort, as when there are opposing influences.

These two qualities are glaringly absent in the professing church of our day: "haste," or getting involved **now** in the work of the Kingdom, and **carefully watching** for appropriate opportunities. **An environment has been foisted upon the religious community in which God cannot and will not work.** This text addresses the manner of the Kingdom, and the kind of environment in which growth can take place in the saints, and glory brought to God. All of this will take holy effort. This is because we are not in a moral vacuum. There are opposing spirits and men, as well as the flesh that energetically attempt to block the path to glory.

TO KEEP THE UNITY. Other versions read, "preserve,"^{NASB} "maintain,"^{NRSV} and "to guard and keep the harmony and oneness."^{AMPLIFIED} Other versions refer to "the unity of the Spirit" as "harmony of the Spirit,"^{BBE} "united in the Spirit,"^{NLT} "led along together by the Spirit,"^{LIVING} "unity given by the Spirit,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "the harmony and oneness of [and produced by] the Spirit."^{AMPLIFIED} This speaks of something God has started that is to be maintained with zeal.

This is not a unity produced, created, or initiated by men. It is a unity created by God at the point a person is "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14), "joined unto the Lord" (1 Cor 6:17), "added" to the church (Acts 2:47), "baptized into Christ" (Gal 3:27), and "baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13). This is the point where God puts us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), and places us in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:18). At that point we are at once united with all of the saved, whether they remain in the world, or have passed through death into a loftier realm. Every person who is born again is most happy to find kindred believers. It takes a sectarian environment to invade the sacred citadel of unity and pit brother against brother.

Precisely how does one "endeavor" to keep the unity that is originated by heaven - and why is it necessary to do so? First, the endeavor, or effort, is found in walking worthy of our calling with all longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. Those are activities that the forces of darkness cannot negate, for Satan cannot touch that which is born of God (1 John 5:18). Those who endeavor to keep the unity will not allow divisions to be among themselves (1 Cor 1:10).

OF THE SPIRIT. With holy deliberateness, Paul traces this blessed unity to the Holy Spirit. He is the One who moves us into the experience of the "unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet 1:22). The Holy Spirit is the One who administers the various spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4,7-11). These gifts work together harmoniously like a finely tuned engine. They are the pragmatic, or practical way, in which the unity is maintained (1 Cor 12:12-27).

IN THE BOND OF PEACE. Other versions read, "yoke,"^{BBE} "binding power,"^{CJB} "ties you together,"^{GWN} "the tie,"^{WILLIAMS} "hold you together,"^{ERV} and "the binding power of."^{AMPLIFIED}

James wrote, "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:18). **Peace is the soil in which spiritual virtues grow and flourish.** Agitation, tumult, and various eruptions of the flesh are all counter-productive. The Spirit will not work in such an environment. However, where the kind of peace exists that is referenced in this text, there will be an unparalleled spurt of growth, and the development of God-honoring maturity.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 42

Eph 4:4 " *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.*" (Eph 4:4)

UNIQUENESS CHARACTERIZES THE BODY OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

The body of Christ is comprised of many members, but none of them, nor any group of them, are islands unto themselves. The members of the body are not grouped in accordance with their gifts - eyes with eyes, and feet with feet, so to speak. The apostles are unique, being given things to see that can only be received from them. Yet, they are integrated into the body, and are considered to be one with it (1 Cor 12:28). The strength of the brethren does not consist in their uniqueness, but in their oneness with the rest of the body. The reason for this arrangement is the nature of the Kingdom - particularly as it regards the matters of edification, strengthening, exhorting, comforting, etc. While there is a sense in which some of this activity is accomplished through our direct fellowship with God through Christ (Eph 4:20-21; 1 Thess 3:11), and through the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27), the primary means is through the various members of the body (Col 2:19). Even then, there are very real things that are common among us. Thus far Paul has mentioned being blessed with Divine supplies (1:3), being chosen (1:4), being adopted (1:5), and being "*made accepted*" (1:6). There is also the status of having redemption and forgiveness (1:7), obtaining an inheritance (1:11), and being sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13). Each member has been "*quickened,*" or made alive (2:1,5), raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places (2:6), made nigh by the blood of Christ (2:13), reconciled (2:16), given access to God (2:18), given citizenship in the household of God (2:19), and built on the foundation (2:20). However, we "*are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*"^{NKJV} (Eph 2:22). Because of this circumstance, God can dwell among us ONLY to the degree that we are united together - which unity, from a practical point of view, is accomplished by the various ministrations of the body. That is, we are bonded together by "*that which every joint supplieth*" (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). It is in the prospect of developing this matter that Paul now addresses the marvelous unity and accord that exists in the church. The Scriptures nowhere postulate the existence of a divided and fractured church. That condition is wholly of man's making, and is unanimously condemned by the Holy Spirit (Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; 3:3; 11:18; James 4:1). The people of God are admonished to "*be at peace*" among themselves, for that is the environment in which God works (1 Thess 5:13). We will now find that unity is based upon very solid and unmoveable realities.

THERE IS ONE BODY

Eph 4:4a **"There is one body . . ."**

In this section, the point being emphasized is the spiritual structure of the church. From one point of view, it is a building project, with the saints being *"builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit"* (Eph 2:22). From another point of view, it is the amalgamation of two differing bodies of people, who lose their fleshly distinction in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:6). This merging of otherwise differing peoples confirms the reality of *"newness of life."* **In the Kingdom of God, personalities that are fundamentally different cannot be brought together into "one."** This is not only true of man with man, but of God with man as well - and even holy angels and men (Heb 12:22). This essential change is encapsulated in being raised from death in trespasses and sins, where the difference between God and man was revealed, and developed as well (Eph 2:1-5). Thus Paul embarks on the subject of unity by showing certain Kingdom singularities.

THERE IS. This is not philosophical language - like, "there should be," or "there ought to be." This is something that exists - not something that should exist. The only issue here is whether or not the people are part of it.

This is an aspect of the Kingdom that requires consist proclamation. God *"IS"* (Heb 11:6). Jesus *"IS"* (Eph 5:23). The Spirit *"IS"* (1 John 5:6). Faith *"IS"* (Heb 11:1). **It is the reality of God and the things of God that brings the people together, as well as their reception of a nature that is compatible with them.** In this section, Paul will clearly affirm that the oneness that exists among the people of God is not institutional in nature. Nor, indeed, is it based upon a mere creed. In the church, we have an introduction to the kind of unity that is the revealed objective of God: *"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"* (Eph 1:10).

ONE BODY. In the book of Ephesians, the church is frequently referred to as the *"body."*

- **CHRIST'S MEANS OF EXPRESSION.** *"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"* (Eph 1:22-23).
- **THE PLACE WHERE RECONCILIATION IS REALIZED.** *"And that He might reconcile both unto God in ONE BODY by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby"* (Eph 2:16).
- **THE PLACE WHERE HEIRSHIP IS REALIZED.** *"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel"* (Eph 3:6).
- **THE PLACE OF BUILDING UP.** *" . . . for the edifying of THE BODY of Christ"* (Eph 4:12).
- **THE PLACE WHERE UNITY IS REALIZED.** *"From whom the WHOLE BODY fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth"* (Eph 4:16).
- **THE PLACE WHERE SALVATION IS CONFIRMED.** *"Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of THE BODY"* (Eph 5:23).
- **THE PLACE WHERE PARTICIPATION TAKES PLACE.** *"For we are members of HIS BODY, of his flesh, and of his bones"* (Eph 5:30).

Paul also refers to the church as Christ's "body" in his other writings.

- **THE PLACE WHERE DIFFERENCES ARE LEGITIMATIZED.** *"For as we have many members in ONE BODY, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are ONE BODY in Christ, and every one members one of another"* (Rom 12:4-5).
- **THE PLACE OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY.** *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are ONE BODY: so also is Christ"* (1 Cor 12:12).
- **THE PLACE WHERE CHRIST'S HEADSHIP IS REALIZED.** *"And He is the Head of THE BODY, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence"* (Col 1:18).
- **THE PLACE INTO WHICH WE ARE CALLED.** *"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,*

to the which also ye are called in ONE BODY; and be ye thankful" (Col 3:15).

The expression "*one body*," referring to the church, is an important one, occurring ten times in Scripture (Rom 12:4,5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12,13,20; Eph 2:16; 4:4; Col 3:15). It accents the effectiveness of Christ's death, resurrection, exaltation, and intercession.

The fact that there is only "*one body*" underscores the fact that it is not divided - for then it would cease to be a body. Men may be divided, such as the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:3; 11:18). However there are no divisions in Christ's body, for that would require Him to be a minister to those divisions - and that is not possible. Every person who is put into Christ (1 Cor 1:30) is, at that time, placed in the body, and is "*one*" with all of the other members.

Babylon the Great has introduced a non-body concept of the church. It is not, in any sense of the word, a working entity, and it is not something to which Christ ministers. This accounts for the spiritually negative impact it has upon the person whose mind is set on things above. If there is only "*one body*," then there is only one environment in which Jesus ministers, consistent edification is realized, and growth up into Christ actually takes place (Eph 4:15).

THERE IS ONE SPIRIT

^{4:4b} "**There is . . . one Spirit . . .**" Other versions read, "*the same Spirit*," ^{LIVING} "*one Spirit of God*," ^{CEV} and "*You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly.*" ^{MESSAGE} All other versions read "*one Spirit*." The two exceptions are serious departures from the text. The first ("same Spirit") accents the unity of the believers, while the text stresses the singularity of the Spirit. The third is nothing more than a commentary parading itself as a translation of the Bible.

AN ANIMATING SPIRIT. The point here is that the "*one body*" is animated by "*one Spirit*." Just as in nature, where "*the body without the spirit is dead*" (James 2:26), so in matters pertaining to salvation, a "*body*" of professed believers without the Holy Spirit, is "*dead*." This is the condition that caused the church in Sardis to be classified by Jesus as "*dead*" (Rev 3:1). The Holy Spirit was not there. It was their "*works*," or, more specifically, lack of the works for which they had been created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10) that brought about this Divine diagnosis. Therefore Jesus admonished them, "*Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God*" (Rev 3:2). The fact that there were some remaining things that were "*ready to die*," does not contradict the fact that they were "*dead*." That is rather the effect of "*a few*" in Sardis who had "*not defiled their garments*" (Rev 3:4). As I understand it, their presence at that time offered a way of escape from the domain of spiritual death. However, if that church did not take advantage of the door opened to them, death would envelop them. I assume that would take place when those few people were withdraw from the assembly, like the disciples were in the Ephesians synagogue, which was another "*dead*" environment (Acts 19:9).

There is only "*one Spirit*" that properly animates, motivates, and leads, the body of Christ, which is also single. It is not a Spirit that allows for differing preferences in matters pertaining to life and godliness. It is a uniting Spirit, a working Spirit, and an interceding Spirit. If that "*one Spirit*" is not animating the "*one body*," it is not the body of Christ!

WHAT THIS "ONE SPIRIT" DOES. Men dare not accept a philosophical view of the Spirit of God - the "*one Spirit*" of reference. This is "*the Holy Spirit of promise*" (Eph 1:13), "*the Holy Spirit of God*" (Eph 4:30), and "*the Spirit of Jesus Christ*" (Phil 1:19). While it is true that He is given to individual believers (Acts 2:38; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thess 4:8), the emphasis here is on the body. This will be confirmed through this entire text (4:1-32). Further, in this very text, the **assembly** is admonished, "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye (plural) are sealed unto the day of redemption*" (Eph 4:30).

It is important to consider the things the Spirit does. They are things that cannot be emulated, or produced by some other source.

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- Is a Witness, given to those who obey God (Acts 5:32).

- Is a minister of "comfort," strength, and encouragement (Acts 9:31).
- Gives certain commissions (Acts 13:2-4).
- Makes chosen men "overseers, to feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28).
- Sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5).
- He leads in the successful subduing of the flesh (Rom 8:13-14).
- Intercedes for us in necessary matters of which we are ignorant (Rom 8:26-27).
- Produces righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17).
- Fills with "all joy and peace in believing," enabling the believer to "abound in hope" (Rom 15:13).
- Sanctifies the offering of lives to God (Rom 15:16).
- Teaches men to speak with proper words (1 Cor 2:13).
- He washes, sanctifies, and justifies (1 Cor 6:11).
- He leads people to speak profitably (1 Cor 12:3,8).
- He changes us from one increasing stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18).
- Enables the believer to "wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5).
- He produces fruit that glorifies God and stabilizes the body of Christ (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9).
- God inhabits the church "through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22).
- Enables the believer to "keep" what has been given by God to him (2 Tim 1:14).
- Moves men to obey the truth, and to love the brethren with an unfeigned love (1 Pet 1:22).
- Confirms that Christ abides in us (1 John 3:24).

This "one Spirit" is indispensable to the proper functioning of the body of Christ. So far as the assembly is concerned, He dispenses and administers proper spiritual gifts that are designed to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor 12). There is no such thing as an acceptable church, or congregation, where the Holy Spirit is doing His assigned work. Further, where this work is not being accomplished, the Spirit has been "quenched" or "grieved" (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19).

THERE IS ONE HOPE OF OUR CALLING

^{4:4c} "... even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Other versions read, "called to one hope when you were called," ^{NIV} "called to the one hope that belongs to your call," ^{RSV} "the one hope of His purpose for you," ^{BBE} "one hope of your vocation," ^{GENEVA} "called to share one hope," ^{GWN} "one hope is the goal of your calling by God," ^{NJB} "called to one glorious hope for the future," ^{NLT} "called to the same glorious future," ^{LIVING} "you had one and the same hope held out to you," ^{WEYMOUTH} "one hope resulting from the call you have received," ^{WILLIAMS} "you were given one hope when you were chosen to be God's people," ^{CEV} "God chose you to have one hope," ^{ERV} and "there is also one hope [that belongs] to the calling you received." ^{AMPLIFIED}

WHAT IS HOPE? "Hope" is mentioned 48 times in the Epistles (Romans-Jude). It always points to the future, and is set forth as the objective, or purpose, for being saved. Paul had already written that his prayers for the brethren included the opening of the eyes of their understanding to "the hope of His calling" (Eph 1:18). That "hope" must be perceived and embraced, If it is not, there is no alternative to being anchored to this world, which is passing away. Further, those who become anchored to this world, minding earthly things, will be destroyed (Phil 3:9), and the person whose whole desire is to be a friend of the world, becomes "the enemy of God" (James 4:4). "Hope" is what keeps us from being pinned to the earth, and becoming friends of

the world. It is the *"anchor"* that is cast upward, securing the soul (Heb 6:19). Hope is faith in its forward posture - the assured anticipation of participation in the salvation that is *"ready to be revealed"* (1 Pet 1:5). At that time, we will be made complete, receiving *"the redemption of our body"* (Rom 8:23). Our bodies are referred to as *"the purchased possession"* (Eph 1:14). They are the part of us, associated with *"the soul,"* that has not yet been *"saved."* While we remain in them, we *"groan"* under their weight (2 Cor 5:4). Salvation prepares us for our immortal bodies, which are waiting for us *"in the heavens"* (2 Cor 5:1). We will inhabit these glorified bodies when Jesus comes, either by being raised from the dead, or instantly *"changed,"* if we are *"alive and remain"* until the coming of the Lord (1 Thess 4:15-17). It is revealed that God has created us in Christ Jesus for the purpose of inhabiting these glorified bodies (2 Cor 5:5). When Jesus comes, and we behold Him in all of His glory, *"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"* (1 John 3:2).

It is not that hope is fully realized by inhabiting our glorified bodies. That will be the commencement of an eternity of teeming with activity, described as reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), and being *"joint heirs"* with Him (Rom 8:17). God Himself will dwell within the glorified church (Rev 21:3). The experience is described in these words, *"and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thess 4:17). There will be a total absence of everything that chafed against our spirits in this world (Rev 21:1-4; 22:3).

ONLY ONE HOPE. There is, as our text affirms, only *"one hope,"* and it has to do with life AFTER this world has passed away. This hope has everything to do with our *"beginning"* (Heb 3:14) - when we were *"called."* It is referred to as the *"hope of your calling,"* or the reason God called you! This calling is associated with the Gospel, for, as it is written, *"He called you by our Gospel"* (2 Thess 2:14). When the real Gospel of Christ is preached the hearts of believers are drawn toward heaven, where their calling will be consummated. It was attended by the beginning of a discontent with *"this present evil world,"* from which Jesus has delivered us (Gal 1:4). This hope is referred to as *"the hope of the glory of God"* - something in which we *"rejoice"* (Rom 5:2). This hope is the means through which we are *"saved"* (Rom 8:24-25), and without which salvation is not possible. It is a *"hope"* in which we can *"abound,"* which neutralizes all of the trials and vicissitudes (unfavorable changes) of life. This is *"the hope of the Gospel"* (Col 1:23).

The *"one hope"* foresees and anxiously anticipates the realization of total righteousness - with no flaw in any part of our being. Having their hearts *"purified by faith,"* the elect have a strong propensity to purity. This is the reason for the expression, *"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith"* (Gal 5:5). This hope protects the mind, keeping it from being drawn aside to vanity. It is referred to as *"an helmet, the hope of salvation"* (1 Thess 5:8).

The full realization of this hope, which involves being with Jesus forever, is being kept for us in heaven: *"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel"* (Col 1:5). For the child of God, there is no other hope! This is the **"ONE HOPE"** made known in the preaching of the Gospel, and to which we have been called. **Where this hope does not exist, either the Gospel has not been preached, or it has not been believed.**

As Paul begins this discourse on the functionality of the church, he lays a groundwork so we can identify the spiritual environment in which Divine workings pertaining to salvation are found. If they are not found, then an environment exists in which they cannot be wrought. **Also, there are NO other sources that can cause bring these spiritual realities into existence, or sustain them once they are located in the body.**

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 43

Eph 4:5 " *There is . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*" (Eph 4:5)

ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM

INTRODUCTION

The fulfillment of any inspired exhortation is necessarily preceded by an accent on the Lord who called us, and the realities that are made known in Christ Jesus. In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul, Paul first identified **God Himself**. He is the one who bestows grace and peace (1:2). He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (1:3). He is the One who has chosen us (1:4a), and has determined that we would finally be "*without blame before Him in love*" (1:4b). He predestinated us to be adopted as His children (1:5). He has "*made us accepted*" (1:6). God has "*abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence*" (1:8). He has made known the mystery of His will (1:9). He has determined He will gather everything together in one (1:10). He is the One who "*worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*" (1:11). He is the One who gives us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (1:17). He is the One who raised Jesus from the dead, seating Him at His own right hand (1:20). God has put all things under the feet of Christ, and given Him to be the Head of all things (1:22). It is God who has quickened us (2:1). He raised us up to sit with Christ in heavenly places (2:6). We are His workmanship (2:10). It is the "*manifold wisdom of God*" that is currently made known to heavenly powers through the church (3:10).

Christ Jesus is the one in whom God chose us (1:4), through whom we are adopted (1:5), and in whom we are made accepted (1:6). We have redemption through His blood (1:7), and all things are gathered together in Him (1:10). In Jesus we have obtained an inheritance (1:11), and He is the One in whom we trusted (1:12). The church is Christ's body, and is the repository into which He pours His fulness (1:23). We have been "*made nigh*" by His blood, and He is our peace (2:13-14). He "*abolished*" the enmity that separated us from God, making peace (2:15). He Himself "*came and preached peace to us,*" and through Him both Jew and Gentile "*have access*" to God (2:17-18). He is the Foundation upon which we are built, and is the Chief Cornerstone (2:20). It is in Jesus that we are "*fitly framed together*" (2:21). God "*created all things by Jesus Christ*" (3:9). It is Christ who dwells in hearts made strong by the Holy Spirit, doing so by their faith (3:16-17). The unwavering intention is for God to receive glory "*in the church by Christ Jesus*" (3:21). That is a snap-shot of thought that prepares us for statements that follow.

That is the context in which the statements and exhortations of chapter four are made.

THERE IS ONE LORD

Eph 4:5a **"There is . . . One Lord . . ."** Other versions read, "Let there be but one Lord,"^{TNT} "For us there is only one Lord,"^{LIVING} "We have only one Lord,"^{CEV} "You have one Master."^{MESSAGE} The original language has only two words: ei-j ku,rioj = "one Lord" [Master]. This is not an exhortation, as represented in the Tyndale Bible. It is not a statement of something that is unique to believers, as the Living Bible, Contemporary English Version, and Message bibles state. **Foundational statements concerning Deity are not grounded in human experience, and it is wrong to represent them as though they were.** This is an unqualified statement of the reality of the case. In another text that is dealing with a deficiency of understanding among certain novices, Paul did write, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Cor 8:5-6). There, however, Paul is dealing with brotherly consideration. In our text, he is grounding the faith of the people. Here he does not speak of human perception, but of ultimate reality - "ONE LORD."

The word "Lord" comes from a word meaning "having power or authority, he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord; used a. universally, of the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner . . . one who has control of the person, the master."^{THAYER} "one who has control of the person, the master,"^{LOWE-NIDA} "lord, master, one who has full control."^{GINGRICH} In Matthew through Revelation, this word is applied to God 115 times, and in relation to Jesus 411 times. In this text, it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is referenced in the next verse. It is a wholly proper view of Jesus Christ that promotes faith and trust.

Eight times this expression is used in Ephesians: "Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2,3,15,17; 3:14; 5:20; 6:23,24). We also read of "Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:11). Things related to the perception that Jesus is Lord include the following: "spiritual blessings" (1:3), "faith" (1:15), the framing of the church into a "temple" for God (2:21), God's "eternal purpose" (3:11), "the Father" (3:14), walking as "children of light" (5:8), "what is acceptable" (5:10), the Divine "will" (5:17), "singing" (5:19), giving "thanks" (5:20), submission (5:22), obedience (6:1), "nurture and admonition" (6:4), doing "service" to God (6:7), receiving "from God" (6:8), being "strong" (6:10), being a "faithful minister" (6:21), "love" and "faith" (6:23), and "grace" (6:23). It is evident that a proper perception of Jesus Christ is essential to living acceptably for, and receiving from, God.

Let it be clear that this expression "ONE LORD," as used here, particularly applies to Jesus Christ. Also, this applies to His state following His ascension back into heaven, and His exaltation above all. Peter made this clear on the day of Pentecost when he boldly announced, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ**" (Acts 2:36). He also declared this to certain Gentiles who were gathered in the house of Cornelius: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (**He is Lord of all**)" (Acts 10:36).

The reign of Jesus is consistently associated with His Saviorhood - His incarnation through His present uncontested reign. The adjudication of His Kingdom is connected with Him being "born" and "glorified" - not with Him coming the second time (Isa 9:6-7; Acts 3:13).

Although Satan is "the God of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), and "the whole world" lies under his sway (1 John 2:19), his power is secondary and delegated authority. He is subject to Christ in the strictest sense of the word. He cannot touch the one Jesus protects, or interfere with the purpose Jesus is carrying out to its culmination.

JESUS IS ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN. Let there be no doubt about this. Jesus is presently "the blessed and **only** Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim 6:15). "Angels, and authorities, and powers" have been "made subject to Him" (1 Pet 3:22). "All authority in heaven and earth" has been given to Him (Matt 28:18). The dispensation of this power and authority has been given to Jesus to bring the sons home to glory. It is essential that they know this.

HE IS THE ULTIMATE OWNER. All men, and particularly the church, belong to Jesus. The church has collectively been purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28). Individuals are not their own, they have been "bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20). That fact even applies to those who deny He is Lord (2 Pet 2:1).

Speaking of Himself, Jesus said the Kingdom of heaven was "likened unto a man which sowed good seed in HIS FIELD" (Matt 13:24). When He explained the parable to His disciples He said, "The field is the world" (Matt 13:38). That means the world belongs to Him! In fact, it is revealed that "all things were created by Him, and FOR HIM" (Col 1:16).

There is only "ONE LORD" - One who is over all, God Himself being the only exception (1 Cor 15:27). All

unbelief, disobedience, waywardness, and insensitivity is owing to the failure to recognize and live in view of this unwavering reality. All men will give account for their response.

THERE IS ONE FAITH

^{4:5b} "... **one faith** ..." Other versions read, "*one trust*," ^{CJB} "*one belief*." ^{ABP} The word "*faith*" is translated from a word meaning "1) conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it 1a) relating to God 1a1) the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ 1b) relating to Christ 1b1) a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God 1c) the religious beliefs of Christians 1d) belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same 2) fidelity, faithfulness 2a) the character of one who can be relied on." ^{THAYER} Synonyms for the English word "*faith*" are: confidence, dependence, hope, reliance, persuasion. **Where these traits are missing, faith will not be found.**

In Scripture "*faith*" is associated with certitude. There is no doubt or questioning in faith. The stronger faith is, the more certain the individual possessing it is. As used here, "**faith**" is not a body of doctrine, as some allege. What is believed is not the point, but believing itself, which is the expression of faith.

At the root level, the faith of Abraham is the same as the faith of Paul and Peter, and the faith of believers to day is "*like precious faith*" - or the same, or "*like precious*" as that of the apostles (2 Pet 1:1). The difference in believers is not found in faith itself, but in the "*measure of faith*" that has been dispensed to them (Rom 12:3). Whatever divides the disciples of Christ cannot be properly said to be what they "*believe*." There is such a thing as believing a lie - a condition imposed on those who do not receive the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10-11). That is the a fictitious form of faith, which is a fleshly emulation of believing rather than a genuine expression of faith. Our text uses the noun form of the word, which accents the Source of faith rather than its expression.

Faith is "*obtained*" from God (2 Pet 1:1). It comes to men on the wings of grace (1 Tim 1:14), coming "*from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Eph 6:23). This faith is perfectly consistent in all who receive it. It never sets one brother against another brother, or creates a variance in the body of Christ. It is always "*an evil heart*" that generates unbelief (Heb 3:12).

The Scriptures refer to certain novices as being "*weak in faith*" (Rom 14:1). The expression is not "weak faith," but "*weak in faith*." It is not that faith itself is weak, for even though it is small like a mustard seed, it still had great power and potential (Lk 17:6). This condition exists because of a limited understanding, not any limitation in faith. This is because faith "*comes by hearing*" (Rom 10:17). Yet, even the person who has heard relatively little does not need to be "*weak in faith*."

Take Abraham for an example. His understanding was comparatively very small because of the extremely small amount of things revealed to him by God. Yet it is said of him, "*And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform*" (Rom 4:19-21). That is the same faith that is received by believers today - "*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to **all** the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all*" (Rom 4:16).

There is only one kind of faith, one valid faith - faith that works only one way. A faith that is not like that of Abraham is not faith at all. Further, faith is strengthened according to the revelation that is received and perceived. Faith cannot increase if more is not comprehended. Additionally, as faith increases in the various members of the body, they make advancement toward having "*the same mind and the same judgment*" (1 Cor 1:10). Having "*the same mind*" is the result of possessing the "*one faith*."

Wherever genuine faith is possessed there is accord, because there truly is just "*one faith*." From a practical point of view, the accord, or unity, is realized when the same thing is perceived. If, for example, one is

persuaded that God loves everyone the same, while another is convinced there are measures of love, faith can resolve the issue. That will require comprehending what God has said on that subject. If men stubbornly cling to their own view, without a thorough and due regard for what God has said, there will be division - which contradicts the fact of faith.

All of this underscores the importance of affirming what God has made known in the Scriptures, as compared with what men think He meant by what He said. Faith is the apprehension of what God has said, not the thoughts of men concerning that word. All of this is involved in living "*by every word of God*" (Lk 4:4). It also confirms what takes place when a person is moved to trust in what the Lord has said as compared with merely theorizing about it.

THERE IS ONE BAPTISM

^{4:5c} " . . . **one baptism.**" Other versions read, "*one immersion.*" ^{CJB}

Here is a subject that has confused many. Admittedly, it appears from Scripture that there is more than one baptism. There was ¹ "*the baptism of John*" (Lk 7:29), ² the baptism of suffering (Lk 12:50), ³ the baptism of death itself (1 Cor 15:29), ⁴ Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Acts 1:5), ⁵ baptism "*into Christ*" (Gal 3:27), and ⁶ being baptized by the Spirit "*into one body*" (1 Cor 12:13). Yet, our text does not say there are six baptisms, but ONE baptism.

This "*baptism*" is confirmed in the doctrine of the apostles. It has to do with coming "*into*" Christ, or becoming a part of the "*one body.*" Paul referred to it as being "*baptized into Christ*" (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27), and are "*buried*" with Christ in baptism (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12). Putting the microscope of insight on the subject, he provided further details. We were "*baptized into His death*" (Rom 6:3), and "*planted together in the likeness of His death*" (Rom 6:5). We were also "*baptized into one body*" (1 Cor 12:13). There also is some sense in which baptism "*doth also now save us*" (1 Pet 3:21). We further read that when we are baptized our sins are "*washed away*" (Acts 22:16), as it is "*for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). Paul taught that there is a "*circumcision*" that takes place in baptism, and it is accomplished by Christ - "the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11-12).

THE WHOLE GODHEAD IS ASSOCIATED WITH OUR BAPTISM. When Jesus instructed His disciples to go into the world, making disciples of all nations, He commanded them to baptize the disciples (and only the disciples) "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*" ^{NKJV} (Matt 28:19). This is not the statement of a formula to be spoken, but means "*INTO the name . . .*" ^{AMPLIFIED} It is another way of saying "into identity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" - particularly in regard to what they do at the time of our baptism into Christ.

This text is speaking of "*baptism*" in its widest sense - particularly as regards the working of Deity, and the effects realized by the one being baptized. There is "one baptism" in which all of these things occur. Consider what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - into whose name we are baptized - do in this "*one baptism.*"

THE FATHER. His work at the time of the "*one baptism*" is referred to as "*the operation of God*" (Col 2:12). That Divine "*working*" ^{NKJV} includes putting us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), forgiving us for Christ's sake (Eph 4:32), forgiving us of "*all trespasses*" (Col 2:13), raising us "*to walk in the newness of life*" (Rom 6:4), and making us His "*workmanship,*" creating us anew (Eph 4:32).

THE SON. The Son circumcises our heart (Col 2:11-12; Ezek 36:26), "makes us free" (John 8:36; Rom 6:18,22; Gal 5:1), and receives us "*to the glory of God*" (Rom 15:7). He makes us "*alive unto God*" (Rom 6:11). Our "*old man is crucified with Him*" (Rom 6:6), and baptism "*saves us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet 3:21).

THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit washes, sanctifies, and justifies us (1 Cor 6:11), and baptizes us into one body (1 Cor 12:13)

THE ONES BEING BAPTIZED. In addition to the above, there is also the involvement of the subjects who are baptized. They submit to the ordinance, being led to obedience by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:2). They are the ones, who like Saul of Tarsus, are commanded to cease tarrying, arise, and be baptized (Acts 22:16).

They are the ones who are buried into Christ's death, and they are the ones who are raised up to walk in the newness of life.

Who would dare to say that the ones being baptized are the main personalities involved? Or that what they do is the primary activity? Be assured that when Paul says "*there is one baptism*," he is not stressing the ones being baptized - anymore than he is stressing the people when he refers to "*one body and one Spirit*," "*one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism*," and "*one God and Father*." This is foundational teaching, and foundations have to do with Divine involvements, not human ones.

WHEN DOES THIS ALL TAKE PLACE? When do these workings of Deity take place? It is when we are baptized into Christ! That is how it is depicted in Romans, First Corinthians, Colossians, and First Peter. It is taught that it occurs when we ourselves are baptized. **It is what happens behind the scenes that makes the baptism effective.** It is all associated with our obedience to the "*form of the doctrine*" (Rom 6:17) in order that faith can take hold of what has really happened. It is much like the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. According to appearance, it looked as though they simply walked out of Egypt. Behind the scenes, however, God had given them favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, subdued Egyptian hostility by His judgments, and made His own people willing in the day of His power. He judged the Egyptian gods openly, showing that they were impotent. He broke down the confidence of the magicians, and caused Pharaoh to earnestly desire that the people leave. He even subdued the barking dogs. The deliverance of Israel, like our baptism, was effective because of what God did, not what the people did. They did obey the Lord, but their obedience was not what caused the effectiveness of their deliverance.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIS

LESSON NUMBER 44

Eph 4:6 ***"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*** (Eph 4:6)

ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

INTRODUCTION

In academics, it is enough to know the facts, and in most school-testing, that is the focus - intellectually knowing the facts or principles. This requirement is certainly not omitted in spiritual life. It is essential to know the facts pertaining to God's great salvation, even though in our time this is a much neglected area. However, in matters pertaining to life and godliness, a proper perspective of the facts must be had-i.e. how they fit into, and clarify, the eternal purpose of God. The essentiality of the facts must be discerned, and it must be coupled with a God-granted ability to integrate them into one's personal life. This, and more, is seen in the beginning of this fourth chapter. Paul has established the facts - facts that have to do with being delivered from sin and its power, united with the Godhead, and prepared for glory. These facts, however, are so lofty that men who dwell in the lower climes can treat them as though they were actually unimportant to life. Therefore, as a *"wise master-builder"* (1 Cor 3:10) Paul is showing the essentiality and effectiveness of the facts related to redemption. For example, they cannot be merged with things having their genesis with men. Therefore, there is "ONE body, ONE Spirit, ONE hope, ONE Lord, ONE faith, and ONE baptism" (4:4-5). These cannot be altered, discarded, or blended with the wisdom of men. **Their strength is in their singleness.** When men take them into philosophical hands, they lose their significance. When men debate about them, they lose their power. When men attempt to exploit them they turn into useless ashes. These are realities that only have relevance in God, through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. They are only helpful to those who have been reconciled to God, and they are at the root of God getting glory. The fact that today's Christians stand in shambles is a testimony to the fact that these things have been neglected, and, in many circles, even despised. This is what happens when men are closer to the earth than to heaven, and culture a greater familiarity with life in this world than life in the world to come. Sound reasoning and effective living demand that the matters now under consideration be prominent in the thinking and lives of the people. If they are allowed to take a back seat to earthly challenges and concerns, the possibility to be saved begins to diminish, sin gains more strength, and the devil is given a greater domain in which to work. If all of this seems a bit radical, know that it is really significantly understated.

THERE IS ONE GOD AND FATHER

Eph 4:6 ***"One God and Father of all . . ."***

There is a certain level of spiritual thinking where we are limited to *"one"* reality. Paul is focusing our thinking on this matter in the opening of this chapter. When it comes to thinking about the body of Christ, which is His church, *"there is one."* When it comes to the hope, or reason, for our calling, *"there is one."* When it comes to the Lord, or Head, or Sovereign that is governing all things, *"there is one."* If we are considering the means through which we are saved and receive from God - *"the faith"* - *"there is one."* When we are considering our entrance into Christ, or the point at which we are initially brought into him - *"baptism"* - *"there is one."* Now, when it comes to the Supreme One, or *"God"* - the Ultimate Father, *"there is one."*

Sound spiritual thinking and sobriety demand that we think in this manner. We must not allow our minds to entertain the notion that there are multiple bodies (churches), hopes of our calling, Sovereigns, faiths, baptisms, or gods. Men may think that such pluralities exist, but they do not. This places a certain obligation upon men to know, and consent to, this circumstance.

ONE GOD. The word *"God"* lexically means "Supreme Deity, Magistrate," ^{STRONG'S} "supreme Divine Being," ^{THAYER} "the one supreme supernatural Being as Creator and Sustainer of the universe," ^{LOUW-NIDA} "a term unusually used in the ancient world of beings who have powers or confer benefits beyond the capacity of mortals." ^{GINGRICH} The English word *"God"* is defined as "the supreme or ultimate reality: as a : the Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness who is worshiped as creator and ruler of the universe." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} As you can see, human language and perception come far short of providing a satisfactory definition of *"God."* That is because the concept itself lies outside the circumference of human experience and knowledge. If men do not accept what has been revealed about the *"one God"* in the Scriptures, they will reason as though there is no God. That is how the erroneous theory of evolution and the false science of psychiatry came into being. They are both based on godless suppositions.

This "one God" is known by His revealed associations. He is *"the God of the earth"* (Gen 24:3), *"the God of Abraham"* (Gen 26:24), *"the God of Isaac"* (Gen 28:13), and *"the God of Jacob"* (Ex 3:6). He is *"the God of Bethel,"* where Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven (Gen 31:13; 28:12ff). He is *"the God of the Hebrews"* (Ex 5:3), *"the God of Israel"* (Ex 24:10), and *"the God of the spirits of all flesh"* (Num 16:22). He is *"the God of my Rock,"* noted for stabilization and safety (2 Sam 22:3). He is *"the God of David"* (2 Kgs 20:5), *"the God of Hezekiah"* (2 Chron 32:17), and *"the God of Jerusalem"* (2 Chron 32:19). He is *"the God of heaven"* (Ezra 5:11), *"the God of my salvation"* (Psa 18:46), and *"the God of glory"* that reveals Himself (Psa 29:3). The Psalmist confessed Him as *"the God of my life"* (Psa 42:8), *"the God of my strength"* (Psa 43:2), and *"the God of my mercy"* (Psa 59:10). He is declared to be the *"God of gods"* (Psa 136:2), *"the God of truth"* (Isa 65:5), and *"the God of hosts"* (Jer 38:17). He is *"the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego"* (Dan 3:28), and *"the God of Daniel"* (Dan 6:26).

In Christ He is known as *"the God of patience and consolation"* (Rom 15:5), *"the God of hope"* (Rom 15:13), *"the God of peace"* (Rom 15:33), and *"the God of all comfort"* (2 Cor 1:3). He is *"the God of love and peace"* (2 Cor 13:11) *"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Eph 1:17), *"the God of glory"* (Acts 7:2), and *"the God of all grace"* (1 Pet 5:10).

The *"one"* God is revealed in His dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, David, Hezekiah, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel. He is particularly made known in Christ Jesus, and in the experience of patience, consolation, peace, love, and grace.

Furthermore, because *"God is one"* (Deut 6:4; Gal 3:20), there is a perfect consistency in all of these associations and manifestations. The Divine character is never contradicted in any of them. It can be said of all things as it is said of spiritual gifts, *"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all"* (1 Cor 12:6),

ONE FATHER OF ALL. God is declared to be *"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 15:6), *"the Father of whom are all things"* (1 Cor 8:6), and *"the Father of mercies"* (2 Cor 1:3). He is *"the Father of glory"* (Eph 1:17), *"the Father of spirits"* (Heb 12:9), and *"the Father of lights"* (James 1:17).

By saying God is *"the Father"* of these things, it is affirmed that He originates them. He is the cause of them. He initiates them all - and that includes us. So far as our human nature is concerned, He *"created"* us (Psa 100:3; Mal 2:10). He is the One who *"giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"* (Acts 17:25). This is emphatically denied by the evolutionists, who refuse to give glory to God for the inanimate things, the animated things, and humanity itself. This omission cannot be ignored, for it is nothing short of blasphemy to

ascribe to nature what the Lord God has done.

In redemption, God is also the sole Originator. He has re-created us in Christ Jesus. We are His "workmanship" (Eph 2:10), "begotten" by Him (1 John 5:1,18). The same God who created Adam, and called and blessed Abraham is the One God with whom we all "have to do" (Heb 4:13).

ONE GOD WHO IS ABOVE ALL AND THROUGH ALL

^{4:6b} "... **who is above all, and through all.** . . ." Other versions read, "over all," ^{NASB} "rules over all, works through all and is in all," ^{CJB} "who is over everything, through everything, and in everything," ^{GWN} "over us all and in us all, and living through every part of us," ^{LIVING} "who rules over all, acts through all, and dwells in all," ^{WEYMOUTH} "who is over us all, who pervades us all, and who is within us all," ^{WILLIAMS} "Not only is God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us," ^{CEV} "rules over everyone. He works through all of us and in all of us," ^{ERV} "who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness," ^{MESSAGE} and "Who is above all [Sovereign over all], pervading all and [living] in [us] all." ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is a key aspect of the "one God" that has been vastly understated by the modern church, and universally denied by all evolutionists. Champions of the "free will" and "free moral agency" of man have also unwittingly challenged this concept. They insist that God has consented to let man direct his own path, when Scripture categorically states that this is not the case. Even Jeremiah, living under a lesser light, confessed, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer 10:23). Speaking out of the reservoir of the wisdom given to him by God, Solomon said, "Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Prov 20:24). This is an aspect of God that cannot be questioned or denied with impunity.

ABOVE ALL. God is "Almighty," and is so identified (Gen 17:1; Psa 91:1; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 11:7). There is no limit to His might or power, and He can use it as He wills. He is referred to as "the **Most High**" (Gen 14:18; Deut 32:8; Psa 83:18).

He rules "in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan 4:17,25). David referred to God as "the Lord Most High" (Psa 7:17), a term frequently used elsewhere (Psa 47:2; Isa 14:14; Dan 3:26; Acts 7:48). He is "above all gods" (Psa 95:3), is "above all the earth" (Psa 57:5), and "high above all nations" (Psa 113:4). Because of this, He is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20).

Because God is "above all," all personalities answer to Him, and will give an account to Him. That is a specific point Paul made when speaking to the Epicurians and Stoics of Athens (Acts 17:31).

No one can effectively challenge what God says or does. This is categorically stated in Scripture: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35). Boldly God challenges those who would dare to oppose Him: "there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?" ^{NKJV} (Isa 43:13). Solomon affirmed, "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD" (Prov 21:30). This is why Gamaliel said, and why the Spirit reported it, "But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:39). It is why, when Peter saw what God did at the house of Cornelius, he said, "what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17).

The fact that God is "above all" accounts for the affirmation, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). It is why it is true "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 fact that this is true shows the utter absurdity of the critics of Scripture, who maintain that the text of Scripture has been corrupted. If such a thing was possible, God is NOT "over all." In such a case, mere mortals have put Divine utterances beyond the reach of men - and that simply is not possible. When men add their own thoughts to Scripture, it is no longer Scripture (Matt 15:6; Mk 7:13). In such a case, it is no longer

the "sword of the Spirit," and faith cannot come by hearing a distorted Gospel.

THROUGH ALL. The idea here is that God's presence and power pervades every environment. David referred to this Divine Presence when he wrote, "*Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me*" (Psa 139:7-10). When men and circumstance appear to move us, there is no need to fear!

Faith reckons on this reality, and proceeds confidently through "*this present evil world*" Gal 1:4). Paul also referred to this Presence when he affirmed to certain philosophers, "*He be not far from every one of us*" (Acts 17:27). For the believer, this does not promote slipshod and unalert living. It rather contributes to sobriety and watchfulness. In the ordinary scope of things, nothing that God has created is devoid of His presence. The only possible exception to that is the lake of fire, or Hell. Those consigned to that awful place are described as being "*punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power*" (2 Thess 1:9).

ONE GOD WHO IS IN YOU ALL

4:6c "*. . . and in you all.*" Other versions read "*in all,*" ^{NASB} "*in us all,*" ^{DOUAY} "*in everything,*" ^{GWN} "*within all,*" ^{NJB} "*living through all,*" ^{NLT} "*through every part of us,*" ^{LIVING} "*dwells in all,*" ^{WEYMOUTH} "*within us all,*" ^{WILLIAMS} "*He lives in all of us,*" ^{CEV} "*is present in all.*" ^{MESSAGE}

As you can see, several of the versions appear to be groping in the dark for something that is unknown. There are at least two things this cannot mean. First, it cannot mean that God Himself is resident in everything. He nowhere presents the creation as His dwelling place. That is a heathen concept. Second, it cannot mean that all men everywhere have God dwelling in them. Divine influence and working are not synonymous with dwelling within. Not being able to flee from God's presence does not mean He Himself is in every created thing. That expression is speaking of an **environment**, not of things and people that dwell in the environment.

Some Greek texts reads "*and in all you,*" using the Greek word "humin," which means "you." Other Greek texts use the word "pas," which means all, or everyone." Considering the nature of this text, I hardly see how that could mean every single person in the world, or that the expression is nothing more than a reiteration of "*through all.*"

Further, unless this is speaking about believers, it would appear to have no relevancy to the subject Paul is addressing. He has told us to "*endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (4:3). Later, he will write concerning the objective to realize "*the unity of the faith*" (4:13). This present discourse is an elaboration on that unity, which is based upon the concept of "*one.*" He cannot be talking about nature, for redemption does not make us one with nature, even though we join them in the groan for total redemption (Rom 8:22-23; 2 Cor 5:2).

GOD IS "IN" THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS. The point here is that God is in the believers. This is particularly true of them as a whole, although it is also true of them individually. Concerning the individual, it is written, "*He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*" (1 John 4:16). Again it is written, "*And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us*" (1 John 3:24).

When speaking of this personal aspect of the indwelling God, Jesus said, "*If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him*" (John 14:23). This indwelling is through faith and by the Spirit, but is very real. It is not as complete an identity as will be realized in the world to come, but it is presently one of truth that results in our instruction, protection, and guidance.

GOD IS IN THE COLLECTIVE BELIEVERS. Concerning God dwelling in His people collectively, Paul has already informed us that the church is being "*builded together for a habitation of God through the*

Spirit" (Eph 2:22). Again it is written, *"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us"* (1 John 4:12). I do not believe this aspect of the Divine presence is generally known in the modern church. There appears to be an incessant effort to have God come and meet with the people. They plead for His presence, talk about portals through which He comes to the people, etc. However, if the church is being built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, then His presence ought to be expected in a qualified gathering. The thing that makes the gathering qualified is being introduced in this text.

In his corrective letter to the Corinthians, Paul dealt with certain evidences of the presence of the Lord. He confirmed that it was not found in speaking with other tongues. He rather poses a scenario in which *"those that are unlearned, or unbelievers"* come into the assembly. *"If all prophesy,"* as Paul desired that they would (1 Cor 14:1), God would speak through them in such a manner as to reveal *"the secrets of his heart."* When the man discerned what was happening, he *"so falling down on his face . . . will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth"* (1 Cor 14:25). Isaiah posed a similar setting when he wrote of the spread of the truth to Egypt because of the enlightenment of Israel. *"Thus saith the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God"* (Isa 45:14).

The implications of God being *"in you all"* are most arresting to consider. It is a glimpse into the truth that Jesus prayed when He said to His Father, *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"* (John 17:23-21). That is the very experience Paul posed on a congregational scale, reproduced on a global scale. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus is effective enough to produce that kind of result. It is no wonder that the apostle labors with such intensity to establish the saints in the faith, broadening their understanding of salvation.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 45

Eph 4:7 *"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."* (Eph 4:7)

EVERYONE IS INVOLVED

INTRODUCTION

Paul has laid the ground work for a thorough exposition of the functioning of Christ's body, which is the church. Now He is going to show that Christ's present ministry is exclusively to and through the church. Whatever we may think about salvation, the spread of the Gospel, and the influence of men, it must fit within the framework of what God has purposed, for God will not conduct Himself in opposition to, or while ignoring, His purpose. However, an added perspective will now be developed. It is what Jesus has and is doing - now! Jesus is not sitting idly in the glory, waiting to do a work at some future time. Nor, indeed, did God put a purpose in motion that is a temporary situation - a kind of secondary work that will fill the gap until a worldly golden age when what He purposes will at last come to pass. We must settle it in our minds that Jesus died, rose again, ascended, and was seated on the right hand of God, to do something **now**. He is building His church **now**. He is authoring and finishing faith **now**. He is interceding for His people **now**. He is mediating the New Covenant **now**. He is feeding, sustaining, and causing His people to triumph **now**. He is making ways of escape from temptation **now**. He is dwelling in the hearts of His people **now**. But, WHY is all of this taking place. Is it just a formality that is being carried out to ensure the safety of His people? Be assured that what Jesus is doing in and through His people **now** requires His present work. Furthermore, if His church is not conducting itself as has been ordained, there really is no purpose for the church being involved with Him. If the church has been established as the place where He pours out His fulness, then an idle and unproductive church is really a social monster that blights the name of Jesus, and makes it more difficult to believe on Him. Long the church has suffered from the impact of institutionalism and carnal organizationalism. It has learned to function as a business, and in so doing it has blasphemed its Head. If that sounds like strong language, it will become apparent in this chapter that this is the unvarnished truth. You will be hard pressed to find a body of believers anywhere who function in the manner described in this chapter. That circumstance cannot be excused, for the Lord has spoken clearly about what is intended to take place in His body. In this lesson we will see that **everyone** in the body is involved, and none are excluded. That is the way things are intended to work. The presence, commendation, and blessing of the Lord cannot be expected if this does not take place.

THE CONCEPT AND PURPOSE OF "EVERYONE"

Eph 4:7a *"To every one of us . . ."*

When it comes to the church, or the body of Christ, the whole of it is constantly emphasized. Words are used like *"every one"* (Rom 12:5; 15:2; 1 Cor 12:18; 14:26; 1 Cor 16:2; 1 Thess 2:11; 4:4, 2 Thess 1:3), *"all"* (Rom 1:7; 8:32; 10:12; 12:4; 15:33; 1 Cor 12:6; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 3:28; Eph 3:18; 4:13), *"one another"* (Rom 12:10; 13:8; 15:7,14; Gal 5:13), and *"whole"* (Rom 15:23; 1 Cor 12:17; 14:23; Eph 3:15; 4:16) are employed.

THE CONCEPT OF A "BODY." In this epistle, Paul refers to the church as Christ's *"body"* no less than nine times (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4,12,16 (2 times); 5:23,30). Two of those references have to do with the Jews and the Gentiles comprising one body (2:16; 3:6). The other references refer to all of the individual members making up *"one body."*

The idea of a *"body"* includes the matter of working together for a common objective. It also accents the fact that the members are not mere clones, but have a specific function within the body. When God made Adam's body from the dust of the earth, it was a single unit with many functional parts - some internal, and some external. None of those parts operated independently of the other parts. This creation was a kind of prophecy of what was to come. **By Divine intent, God would create a people who would be united, work together, and serve a specific purpose.** The Head of this body, who would determine the abilities and direction of the body, would be His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In order to confirm that this was something that could not be carried out by men, God first chose a people for Himself - the Jews. They qualified as a group, but not as individuals. Although their Creator was God, they resisted Him, did not prefer Him, and exalted their own interests above His. Even though He gave them explicit instructions, a good Law, and an excellent leader who was *"faithful in all of His house"* (Heb 3:2,5), yet they proved to be a *"stubborn"* (Judges 2:19), *"rebellious"* (Deut 9:7,24), and *"stiff-necked"* (Ex 32:9), while they were appropriately described as those who *"always resist the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 7:51).

They were by no means a "body" - even though, according to the flesh, they were given every conceivable advantage. As only God can do, He delivered them, led them, fed them, and protected them. He taught them through the Prophets, caused them to triumph over their enemies, and made them a superior people by giving them a good and just Law. **Yet, they were never able to consistently work together.** In fact, they fought with one another (2 Kgs 14:15). If you were to remove the godly leaders and prophets of Israel, their distinction would disappear. Their strength was not the people themselves, but the holy men that were raised up among them: Moses, Aaron, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. They could not be properly called a *"body."*

UNIQUENESS UNDER CHRIST. In Christ there is a uniqueness realized that brings great glory to God. For the first time in history, Jews and Gentiles can work together - harmoniously. Together, in Christ, they are appropriately described as *"one body"* (Eph 2:16). One part had extensive exposure to the mind of the Lord, and the other had none. One group had a covenant with God, and the other did not. Yet, in Christ, they become *"one body,"* fully harmonious with one another. That is *"the body"* viewed in its most general sense - both Jews and Gentiles become functional together.

AS INDIVIDUALS. In Israel, the mass of the people were unknown. Only certain individuals surfaced as worthy of mention. Most of the people remained anonymous. But this is not so in Christ Jesus. Each individual is himself a functional member of the body. As it is written, *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular"* (1 Cor 12:27). Under the Old Covenant, Israelites did not enjoy such a distinction.

Now we read of something that is given *"to every one of us."* It is something that, at the dispensing level, is for each individual, with none being left out. In any other context, this would allow for strict individuality, and the development of personal agendas. But in the context of *"one body"* this is not how it works. What each person is *"given"* is the very thing that, from a practical point of view, produces the unity: ***"one body."*** This passage will teach that reality with unusual wisdom and power.

Right here I must observe that this is a totally foreign concept in the modern church. For many, they can get no further than a purported praise service, where all of the people sing together. That this can be an expression of oneness cannot be denied (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). However, this does not fulfill the idea of contribution, although it is faintly mirrored in the singing of parts. This text affirms that something is *"given"* to *"every one of us"* - something unique, needed, and effective. It is something the *"one body"* requires. By its very nature, it is not something that is general, or the same in every person. You can no more have the

body of Christ with everyone being identical, than you can have a human body that is comprised of only eye-balls. There are areas where members are the same - washed, justified, sanctified, accepted, chosen, adopted, raised, re-created, etc. However, as a "body" they are uniquely different.

GRACE IS GIVEN

^{4:7b} "... **is given grace**" Other versions read, "grace was given," ^{NKJV} "has been given," ^{NIV} "God's favor has been given," ^{GWN} "given each one of us a special gift," ^{NLT} "given the grace," ^{YLT} "has given each of us special abilities--whatever he wants us to have out of his rich storehouse of gifts," ^{LIVING} "each of us is given his own gift," ^{MESSAGE} and "grace (God's unmerited favor) was given to each of us individually [not indiscriminately, but in different ways]." ^{AMPLIFIED}

"IS" or "WAS"? Some versions read "is given," while others read "has been given" or "was given." Both are correct. "Is" emphasizes the fact that the gift is currently possessed. "Was" or "has been" stresses that it was given when we were put into Christ - from the beginning. This same kind of reasoning is expressed in First John 5:20, where it states, "The Son of God is come." Some versions read "has come." ^{NASB/NIV} The idea is that He has come, and is still here.

THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN WHEN YOU ENTERED IN. This is not speaking of a grace that was dispensed at some later time, after due maturity had been realized. The USE of the gift may have come later, but the dispensing of it was from the very first. This is the precise point Paul makes in his commentary on spiritual gifts. In the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, these gifts are viewed as positions, or functions, within the body, dispensed at our entrance.

Paul first establishes that everyone is involved in this distribution. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is **given to every man to profit withal**" (1 Cor 12:7). And again, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, **dividing to every man severally as he will**" (1 Cor 12:11).

Paul then associates this with our placement in the body of Christ. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor 12:18). He then argues that this is what makes "the body" what it is: "And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body" (1 Cor 12:19-20).

GRACE SEEN IN THE UNIQUE GIFT. In this text, the nature of grace is not the point. Rather, it is the ability that is granted, that is the point. **That ability is not a natural endowment, but is a bestowed one** at the time of our new birth. It is true that, according to appearance, it may seem that the individual was naturally endowed to do this or that in the body of Christ. However, this is emphatically not the case! Every functioning member of the body of Christ can say, in their own measure, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor 15:10).

This is not the only place spiritual giftedness is traced back to the grace of God. In addressing the subject of spiritual gifts Peter wrote, "As every man hath **received the gift**, even so minister the same one to another, **as good stewards of the manifold grace of God**. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet 4:10-11). Thus we are "saved" by grace (Eph 2:8), and gifted by grace at the same time (Eph 4:7).

Unlike natural gifts, gifts distributed by the grace of God, and through the Spirit of God, work together for the edifying of the body of Christ. In the world a carpenter and a jeweler may not be able to work profitably together - or a mathematician and a cattle-breeder. However, in the body of Christ aptitudes are synchronized by the Lord and administered by the Spirit of God. Where friction and competition exist among professed Christians, the devil is at work. He has introduced a spirit that cannot work together with the body, and therefore disruption takes place.

CAPACITY VERSUS APTITUDE. Here we also ought to distinguish between capacity and aptitude, so that we may use the terms correctly. Capacity has to do with receiving, while aptitude has to do with expressing. The new creation is related to capacity, while the gift distributed by grace relates to aptitude - or

the ability to use what the capacity contains.

A "good steward" (1 Pet 4:10) is one who uses what he has been given for the edification of the saints of God, which is the purpose for all spiritual giftedness. As it is written, "*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*" - meaning all of the body (1 Cor 12:7). Other versions read "*profit of all,*"^{NKJV} and "*common good.*"^{NIV}

Let us postulate that a person has received a gift of grace - the ability to edify the saints of God, working together with and for the body of Christ. That person may choose to use his ability in a professional way, to entertain people, make a living, or some other seemingly noble endeavor. Has that person been faithful to the Giver of the gift? Could he be called a faithful "*steward of the manifold grace of God?*" I will tell you what will eventually happen in such a case. The person may retain a remarkable ability, but he will lose his power to edify and strengthen the body of Christ. He will even lose his desire to primarily bring advantages to the people of God. It is even possible that he will be forced to lose the ability itself.

If this teaching is true - and this text confirms that it is - **then the assembly of the saints becomes an environment in which the various gifts can be expressed.** That is the whole point of the 12th through the 14th chapters of First Corinthians. The spiritual binder that brings the whole matter together is the 13th chapter, where the attributes of "*love*" are delineated.

ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE

^{4:7c} ". . . **according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**" Other versions read, "*measure of Christ's gift,*"^{NKJV} "*as Christ apportioned it,*"^{NIV} "*measure of the giving of Christ,*"^{BBE} "*measured by the Messiah's bounty,*"^{CJB} "*measured out to us by Christ who gave it,*"^{GWN} "*in whatever way Christ allotted it,*"^{NJB} "*measured out with the munificence [largeness] of Christ,*"^{WEYMOUTH} "*Everyone received what He wanted to give them,*"^{ERV} and "*in proportion to the measure of Christ's [rich and bounteous] gift.*"^{AMPLIFIED}

Every cook has measuring utensils. Smaller measurements include 1/8th, 1/4th, and 1/2 of a teaspoon; one teaspoon, and one tablespoon. Larger measurements include 1/4th, 1/3rd and 1/2 cup, as well as one cup. There are even unusually large measure like pint, quart, and gallon. These measurements have nothing to do with the nature and effectiveness of the source of the thing measured by them. Salt is salt, and flour is flour regardless of the amount measured out.

So it is with the grace of God. The grace itself is abundant, and without known limits. It is effective for what it is intended to do. However, in the sense of our text, the amount of it that is distributed is strictly determined by Jesus Christ - the Head of the body. When believers are told they can "*find grace to help in the time of need*" (Heb 4:16), grace is not addressed as it is in our text. The same is true of the saying, "*by grace are ye saved*" (Eph 2:5,8). The same grace saves us, and gifts us as well, but the distribution is not the same. Being saved by grace has to do with extricating us from sin and the world, and uniting us to Christ. "*The measure of the gift of Christ*" has to do with how we function within the body of Christ. It is this aspect of spiritual life that has been grossly neglected in our time.

DETERMINED ROLES. Our particular roles in the body of Christ are determined by the amount of grace that was given to us when we came into Christ. A person cannot minister effectively to the body of Christ beyond the measure of grace that they have received.

While the grace of God determines what a person is chosen to do, faith is the means through which that grace is put to profitable use. Therefore, when writing on the same subject to the brethren in Rome, Paul spoke of a "*measure of faith*" when referring to spiritual gifts. "*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*" (Rom 12:3-5).

You might say that the faith that a person has been given correlates precisely with the place in the body into which he has been placed by God. The entire Godhead is involved in this matter. God Himself

puts us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30). The Holy Spirit baptizes us into one body (1 Cor 12:13). The Lord Jesus distributes to us the "*measure*" of grace and faith that are required to fulfill the role God intended when He set us in the body as it pleased Him (1 Cor 12:18). The Holy Spirit then administers the use of these gifts (1 Cor 12:4,7-11).

Think of some of the seemingly less prominent gifts that can be expressed in the assembly, with the whole body profiting from those expressions. "*The word of wisdom*" (1 Cor 12:8a) - a wise message, or an utterance of wisdom. This has to do with the purpose of God and the proper path to pursue. It involves opening up truth and showing its inter-relationships. "*The word of knowledge*" (1 Cor 12:b) - a revelation of pertinent facts that may not be apparent to others. It has to do with putting a handle on the truth so the people can more readily grasp it. The gift of "*faith*" (1 Cor 12:9) - the ability to relate faith in God with particular matters, and express how He can be trusted in ways ordinarily not apparent. The "*discerning of spirits*" (1 Cor 12:10) - the ability to discern the source of thoughts, teachings, etc. This is an ability correlated with an understanding of the purpose of God. For example, Paul wrote to the Corinthians about their cessation of obeying the truth, "*This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you*" (Gal 5:8). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that when they came together it was "*for the worse*" (1 Cor 11:17). That was an expression of discernment. There is also the gift of mercy (Rom 12:8), which may detect a member of the body that needs a comforting word from the Lord, and therefore speaks it forth publically. Such an one may also cradle the afflicted in their arms and bring solace to them by the expression of mercy in a deed - in the assembly.

Again, with all of these "*measures*" of grace (Eph 4:7), or spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1), or measures of faith (Rom 12:3), there is a corresponding ability of expression - else they would not have value in the assembly of the saints. These are the practical ways in which Christ ministers to His people. This by no means obviates the uniquely personal ministrations of Christ to His people. There is still the personal and effective way of coming to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:15-16). There is the personal intercession of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27), and that manifestation and indwelling that is promised to every individual who loves Jesus and keeps His sayings (John 14:21,23).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 46

Eph 4:8 *"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." ⁹ (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.)"*
(Eph 4:7)

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

Christ Jesus is at the center of the Kingdom of God. He is the Head of the church, the Head over all principality and power, and the One through whom everything is given to men and received by God. However, He did not obtain this position without demonstrating His capability to be a duly constituted Minister. The chief proof is being able to go up into heaven, being received without contradiction, and be invested with all power in heaven and earth. All though it is most difficult to imagine, the modern church is not making this known to the people, yet it urged people to trust Christ. Paul is not guilty of such gross neglect. In the letter to the Ephesians, he has declared what Jesus has done. We have been *"made nigh"* by His blood (2:13). He is our peace (3:14a), and has broken down the wall that separated the Jews and the Gentiles (3:14b). He abolished in His flesh the enmity that created the division (3:15a), and in Himself has made Jew and Gentile one, having made peace (3:15b). He has reconciled both Jew and Greek to God, and *"came and preached peace"* to the Gentiles which were far off (3:3:16-17). Further, in Christ we have been chosen (1:4), predestinated (1:5), and made accepted (1:6). In Him we have redemption and forgiveness (1:7). God has determined to gather all things together in Christ (1:10). In Him we obtain an inheritance (1:11). We were quickened together with Christ (2:5), then made to sit together with Him in heavenly places (2:6). We were *"created in Christ Jesus"* (2:10), and glory is being brought to the God in the church through Him.

Now we will see the practical aspect of all of this - how everything Christ has done and is doing is intended to be used effectively. Christ's primary work was not merely to get us out of sin - and getting into heaven is not a simplistic. He is not going to pull us into heaven, but orient us for the transition from earth to glory. This will be done by a work of staggering and effective proportions - an ongoing work in which multiple workers, under Christ, are involved.

WHEN HE ASCENDED

Eph 4:8 *"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."*

HE SAITH. Other versions read, "it says," ^{NIV} "it is said," ^{NRSV} "the Scriptures say," ^{GWN} "The Psalmist says," ^{LIVING} and "the text for this." ^{MESSAGE}

This is reference to what the Lord has said. It is written in the Scriptures, and was penned by the Psalmist, but that is not the point of the text. This is God's testimony concerning His Son, and it touches upon a vital, though much neglected, point of the activity of Christ Jesus.

WHEN HE ASCENDED. Other versions read, "went up," ^{BBE} "went to the highest place," ^{GWN} "went up to the heights," ^{NJB} "gone up on high," ^{TNT} "when Christ returned," ^{LIVING} "re-ascended," ^{WEYMOUTH} "went up high into the sky," ^{ERV} and "He climbed the high mountain," ^{MESSAGE}

The ascension of Christ is a vital part of the Gospel. Jesus ascended back to heaven, from whence He had come. It is foreshadowed in the taking of the ark up into Jerusalem: "God is gone up with a shout" (Psa 47:5; 1 Chron 15:28). It was prophesied by the Psalmist in Psalm 68:18, with the added statement that this was done "that the Lord God might dwell among them."

The ascension is reported in Mark 16:19, where He is said to have been "received up into heaven." Luke 24:50 says that He was "parted" from His disciples and "carried up into heaven." Jesus once asked the people, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6:62). Jesus referred to His ascension when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2), and "I go unto My Father" (John 14:12; 16:5,10,16,28). Acts 1:9 says He was "taken up," Peter affirmed, "the heaven" had to receive Him "until the time of the restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). First Timothy 3:16 states that Jesus was "received up into glory." Hebrews 4:14 says that He "is passed into the heavens." Hebrews 9:24 affirms that He has "entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The ascension postulates that His work on earth was finished. In the working out of salvation, there was nothing more to be done on earth. Everything required for the preparation for glory has been given because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. There is no foe that has not been defeated, including "the last enemy," which is death. The storehouse containing all things pertaining to life and godliness has been opened. Everything required for the conversion and uniting of Jew and Gentile is in place. Now, heaven will retain Christ until everything the prophets have prophesied has come to pass (Acts 3:21).

Having ascended into heaven, Jesus is no longer, nor will He ever be, accessed by the flesh. He has now passed out of that domain, and is ministering from heaven.

HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE. Other versions read, "led captive a host of captives," ^{NASB} "led captives in His train," ^{NIV} "He made captivity itself a captive," ^{NRSV} "taking His prisoners with Him," ^{BBE} "He took prisoners into captivity," ^{CSB} "he took captive those who had captured us," ^{GWN} "captured captives," ^{NET} "returned triumphantly," ^{LIVING} "captured everything," ^{IE} "captured the enemy and seized the booty," ^{MESSAGE} and "He led a train of vanquished foes." ^{AMPLIFIED}

A host of explanations have been offered for this text. Some say it means Jesus emptied paradise, and took the souls retained there to heaven. There is no clear Scriptural support of this opinion. The Message Bible reads that He took booty from the captives, and gave it to men. All of this is nothing more than an attempt to intellectualize ignorance.

The meaning is that Jesus captured what had taken men into captivity. In the words of Hebrews, He "destroyed the devil" (Heb 2:14). In the words of Colossians, He spoiled principalities and powers (Col 2:15). In the words of First Peter, authorities and powers were made subject to Him (1 Pet 3:22). They were captivated in the sense of no longer being able to capture those who are with Jesus. Now it may be said that "all things are yours" (1 Cor 3:21-22). The devil cannot touch the person who has been "begotten of God" (1 John 5:18).

All inimical powers are knowingly under Christ, serve Christ, and are restrained or used by Him at will. When Jesus left the earth, He took away the power and effectiveness of the devil and his host, particularly in regards to those He is bringing to God.

AND GAVE GIFTS TO MEN. Other versions read, "gave freely to men," ^{BBE} "gave gifts to humanity," ^{NJB} "gave gifts to His people," ^{NLT} "handed it all out in gifts to the people," ^{MESSAGE} and "bestowed gifts on men." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The "men" to whom, He gave gifts are those whom He reconciled unto God. These gifts pertain to the

equipping of the saints, their appropriation of needed grace, and their preparation for glory. They are the means through which men are "laborers together with God" (1 Cor 3:9). Working through the Holy Spirit, these "gifts" will carry on the work Jesus started, bringing the people of God to perfection. Although men are involved in these gifts, the gifts themselves refer to what they do rather than who they are. These are not impersonal abilities, and they are not mere positions. The gifts were given following His ascension into the glory, and were one of His first acts as the glorified "Man," made "Head over all things" for the church (Eph 1:22).

FIRST HE DESCENDED

4:9 "(Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)"

NOW THAT HE IS ASCENDED. Other versions read, "Now this . . . what does it mean?"^{NKJV} "this expression,"^{NASB} "What does "He ascended mean except."^{NIV} and "In saying."^{NRSV}

The reference here is to the quotation cited from Psalm 68:18. What is meant by the saying. Or, more precisely, what does it infer?

HE FIRST DESCENDED. When was it that Jesus "descended?" The Amplified Bible reads, "He had previously descended from [the heights of] heaven into [the depths], the lower parts of the earth." I see that as a complete misrepresentation of the case. This text is not referring to Jesus coming from heaven to earth, as several notable commentators allege. While there was a profound humiliation involved in Jesus coming to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh, that could not, in my understanding be properly be called a "descent." His second coming will be a "descent" (1 Thess 4:16).

It seems to me that Paul is in the process of expounding the results of Christ's vicarious death, not comparing His ascension back to heaven with him coming from heaven. To say that Jesus must first come from heaven before He could return to heaven represents a disjointed thought. Jesus could not go back to heaven until He had finished the work God gave Him to do (John 17:4). In addition to this, the next phrase does not precisely correlate with what is said of Jesus entering into the world as in the form of a servant and the likeness of men (Phil 2:7).

THE LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH. Some versions read, "the lower parts, that is, the earth,"^{CJB} "the lower regions, namely, the earth,"^{NET} "descended to our lowly world."^{NLT} These are not proper representations. **To begin with, the earth is not the lowest region.** There is a realm called "under the earth" (Phil 2:10; Rev 5:3,13). David wrote of "the lower parts of the earth," declaring that those who sought his soul would go there (Psa 63:9). Isaiah challenged "the lower parts of the earth" to shout and break forth in singing (Is 44:23). This apparently is a region that belongs to the earthly order, which will go away when the earth is destroyed.

The language is very precise. He does not say lower parts, that is, the earth. Rather, it reads "the lower parts of the earth" - i.e. a lower region associated with the earth. In this regard, other versions read, "lower earthly regions, or depths of the earth,"^{NIV} "interior regions of the earth,"^{MRD} and "deepest levels of the earth."^{NJB}

Jesus also spoke of Himself, following His death, being "in the **heart** of the earth" - "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt 12:40). Other versions read, "depths of the earth,"^{CJB} **His words clearly associate this region of reference with death.**

This descent was to the region of the dead. The older versions ascribe the word "hell" to this region, while later versions employ the word "hades." The difference in the two words is that doctrinally "hell" is a place of everlasting torment, while "hades" is a kind of holding place until the resurrection. Hell, or the lake of fire, is not associated with the earth, and therefore cannot be correctly called "the lower parts of the earth." It is also separate from the domain of the dead, for in the end "death and hell" [hades^{NKJV}] will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter referred to this descent into the region of the dead. "Therefore did My heart rejoice, and My tongue was glad; moreover also My flesh shall rest in hope: Because Thou wilt not leave My

soul in hell [hades], neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance" (Acts 2:26-28).

Although Jesus descended into the region of the dead, He knew He would not remain there. It must have been a staggering experience for the Prince of life to occupy the region of the dead! But He knew God would make Him glad with His countenance - not merely when He rose from the dead, but when he return back to heaven.

At least one of Christ's activities in the region of the dead has been revealed. *"For Christ . . . 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 . . ." (1 Pet 3:18-20).*

This passage is characterized by the same mystery as our text. It is because it deals with a domain concerning which man has no wisdom or understanding at all. For this reason, it is not appropriately represented by human language. We must allow the doctrine to form our concepts of *"the lower parts of the earth," "the heart of the earth,"* and *"hades."*

The point of the text is two-fold. First Jesus entered the region of the dead to conquer it by returning from it through His own power, thereby confirming death is not the end of all. **Second, it is to establish that the Jesus that ascended into heaven is the same Jesus who died for the sins of the world.** Even though He was in the grave long enough for His body to *"see corruption,"* it did not (Acts 2:27,31). The *"same Jesus"* (Acts 2:36) who was crucified, ascended into heaven.

HE ASCENDED IN ORDER TO FILL ALL THINGS

^{4:10} ***"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."***

This is the conclusion of a parenthetical statement that is contained in verses nine and ten. It is the clarification of who it was that ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and giving Divine gifts to men. According to appearance, after His resurrection, Jesus did not appear as the same person. Mary thought He was the gardener (John 20:15). Cleopas and his companion, to whom Jesus appeared in *"another form"* (Mk 16:12), thought he was *"a stranger"* (Lk 24:18). When Jesus appeared to the eleven and those with them, they thought *"they had seen a spirit"* (Lk 24:39). However, the resurrected Christ was the same Person who died and descended into the lower parts of the earth.

HIS ESSENTIAL PERSON HAD NOT CHANGED. Some people have a lot of trouble with comprehending whether or not Jesus was *"God."* In fact, all men had difficulty with this before Jesus died. Even on the eve of His betrayal, it appears this was not at all clear to the disciples. Philip asked Him, *"show us the Father."* (John 14:8-9). Prior to His death and resurrection, none of the disciples ever addressed Jesus as *"God."* When it was revealed to Him, Peter confessed He was *"the Son of the Living God"* (Matt 16:16). The disciples referred to Jesus as *"Rabbi"* (John 1:49), *"Master"* (Mk 4:38; 9:5; 13:1), and *"Lord"* (Matt 8:25; 14:28). Mary called Him *"Rabboni"* (John 20:16). I do not believe there is a record of His disciples addressing Him as *"Jesus,"* indicating that they avoided addressing Him as one of their peers. And certainly we have no instance where they referred to Him as *"God."*

Yet, when He was risen from the dead Thomas said to Him, *"My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28). The fact that he doubted the testimony of the disciples confirms that he did not recognize this prior to Christ's resurrection. When Mary reported to the disciples that she had seen Jesus alive, they *"believed not"* (Mk 16:11,14). Even when the risen Christ showed the disciples His hands and His feet, *"they believed not for joy"* (Lk 24:41).

The Jesus that ascended was *"the same"* one that walked among men, and was crucified by men. He is the same Jesus that was buried. That necessarily infers that Jesus did not discard His Deity when He humbled Himself. He refused to overcome the devil as God - yet He was *"God manifest in the flesh"* (1 Tim 3:16). Therefore, in His incarnation, He laid aside the prerogatives of Deity, or the right to conduct His affairs as

God. Instead, He conducted Himself as a Man, living by faith, passing through temptation, and submitting to die for the sins of the world.

FAR ABOVE ALL HEAVENS. Other versions read *"higher than all heavens,"*^{NIV} *"far above all of heaven,"*^{CJB} *"higher than all the heavens."*^{NIB}

There is a sense in which *"heaven"* refers to a large area. There are also expressions like *"the third heaven"* (2 Cor 12:2), *"the heaven of the heavens"* (Deut 10:14; Neh 9:6), *"heaven itself"* (Heb 9:24), and *"heavenly places"* (Eph 1:3,20; 2:6). I gather that in the general sense of the word, *"heaven"* bears some resemblance to the Tabernacle and the Temple. There was the outer court, the holy place, and the Most Holy place.

There are high-ranking personalities in the heavenly realms. These include *holy angels* (Gen 18:12; John 1:51), *seraphim* (Isa 6:2,6), *cherubim* (Ezek 10:15-20), *"living creatures"* (Ezek 1:5), *"four beasts"* (Rev 4:6-8), and the *twenty four elders* (Rev 4:4,10). There is also a realm called *"heavenly places"* in which those in Christ wrestle with *"principalities," "powers," "the rulers of the darkness of this world,"* and *"spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Eph 6:12).

When the text says Jesus is *"far above all heavens,"* and the epistle to the Hebrews states that He has been *"made higher than the heavens"* (Heb 7:26), the intended meaning is that **Jesus has been exalted over everything and everyone that has been created.** He is *"over all"* (Rom 9:5; Eph 1:22), having been given a name that is *"above every name"* (Phil 2:9). There is none that can compete against Him, or that does not yield to Him when He exerts His power. A Gospel that does not accent this exaltation is spurious, and the power of God will not work through it.

THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS. Other versions read, *"in order to fill the whole universe,"*^{NIV} *"that He might make all things complete,"*^{BBE} and *"from the lowest to the highest."*^{AMPLIFIED} This is another view of referring to the dispensing of His *"fulness"* (Jon 1:16; Eph 1:23). This can also involve the fulfillment of all of the types and shadows (Matt 5:17).

In other words, before Jesus could pour forth His fulness, He had to be exalted as Head over all things. His power is not theoretical. Having been confirmed on earth, in the realm of the dead, and in heaven as well. **He fills all things because He is superior to all things.** The fact that while we are present in the body we are *"absent from the Lord,"* and that He *"gone into heaven"* (1 Pet 3:22) by no means suggests that He is not with us. He promised His disciples, *"Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world"* (Matt 28:20). He has been exalted above all in order that this may be fulfilled. In other words, A Christ who is not presently *"above all,"* cannot be a Savior. However, He **is** above all, and is therefore able to save us to the uttermost (Heb 7:25).

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 47

Eph 4:11 *"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"*

(Eph 4:11)

THE GIFTS JESUS GAVE UNTO MEN

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of His death, when Jesus told His disciples He was leaving, *"sorrow"* filled their hearts (John 16:6). "Nevertheless," the Lord told them, *"I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you"* (John 16:7). At that time, the disciples could not imagine the work of God continuing without the physical presence of Jesus. They had not yet grasped what God was really doing through His Son - which relationship (being the Son of God) was not at all clear to them. They could not yet conceive of a great and needed work continuing if the Lord left. Even after He had risen from the dead, the two on the road to Emmaus were still thinking this way, deducing that when Jesus of Nazareth died, all of their hopes were dashed to the ground. To this very day, multitudes of professing Christians think the same way. Now, they are anticipating the return of Jesus in a form that will be accessible to fallen men. At that time, He will set up a Kingdom, and the work of God will continue as it was intended. It all may look innocent enough, but it is not. It is a subtle form of unbelief, and evidences a failure to perceive Jesus as God has intended for Him to be comprehended.

However, the work of redemption, of God's great salvation, is associated with an *"eternal purpose,"* not a temporal one. That objective was *"purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph 3:11), which is a redemptive description of the Savior. The term *"Christ"* pertains to His appearance *"once in the end of the world to put away sin"* (Lk 2:26; John 20:21; Heb 9:26). *"Jesus"* was the name by which He was known, which is associated with saving His people *"from their sins"* (Matt 1:21). *"Lord"* is a term applied to the risen and enthroned Jesus (Acts 2:36).

Our text now commences to expound what Jesus is doing now, and what is the objective of that activity. **Those who speak about what Jesus is going to do in the world at His second coming universally neglect what He is doing now.** This is because of their own ignorance of God's purpose, the work of Jesus, and the place of the church in God's purpose. These are serious deficiencies that must not be found among us. We must be clear on these revealed matters.

"HE GAVE . . ."

Eph 4:11a *""And He gave some . . ."*

Now we come to what the Lord did - once that He had ascended back into heaven, and been exalted to the right hand of God. His work was not *"finished."* Only the part that was to be accomplished in the earth was completed. That work, encapsulated in His death and resurrection, was necessary to the completion of the *"eternal purpose"* that had been set in motion. There is considerable said about Christ's post-enthronement activity from heaven.

Before leaving, He told His disciples, *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me"* (John 15:26). On the day of Pentecost, Peter confirmed that this is precisely what Jesus did. *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear"* (Acts 2:33). Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus would come to minister *"comfort"* to His people (John 14:17-18).

Some of the things Jesus is currently doing include the following. (1) He is interceding for those who are coming to the Father through Him (Heb 7:25). (2) He is teaching His people, giving them an understanding of God Himself (1 John 5:20). (3) He teaches His people concerning putting off *"the old man,"* and putting on *"the new man"* (Eph 4:20-24). (4) He is shepherding the sheep (Heb 13:20). (5) He is dispensing grace and peace (Eph 1:2). (6) He is maintaining fellowship with His people (1 Cor 1:9).

HE GAVE. Other versions read, *"He Himself gave,"* ^{NKJV} *"It was He who gave,"* ^{NIV} *"The gifts He gave were,"* ^{NRSV} *"He has given,"* ^{DARBY} *"He therefore gave,"* ^{GENEVA} *"the very same made,"* ^{TNT} *"Christ appointed,"* ^{IE} *""Christ chose,"* ^{CEV} and *"He Himself appointed and gave men to us]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Acting in the capacity of *"the Head"* of the church, and *"the Savior of the body"* (Eph 5:23), the exalted Christ dispensed, or apportioned certain gifts. These are the *"gifts"* referenced in the Psalmic quote of verse eight: *"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."* Having plundered principalities and powers (Col 2:15), the enthroned Jesus turned His attention to His church - the body of people that are being cultured to be His *"wife"* (Rev 19:7). Although the Psalm (Psa 68:18) states that the gifts were *"for men,"* **Paul makes clear that this is confined to the church** (Eph 4:11-16).

For a rather lengthy period of time, preachers and teachers have stressed what Jesus has provided for sinners, the alienated, and those who are without God and without hope in the world. And, indeed, God has an effective means of escaping the world and condemnation, and obtaining the remission of sins and thorough justification. **However, that is not the emphasis of Christ's current ministry - a High Priestly ministry.**

At this time the stress is placed on bringing *"many sons to glory"* (Heb 2:10), and interceding for those who are coming to God through Him (Heb 7:25). He is *"the Great Shepherd of the sheep"* (Heb 13:20). It is true that John affirmed, *"that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world"* (1 John 4:14). However, that salvation is not confined to its initiation. The process of saving *"to the uttermost"* involves the ongoing ministry of the exalted Savior. In fact that is why He *"ever liveth,"* or *"always lives"* ^{NIV} - *"to make intercession for them"* (Heb 7:25).

This ongoing ministry is not a concentration on continued deliverance from sin - although that is involved. It is rather the ministry of conformation - conforming the people to His own image (Rom 8:29). **The ongoing progressive change that is taking place through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18) is being accomplished under His administration.**

In our time there is scarcely anything being said about Christ's relationship to His church. Of course, it is most difficult to build careers and institutions on that reality. Nevertheless, that is the thrust of this passage, and Paul will make that fact quite clear.

SOME. As is taught elsewhere, there are certain key people that have been placed within the church. They are the instruments through which the people are established in faith and conformed to the image of Christ. These are not functions created by men, and the power and effectiveness of them cannot be transferred to offices created by men.

CHRIST IS BUILDING HIS CHURCH. This text reveals **how** Jesus is building His church. Our Lord Himself told Peter and the other disciples, "*I will build My church*" (Matt 16:18). This speaks of more than adding "*to the church such as should be saved*" (Acts 2:47). It also includes strengthening, fortifying, conforming, and maturing them so they can "*stand against the wiles of the devil.*" It includes the conferment of grace and peace (Rom 1:7), making them "*perfect in every good work*" (Heb 13:21), and teaching them (Eph 4:20-24; 1 John 5:20). As the Shepherd of the saints, He leads, guards, and directs them from the Throne of heaven.

All of that is involved in building His church - making it strong and able to withstand the assaults of the wicked one - making them wise and discerning so they can behold and avoid the artifices of the devil, his craftiness, and his wiles. This ministry of the Lord Jesus is indispensable. Salvation cannot, and will not, be accomplished without it - and that is all by Divine design.

APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

4:11b "*... apostles; and some, prophets ...*"

In this text "*gifts*" are people - people who are especially endowed by Jesus and given to the church to build and perfect it. These gifts cannot be created by men. Strictly speaking, neither can they be cultured or perfected by men. Whatever arguments can be put forward in favor of these gifts being developed and perfected in the schools of men, it will prove an impossible task to support such claims. In order to attempt such proof, one will have to resort to human logic - and even then special hypotheses must be developed within which the proof can supposedly be developed. **There is not a man who has lived or lives now who can prove that Jesus administers these gifts through an institution originated by men.** Nor, indeed, can it be proved that He has ever done so.

Further, the immediate context (4:11-16), as well as the overall context (1:1-4:6), support the fact that he is speaking exclusively of the church - those who have been chosen (1:4), predestinated (1:5), made accepted (1:6), redeemed and forgiven (1:7), obtaining an inheritance (1:11), and sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). Further, these are the ones for whom Paul prayed - that they would be "*enlightened*" (1:15-20), and "*filled with all the fulness of God*" (3:15-20). These are the ones who have been "*quickened together with Christ*" (2:1-5), and made to "*sit together in heavenly places*" (2:6). They are God's own "*workmanship, created in Christ Jesus*" (2:10). They have been "*reconciled unto God*" (2:16), are members of "*the household of God*" (2:19), and are "*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*" (2:20).

APOSTLES. Other versions read, "*special ability as apostles,*" ^{LIVING} "*some to be apostles (special messengers).*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

Here the word "*apostles*" is used in the purest sense of the word- i.e. "*twelve apostles*" (Matt 10:2; Rev 21:14) - also referred to as "*the twelve*" (Matt 20:17; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5), and Paul "*the apostle of the Gentiles*" (Rom 11:13).

Another man is referred to as an "*apostle*" - Barnabas (Acts 14:14). However, he was not an apostle of Christ, but, together with Saul, was called by the Holy Spirit to a special work. They were then "*sent*" by the church in Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). This is not the kind of use reflected in our text - even though some denominations refer to certain of their leaders as "apostles." While this may be technically correct, it seems to me to be an unwise use of the term.

The word "*apostle*" means "a messenger, one sent forth with orders." ^{STRONG'S/THAYER} In this case, they were sent out directly by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 10:5,16), and are therefore referred to as "*the apostles of Christ*" (2 Cor 11:13; 1 Thess 2:6). Paul also said he was called "*to be an apostle of Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor 1:1). Referring to the Gentiles, Jesus said to him, "*I send thee*" (Acts 26:17). Men believe on Jesus through the words of His apostles (John 17:20). Peter challenged his readers with the words, "*That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior*" (2 Peter 3:2).

The apostolic office was not passed down through succeeding generations. We have their ministry in their writings. This ensures that they will not be idolized in a lifeless manner.

The actual writings of the twelve are very few. We have letters from only Matthew, Peter (1 & 2 Peter), and John (John, 1,2,3 John, Revelation). This certainly does not suggest they were the only apostles who said anything. It rather accents that their message was single, and that they were perfectly united in the declaration of it. Scripture also suggests that Peter was the appointed spokesman for the twelve (Acts 2:14; Gal 2:7-8).

As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was not only given special insights (Rom 16:25; Gal 1:12; Eph 3:3-4; 2 Cor 12:1;), he wrote most of the letters for the churches - in fact, those are the only letters of which we have record (Romans, Corinthians (2), Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians (2), Timothy(2), Titus, and Philemon).

These apostles were given to the church by Jesus. In addition to the letters written by Paul, we have Matthew, John, First and Second Peter, First, Second, and Third John, and Revelation. The lack of familiarity with these writings within the professed church is staggering.

PROPHETS. Other versions read, *"to others he has given the gift of being able to preach well,"*^{LIVING} *and, some prophets (inspired preachers and expounders).*"^{AMPLIFIED} These are not *"the prophets"* prior to Christ. These are gifts given by the exalted Christ-*"the Man Christ Jesus"*- and refer to those with holy aptitude to edify, exhort, comfort (1 Cor 14:3), and discern a message that is genuinely from the Lord (1 Cor 14:37). This is the second highest office in the church. As it is written, *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets"* (1 Cor 12:28). Several of these men were in the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1), as well as Corinth (1 Cor 12:29; 14:31,32,39). These are men who are given insight into Scripture, and are able to properly correlate Scripture with Divine purpose. It appears to me that they are able to uncover essential revealed spiritual perspectives that may have been hidden for years.

HE GAVE EVANGELISTS, AND PASTORS AND TEACHERS

4:11c *" . . . and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."*

Paul is outlining the teaching ministries that have been given to the church. Notice that in this foundational teaching he does not mention spiritual gifts such as, *"miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues,"* and their *"interpretation"* (1 Cor 12:28-29). Neither does he mention other revealed gifts such as *"ministry," "giving,"* and *"showing mercy"* (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Pet 4:11). Those are all legitimate gifts, but they are not foundational ones.

A proper perspective of spiritual gifts is seen in the following statement: *"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"* (1 Cor 12:28). The clear implication is that the latter gifts can be properly ministered only within the context of sound teaching.

It is interesting to observe that the teaching ministries here revealed are almost totally absent from the modern church. Teaching has been redefined to fit into the modern penchant for a "how-to" approach to religion. Word merchants are employed to address social and domestic issues, rather than to build up the saints - a subject that Paul is commencing with this text.

EVANGELISTS. Other versions read, *"preachers of the good news,"*^{BBE} *"proclaimers of the Good News,"*^{CJB} *"some have special ability in winning people to Christ,"*^{LIVING} *"some to go and tell the Good News,"*^{ERV} *and "some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, traveling missionaries).*"^{AMPLIFIED}

These were proclaimers of the good news. This gift, along with the others that are stated, are expressly said to be *"for the perfecting of the saints"* (4:12). This cannot, therefore, be limited to, what is commonly called, evangelism. Evangelists of Scriptural record include Philip (not the apostle-Acts 21:8), and Timothy (2 Tim 4:5). Philip did preach in Samaria, bringing about the conversion of the entire city (Acts 8:5-1-8); other cities of the Samaritans (Acts 8:25), and to the Ethiopian eunuch as well (Acts 8:26-38). Timothy was noted for his work with the churches (Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Phil 1:1; 2:20-21; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:2).

The Gospel is to be preached to the church, for it is the doctrinal foundation upon which everything is built (Rom 1:15-16; 15:16,29; 1 Cor 15:1; Gal 2:5; Eph 6:15; Col 1:23; 2 Tim 1:10). **True apostolic doctrine is actually the exposition of the Gospel.** What took place in the death, resurrection, and exaltation

of Christ is the theme of everything Paul wrote to the churches.

There is an approach to Gospel preaching that affirms "*preaching*" is done to the sinners, and "*teaching*" is done to the saints. There is no Scriptural support for this view. Peter and the apostles "*taught*" Jewish unbelievers (Acts 4:2; 5:21). Paul and Barnabas taught unconverted Gentile cities (Acts 14:21). They also continued "preaching and teaching" in Antioch (Acts 15:35). Paul was ready to preach to Roman believers (Rom 1:15), establishing them with preaching (Rom 16:25). Paul also preached to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 15:1).

The point is that preaching, declaring, and affirming the Gospel is an ongoing work within the church. This is the word through which faith comes and is nourished. The church itself needs evangelists - insightful preachers of the Gospel - in order to be perfected.

PASTORS AND TEACHERS. This is a single office, not two. Grammatically, there is no comma between the two, but a coordinating conjunction - "*and*." Other versions read, "*some to give care and teaching,*"^{BBE} "*shepherds and teachers,*"^{CJB} "*caring for God's people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God,*"^{LIVING} "*care for and teach God's people,*"^{ERV} "*pastor-teacher,*"^{MESSAGE} and "*pastors (shepherds of His flock) and teachers.*"^{AMPLIFIED}

This is a more thorough description of the word "*teachers,*" that is listed as the third most important office in the church (1 Cor 12:28). A "*teacher,*" as used here, is not only one that communicates truth, but that also discerns the needs of the flock, and endeavors to insightfully enable them to "*grow up into Christ in all things.*"

As is confirmed in Jude, a good teacher might have personal preferences of what he wants to communicate, but is not able to do so because of the condition of the flock. Therefore Jude wrote, "*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 1:3). That is caring for the flock.

Paul referred to this ordained role as caring for the church of God (1 Tim 3:5). Paul admonished the elders of the church in Ephesus, "feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28). Peter admonished elders, "*feed the flock of God . . . taking the oversight*" (1 Pet 5:2). The Hebrew believers were told of those among them who "*watch for your souls*" (Heb 13:17). These are pastor-teachers. The word "*pastor*" means "*shepherd,*" and accents caring for the sheep, and not being a mere hireling. Such a person recognizes where the flock needs to be led, and what is the proper diet for their present condition.

Here is where the epistles of Paul, Peter, and John are especially useful. They show a godly discretion that all men do not have - yet it is something that is sorely needed. Thus the Head of the church has place "*some*" in the church, for the perfecting of the saints.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 48

Eph 4:12 ***"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."*** (Eph 4:12)

THE INTENTION OF THE "GIFTS" GIVEN TO MEN, #1

INTRODUCTION

Having ascended triumphantly into heaven, taking captive what had captivated men (Eph 4:8), receiving a Kingdom (Dan 7:13-14), and being seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3), the Lord Jesus *"gave gifts unto men."* These related to the fulfillment of the *"eternal purpose"* that had been set in motion (Eph 3:11). It had very much to do with those who had been *"chosen"* and *"predestinated"* by God Himself (Eph 1:4-5). This has to do with redeeming these chosen ones with the blood of Christ (Eph 1:7). It is why Paul prayed for the eyes of the understanding to be opened (Eph 1:15-20), and that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith (Eph 3:15-20). These indispensable gifts have to do with preparing Christ's bride to be married to Him. They relate to them being God's children, of whom He is not ashamed. The main work was not freeing them from the grasp of the devil, but equipping them for fellowship with Christ. It was not merely to forgive their sins, but to make them *"the righteousness of God"* in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:21). These gifts are the appointed means of conforming those who have been called and justified to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29-30). To bring these sons to glory (Heb 2:10), they had to be prepared to dwell in glory - and these gifts will ensure that this preparation takes place. There is no substitute for the working of these gifts - the proper working of them. If they are shunned or neglected, the sanctifying work will not be done. There is no substitute for these gifts. As long as the world stands, they will never become obsolete, nor will they be replaced by things that are more effective. The work of the Holy Spirit is circumscribed by these gifts, for they are the means through which He works. These are appointed gifts, but they are needed ones - required ones - also. It is not that the work of Christ is not sufficient, and God forbid that anyone should conclude such a thing. Rather, this is the means through which Christ pours His fulness into His body (Eph 1:22-23). As we wade into these waters, we will find they significantly conflict with what is going on in the church of our time. It will be confirmed that the Babylonish monster that Satan has fabricated has no primary place for these gifts. That is why they are not there.

"FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS"

Eph 4:12a ***"For the perfecting of the saints . . ."***

Now the Spirit delineates what these gifts are calculated to do: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. God does nothing *"without a cause"* (Ezek 14:23). These *"gifts"* are not merely glamorous positions designed to elevate individuals. These are not basically authoritative gifts. Jesus made clear to His disciples that they would not be like the kings of the earth, wielding power and subjecting men to themselves. *"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mat 20:25-28). In this text, Paul expounds the word *"minister."*

FOR THE PERFECTING. Other versions read, *"equipping,"* ^{NKJV} *"prepare,"* ^{NIV} *"training,"* ^{BBE} *"knit . . . together,"* ^{NJB} *"gathering together,"* ^{PNT} *"fully to equip,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"immediate equipment,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"readying,"* ^{ABP} *"would learn,"* ^{CEV} and *"the perfecting and the full equipping."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word translated *"perfecting"* has the following lexical meaning: *"complete furnishing, equipping,"* ^{STRONG'S} *"adequacy, full qualification, maturity,"* ^{FRIBERG} *"made complete,"* ^{BARCLAY-NEUMAN} *"to cause to be fully qualified."* ^{LOUW-NIDA}

The depiction is like a child becoming a man, or a structure being made habitable, or a tree or vine becoming fruitful. In Christ maturity is not a luxury, or something unusual. Further it is not an automatic process - even though it is often declared as though that was the case. Every farmer or vineyard-keeper knows that unattended crops do not do well. Every good mother knows that a child left to himself will not mature properly. Yet, in Christian circles, there are multitudes of professing Christians who have been left to themselves to grow up into Christ. Novices speak about the people of God feeding themselves, and often speak of bearing fruit as though it just happens. They appear blissfully unaware of the fact that God does not simply expect fruit, but *"much fruit"* (John 12:24; 15:5,8).

Now we learn that perfecting, maturity, preparing, and readying is accomplished by appointed means: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. In the Kingdom of God, maturity, or spiritual adulthood, has to do with functionality within the body of Christ. It relates to fulfilling the ministry in which each one has been placed. The Spirit apprises us that God has *"set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him"* (1 Cor 12:18). Now we find that they require the input of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers to fulfill that function.

Let us make this matter even more clear. The people of God need the regular input of the foundation-layers of the church - the *"apostles."* They need their doctrine, their exposition of Christ, their knowledge of the purpose of salvation, and what God has determined for the church-all of which is found in their doctrine, or writings. They need the input of prophets, who have insight into the purpose of God, understand the Scriptures, and can put things together in a manner that glorifies God and edifies His people. These men will speak unto edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor 11:3). The people of God need the ministry of evangelists who know the core-message, and proclaim it with power: men who know what to announce, declare, report, and affirm. They need the ministry of pastor-teachers who know and care for the flock, ensuring that they receive proper nourishment.

Where these ministries are not taking place, it is pointless to expect people to grow up into Christ, mature, or become fruitful. If the appointed means Divinely designed to equip and mature the saints is withheld, it is not possible for them to advance in spiritual stature.

Thus we see that spiritual life does not automatically advance. There are certain requirements like pruning, teaching, chastening, strengthening, exhorting, and comforting. There is armor to put on, resistance to be done, together with running, fighting, and wrestling. It is true that these are accomplished through the effort of the believer, but that effort will not be expended if the saints have not been equipped or perfected.

OF THE SAINTS. Other versions read, *"God's people,"* ^{NIV} *"holy ones,"* ^{NAB} *"holy people,"* ^{NJB} and *"His consecrated people."* ^{AMPLIFIED} The word *"saints"* is literally translated *"holy ones,"* *"blameless, and consecrated."* ^{THAYER} These are the people to whom the stated gifts have been given. Not to UNholy people, but to holy people. **God is not perfecting unholy or carnal people.** It is no wonder believers are told, *"But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Pet 1:15-16). These are the people - the only people - who are being perfected by the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. In fact, no other people CAN be matured, grow up into

Christ, or be conformed to the image of God's Son. The implications of this can be quite alarming. Still all professed believers do well do expend quality time considering this circumstance.

"FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY"

4:12b " . . . *for the work of the ministry* . . . "

Perfection, or maturity, or spiritual adulthood is not an end of itself. It rather qualifies the people to **do** something - something pertaining to the body of Christ. Ultimately, this ministry has to do with preparing the church to be inhabited by God (Eph 2:22; 1 Cor 3:16; Rev 21:3). Remove that revealed objective, and there really is no reason to have a church - no reason for Jesus to "*build*" His church, and no reason for ministry. A church that is not working in the sense of this text, is as useless as a car that does not work, or any piece of machinery or other apparatus that is not functional. These days the church has adopted the jargon of the world: "dysfunctional." By definition this word means "impaired, abnormal functioning, unhealthy interpersonal behavior." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} In the world, this may be an acceptable condition, or at least one with which certain experts can work. However, in the Kingdom of God this is not at all the case. A tree or a vine that does not bear fruit is useless, and will be removed. Faith that does not have works is "*dead*," and has no place in spiritual life (James 2:20,26). Brethren who do not love are not brethren at all, but are of the wicked one (1 John 3:10; 4:8,20). Those who insist on touching the unclean thing are not being received by God (2 Cor 6:17). The person who does not submit to Jesus for cleansing has "*no part*" with Him (John 13:8).

Mind you, we are not seeking to exclude as many as we can, and that is not the point of these observations. It is rather to point out that the church of our day has grown accustomed to glaring deficiencies, and does not see them as disqualifiers. And, indeed, if it were not for text like the one we are considering, this kind of reasoning might be seen as acceptable.

When God has made a provision, men are to avail themselves of it. If He provides "*the whole armor of God*," we are obliged to put it on (Eph 6:10). If He has given us "*all things that pertain to life and godliness*," it is our duty to seek them out and obtain them (2 Pet 1:3).

THE WORK. This word is not a verb, but is a "noun." It is not limited to activity, but addresses the matter of objective, purpose, and reason for working. Synonyms are "business, employment, what one undertakes, enterprise. Therefore, Paul referred to "*the work of an evangelist*" (2 Tim 4:5).

The gifts covered in verse eleven, then, are designed to get all of the parts of the body functioning in their ordained role. Each part of the body is designed to do something, and the Lord has placed certain functions in the body to get those parts involved in what they are intended to do.

Several of these parts, or assigned functions, are specified in Scripture. The letter to the Romans mentions "*prophecy*,"¹ "*ministry*"² or serving, "*teaching*,"³ "*exhorting*,"⁴ "*giving*,"⁵ "*ruling*,"⁶ and "*showing mercy*"⁷ (Rom 12:6-8). Corinthians mentions "*word of wisdom*,"⁸ "*word of knowledge*,"⁹ "*faith*,"¹⁰ "*gifts of healing*,"¹¹ "*working of miracles*,"¹² "*divers kinds of tongues*,"¹³ "*interpretation of tongues*,"¹⁴ (1 Cor 12:8-10), "*apostles*,"¹⁵ "*prophets*,"¹⁶ "*teachers*," "*helps*,"¹⁷ and "*governments*"¹⁸ (1 Cor 12:28). The Ephesian letter lists "*apostles*," "*prophets*," "*evangelists*,"¹⁹ "*pastor-teachers*"²⁰ (Eph 4:11). Peter lists "*speaking*,"²¹ and "*ministering*," declaring they involve being "*good stewards of the manifold grace of God*," and "*the ability which God giveth*" (1 Pet 4:10-11).

There are twenty-one different "*gifts*," all of which speak of active and beneficial functions. Our text affirms that at least four of these gifts are particularly designed to bring the members of the body to a point where they can function acceptably and profitably in the function into which they were placed by God.

OF MINISTRY. Other versions read, "*work of service*,"^{NASB} "*works of service*,"^{NIV} "*work of ministering*,"^{ASV} "*servants in the church*,"^{BBE} "*to serve*,"^{GWN} and "*work of ministration*."^{PNT}

The idea here is not that of meeting a perceived need, but of serving Divine interests. Jesus Christ is referred to as "*a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God*" (Rom 15:8), and "*a Minister of the sanctuary, or the true tabernacle*" (Heb 8:2). The glorified Christ told Saul of Tarsus that He had appeared to him "*to make thee a minister*" (Acts 26:16). Paul says he was "*made a minister*" (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23,25). A servant is one

who serves the interests of others - in this case, the interests and purposes of God, not men. As depicted here, the "servant" who ministers is receiving something from God, then delivering it to God's people.

Every member in the body of Christ has been given something to deliver to the saints. However, they must be matured before they can do their assigned work effectively. Thus, apostolic doctrine (apostles), prophetic utterances that edify, exhort, and comfort (prophets), insightful proclamations and declarations (evangelists), and those who perceive and care for the flock, providing timely and pertinent teaching (pastors-teachers). These have been given to the church to ensure proper and timely growth. If these key ministries are not carried out, spiritual maturity will not take place, and the various members of the body will not function as intended. One can only imagine the future of those who have ignored this provision, instituting human purposes for the church that have little or no bearing on eternity.

FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY

4:12c " . . . *for the edifying of the body of Christ.* "

Follow the reasoning here, for it is progressive. Jesus gave gifts to the church in order to perfect or mature the members of the body. That maturity was in order that they might do the following. This would indicate that true edification is not accomplished by those who are immature, else this text would have no meaning. While it may be apparent, it needs to be said: **no believer can lift another believer higher than his own status.** This is why the admonition is given, "*in understanding be men,*" or "*in your thinking be mature*" ^{NIV} (1 Cor 14:20). This is not only for the sake of the individual, but for the rest of the members, to whom God has intended the person should minister.

FOR THE EDIFYING. Other versions read, "*building up,*" ^{NASB} "*built up.*" ^{NIV} Edifying has to do with building up, promoting another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, and holiness. ^{THAYER} In edification there is both addition and strengthening. There is fortification, and a widening of one's spiritual perspective. Many professing Christians give no indication of growth at all. If this assessment is true, they have not been edified. Either a legitimate attempt was made to edify them, and they rejected it, or they have really not been subjected to edifying influences - at least not consistently.

There is a two-fold way of considering the necessity of edification. First, by virtue of being in the world, we are subjected to eroding influences. If a person or group of persons is not being built up, they are being torn down. They are losing grace instead of gain in it. Their vision is deteriorating so that they are becoming less and less perceptive, and therefore more and more vulnerable to the wicked one. Second, if they are not being edified, they cannot minister to the rest of the body, for, as our text clearly states, the means of being able to edify is found in the ministration of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor=teachers.

Where the doctrine of the apostles (Acts 2:42) is not declared, the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the prophets is not being heard, Gospel declaration is minimal or not at all, and teaching and Scriptural shepherding is not taking place, **there is no edification.** Under such a circumstance, maturity is not taking place, for those are the appointed means of spiritual growth.

This is the reason for the apostolic injunction, "*Let all things be done unto edifying*" (1 Cor 14:26). It is why "*greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that **the church** may receive edifying*" (1 Cor 14:5). This is the reason for the admonition to the Thessalonians, "*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do*" (1 Thess 5:11).

Edification takes place in the realm of understanding, comprehension, and discernment. Just as it is possible to have an adult body while possessing a childish mind, so it is possible for a person to be a longtime church=member, yet not be "*built up*" in the Lord, or "*be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*" (Eph 3:18-19). Where this condition is maintained for an inordinately long period of time, edification has not taken place. And where edification has not been able to take place, the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers has been suppressed. If this can in any way be justified, then there is no point to the exaltation of Jesus. I would consider such a supposition to be in the category of blasphemy and unbelief.

OF THE BODY OF CHRIST. There is no record of Jesus giving gifts to the world, or to sinners, or to the ungodly. I suppose that the ministry of the Holy Spirit in convicting the world (John 16:7-10) might be thought to be a gift for the world. But that is not how He is presented. He is the gift given to those who are in Christ Jesus, not the world (Acts 3:28; 10:45). Even so, it is the edification of *"the body of Christ"* that is the point of the gifts here mentioned.

There can be no question about *"the body of Christ"* being the church, for *"Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body"* (Eph 5:23). Again, *"He is the Head of the body, the church"* (Col 1:18). Again, Paul; writes of certain afflictions associated with Christ that have been left behind *"for His body's sake, which is the church"* (Col 1:24). Here is where the Lord Jesus pours out His *"fulness"* (Eph 1:23). It is said of Jesus, He *"loved the church, and gave Himself for it"* (Eph 5:25). This is the body of people He is going to *"present"* to Himself, *"a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"* (Eph 5:27).

Who is the person who would dare to neglect the church in favor of the enemies of God? Who would have the brashness to assert that Jesus was more interested in the lost than He was His betrothed bride? Who is the undiscerning person who would shape the activities of the church to have a primary purpose other than perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry? Wherever there is such a person or group of persons, there will be a minimization of the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. There is no exception to this rule.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 49

Eph 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."*** (Eph 4:13)

THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

In the salvation of God, requirements are on a higher level than a law of commandments. To be sure, God has not eliminated commandments, and God forbid that anyone should even think such a thing. If His commandments *"are not grievous"* (1 John 5:3), then obviously we are not without them. In summing up those commandments John wrote, *"And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment"* (1 John 3:23). However, the objective of the commandments is quite different than under the Law. Under Moses, the primary purpose of the commandment was to define and subdue sin. In Christ, there is a higher purpose: *"Now the end ['purpose' NKJV] of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned"* (1 Tim 1:5). You see, then, that the aim of the commandment is to become something, and obtain something, rather than to refrain from this and that, and subdue expression. That is a whole new perspective of duty, requirement, and doing what is necessary. Many professed believers have never seen this perspective. They are in a kind of intellectual rut in which they only think of not doing what it wrong or forbidden. Therefore we often hear questions like, "Does the Bible condemn this or that?" Or statements like, "I do not find that this or that is forbidden." While there is some justification for this line of thinking, it is by no means the superior approach to life.

We particularly learn from this passage that the Head of the church has some objectives and expectations. To come short of those expectations is in the same category as disobeying a commandment. For the church not to produce and become what its Head expects, and for which He has provided resources is infinitely more serious than the nominal Christian thinks. This is precisely what raised the concern of Paul, Peter, James, and Jude for certain churches. They had not become what is intended to be produced by salvation. Jesus Himself made this quite clear in His letter to the seven churches of Asia. With this in mind, we will proceed with the text.

"TILL WE ALL COME IN THE UNITY OF THE FAITH"

Eph 4:13a *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . ."*

TILL WE ALL COME. Some versions read *"meet together,"*^{GENEVA} *"all together,"*^{IE} and *"with each other."*
MESSAGE

Thus we have two differing ideas presented here. First, that we would all think alike about matters pertaining to life and godliness - whether in the assembly or away from it. Second, the stress is placed upon coming together, and being of one accord when that takes place. This would mean we are meeting for the same purpose, and focused on the same Person and ultimate objective. Within this context, the stress does seem to be on the assembly of the saints. That is where the gifts are designed to enable the ministry of the members to one another, the Head of the church working through them (4:16; Col 2:19). It ought to be apparent that the effectiveness of the body is realized when, in some sense, it is together. It is true that the unity of reference can be achieved in some sense independently of bodily presence. In that sense we are *"one"* with *"the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Heb 12:23), and with the *"whole family in heaven and earth"* (Eph 3:15). However, it seems to me that this is not the point being made here.

"WE." The word *"we"* applies to believers that are still in the world, and who have some kind of proximity to one another.

"ALL." This means that no person in Christ is excluded, nor can any individual rightfully think of himself as separate from the other members of the body (Cor 12:20-27).

"COME." This is the language of progress - of moving to some appointed place or status. It necessarily means that we do not arrive at this place automatically, nor has God made provision for NOT arriving there at all. God's appointments are achieved by God's means, and whoever is not part of the concluded intention will be excluded from the presence of the Lord. In a society that stresses individuality, this is a difficult lesson to learn. In Christ, the Individual who has the preeminence is Christ Himself. He alone *"filleth all in all"* (Eph 1:213). The rest of the people find their significance in *"the body of Christ."* Even the apostles, premier individuals in the world, have been placed within *"the body"* (1 Cor 12:28).

The word *"come"* has the *"body"* of Christ in prospect - the gathering of the saints together. It is clearly taught that it is within that context that Christ ordinarily ministers to His people. It is to be acknowledged that holy individuals are taught by the Lord personally, and in strict accord with His purpose. However, even that teaching is with Christ's *"body"* in mind. Paul, for example, received revelations that were not ministered within the context of other members of the body (2 Cor 12:1-3). The same is true of *"prophets."* However, those insights are to be ministered to the body, for whom they are ultimately intended.

THE UNITY OF THE FAITH. Other versions read, *"unity in the faith,"*^{NIV} *"harmony of the faith,"*^{BBE} *"the unity implied by trusting,"*^{CSB} *"meet together (in the unity of faith,"*^{GENEVA} *"are united in our faith,"*^{GWN} *"become one and the same, in faith,"*^{M RD} *"believe alike about our salvation,"*^{LIVING} *"we are all together. We must be united in our faith,"*^{IE} *"arrive at oneness in faith,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"unity of the belief,"*^{ABP} *"united by our faith,"*^{CEV} *"joined together in what we believe,"*^{ERV} *"all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son,"*^{MESSAGE} and *"oneness in the faith."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul has already affirmed that there is *"one faith"* - one spiritual substance and evidence of things hoped for (Heb 11:1). Here, this has primarily to do with our perception of Christ Himself, and, consequently, of the salvation that He is administering. **There is no room in the Kingdom of God for varying views of Christ.** Nor, indeed, have men been given the freedom to embrace differing views of salvation - what it is, how it is initiated, and its culmination. There is only one thing that can take hold of grace, which is the vehicle in which salvation is brought to us (Tit 2:11) - and that is *"faith"* (Eph 2:8).

This faith is what actually brings us together - both in heart and holy gatherings. While what we believe is involved, it is more precisely WHOM we believe. God has nothing to give us or teach us that does not come through Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son. A *"unity of the faith"* is realized when that is actually embraced, being more than a mere tenet, or dogma.

This is the faith that constrains the individual to live acceptably to God (Rom 1:17). It is the faith that justifies and initiates peace with God (Rom 5:1). This faith enables us to *"stand"* (2 Cor 1:24), *"walk"* (2 Cor 5:7), be *"kept by the power God"* (1 Pet 1:5), and overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5). Those who are united by faith are those who are living by that faith, being demonstrably kept by God, and overcoming the world. Where these characteristics are not found, there is a deficiency of faith - if, indeed, there is any faith at all.

Where faith is either non-existent or minimal, there will be a tendency to separate from the body of Christ, living in some kind of isolation. That circumstance contradicts the revealed purpose of God and ministry of Christ. Therefore, the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers is to establish the saints in the faith so they can be together as intended.

"AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD"

4:13b " . . . *and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . .* "

As if "*the unity of the faith*" was not enough, we learn that it is only one leg of a two-legged objective. Neither of these objectives is intended to stand on its own. They are like siamese twins that are joined together. Any attempt to separate them will end in losing them both.

AND. It is a major step forward when a spiritually rational view of "*and*" is embraced. This is a spiritual knot that ties two realities together. We read of such combinations as "*grace and truth*" (John 1:14), "*love and peace*" (2 Cor 13:11), "*love and patience of hope*" (1 Thess 1:3), "*Love and faith*" (Phile 1:5), "*righteousness, peace, and joy*" (Rom 14:17), "*consolation and salvation*" (2 Cor 1:6), "*everlasting consolation and good hope*" (2 Thess 2:16), "*joy and consolation*" (Phile 1:7), "*faith and power*" (Acts 6:8), "*work of faith and labor of love*" (1 Thess 1:3), "*faith and a good conscience*" (1 Tim 1:9), "*faith and patience*" (Heb 6:12), and "*faith and hope*" (1 Pet 1:21).

In this kind of arrangement we are better equipped to examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith or not (2 Cor 13:5). No person in Christ should be content to have some minimal evidence of the presence of a few selective virtues. Salvation has many facets, and it is those facets that make salvation effective and discernible.

THE KNOWLEDGE. Here is a facet of the domain of "*unity*" that is glaringly absent in the church of our day. One can scarcely find even a small number of professed believers that are united in what they know.

The word "*knowledge*," in all of its varied forms (know, knowing, knows, and knowledge) is mentioned 1,097 times in Scripture. There is "*the knowledge of good and evil*" (Gen 2:9,17), "*The knowledge of the Lord*" (2 Chron 30:22), "*the knowledge*" of God's "*ways*" (Job 21:14), "*the knowledge of God*" (Prov 2:5), "*the knowledge of salvation*" (Lk 1:77), "*the knowledge of sin*" (Rom 3:20) "*the knowledge of the glory of God*" (2 Cor 4:6), "*the knowledge of His will*" (Col 1:9), and "*the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim 2:4), to name a few.

What is meant by the word "*knowledge*?" As used in this text, the literal meaning of the word is, "recognition, full discernment, acknowledgment," ^{STRONG'S} "precise and correct knowledge," ^{THAYER} "true knowledge," ^{FRIBERG} and "with a degree of thoroughness or competence." ^{LOUW-NIDA} In the English language, "*knowledge*" means "The fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association (2) : acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, or technique b (1) : the fact or condition of being aware of something." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

As is apparent, this is not mere academic knowledge - like facts learned in school or through books. **This "*knowledge*" involves precision, correctness, truth, thorough acquaintance, competence to use, being familiar with, being associated with, understanding, and awareness. There is no allowance for incorrect knowledge, or knowing something one cannot recognize or use. What the person knows must strictly conform with the truth made known by God.** When one realizes the scope of this statement, it staggers the intellect, and challenges the very capacity of thought. What God intends us to know requires spiritual maturity, and spiritual maturity requires the ministration of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

OF THE SON OF GOD. And what is it that is to be known - discerned, comprehended, recognized, and seen correctly? It is "*the Son of God.*" **Any other kind of unity will not be honored in heaven, but will be classed with the builders at Babel.**

This kind of knowledge was the life-long quest of the Apostle Paul Himself. He said that he abandoned his former life in order that He might "*know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death*" (Phil 3:10). John wrote, "*And hereby we do know that*

we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2:3).

Knowing the Son of God is being able to recognize Him, His salvation, His truth, and His purpose. The existence of denominations confirms a failure to be able to recognize the Lord's Christ. As demonstrated in Christ's earthly ministry, no one truly benefitted from Him until He was, to some degree, known. It was **after** the disciples were convinced Jesus rose from the dead that they were profited by the resurrected Christ. Wherever Jesus went, if the people did not know who He was, they did not get much from Him.

Some professed Christians are like Cleopas and his companion - unable to recognize Jesus. That is because they did not know Him, even though they had been with Him. There are "church members" who cannot discern the real Jesus, and the doctrine that concerns Him. However, this condition must be corrected before genuine unity can exist - a unity that is facilitated by the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. If the unity of reference (of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God) is the objective of the ministry of the "gifts" given to the church, the acceptance of what they minister in that capacity will increase and mature faith, and will produce a more thorough acquaintance with, and ability to recognize, "the Son of God."

TILL WE ALL COME UNTO A PERFECT MAN

4:13c *"...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."*

The intended progression purposed by the ministry of the "gifts" given by the exalted Christ, continues: perfecting or equipping the saints, **in order to** "the work of the ministry," **in order to** "the edifying of the body of Christ," **in order to** all coming into "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God," **in order to** the realization of "a perfect man." No ministry that falls short of these objectives is valid. We are speaking here of Divine intentions and objectives. If men are not in harmony with these aims, they are out of synch with the Lord.

UNTO A PERFECT MAN. Other versions read, "a mature man," ^{NASB} "mature," ^{NIV} "maturity," ^{NRSV} "mature manhood," ^{RSV} "full grown man," ^{ASV} "full growth," ^{BBE} "complete man," ^{MRD} "mature adulthood," ^{ISV} and "the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection)." ^{AMPLIFIED}

There are two possible meanings of this expression. The first is that each person will mature. The second is that the body as a whole will mature. The difference is between a mature "Christian" and a mature "church." Which is the proper meaning? First, does anyone really think that an elaborate salvation has been instituted for the sake of one person? How could this be so if the salvation of the Jews was not sufficient incentive for Jesus to come into the world? As it is written, "Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth'" ^{NKJV} (Isa 49:6).

In our text, the sentence reads, "we all come . . . unto a perfect man." Here a plurality ("we") becomes a single entity (*man*). This is the same kind of oneness between Jew and Gentile, that was described earlier: "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 ["create in Himself one new man from the two" ^{NKJV}], so making peace" (Eph 2:15).

Of course, this postulates the maturity of the individual members - however that is not the target. It was not enough for Israel to be saved, while the Gentiles remained in a state of alienation and enmity. That would not be the fulfillment of God's purpose. Just so, it is not enough that some members of the body of Christ become mature, while vast numbers of them remain in a state of spiritual infancy and immaturity. That circumstance comes short of what the Lord intends - and coming short of what He wills is always viewed as a most serious matter. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on the whole body, and not on the individual members.

This is not a strange way of reasoning. When Jesus assessed the churches in Asia, He assessed each one as a whole. He did speak of individual members, some who were unacceptable (2:14-15,10.22), and some who

were acceptable (Rev 2:24; 3:4). Yet, the Lord addressed those churches as a whole. **Each one of them were expected to be mature as a church, or congregation of believers.** This is a strange concept in our time, as well as in much of church history. When the church was institutionalized, the idea of a mature church was forfeited, for you cannot institutionalize a mature church. Institutionalization requires spiritual infancy.

THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE. Other versions read, "*attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ,*" ^{NIV} "*to the full measure of Christ,*" ^{BBE} "*the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection,*" ^{CSB} "*the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ,*" ^{GENEVA} "*measure up to Christ, who is the standard.*" ^{GWN}

In the end, the whole church will be "*not having spot or wrinkle*" (Eph 5:27); the whole church will be "*blameless*" (1 Thess 5:23). Until that time, individual churches are to be like a "*perfect man*" - a mature man, fully grown. The whole church at Ephesus was assessed as having left its "*first love,*" and the whole church was admonished "*repent, and do the first works*" (Rev 2:5). A mature church requires the purging of false doctrine (Rev 2:14-16). The whole church at Corinth was required to be "*separate,*" and "*touch not the unclean thing*" (2 Cor 6:17). Paul wrote whole letters to individual churches (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica). There are letters written to individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon). However, the thrust of Paul's attention was put upon the "*churches*" (Acts 15:41; 16:5; 1 Cor 7:17; 2 Cor 8:18; ; 11:28). The reason for this is obvious. Paul knew the purpose of God for the churches - that each one of them be matured as "*a perfect man,*" with no moral or spiritual flaws, and no inadequate level of the knowledge of and familiarity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who glory in the largeness of an assembly, affirming how much more they can do, can rarely present us with a mature body - a "*perfect man.*" Among other things, that confirms that their approach to ministry is actually ineffective, not measuring up to the revealed objective for the churches. Whatever does not make for the perfection of reference militates against it. When it comes to the things of God, and the environment of the saints, whatever does not edify tears down, and whatever does not strengthen causes weakness. This is because there are only two masters, two sources of influence, and two mind-sets.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 50

Eph 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."***

(Eph 4:14)

THAT WE BE NO MORE CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

Many professing Christians do not have an accurate understanding of what the Lord is doing in salvation, and the scope of His will in the accomplishment of that purpose. This is largely owing to the spiritual poverty of much preaching and teaching. Under the administration of Babylon the Great, *"the key of knowledge"* - vital knowledge - has once again been taken away, as it was long ago. In Jesus' day, this was done by the *"lawyers,"* who were supposed experts in the Law - the Biblical experts of the day. Our Lord's scathing rebuke of them is found in Luke 11:52: *"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered"* (Luke 11:52). He charged the Pharisees with a similar sin, saying they had *"shut up the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt 23:13). Four hundred years earlier, the Lord upbraided the recalcitrant priests of Israel saying, *"the lips of the priest should preserve knowledge . . . But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction"* (Mal 2:7). During the days of Paul's ministry, there were teachers who were *"subverting,"* or overthrowing *"the hearers"* (2 Tim 2:14). What these false teachers had done was fail to give the people the kind of knowledge that enabled them to walk acceptably before the Lord. They introduced teachings that eroded faith instead of solidifying it, and stripped the hearers of Divinely provided power. This same thing is very prevalent in our time, just as the apostles said it would be (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1-5).

What Paul is doing in this text is the opposite what the priests, lawyers, and Pharisees did. He is establishing and fortifying the saints in the knowledge of the Lord, providing them the understanding that is essential to overcoming the world and obtaining the prize.

"THAT WE HENCEFORTH BE . . ."

Eph 4:14a ***"That we henceforth be . . ."***

It is necessary to again see the logical progression of what Paul is saying. The equipping, or preparing, of the

saints is *IN ORDER* for the work of the ministry, *IN ORDER THAT* the body of Christ might be edified, *IN ORDER THAT* we all might come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God *IN ORDER THAT* we henceforth be no more children. The progress intended by the Lord cannot be realized independently of the ordained means through which that progress is to take place. There is a certain spiritual culturing and nurturing that is required in order to grow up in Christ. That is the matter Paul is addressing.

WE. This word is used 562 times in the epistles (Romans thru Jude). It nearly always refers to those who are in Christ Jesus, and this is a "*family*" term (Eph 3:15). "*Us*," which is a similar term, is used 277 times in the epistles, and is also generally a family term. All of this substantiates that the epistles were written with all of the saints in mind - and that includes the letters written to Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Gaius, and the elect lady. There are no letters written particularly for politicians and world leaders, or for those who are aliens from God, being dead in trespasses and sins. With this in mind, it is more than passingly strange that the professing church world remains fundamentally ignorant of the epistles - particular the writings of Paul, who was specifically given to the Gentiles.

The Epistles expound the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Jesus - something that is announced in the Gospels, but not expounded in them. In view of this, until the church obtains a compelling interest in the epistles, their understanding of Christ, His atoning death, His resurrection, ascension, and enthronement in heaven, will remain obscure. Further, as long as that condition exists, spiritual growth simply is not possible. Although it is rather elementary, this is not generally known in the Christian world. There are countless multitudes who think that if a person is given the Gospel of John, everything concerning Jesus will become clear to them. To begin with, it is generally agreed that the Gospel of John was primarily intended for Jewish people, to convince them that Jesus was the Christ. It also is of particular importance to those who are in Christ Jesus. But it does not expound the Gospel.

Suffice it to say, the text we are now perusing is intended for all believers, all of the body of Christ, everyone who has been born again, and made accepted in the Beloved. It confirms that there is more to spiritual life than its conception and birth.

HENCEFORTH. Other versions read, "*as a result*,"^{NASB} "*then*,"^{NIV} "*So that*,"^{RSV} "*then we will*."^{CSB} The language here is difficult to put into English words. The word "*henceforth*" is a supplied word - a kind of interpretation. The idea is that of a line of demarcation, when one condition ends and another begins. For example, the new birth is a line of demarcation that separations old and new, death and life, alienated and reconciled, condemned and accepted. What results from the new birth is never to be retrogression, going backward, or remaining in a fixed and undiscerning state. Salvation is not calculated to permit the life that was condemned to continue - the condition in which men were alienated from God to return.

The HENCEFORTH factor is one that makes for progression, advancement, furtherance, promotion, forward motion, and maturity. Blindness must be replaced by vision, ignorance by knowledge, dullness by sensitivity, staleness by freshness, deadness by life, and walking in darkness by a walk in the light. Anyone with but a modicum of understanding can see that this is true, and yet it is rarely seen being lived out in the professing church. Among professing Christians a staggering percentage of them is noted for spiritual infancy, childishness, naivete, simplicity, and outright ignorance of the things of God. There are all kinds of numbers and statistics concerning conversions, but none on growing up and maturing. In fact, I know of no public endeavor to assess the growth of professing Christians. This is because of the absence of the HENCEFORTH factor. What salvation is calculated to do is simply not being communicated to the "Christian" masses. They are being led to believe that domestic and social idealness is really the goal of, what is called, "the Christian life."

Paul will not write in a way that undergirds such an approach to the maintenance of spiritual life. He is a "*wise master builder*" (1 Cor 3:10). As such, he is setting before us the Divine blueprint for the building in which God intends to take up residence (Eph 2:22). His teaching has to do with getting the building ready for that habitation, ensuring that God's "*eternal purpose*" is fulfilled to His glory. This is why Jesus is reigning. It is why the spirit has been given. It is why the Word of God has been provided for us. It is the reason for apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor=teachers. It is the reason for the prominence of edification in the "*work of the ministry*." It is all *IN ORDER THAT* certain results may be found among those identified with Christ - all of them! These results are not optional, but are rather essential to our ongoing identity with the Living God. If this is not seen, the apostleship of Paul simply does not blend in with the eternal purpose of God. His teaching is unnecessary, and even the necessity of Christ becomes questionable.

"NO MORE CHILDREN"

4:14b " . . . *no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . .* "

This will describe spiritual life as it is intended after the new birth - after we have been forgiven, and are joined to the Lord. Here is the direction in which genuine life is pitched.

NO MORE CHILDREN. Other versions read, "*no longer children,*" ^{NKJV} "*no longer be infants,*" ^{NIV} "*no longer be little children,*" ^{CSB} "*no longer babes,*" ^{DARBY} "*be like children,*" ^{LIVING} "*stop acting like children,*" ^{CEV} and "*No prolonged infancies among us.*" ^{MESSAGE}

The truth of the matter is that the salvation of God has made no provision for prolonged childhood. There is a state in which believers are children who are lacking in understanding. But that is not intended to be a permanent condition. There comes a time when childishness must cease, naivete disappear, and simplicity be abandoned. The proper execution of the various gifts mentioned in this passage are the appointed means through which the transition from childhood to adulthood occur: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teacher. To put it another way, foundation layers, insightful -expounders, powerful proclaimers, and those who care for and nourish the flock of God. Where these ministries are removed, replaced, or ignored, the intended growth will not take place.

There are a number of admonitions that touch on this subject. "*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men*" (1 Cor 14:20). There does come a time when the believer becomes a "*man*" and puts away "*childish things*" (1 Cor 13:11) - i.e., a childish way of thinking. Paul wrote to the Philippians about abounding in knowledge (Phil 1:9). The letter to the Hebrews spoke of a time when "*for the time ye ought to be teachers*" (Heb 5:12). Peter admonished his readers to "*grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet 3:18).

In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that he was praying for the enlightenment of the eyes of their understanding (Eph 1:18). He made clear that alienation from God took place in the understanding (Eph 4:18). He will plead with them to "*be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph 5:17). He wrote to the Colossians that he was praying they would be "*filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Col 1:9). There is even "*the full assurance of understanding*" that helps to stabilize the heart (Col 2:2). Add to that the fact that Jesus "*is come to give us an understanding*" (1 John 5:20).

Terms of spiritual adulthood include "*know*" (1 Cor 2:12), "*discern*" (Heb 5:14), "*comprehend*" (Eph 3:18), "*steadfast*" (1 Pet 5:8), and "*unmoveable*" (1 Cor 15:58). **Spiritual processes that lead to maturity** include growing (1 Pet 2:2), going on to perfection (Heb 6:1), perfecting holiness (2 Cor 7:1), pressing toward the mark (Phil 3:14), and adding to our faith (2 Pet 1:5-8).

TOSSED TO AND FRO. A state of spiritual childhood makes one vulnerable to deception. The status of "*tossed too and fro*" is that of a ship at the mercy of the waves, "*driven with the wind and tossed*" (James 1:6), as compared to being solidly anchored (Heb 6:19). A novice is easily confused, not being able to sort out the lie from the truth. Their senses have not been exercised to discern good and evil (Heb 5:14).

You may recall that Noah's raven went forth "*to and fro,*" finding no place to rest (Gen 8:7). Unstable people are described by the Psalmist as reeling to and fro, staggering about like a drunkard, and at their "*wits end*" (Psa 107:27). Amos spoke of those who, during a famine of hearing the word of the Lord, "*run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it*" (Amos 8:12). All of these texts depict an unstable and restless condition.

CARRIED ABOUT. Other versions read, "*blown here and there,*" ^{NIV} "*blown about,*" ^{NRSV} "*swept along,*" ^{NAB} and "*wavering with every changing wind.*" ^{AMPLIFIED} The person who has grown up, into Christ in all things knows what belongs to him, and can employ such for God-honoring purposes and the edifying of the body of Christ. But the childish person is himself "*carried about,*" pulled one way, then another, by the ideas to which he is subjected. He cannot sort out truth from error, or reality from delusion. False teaching is like a flood that picks him up and carries him away, capturing his thoughts and diverting his attention from the

Lord.

WIND OF DOCTRINE. Other versions read, *"teachings that change like the wind,"*^{GWN} *"Wind of teaching,"*^{NET} and *"new gust of teaching."*^{NJB} These are doctrinal fads and crazes. These are teachings that are in vogue today, and are supplanted by another emphasis tomorrow. They are powerful spiritual gusts - like the straight-winds that wreak havoc today - strong horizontal bursts of winds, distinct from a whirling tornado. When these are focused upon the spiritually immature, it throws them about like cord-wood. They cannot stand upright during such assaults, but are hurt from them. Their thinking becomes damaged, and their lives are impacted by it.

As long as we are in the world, we will be subject to these spiritual blasts. The answer to them is not a wind-stopper, but a sturdy, mature, and stable person who is stronger than the wind.

THE SLEIGHT OF MEN

4:14c *" . . . by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."*

Although deception ultimately comes from the devil, here it is traced back to men - men who are used by the *"old serpent."* These will be Satan's servants, or *"ministers,"* who are *"transformed into ministers of righteousness"* (2 Cor 11:14). The *"men"* of this text are not people in the entertainment world. They are not the world's educators and philosophers. These are found in the world of religion, where they are causing all kinds of confusion and havoc.

THE SLEIGHT OF MEN, AND CUNNING CRAFTINESS.. Other versions read, *"trickery of men,"*^{NKJV} *"cunning,"*^{NIV} *"twisting,"*^{BBE} *"clever,"*^{CJB} *"wiliness,"*^{PNT} *"cleverly lied."*^{LIVING} These men, because they are driven by the devil, are experts in deception. From their point of view, they are not intending to deceive. Their motivation is exploitation, or using naive people to advance their own career and finances. Like Balaam, they prophesy for money, loving *"the wages of righteousness"* (2 Pet 2:15).

The cleverness of these men is after the flesh. It is more than merely being creative or inventive. Like the Israelites of old, they provoke God to anger *"with their inventions"* (Psa 106:29). Therefore it can also be said of them, *"Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions"* (Psa 106:39). Therefore, it is true, as Solomon wrote, *"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions"* (Eccl 7:29).

The doctrines of these men have been formed because of their pride, and fall into the category of Psalm 119:69: *"The proud have forged a lie"* (Psa 119:69). This is what makes their doctrines so reprehensible. They have constructed them like a building, and put them together like a craftsman. They are not innocent thoughts, but a way of thinking and speaking that has been studied out and put together in a disciplined, but carnal, manner. These are systems of religious thought that allow a person to wear the name of Jesus and be identified with *"the church,"* while having a radically different kind of mind-set.

Perhaps it would be good to draw attention to some of these deceptions. Whole bodies of doctrine are built around them. (1) God loves men unconditionally. (2) God cannot hate. (3) God is going to save everyone. (4) Once a person is saved, they are guaranteed heaven. (5) There is an experience that supercedes salvation - the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (7) Healing is in the atonement, which guarantees flawless health. (8) Believers can call things into being. (9) Seed faith is a law of the Kingdom. (10) Routines that are guaranteed to enable a person to recover from sin. (11) The concept of a carnal Christian. (12) The lives of those in Christ being "out of control." (13) Like everyone else, Christians are sinners, but they are forgiven.

One might wonder how such doctrines can gain such popularity among professing Christians. There are at least two reasons. First, they are cleverly constructed, so that their flaws and misrepresentations are not readily apparent. Second, they are designed for the uninformed - not to inform them, but to exploit them, making merchandise of the souls of men (Rev 18:13).

LYING IN WAIT TO DECEIVE. Other versions read, *"deceitful plotting,"*^{NKJV} *"deceitful scheming,"*^{NASB} *"cleverness in the techniques of deceit,"*^{CSB} *"who plot to seduce by their subtlety,"*^{M RD} *"unscrupulousness in deliberate deception,"*^{NJB} and *"in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead."*^{AMPLIFIED}

These men are looking for any and every opportunity to prosper themselves by exploiting those who are simple and unlearned.

Like the whorish woman of Proverbs, these teachers target the spiritually simple people - those who are children in their understanding. *"For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways: **Whoso is simple**, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding"* (Prov 9:14-17). These are precisely the same words that Wisdom uses when it calls to the people: *"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars . . . she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,"* (Prov 9:1-4). Wisdom offers genuine understanding, saying, *"Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding"* (Prov 9:6). The whorish woman calls out, but it is said of her dwelling, *"the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell"* (Prov 9:18). Those who invent clever doctrines and teachings are related to the latter woman. What they teach takes life rather than giving it.

We learn from this text that the work of the Lord was never intended to be carried forward in an environment of simplicity and ignorance. Being a member of the body of Christ involves becoming a contributor, as well as a receiver. However, in order to lastingly benefit the people of God, there must be a stability and solidity there that can only come from growing up into Christ in all things. A failure to mature in Christ, or move on to perfection, guarantees that the individual will eventually be led astray by charlatans. That is just the way salvation works.

COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS

LESSON NUMBER 51

Eph 4:15 *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: 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 body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph 4:15-16)

GROWING UP AND COMPACTED TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

As *"the body of Christ,"* the church is a unique unit. It is single in its constitution, yet comprised of many members. The whole of it cannot be considered without due regard for its members, and its members are not to be viewed apart from the fact that they comprise *"one body."* This is a concept that the world cannot digest. The head of an earthly institution may neglect the individual members, rarely making contact with them. But that is not the manner of the church. Growth is expected in this body, and the means of growth is through the channel of speaking. Words were the vehicle employed to cause humanity to fall, and words are the means of bringing the people together in Christ. The body of Christ does not mature simply by providing the earthly needs of the brethren. That is necessary, as seen in the early churches supporting the *"poor saints which are at Jerusalem"* (Rom 15:26). In spiritual life, the inner man is not made stronger by the well being of the outer man. That does not justify neglecting the needs of the brethren, but that help does not make the recipient more conformed to the image of God's Son - unless it be that it frees the individual from distracting cares. When it gets down to the matter of the purpose of God for the church, we rise into another realm. Here we are dealing with the maturing of character, the increase of perception and understanding, and the development of senses that can distinguish between good and evil. We are addressing the challenge of people being able to assist their brethren in realizing a better understanding of what God is doing in Christ Jesus, that for which the saints are being groomed, and the impressive provision that is available to those in Christ Jesus for the accomplishment of God's purpose. In the Kingdom of Christ ignorance is a lethal spiritual virus. Spiritual impotence, or the inability to do what the new creation is intended to do, is like a deadly cancer. The only effective means of offsetting these liabilities is to grow up into Christ - both as individuals, and as a body of believers.

"SPEAKING AND GROWING"

Eph 4:15 *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."*

BUT. Other versions read, "*instead,*"^{NIV} "*rather,*"^{RSV} and "*No, we will.*"^{ERV} This is a word that ties the present thought to the preceding verse. In the purpose of God, rather than producing children that are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, here is the appointed alternative action. Because full provision has been made for the following to take place, no person can justify perpetual spiritual infancy. Continuing in an unlearned and vulnerable state contradicts the very nature of salvation. Grace will not sustain a person remaining in that state. It is not designed to do so. Grace advances the believer, and does not leave him floundering in an immature state.

This text is not a statement of theoretical possibilities. It rather projects the nature and purpose of God's great salvation. This is how it works, and when there are people living in continual contradiction of this manner, careful examination must be made to see if they are in the faith (3 Cor 13:5).

I suppose we should make allowance for those precious souls who, not owing to their own preference, do not have a strong mental capacity. However, even though their natural aptitude may be limited, grace will take them as far as is possible, which will no doubt exceed human expectation.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE. Other versions read, "*saying true words in love,*"^{BBE} "*doing the truth in charity,*"^{DOUAY} "*follow the truth in love,*"^{GENEVA/PNT/TNT} "*lovingly speak the truth,*"^{GWN} "*living the truth in love,*"^{NAB} "*practicing the truth in love,*"^{NET} "*live by the truth and in love,*"^{NJB} "*being true in love,*"^{YLT} "*lovingly follow the truth at all times--speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly,*"^{LIVING} "*lovingly hold to the truth,*"^{WEYMOUTH} "*being truthful in love,*"^{ABP} "*Love should always make us tell the truth,*"^{CEV} and "*lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly].*"^{AMPLIFIED}

Judging from the various versions of Scripture, we have our work cut out for us to determine what the text has actually said. What exactly is the relation to the truth? Is it speaking? Doing? Following? Living? Practicing? Holding to? The phrase "*speaking the truth*" is translated from a single Greek word which means, "to speak or to tell the truth, to teach the truth, to profess the truth, true doctrine."^{THAYER} and "speak the truth, be honest."^{BARCLAY-NEWMAN} The idea is that the truth is the environment in which everything is said and done. Our communication must not center in human tradition or opinion, but in the truth itself. As compared with selfish motives and interests, the truth is to be spoken "*in love*" - i.e. in the interest of advantaging our brethren. Our aim must not be to promote ourselves, justify ourselves, or solicit an accommodating attitude toward those who insist on living far from the Lord.

To speak the truth in love is to communicate with a dominating love for the **God** of truth, a love for the **truth** itself, love for the **church** of God, and a love for the **ones** to whom it is being declared. Genuine love will impact upon what is said, and how it is said as well.

It also ought to be noted that one cannot live up to what he does not know, nor can he lovingly express the truth to his neighbor by advancing his personal interests.

GROW UP INTO HIM IN ALL THINGS. Other versions read, "*grow up in all aspects into Him,*"^{NASB} "*we must grow up in every way into Him,*"^{NRSV} and "*grow completely into Christ.*"^{NJB}

The subject under consideration is the church: "*the saints . . . the body of Christ . . . we all . . . that we henceforth . . . the whole body*" (vs 12-16). The focus is not on the individual members, but on the whole body. The object of verse 15 is the same as that of 14 - "*we.*" Growing up into Christ equates to being "*a perfect man*" (v 13), and "*one new man*" (Eph 2:15).

It refers to every aspect of life in Christ Jesus. In other words, the body of Christ is intended to be a thorough expression of the Lord Jesus Himself. He will work in the individual, but the objective is for the body - the church - to be mature and functional.

THE HEAD, EVEN CHRIST. An effective and sustained connection must be made with the Head of the church, if it is to be employed as the Lord intended. That connection is multi-faceted, like an appendage with joints and bands, or bones, muscles, and ligaments. It is true that upon being "*added to the Lord*" (Acts 5:14), God puts us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30). However, that placement is not as thorough as it is intended to be. The connection must be made more firm by growth - spiritual growth. What God intends in salvation is not simply to get us out of danger, and free us from the dominion of Satan. He also intends to work in and through us for His glory, making us participants in the work, as well as in His nature. It is this participation that requires growth up into Christ in everything - attitudes, intentions, desires, understanding, insight, etc.

The aim is to be an assembly like Antioch. They had certain "prophets and teachers" among them. "As they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted," the Holy Spirit said, "*Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*" (Acts 13:1-2). That is an example of a mature body of believers through whom the Lord could work effectively.

"FROM WHOM THE WHOLE BODY..."

4:16a *"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth . . ."*

Notice how Christ is the Center of everything that is being taught. The whole church is to grow up into Him, because everything that is required comes from Him. No valid resource comes from the world - the wisdom of the world, or the power of this world.

FROM WHOM. Other versions read, "*from Him,*" ^{NIV} "*through whom,*" ^{BBE} "*under His control,*" ^{CJB} "*He makes,*" ^{GWN} "*by whom,*" ^{NJB} "*in whom,*" ^{TNT} "*He is the Source,*" ^{IE} "*dependent upon Him,*" ^{WEYMOUTH} and "*it is under His direction.*" ^{WILLIAMS}

If we view this text from the standpoint of Jesus being the Source, it is proper to say "*from Him.*" If He is seen as the Means, we would say "*through Him.*" If we see Him as the Environment, it will read "*in Him.*" Seen from the vantage point of Jesus being the Head, the work being considered is what is "*under His control,*" "*under His direction,*" and something "*He makes*" to happen. From the viewpoint of the members, they are "*dependent upon Him.*" Thus all of these varied versions present a facet of the truth. There will be no valid work done without the Head!

THE WHOLE BODY. Again, the point of emphasis is the whole body, and not the individual members. Here is the doctrinal exposition of the parable of the Vine and the branches (John 15:1-8). We are now speaking of those who have "*come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.*" This has been accomplished through the process of edification (4:13). The people are no longer "*children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine*" (4:14). Having a grasp of the truth, and united by their faith and knowledge, they now speak the truth "*in love,*" no longer enamored of the wisdom of men, or distracted by their erroneous doctrines. By means of "*sound doctrine*" and a dominating love for the Lord, His truth, and His people, they have become more closely identified with the Lord.

The early history of the church emphasized the group rather than the individuals: "*all that believed . . . the church . . . they were all filled . . . they had all things common . . . grace was upon them all . . . all the church*" (Acts 2:44,47; 4:31,32,33; 5:11). Paul wrote letters to churches (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica). Jesus sent a message to the churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea). Further, in His word to those brethren, he also spoke of "*all the churches*" (Rev 2:23), and "*the churches*" (Rev 22:16).

Addressing the entire church, therefore, should not be a strange concept to us. It means that we should perceive with one set of eyes, hear with one set of ears, speak with one voice, and think with one mind. If someone imagines that this is an impossible scenario, they need to think again, for this is precisely what redemption is doing - making the people "*one*" (Eph 1:10).

FITLY JOINED TOGETHER AND COMPACTED. Other versions read, "*joined and knit together,*" ^{NKJV} "*fitted and held together,*" ^{NASB} "*fitly framed and knit together,*" ^{ASV} "*rightly formed and united together,*" ^{BBE} and "*joined and held together.*" ^{ESV}

Being "fitly joined together" has to do with the connectivity of the saints with one another. They fit together, complement one another, and work well together. This is in order to the accomplishment of the purpose of God. While they help and assist one another, that is not the point of emphasis. Here, it is working together that is the point.

BY THAT WHICH EVERY JOINT SUPPLIETH. Other versions read, "*every supporting ligament,*" ^{NIV} "*every joint of supply,*" ^{DARBY} "*every joint adding its own strength,*" ^{NJB} and "*through the supply of every joint.*" ^{YLT}

This text parallels Colossians 2:19: *"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God"* (Col 2:19). There, *"holding the Head"* equates with *"growing up into Christ."*

The idea is that as the individuals and Christ are solidly united, He sends nourishment through them to the other members of the body. The ministration takes place at the point they intersect with one another. The ligaments that pull and hold the joints together are *"the unity of the Spirit"* and *"the unity of the faith."* It is through these binding factors that spiritual nourishment is able to pass from the members to one another.

Under ideal circumstances, when the people are of one heart and one soul, and they have one nature in Christ, the passing of truth from one to another awakens that *"ligament"* to send back some nourishment - some further insight or amplification of what was said. An excellent example of this was the Jerusalem conference over circumcision. First there was much discussion among themselves (Acts 15:7a). This provoked Peter to provide some input into the matter (Acts 15:7b-11). Barnabas and Paul then provided their input (Acts 15:12). James was then moved to provide some meaningful insight (Acts 15:13-21). The apostles and elders, *"with the whole church"* then agreed in what should be done (Acts 15:22). This played a significant role in directing the early Gentile churches in the proper path, this ensuring the continued preaching of the Gospel.

THE INCREASE OF THE BODY

4:16b *" . . . according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

ACCORDING TO. Other versions read, *"as each,"* ^{NIV} *"when,"* ^{NRSV} *"by the"* ^{BBE} *and "by."* ^{CSB} The point here is the further elaboration of the appointed means through which spiritual growth is facilitated. The modern church has had its share of plans and programs that did not work. God does not have so much as one such plan involved in which He is doing. Keep in mind that we have the gifts given to the church at one end, driving the process. At the other end, we have the will of the Lord being done effectively. The only question that remains is whether or not we are involved in this process.

EFFECTUAL WORKING. Other versions read, *"effective working,"* ^{NKJV} *"proper working,"* ^{NASB} *"is working properly,"* ^{NRSV} *"by the aid of every contributory link,"* ^{LIVING} *"proper functioning,"* ^{NAB} *and "each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions]"* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The words *"effectual working"* are translated from a single Greek word that means, "working efficiency, in the NT used only of superhuman power, whether of God or of the devil." ^{STRONG'S}

In this text, it is obviously power that comes from God, for it is used to implement God's purpose. The effectiveness of the work that builds up the saints is not owing to any expertise learned in the schools of men. It is not because of personal discipline, creativity, and study. Although those things may be present, they are not what makes the work effective. It is the power that drives the work that makes it effective, and that power comes from the Head of the church alone.

THE MEASURE OF EVERY PART. Other versions read, *"by which every part does its share,"* ^{NKJV} *each individual part,"* ^{NASB} *"each part does its work,"* ^{NIV} *and "according to the gift that is imparted by measure to each member."* ^{MRD}

The interdependence of the parts is powerfully declared in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians (12:14-27). No part can say it has no place in the body: *"because I am not the hand, I am not of the body"* (1 Cor 12:15). And, no member can stand alone, saying he has no need of the other members: *"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you"* (1 Cor 12:21).

The objective of the gifts is to mature the whole church by bringing each individual member to the point where they can effectively do what God has put them in the body to do.

THE INCREASE OF THE BODY. This is a particularly important expression. Other versions read,

"growth of the body," ^{NKJV} "promotes the body's growth," ^{NRSV} "makes the body grow," ^{GWN} "grows to full maturity." ^{AMPLIFIED} This phrase correlates with a statement made in Colossians: "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with **the increase of God**" (Col 2:19). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "the Lord make you to increase and abound toward one another" (1 Thess 3:12).

What kind of "increase" is this? It is quite common to see this as numerical increase. Often Paul's statement to the Corinthians is so viewed: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor 3:6-7). The text reference to "increase" refers to the edifying and building up of the saints, not the conversion of sinners.

The "increase" of this text applies to spiritual growth and advancement - being conformed the more to the image of Christ, particularly as a body of believers, as compared to individual believers. This is such a rare occurrence in the "church" world, that it is most staggering to consider. The very idea of a church that is increasing spiritually is virtually unknown.

THE EDIFYING OF ITSELF IN LOVE. There can be no question concerning the meaning of the text, for Paul spells it out. Other versions read, "building up of itself," ^{NASB} "builds itself, up," ^{NIV} "upbuilds itself," ^{RSV} and "grows to full maturity, building itself up in love." ^{AMPLIFIED}

Any given body of believers must get to the point where they do not have to import from the outside those who will build them up. This is not the manner in which Jesus works. This by no means suggests a congregation being self-enclosed, with no outside contacts.

Building up has to do with solidity and fortification, not problem resolution and correction. It has to do with the expansion of perception, the enlargement of the understanding of God, Christ, and salvation. It is only when the comprehension of the people is brought to maturity that sin can be seen for what it is and avoided. With the clearing of the understanding, what God has reserved for those who love Him can be more clearly seen, and will be more energetically pursued. The good fight of faith will be fought more insightfully and zealously, Satan will be successfully resisted, and the full assurance of faith will be possessed. It is only then that false prophets will be perceived and rejected by the people, while truth will be loved, embraced, and pondered. The aim of Jesus is to make the church strong. Until that takes place, the church is deficient.
