



Ephesians

A COMMENTARY OUTLINE

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OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

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The Doctrine of the Church

or “The Creation of the Body of Christ”

Ephesians 1:1-3:21

The letter to the Ephesian church was written by Paul from prison in Rome around A.D. 60. He reminds his readers of this imprisonment three times in this epistle. In Ephesians 3:1 he calls himself “the prisoner of Christ Jesus”; in 4:1 the “prisoner of the Lord”; and in 6:20 “an ambassador in chains.” Paul, though held prisoner by the Roman government, always views himself as the prisoner of the Lord. Paul views life from the perspective of the sovereignty of God. He was the prisoner of Christ, not the prisoner of Nero.

Prison was no disadvantage to Paul; indeed it gave him opportunity to reflect deeply upon the nature of the church and its relationship to Christ, its head. His three most Christological books, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, are all prison epistles, making it clear that Paul had his greatest insight into the person of Christ under these conditions.

THE TRINITY EXTOLLED 1:1-21

GREETINGS TO THE READERS 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The first two verses of Ephesians follow the ancient custom of letter writing. The name and title (or office) of the sender is identified first, followed by the names of the recipients, and then a salutation directed to them. The skeletal formula is “X to Y, greeting.” Any of the three elements may be expanded, depending upon the circumstances. In the New Testament, this secular form of address is embellished with distinctively Christian truths. For example, notice that reference to Jesus Christ is found in each of the three elements found here. Each feature of the address found here in the opening words of this epistle finds parallel in Paul’s other letters.

The Writer

Paul was a unique instrument of God in many ways. First, he was unique in the way he was saved. Unlike others, no human instrument was utilized to instruct Paul concerning the nature of the gospel; the risen Christ appeared to him and taught him the gospel directly (Galatians 1:11-12). Second, Paul played a distinctive role in the explanation of the nature and function of the church, God's "mystery" (Ephesians 3:1-13). As Moses stood in special relationship to Israel, so Paul stood in unique relationship to the church.

Paul held the office of apostle, a transliterated Greek word meaning *one sent forth*. The word always implies a sender and possession of credentials on the part of the one sent. It is used in a special sense in the New Testament to designate a special representative of Jesus Christ following His resurrection. Apostles were bona fide messengers of divine revelation to the church. The word marks Paul as an accredited envoy of Christ. The title stresses the authority of the sender and the accountability of the one sent.

The noun *apostle* is buttressed by two phrases. The first is *of Jesus Christ*, showing who Paul officially represented; the second is *by the will of God*, exhibiting the authority by which he represented Him. The exact phrase is also found in I Corinthians 1:1, II Corinthians 1:1, Colossians 1:1 and II Timothy 1:1. Paul was keenly aware of his calling, and his personal desires were lost in the will of God. This made Paul the prisoner the freest man in the Roman Empire, for man's true freedom lies in the cheerful acceptance of God's will as his own. The fullest commentary on the words "apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God" is found in Galatians 1:1 and Romans 1:1, 5.

The Readers

Paul usually opens his letters by addressing the organized body, ("the church at Corinth, Colossae, etc.") but here simply addresses the saints. This universal form of address fits the scope of his letter. The teaching of Ephesians does not deal with local situations but rather addresses the needs and proclaims the wealth of the entire body of Christ, both then and now.

The word saint is the characteristic designation of a Christian in the New Testament, occurring first in Acts 9:13. The word signifies one set apart for God. The emphasis is not on moral or spiritual quality but upon the idea of purposeful possession. This is difficult for us to perceive since we have a hard time separating the word saint from a halo. It is a prominent designation in Ephesians and is found in 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3, and 6:18.

In each of the above occurrences, the noun is plural. Saints comprise a class of people who reside on this earth but bear a special relationship to the Lord as belonging to Him and living for Him. Every chapter in Ephesians addresses this privileged group. The root from which the word comes is the same as for the words sanctify and holy.

The prepositional phrase *in Christ* is the most fundamental expression in the New Testament for what it means to be a Christian. Grammatically, the designation *Christ* is in the locative case; and it would therefore be correct to say “in union with Christ.” The expression is used thirty-five times in Ephesians. Our union with Christ is our only hope of a standing with God (Romans 8:1) and never changes nor is ever lost. The implications of this union are discovered only in the word of God and are unrelated to our feelings and emotions.

Those who are in Christ are described as *faithful*. This word may have an active meaning, *to be trusting*, or a passive meaning, *to be trustworthy and dependable*. Both ideas are probably present here. One obtains a position in Christ by trusting Him (active idea), and one who is in Christ should be trustworthy and dependable (passive idea).

The threefold designation, saints, faithful, and in Christ Jesus, gives us a complete description of those to whom Paul writes. As saints, they are part of a divine society; as faithful, they are moved by devotion to Christ; and as being in Christ, they find Him to be their source of life, vitality, and unity.

The Salutation

This is Paul’s fundamental greeting. While *grace* and *peace* were words of common usage and courtesy, they are elevated to a much higher significance in the New Testament epistles. The order of grace and peace never varies; it is always grace first, followed by peace. This has great doctrinal significance: There is no peace with God apart from the grace of God. Grace is the fountain from which peace flows. In his writings, Paul prefixes the characteristic blessing of the Old Testament (peace) with the characteristic blessing of the New Testament (grace).

In the salutations of Paul, Christ is always united with the Father. This is consistent with Paul’s teaching concerning the equal nature of the Father and the Son. The Son is no less deity than the Father, and neither can be honored in disjunction (John 5:23).

A Textual Note

The words *at Ephesus* are left out of the Chester Beatty papyrus (P46), which is the oldest text of Paul’s epistles, dating around A.D. 200. They are also omitted in two very old manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. If these words are not part of the original text, then this epistle should be considered a circular letter, or an encyclical. In this case, verse 1 reads “. . .to the saints which are at _____ and faithful. . .,” with the blank to be filled in by each church that receives the letter.

PRAISE TO THE GODHEAD 1:3-14

Ephesians 1:3-14 is the greatest doxology of the Bible and the longest sentence in the Greek New Testament. The entire book of Ephesians is trinitarian in nature, addressing the Father (1:3-6), the Son (1:7-12), and the Spirit (1:13-14). Each ascription of praise is neatly marked off by the words “to the praise of. . .” (1:6, 12, and 14).

What is a doxology? A doxology is an utterance of praise. The word itself is a compound made up of the Greek word *dokeo* (δοκέω), which means *to think, to believe, to have an opinion*, and the word *logos* (λόγος), which means *teaching or doctrine*. An opinion that results in praise may be subjective or objective. If subjective, it tells how we feel about something, whether true to fact or not. If objective, it reflects an opinion that is true to fact. The praise found here is of that type; it contains no flattery or false perception.

To the Praise of the Father 1:3-6a

The Father’s Relationship to the Son 1:3a

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ....”

The Greek word translated *blessed* (εὐλογητός = eulogatos) is used exclusively of God the Father and God the Son in the New Testament. It is applied to the Father in Mark 14:61, Luke 1:68, Romans 1:25, II Corinthians 1:3. It is applied to the Son as Messiah in Romans 9:5. Since it refers to one who is blessed on the basis of personal merit, it is not surprising to learn it is never used of man. The word designates one who alone is worthy of worship and could be translated “Praise be to the God and Father. . . .” We bless God when we attribute to Him the honor due His name.

While it is true that men and women are said to be blessed as when Elizabeth said to Mary, “Blessed among women are you. . . .” (Luke 1:42), a different word is used. The verb *blessed* (εὐλογέω = eulogeo) in the participial form means *blessing received by one* rather than *blessing due to one*.

What relationship is meant when Jesus is spoken of as having a God and Father? Does this mean that Christ is less than God? Does this mean the Father is superior to the Son?

In answering this question, one should recall the following. To be the Father of Christ is to hold a unique relationship to Him—one known by no other. The origin of this idea probably comes from Jesus’ own words spoken in John 20:17 where He tells Mary to stop clinging to Him and to go tell the other disciples, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, My God and your God.” Jesus distinguished between God as His Father and God as their Father, between His God and their God. Unique relationship is the point He is making. For Jesus to call God His Father was a claim to deity. Even His enemies understood this as can be seen in John 5:18 where we read, “For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the

Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

The designation *Father* points to the order of the Trinity. It has nothing to do with superior character or nature. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist as equal in nature, but subordinate in function.

The Father’s Relationship to the Believer 1:3b-6

“ . . . *who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,* ⁴*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.* ⁵*In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,* ⁶*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*”

THE RELATIONSHIP IN TERMS OF BLESSING 1:3B The participle *blessed* is different than the word *blessed* that opens verse 3. The latter refers to the Father who merited blessing, but here the word refers to one who has received blessing. It is not something we anticipate receiving, it is some that has already happened to us.

The words *in Christ* strike the keynote of the book of Ephesians. By virtue of our union with Christ, we are a blessed company. These blessings are described as spiritual for two reasons. First, blessing in the Old Testament was often material in nature. Paul, therefore, wishes to show the contrast with the blessings of the church age. Second, the word *spiritual* points to their source in the Holy Spirit. The word *spiritual* (πνευματικός = pneumatikos) occurs about twenty-four times in the New Testament. In each case the word implies the working of the Holy Spirit. The word *every* probably means spiritual blessing in every conceivable form.

The expression in the heavens occurs five times in Ephesians. The logic is this: Jesus Christ died, was buried, was raised, and ascended to heaven and is now seated at the Father’s right hand. Since we are in (union with) Christ, we are seated where He is, that is, in heaven. This position puts the believer in the forefront of five spheres.

- We are in the forefront of the sphere of blessing (1:3).
- We are in the forefront of the sphere of power (1:20).
- We are in the forefront of the eternal sphere (2:6-7).
- We are at the forefront of God’s display of wisdom (3:10).
- We are at the forefront of the lines of spiritual battle (6:12).

We will look at the significance of each of these as we come to them in the exposition of this epistle.

THE RELATIONSHIP IN TERMS OF SELECTION 1:4A The words *just as* introduce the amplification and explanation of the thought found in verse 3. They describe the manner in which we have been blessed. The action of the Father is expressed by the verb *He chose*. Selection is the fundamental aspect of all God’s working. The Old Testament centers about God’s chosen people and nation, Israel. The choice of Israel was not intended to eliminate the salvation of

others; its purpose was to mediate salvation to all through a select-ed people.

I have chosen to use the word *select* rather than *elect* because it seems to carry a more personal idea. This is justified by the use of the middle voice, which points to action taken by God that benefits Himself. We could say, God “selected for Himself.” The verb is never used of random or arbitrary choice; it is always choice with a worthy purpose or goal in mind.

The verb *chosen* is connected to the words *in Him*. Most expositions of Ephesians seem to overlook this prepositional phrase. Jesus Christ is in heaven; we are in Christ; we are therefore also in heaven; that is, we share His position. Further, Jesus Christ is the Father’s eternally chosen One; we are in Christ; we are therefore also eternally chosen; that is, we share His selection. This act of God does not violate human volition of its innate properties.

The words *before the foundation of the world* should be considered in connection with similar Pauline expressions in I Corinthians 2:7, *before the ages*, and II Timothy 1:9, *from all eternity*. In each case, they point to a divine action that occurs apart from time and history. Each phrase points to a divine action taken in eternity. The believer’s security rests in a love that will never end as well as a love that never began!

The word *foundation* (καταβολή = katabole) means *laying down* in the sense of founding or establishing. It is used eleven times in the New Testament, and each occurrence clearly denotes the creation of the universe.

We should humbly admit the limitations of our human understanding when facing such profound truths as election. It is easy to take the path of human logic and engage in speculation of a purely intellectual nature. Paul immediately stops such pursuit with the word *that we should be* (εἶναι = einai), an infinitive of design, intent, and purpose. It urges us to focus on the practical purpose of God’s elective grace.

THE RELATIONSHIP IN TERMS OF PURPOSE 1:4B-6 Paul does not deal with the mystery of our selection; he deals with the purpose of our selection. The word *holy* is the same as the word *saints* in verse 1. Verse 1 tells us what we are; verse 3 tells us what we are to become as a result of God’s loving and eternal choice. Realization of the purpose for which God has set us apart has three phases: the act of setting apart, the process of setting apart, and the culmination of the setting apart. These three phases of salvation are often expressed in the following way. First, we have positional sanctification (I Corinthians 1:2); second, we have experiential sanctification (Ephesians 4:1; I Thessalonians 4:3); third, we have ultimate sanctification (I John 3:1-3).

God’s moral purpose for His children is expressed positively and negatively by the words *holy and blameless*. These two nouns are linked together here and in 5:27 and in Colossians 1:22. The word *blameless* has four applications. First, it applies to Christ

Himself (Hebrews 9:14, I Peter 1:19); second, to the church in her glorified state (Ephesians 5:27); to believers at the end of the age (II Peter 3:14, Jude 24); and finally, to believers now (Philippians 2:15). The words *before Him* mean *in His sight*. This word also described the requirement for the sacrificial animals in the Old Testament. A verb form of this word was a technical term for the examination of sacrificial animals for blemishes.

What is the connection of the words *in love*? King James version connects it to the words *before Him* and thus gives us “before Him in love.” New American Standard Bible ends verse 4 with the words *before Him*. It then begins a new sentence with the words *In love*. This punctuation connects *in love* to the verb *predestined* in verse 5. Thus we have “In love He predestined us. . . .” This seems to be the best connection. It introduces the loving motivation behind the act of predestination, which is the correct view of this doctrine.

It is important to note that there is no “negative predestination” taught in the word of God. That is, the Bible does not teach that men are predestined to hell. The word *predestined* (προορίζω= proorizo) means *to mark out beforehand*. We were *marked out*, not before others but before time. The positive aspect of predestination is *adoption as sons*. Here we have a single Greek word (υιοθεσία = uiothesia) that is used only by Paul in the New Testament. He speaks of it five times: Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5. Under Roman law, an adopted son had the status and the privileges and responsibilities of a natural born son. The word involves much more than being placed in a family; it refers to all the privileges of a full grown son. As the last chapters of Ephesians will show, the privilege of sons should result in the character of sons.

This great position given to us is designed to bring glory to Him who put us in this position. The verb *He freely bestowed* (χαριτόω = charitoo) means *to bestow favor on* and is the verb form of the noun *grace*. We could say He “begraced” us. The words *in the Beloved* introduce a paean of praise to the Son. This is the only place in the New Testament where the word *beloved* is applied to Christ as a perfect passive participle. It points to an emphatic affirmation of love.

To the Praise of the Son 1:6b-12

The Beloved 1:6b

The focus is on the Son in verses 7-12. However, the participle *Beloved* in verse 6 serves as a transitional title. It is in the perfect tense, which points to a full and final bestowal of love. The passive voice marks off Jesus as the object of the Father’s love—a love bestowed on the Son permanently and without reserve. The same idea is expressed in Colossians 1:13 where Paul speaks of God’s *beloved Son*. The title *beloved* is applied to Israel as God’s chosen people in the Septuagint translation .

The meaning of this bestowal is found in the words spoken by the Father at Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:11 and at the transfiguration, as recorded in Matthew 17:5. It recognizes Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah of the Old Testament.

The Redemption 1:7-8a

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, ⁸which He lavished upon us."

Paul itemizes some of the blessings of the bestowal spoken of in verse 6. The Ephesians were acquainted with the Greek-Roman practice of redemption wherein slaves were freed by payment of a ransom. However, Paul is not speaking of the practice of redemption in a general sense because the word *redemption* found here carries a definite article with it. It is *the* redemption of which there is no other and which stands in solitary eminence. The word *redemption* (ἀπολύτρωσις = apolutrosis) denotes deliverance brought about by payment of a ransom. It frequently means *to release* (Hebrews 11:25). Paul uses it seven times in his writings (Romans 3:24, 8:23; I Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7, 14, 4:30; and Colossians 1:14). When the word is used in a doctrinal context, it always implies a previous condition of slavery from which man could not extricate himself.

Lest we associate the price of redemption with mundane things, Paul attaches the phrase *through His blood*. Blood shedding consistently refers to a violent death, pointing to the agony and suffering of the cross. The blood of the sinless Son of God, upon whom the law of God had no claim, was the substitutionary payment that satisfied the righteous claims of God upon the sinner.

Redemption and forgiveness are inseparably linked. Jesus best expressed this fact when He said, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28)." The word *forgiveness* (ἄφεσις = aphasis) carries three basic meanings. First, it may mean *to leave* as in Matthew 13:36. Second, it may be used in the legal sense of divorce as in I Corinthians 7:11. Finally, it may mean *to abandon* as in Matthew 26:56. The idea of separation runs through all the meanings.

Applied in a doctrinal sense, forgiveness means release from the sin that binds man. Redemption is the release of man from that which God's law imposes upon him, i.e., the guilt and penalty of sin, so that our liability to punishment is removed. The remission is full and includes all past sin and makes provision for all future sin. The verb *we have* is present tense, meaning *we are continually having it*. Every day sees it applied in the life of the one who is in Christ. That which we always need is what we always have.

As used by Paul, redemption is an objective accomplishment of the death of Christ. It assumes the guilt of all men and the effectiveness of Christ's death in dealing with that guilt. It is always a divine provision, never a human attainment.

Redemption is grounded solely in Christ (Romans 3:24), and has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of man. It has been put this way: “The offended died to set the offenders free.” Our release from the penalty of sin is to our *advantage* but is not due to our *merit*. This redemption is so deeply rooted in Christ that He not only is the provider of redemption but He Himself *is* our redemption (I Corinthians 1:30).

The words *in Him* at the beginning of verse 7 mean that only those who are in union with Christ have had made effective *in* them the redemption that Christ provided *for* them.

The word *riches* (πλοῦτος = ploutos) is a word Paul loves to speak when referring to the assets of the believer (1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8, 16). The verb *lavished* expresses a profound truth: The Lord’s forgiveness is as rich as its procurement was costly. The infinite cost of salvation brought equally infinite results. God’s unspeakable gift responds to our bankrupt state with wealth that knows no limits.

The Revelation 1:8b-10

“In all wisdom and insight ⁹He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.”

The word mystery (μυστήριον = mustarion) introduces a major thought in Paul’s teaching. It occurs here for the first time and is repeated in 3:3-4, 9, 5:32, and 6:19. The same word is found in Colossians 1:26-27, 2:2, and 4:3. Its meaning in the New Testament is clear: A mystery is something hitherto concealed but now revealed. It is not something unknowable but something unknown until revealed. It shows that God has his own “pace” in biblical revelation. It was not until Paul that God chose to give full revelation concerning the church. Paul summarizes his thought here and gives details later.

The fruition of God’s gracious plan is in Christ, which will lead to an *administration* (οἰκονομία = oikonomia). This word is found nine times in the New Testament. Its basic meaning refers to household management, as in Luke 16:1-2. It extends beyond this to the idea of the divine arrangement of things in the universe. It represents the culmination of God’s program of history. The centrality of Christ extends beyond the human race, beyond the earth, and assumes cosmic dimensions.

All things are to be put under the Lordship of Christ (I Corinthians 15:24-28, Philippians 2:10-11). The verb *summing up* comes from a noun that means a summary or a grand total.

The Inheritance 1:11-12

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹²to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

The words *in Him* point once more to Christ as the source of salvation. John Owen once spoke of the love of God that “flows from the heart of the Father through the blood of the Son.”

The literal translation “we were made a heritage” is more accurate. It brings out the meaning of the passive voice of the verb showing the subject is acted upon. The verb is from the word *lot*, which is used in Deuteronomy 32:9 where we read, “The Lord's portion is His people....” In verse five believers are said to be foreordained to the *adoption as sons*, and now we are said to be foreordained to be part of the Lord's *lot*—His inheritance. It was part of God's eternal purpose to gather a people for His name who would be His special possession.

That God *works all things after the counsel of His will* means what He decrees He brings to pass. Because of His sovereign control of all things, God is able to cause all things to work together to accomplish His purpose. This includes sin and evil, even though they stand in total contrast to His perfect holiness. The supreme example of this sovereign ability is displayed by the cross of Christ where the most heinous of man's sins, the crucifixion of Jesus, was the instrument of God's glorious plan of salvation.

It should be noted that those spoken of in verses 11-12 are Jewish Christians. The words *first to hope in Christ* refer to the truth that it was the Jew who was first given the Messianic hope, with Gentiles entering the picture later. The noun *Christ* is preceded by the definite article *the*. This points specifically to those Jews who recognized Jesus as the Messiah prior to the conversion of Gentiles. Paul uses the pronoun *we* in these two verses but in verse 13 reaches out to gentile believers with the words *you also*. How the Jew and Gentile are now united in one body is explained in chapter two.

To the Praise of the Spirit 1:13-14

The Message of the Gospel 1:13a

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation...”

You also is intended to remind Gentiles that they are fully part of the body of Christ. These have heard *the message of truth*, literally, “the word of truth.” This refers to the integrity of the message; it is a message that tells truth because it is derived from the source of all truth. The *word of truth* is the means of the new birth (James 1:18), the means of sanctification (John 17:17), and the expression of hope (Colossians 1:5). The words *gospel of your salvation* can also mean the gospel that effects salvation as in Romans 1:16.

The Guarantee of the Gospel 1:13b-14

“...having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Hearing, believing, and salvation were followed by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit expressed by two colorful metaphors.

THE “SEAL” METAPHOR A seal was used to accomplish several purposes. First, it was affixed to a document to guarantee its genuineness. Second, it was placed on goods in transit to indicate ownership and insure protection. Third, it represented a designation of office in state service. Summarized, a seal guaranteed, protected, and designated.

Our union with Christ is secured by the sealing of the Holy Spirit. We are placed *in Christ* and then sealed *in Him*—a kind of double security.

THE “PLEDGE” METAPHOR The mention of a *pledge* (ἀρραβών = arrabon) gives further expression to the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Genesis 38:17-20 provides an excellent example of the meaning of the word. Judah gave Tamar, his daughter-in-law, articles of personal property to guarantee a delivery of “a kid from the flock.” Verses 17, 18, and 20 use the word *pledge* to describe this guarantee. The LXX uses the same word as that in Ephesians 4:13. The term is borrowed from the commercial world and means a deposit or first installment. It is the modern Greek word for an engagement ring. It was a token payment made to assure the vendor that the purchase would be completed. It placed one under legal obligation to complete the purchase. The Holy Spirit is the first installment guaranteeing our inheritance.

The word *possession* (περιποίησις = peripoiasis) refers to something acquired for oneself and thus kept safe and secure. The Septuagint uses it in Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Psalm 134:4, and Malachi 3:17.

INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS 1:15-21

Its Cause 1:15-16

“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints,¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers...”

The words *for this reason* are often used by Paul in transitioning to a new paragraph and a new idea. It always looks back to previous statements. We could translate “with all this in mind” (the words of 1:3-14). Here it is used to introduce his intercession for the Ephesian believers. Two great facts move Paul to prayer. First, Paul is motivated by the divine expenditure of grace spoken of in 1:3-14. Second, his intercession was triggered by the work of God’s grace in the hearts of the Ephesian believers as was being evidenced by their faith and love.

The words *I too* (κἀγώ = kago) seem to imply that someone is joining Paul in his prayer. However, one searches in vain for who this might be. Therefore, Paul may well mean he too, even though

a Jew who might be inclined to protect the privileges of his people, finds a delight in gentile inclusion in these great privileges.

Paul consistently manifested a concern for his new converts that was relieved only by news of their continued spiritual progress. I Thessalonians 3:5-8 is a detailed statement of this concern. Paul was never satisfied with the present spiritual attainments of his converts or his readers—or of himself, for that matter. He always prays them on to new heights.

The first quality of the growing Christian is faith. The expression *faith in the Lord Jesus* is specific in its meaning. The preposition *in* (ἐν = en) refers to the believer's moorings, his roots, his anchor. It is this faith that causes Paul to give them the appellation *faithful* in verse 1.

The second quality of the growing Christian is love. Faith and love are often associated together in the writings of Paul (Colossians 1:4, Philemon 5, I Thessalonians 1:3). This love is not general, as in love to all men, but specific, *for all the saints*. Common faith begets common affection

Thanksgiving is a moral quality. We tend to view expressions of thanksgiving as a matter of etiquette. However, passages such as Romans 1:21 name the two great moral flaws of man: Man does not honor God or give thanks. Both characteristics are missing in man's nature; whenever they appear, it is due to the working of God's grace. Paul's thanks for them looks back in time; his intercession looks forward in time.

When Paul uses the expression *making mention of you*, he reiterates a recurring theme at the beginning of Paul's letters (Romans 1:8, I Corinthians 1:4, Philippians 1:3, Colossians 1:3, I Thessalonians 1:2, II Thessalonians 1:3, and Philemon 4). The expression suggests that those for whom Paul interceded were actually named before God. Paul bore the names of believers on his heart in fervent and repeated prayer.

While this type of expression has been found in secular contexts, referring to a desire for the physical health of another, Paul elevates it to the highest point—desire for the spiritual growth of others.

Its Content 1:17-19a

In General 1:17

“...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.”

The term *Father of glory* has no direct parallel anywhere else in Scripture. It bears some resemblance to “Lord of glory” (I Corinthians 2:8) or “King of glory” (Psalm 24:7). The genitive of *glory* stresses the characterizing quality of the Father. We could paraphrase for meaning by saying “the Father with whom glory is always present.”

Wisdom is insight into the true nature of things—a spiritual depth perception. It means one has a sense of what is fitting; the ability to coordinate and use knowledge properly.

The word *revelation* is a correlative of the word *mystery* in verse 9. See Ephesians 3:3, 5 where this fact is made clear. The mystery has been revealed, and Paul is going to explain the revelation in this letter. The revelation of God's word is the material that makes wisdom possible. The Bible, God's revelation, is wisdom inscripturated. The word *knowledge* is an intensive form that stresses full and accurate knowledge. It is an understanding acquired through personal acquaintance. The verb *may give* shows that the discernment that Paul desires for his readers to have does not depend on their own innate capabilities but is rather a free gift of God.

In Particular 1:18-19a

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”

OUR HOPE The expression *eyes of your heart* is a metaphor for inner awareness. Hope, as often understood in English, refers to that which we anticipate having but possess no assurance that we will get. In the Bible, hope does not refer to that which is uncertain but to that which is future. Hope is the future aspect of our salvation viewed as a certainty. It involves a completion (Romans 8:23); and a conformity (I John 3:1-2).

The believer's calling has past, present, and future aspects. The call has already taken place (II Timothy 1:9); and yet at the same time, it is an ongoing call (I Thessalonians 2:12; 5:24). It has a future aspect since the return of the Lord is called our *blessed hope* (Titus 2:13).

OUR RICHES The words *riches of the glory* occur four places in the writings of Paul. In each instance the riches of His glory are extended to the totally unworthy. In Romans 9:23 they are extended to *vessels of mercy*; in Ephesians 1:18 to *saints*; in 3:16 to *you*; and in Colossians 1:27 to *Gentiles*.

OUR POWER Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the word *surpassing* (ὑπερβάλλω = *huperballo*). Literally, the word means *to cast beyond, to go beyond* and thus *to outdo oneself*. It is used three times in Ephesians to describe the power extended to us in Christ (Ephesians 1:19), the grace extended to us in Christ (Ephesians 2:7), and the love extended to us in Christ (Ephesians 3:19). Paul uses the word two other places (II Corinthians 3:10, 9:14). Not content to use this superlative word, Paul presses on with synonym after synonym to describe the greatness of God's power.

Its Explanation 1:19b-21

“These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.”

Paul ransacks the Greek vocabulary for synonyms for power. In our translation, *power* (δύναμις = dunamis) means *capability or potential*; *working* (ἐνέργεια = energeia) means *effective or operational power*; *strength* (κράτος = kratos) means *resistance and control*; *might* (ἰσχύς = ischus) means *inherent or vital power*.

Paul is not satisfied with the use of words to describe the greatness of God’s power for he moves on to the great event wherein the ultimate demonstration of power is manifested. When New Testament writers wish to express the greatness of God’s love, they point to the death of Christ (Romans 5:8); but when they wish to express the greatness of His power, they point to His resurrection and exaltation into the place of highest authority. And it is very important that believers should understand this power because it is also *the power that works within us* (Ephesians 3:20). The believer needs to know the resources at his disposal. The power available is not a bubbling stream but a surging river of life capable of sweeping away all things that would hinder its flow. Paul prays that he himself might come to know Christ *and the power of His resurrection* (Philippians 3:10). It is not the power of a clenched fist but that of a pierced hand that rules the universe.

The imagery used here is spatial—*at His right hand, in heaven, and far above*. These expressions focus on the ideas of exalted authority, not physical location or outer space. God not only raised His Son from the grave but exalted Him to the throne. Likewise, *far above* indicates superiority. The word *name* in verse 21 includes descriptive titles and thus could be interpreted “every title that can be given.”

This forms a theme in the preaching of Peter in the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus to be the fulfillment of Psalm 16:10 and His enthronement as the fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. He then concluded that this was irrefutable evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 2:25-36).

THE CHURCH EXPLAINED 1:22-3:21

THE DESIGNATION OF THE CHURCH 1:22-23

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.”

Verse 22 begins with an allusion to Psalm 8:6 where David speaks of Adam as he came from the creative hand of God, saying, "Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." In Ephesians 1:22 Paul applies this statement to Christ as the head of God's new creation, the church. The headship forfeited by the fall is restored by the last Adam. I Corinthians 15:27 shows this sovereign rule will eventuate in the defeat of the last enemy, death. The brow that wore the crown of thorns now bears the diadem of kingship, and the pierced hands now hold the scepter of the sovereign. One should not neglect the commentary of Hebrews 2:5-9 on Psalm 8:6.

Christ has been given to the church as its head. The word *given* is not equivalent to *appointed*, though there is similarity of meaning. The word *appointed* would point to sovereignty whereas the word *given* (δίδωμι = didomi) emphasizes the loving beneficent bestowal. Headship involves the ideas of authority and unity. How do the words *to the church* fit? Perhaps a paraphrase best explains. God has given Him who is head of all things to the church. The sovereign Christ is God's gift to the church. He who is head of all things is given to the church as its head also. This means the church has overcoming ability because her leader is head of all things.

This is the first mention of the church in the book of Ephesians, and it supplies us with its fundamental sense. The church is the *body of Christ*. Paul speaks the same way in Ephesians 4:4, 12, 16, and 5:30. The church is not an organization but an organism. It is not a denomination, for the Bible knows nothing of the Baptist church, the Methodist church, nor any other formal organization. It is universal, invisible, and innumerable; and it exists only because of its vital relationship to Christ. This relationship is developed in Colossians and Ephesians. Other passages such as Romans 12:4-5, I Corinthians 10:17, 12:22-27 recognize the church as Christ's body, but it is the function of the members, not the headship of Christ, that is developed.

What do the words *fulness of Him* mean? The word *fulness* has a wide range of meanings in the New Testament. In Colossians 2:9 it is applied especially to Christ saying, "For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form..." Here *fulness* refers to the deity of Jesus. This seems to fit best in Ephesians 1:23 also.

How should the words *who fills all in all* be understood? The participle *fills* (πληρόω = plaroo) is in the present tense. This shows that the process is continuous and operates until all things are brought into full subjection. The emphasis is on the present and ongoing process, not the final outcome.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH 2:1-10

Her Past in Sin 2:1-3

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

The second person pronoun *you* is a thread running through the first two chapters of Ephesians. Its occurrence in 2:1 resumes the *you* of 1:13 and anticipates the *you* of verse 11. Why does Paul not refer to *us* instead? Paul is viewing the church from his Jewish perspective. In Ephesians 1:12 he spoke of *we* (Jews) *who were the first to hope in Christ*. With the next verse, he begins to include the Gentiles, saying, *you* (Gentiles) *also* (in addition to us Jews). And now, as chapter 2 opens he addresses the Gentiles with reference to their past (2:1-3) and then their present (2:6-10). This does not mean that the Gentiles are in a condition unknown to the Jew, however. The words *we too* in verse 3 remind us of this fact—the Jew is no better off by nature than the Gentile. In reviewing his reader’s past in sin, he focuses on five features of the unbeliever’s life as God sees him.

Every Unbeliever is Spiritually Dead 2:1

Paul begins a sentence, quickly breaks off, and then resumes in verse 5. Each verse begins with a reminder that all were once dead in trespasses, sins, and transgressions. Verse 5 introduces the main verb, which tells how our sin problem was solved—we were *made alive together*. See Colossians 2:14 for a parallel statement. Paul has dealt with the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and is now ready to demonstrate how that same power brings to life men and women who are dead in sins. The participle *were*, found here and repeated emphatically in verse 5, is a present tense describing the condition existing when made alive. The life imparted by God was not preceded by moral and spiritual reformation.

The death spoken of in verse 1 describes man’s relationship to God. Physical death is the separation of body from soul and spirit; spiritual death is separation of man from God. It does not imply that the unbeliever is not alert to life on the earthly level. As a matter of fact, Paul pictures the unbeliever as very much alive to all the lures of sin, but moribund with respect to God. To be dead in sins means that the most vital part of man’s being, his spirit, has no fellowship with God, and thus man lives while dead. His human sensitivities are alive; his spiritual sensitivity is dead. Heavenward dimension is missing—a soul with no skylight. The tragedy of the continuation of such a condition is vividly described as the second death in Revelation 20:6, 14-15, 21:8.

Death is the fundamental description of the unbeliever and implies three things. First, it implies previous life. One cannot die who has not once lived. This is the condition brought about by the sin of Adam and passed to the entire race (Romans 5:12). Second, it implies insensibility. A corpse does not respond to stimuli. Third, it implies helplessness. What corpse has acted with respect to others, much less cured its own condition? Man has propounded at least two human theories as to the condition of man. First, man is ill but convalescing. Second, man is ill but will respond to proper treatment (the rites and regimen of religious routine). The word of God teaches that regimen can do nothing more than disguise spiritual necrosis.

Why is the metaphor of death appropriate? First, it describes a condition beyond human remedy. Second, it requires a solution that only God can give.

Every Unbeliever is Dominated by Cosmic Viewpoint 2:2a

The words *in which* agree with the noun *sins* but probably incorporate the entire phrase *in trespasses and sins*. This marks the beginning of a typical Pauline digression that continues until verse 5. Paul is going to explore the walk of the unbeliever, marking off its salient features. Verses 2-4 give a fuller account of the *sins and trespasses* in which his readers once lived.

The aorist tense verb *walked* (περιπατέω = peripateo) views the pre-salvation life in summary fashion. It tells the whole story of one's existence before becoming a Christian. It is a favorite expression of Paul's, occurring seven times in Ephesians, referring to one's manner of life (Ephesians 2:2, 10, 4:1, 17, 5:2, 8,15). Though spiritually dead, great activity goes on within the circuit of sin. Every move a non-Christian makes is a "death-walk." From divine perspective, there is nothing else worth saying, for all else is irrelevant. But there is good news; this is the way the Ephesian believers had walked *formerly* (ποτέ = pote), meaning *once in the sense of no more*. Temporally believers on earth still walk in this age, but spiritually we are separate from it. Jesus puts it in simple words as He prays for His own, saying, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one (John 17:15)."

The walk was *according to the course of this world*. We all live under spiritual influence of some sort, and by default that influence is evil. Paul is not speaking of acts of sins committed by unbelievers but of the entire atmosphere in which they once lived i.e., the spiritual air they breathed. The preposition *according to* (κατά = kata) is used to introduce a standard or norm, that to which one conforms. The word *course* (αἰών = aion) is described in Galatians 1:4 as *evil*. The word *world* (κόσμος = kosmos) lies, according to I John 5:19 *in the power of the evil one*. An evil and transitory environment is the unbeliever's "walk-about"! Both of these terms are used separately in other places by Paul but only here are they joined together. This gives this verse special force. The unbeliever is the dupe of Satan's system, which finds expression in the con-

sensus of human opinion, the claptrap of every hour of every day. The condition is sad because the unbeliever is unaware that Satan's kingdom exists. But the sadness of the matter becomes tragedy since Satan's world gives the rewards of respectability and applause. Thus, unbelievers by the million win the Pulitzer prize in cosmic thinking, breathe their last, and perish forever.

Every Unbeliever is Energized by Satan 2:2b

The word *prince* is attached to two descriptive statements. Satan is said to be *prince of the power of the air* (demonic realm) and *prince of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience* (human realm). The *of* in the expression *of the spirit* implies that this spirit is not Satan himself. The word *prince* and the word *spirit* are not in apposition in the Greek (*prince* is accusative; *spirit* is genitive.) *Spirit* is used here in the sense of the "spirit of the age," which is under the domination and direction of Satan (I John 5:19).

The expression *children of disobedience* is a semitic way of referring to men by that which characterizes their life. Disobedience is the conscious resistance to the will of God, which, in turn, lays man open to the working of Satan. Standing opposite are the *children of obedience* (I Peter 1:14).

Satan is viewed here in two ways. First, his external abode is expressed by the word *air* (ἀήρ = aer), which refers to the lower regions of the sky as in I Thessalonians 4:17. Second, his internal working is expressed by the word *spirit*. This helps explain Paul's reference to the *rulers...powers...world forces...spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* spoken of in Ephesians 6:12.

Mention of the realm of Satan introduces a major idea found in Ephesians: invisible conflict of the power of God and the power of Satan. The *working* of God is operative in the resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 1:19), and the *working* of Satan is operative in the spirit of the unbeliever. The word *working* is chosen to show Satan's rivalry with the Holy Spirit. Satan, the unholy spirit, mimics the work of the Holy Spirit in his unceasing activity. From this comes the invisible warfare spoken of in Ephesians 6:11-12.

Every Unbeliever is Controlled by His Sin Nature 2:3a

With the words *we too*, Paul shows the condition he is describing is true of both Jew and Gentile. The word *all* means there are no exceptions. What may be said of Gentiles concerning their depravity is equally true of the Jews.

The verb *walked* in verse 2 is a synonym of the verb *lived* in verse 3. The former refers to personal conduct; the latter refers to social action—those actions dictated by the society in which we live. The phrase *lusts of our flesh* is not limited to sexual impulse. The word translated lust means *desire*, either bad or good. The plural form points to the multitude of evil desires that stem from man's sinful nature. Evil impulse is present in man's heart from birth and needs only the least provocation to burst into flame. Like a powder keg, man's sinful nature can be very quiet until ignited

by a tiny spark that bursts into flame—“Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!” says James (James 3:5). The word *flesh* is a subjective genitive showing the source of the desires. The *flesh* (σάρξ = sarx) is the fallen and corrupt nature of man that is the antagonist of the will of God, standing in particular resistance to the Holy Spirit. This is why every son and daughter learns to sin without instruction.

The flesh can manifest itself in respectable forms as well as in disreputable pursuits. The pronoun *we* shows Paul included himself in the statement being made; and yet, his past is described in Philippians 3:4-6 in terms of religious orthodoxy and practice. Here he lists items of religious merit as examples of *confidence in the flesh*. The domination of the sin nature in Paul’s pre-salvation life expressed itself in a respectable form.

Every Unbeliever is Under Divine Wrath 2:3b

The words *by nature* stand in contrast to the words *by grace* in verses 6 and 8. The word *nature* (φύσις = phusis) carries the following meanings in the New Testament. First, it may refer to one’s instinct, and is so translated in Romans 2:14. The context of the word in this passage shows it to be a reference to man’s conviction untouched by God’s word. Second, the word may mean *by birth* and is so used in Galatians 2:15, translated *by nature*.

What does the phrase *children of wrath* mean? The expression is a Hebraism used to describe a characteristic feature of one’s existence. It refers to those who deserve wrath, so that *children of wrath* is equal to *objects of wrath*. But of whose wrath is Paul speaking? Ephesians 5:6 makes it clear that Paul has God’s wrath in mind. A major feature of the unbeliever’s existence is the disfavor and anger of a righteous God. Ephesians 2:1-3 is a microcosm of Romans 1:18-2:29.

Having established the helpless and hopeless condition of man alienated from God, Paul now turns to describe the masterstroke of grace that transforms men who are dead in sin to seat them in the heavenly places in Christ.

Her Present in Grace 2:4-10

The Source of Our New Position in Christ 2:4-5a

THE DIVINE SIDE 2:4

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...”

The words *but God* show us that the wrath of God just spoken of is not the whole story, and the condition of man is not irreversible. Because of the holiness of His character, God can never approve of sin; but this does not mean He is hostile toward the sinner. As we are about to be taught, God looks upon the sinner in mercy and love. Ephesians 2:1-3 is the black background against which the radiance of God’s grace is displayed.

God moves to provide salvation for man because He is *rich in mercy*. Mercy (ἔλεος = eleos) involves much more than sympathy and feeling. It is the quality that sees misery and is willing and able to do something to relieve it. Mercy is sympathy resulting in salvation; it is compassion in work clothes. In the New Testament the word has special reference to what God has done for us in Christ.

What is the significance of the word *rich*? When applied to man, it is a relative term. If we say, “He is rich,” one could then ask “How rich?” When applied to God, it indicates infinity. How rich is God? God is rich beyond measure. God is infinite in all His attributes—infinite in love, in power, in knowledge, and mercy.

THE HUMAN SIDE 2:5A

“...even when we were dead in our transgressions...”

These words resume the opening words of verse 1 with one exception: The second person pronoun *you* is replaced with the first person plural *we*. The condition described in verses 1-3 is neither gentile nor Jewish, but universal. In this verse Paul will complete his thought by adding a verb in this verse that expresses what Paul wishes to say in this paragraph (2:1-10). The verb is the first of three prefixed with the Greek preposition *sun* (σύν). In bringing us from wrath to grace, these three compound verbs express the action of God.

- We are made “alive together” (σύν-ζωποιέω = sun-zopoieo).
- We are “raised together” (σύν-ἐγείρω = sun- egeiro).
- We are “seated together” (σύν-καθίζω = sun- kathizo).

Each of the verbs is in the aorist tense. They express what God has already done for every believer. These three blessings are facts related to the past, not the future—they describe Christians now!

The Description of Our New Position in Christ 2:5b-6

“...made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus...”

The parenthetical words *by grace you have been saved* will be repeated and expounded in verse 8. The salvation of the readers is viewed in retrospect as shown by the perfect tense of the participle *saved*.

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus has its spiritual counterpart in the salvation of the believer. Three days after His death, Jesus was raised from the dead. This finds its counterpart in the regeneration of the one who was once spiritually dead. Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the throne of God where He took His seat at the Father’s right hand. God has also enthroned those whom He has raised from spiritual death and seated them *in heavenly places*.

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus are stupendous events. Not only do they guarantee our future resurrection and glorifica-

tion, they also provide life and glory in our present state. They impact us temporally and eternally, and positionally and experientially, now and at the end of the age.

The Purpose of Our New Position in Christ 2:7

“...in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Whenever New Testament writers speak of God’s love, power, and grace, they tie them to concrete realities. The following shows how these qualities are taught.

<i>Abstract Idea</i>	<i>Concrete Expression</i>
God’s Love	Christ’s Death (Romans 5:8)
God’s Power	Christ’s Resurrection (Ephesians 1:19-20)
God’s Grace	Believer’s Share in Christ’s Exaltation (Ephesians 2:7)

Verse 7 begins with a connective word used to introduce purpose. What was God’s intent in making us alive, raising us, and seating us with Christ? It was to make an eternal display of His grace.

The verb *might show* (δείκνυμι = deiknumi) is always found in the middle voice in the New Testament. It therefore means *to show for oneself*, that is, for one’s own glory. Believers saved by grace are God’s publicity program of the ages.

Ephesians 1:19 spoke of God’s surpassing power, and now the same is said of His grace. The superabundance of grace corresponds to the superabundance of power. God is as gracious as He is powerful. If the raising of Christ from the dead and placing Him at the Father’s right hand is the supreme demonstration of power, then the raising of those once dead in sins and seating them in heaven is the supreme demonstration of God’s grace.

Four words have been used so far to point to the source of salvation. It is rooted in—

- God’s mercy (ἔλεος = eleos): action taken with respect to our misery; it is sympathy in work clothes (Ephesians 2:4).
- God’s love (ἀγάπη = agapa) is divine love as manifested in the death of Christ for men (Ephesians 2:4).
- God’s grace (χάρις = charis) is the quality that extends salvation to man irrespective of his merit or demerit (Ephesians 2:5).
- God’s kindness (χρηστότης = chrestotes) is love in tender action. It is used only by Paul and carries the idea of generosity and benevolent action (Ephesians 2:7).

The Explanation of Our New Position in Christ 2:8-9

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

Man creates his own ruin; but only God can provide his salvation, and this *by grace*. The noun *grace* has the definite article *the* with it. It is used to indicate previous reference. Paul is saying, “I wish to give further explanation to the grace that I previously referred to in verse 5.” It is not grace in general but rather saving grace of which Paul now speaks. To define grace as unmerited favor is true to the facts of the New Testament. All efforts to gain the favor of God by human works or ritual are the sadly misguided efforts of self-righteousness.

The participle *saved* is a perfect tense, meaning the action was completed in the past with results abiding in the present.

The words *yourselves* and *works* both have the preposition of (ἐκ = ek) in front of them, which points to origin or source. Man and his works are denied as sources of salvation. *Of works* is an explanation of what is meant by *of yourselves*.

What is the reference of the pronoun *that* in the expression *that not of yourselves*? First, it cannot refer to the noun *faith*. The word *faith* is feminine gender and the word *that* is neuter gender. The reference is to the whole idea of a grace salvation.

The words *not of works* preclude any mixture of works with faith. Paul teaches us that grace and works as a means of gaining salvation are mutually exclusive (Romans 11:6, Romans 4:5).

The phrase *that no one should boast* is repeated in Romans 3:27 where all possibility of prideful boasting is shut out by faith. If salvation were by works, men would have something to boast about (Romans 4:2). Faith is a non-meritorious act, it is not a work. Since it is the sole ground of salvation no grounds for pride exist. Faith is the suspension-bridge by which God’s gracious salvation comes to man.

The Result of Our New Position in Christ 2:10

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

The word *workmanship* (ποίημα = poiema) is the word from which the English *poem* is derived. It refers to a work of art, a masterpiece. It is used only here and Romans 1:20. In each case it refers to that which is divinely created. Here is the balance of faith and works: We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works. No one more forcefully repudiated salvation by works than Paul; no one more emphatically insisted upon them as the fruit of salvation.

The phrase *created in Christ Jesus* explains the words *a new creature* found in II Corinthians 5:17 as well as the *new creation* of Galatians 6:15. The verb *created* (κτίζω = ktizo) is used only of God because it speaks of that which only He can do.

The words *which God prepared beforehand* refer to works. It means the power and desire for good works are from God and are the manifestation of His work of grace in one's life. We are not left to self-chosen activity; the epistles are full of works expected of every believer. They are not self-produced, they are grace-produced.

It is in these prepared works that we are to *walk*. The verb is literally *walk about in* (περιπατέω = peripateo). The Christian has no grounds for boasting—salvation is by grace and the road of good works is already built. Even the good we do finds God as its source.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH 2:11-22

Paul is now going to review his reader's spiritual history again but from a different vantage point. Ephesians 2:1-10 reviews his reader's past and present as individuals; Ephesians 2:11-22 reviews their past and present as Gentiles. Considered from a different angle, Ephesians 2:1-10 reviews his reader's past with reference to their moral condition; now in Ephesians 2:11-22 he reviews that past with reference to their deprivations as non-Jews.

In the Old Testament the Jew was God's chosen people, and Gentiles related to God through them. Monotheism was learned from Israel, and the means of approach to God was learned through the institutions of Israel. But now, Paul teaches there is one body made up of Jew and Gentile alike called the church. There are distinct features of life in the church, and we need to know them in order to relate to the will of God properly.

Our Past as Gentiles 2:11-12

In General Terms 2:11

"Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands—"

The connective *therefore* refers back to Ephesians 2:1-10, a single sentence in the Greek New Testament. The command to remember is significant. It is salutary to reflect on what we would be and were apart from God's grace. Exercise of memory often deepens humility.

The words *the Gentiles* sets them apart as a certain class of people. It signifies more than non-Israelites, however. Were this all that is intended, then they were Gentiles; they remain Gentiles; and they will always be Gentiles. To be a Gentile was to be deprived of religious privilege, which Paul is about to point out.

The word *formerly* (ποτέ = pote) in verse 11 stands in direct contrast to *now* (νυνί = nuni) in verse 13.

God made a covenant with Abram and selected him and his descendants as His chosen people. The physical sign of this relationship was circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14). Though essential, it had nothing to do with personal salvation (Romans 4:9-11). The

Jews had a contemptuous terms for non-Jews. It is obscured by the translation *uncircumcision* (ἀκροβυστία = akrobustia), which means *foreskin*. To the Jew, this was the collective designation of the entire heathen world.

In Specific Terms 2:12

“... remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Israel was the only nation in the world that had Messianic expectations. Jesus summarized concisely in John 4:22, saying, “Salvation is from the Jews.” Paul spoke of the same privileges in Romans 9:4-5. This passage is full of contrasts. *Separate from Christ* stands in sharp contrast to their present position *in Christ Jesus* spoken of in verse 13.

What is meant by *the commonwealth of Israel*? It refers to that government framed by God by which Israel was ruled. Israel was the only nation to possess a constitution given by God. To honor the king of Israel was synonymous with fearing the God of Israel. No such condition existed in any other nation. In Israel there was no distinction of civil and sacred. Spiritual meaning was attached to everything including diet and dress, tabernacle and temple.

To be excluded from Israel meant exclusion from the word of God since they alone were its recipients (Psalm 147:19-20). All of the covenants promising a Messiah and salvation were made with Israel. Being without the aforementioned things, Gentiles had *no hope* and were *without God* in the world. The plight of the Gentile may be summarized as Christless, hopeless, and Godless.

Our Present as Christians 2:13-22

The New Position 2:13

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

The words *in Christ Jesus* relate to verse 13 as *separate from Christ* did to verse 12. Paul now shows how the blood of Christ has turned isolation into reconciliation and enmity to amity. The name Jesus is brought in at this point, perhaps to show that He was not only the Messiah of Israel but the Savior of humanity. Notice the centrality of the atonement: His *blood* (verse 13); His *flesh* (verse 15); and His *cross* (verse 16).

The words *far* and *near* are significant for two reasons. First, they are Hebrew idioms that describe the position of Jews and Gentiles relative to God (Isaiah 57:19). The word *far* (μακρῶν = makron) was used by Peter in his proclamation of the gospel on the day of Pentecost saying, “‘For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself’ (Acts 2:39).”

The New Blessing 2:14-18

“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”

The word *peace* is made special by the presence of the definite article *the* preceding it. The grammatical structure (the article + a predicate noun) conveys two ideas. First, it points to something that is well known. Second, it points to something which alone merits that designation. Christ and no other has solved the problem of the relationship of God and man. Christ and no other has solved the problem of man with man.

Christ’s work in making *both groups* (Jew and Gentile) *one* (the church) annihilates the distance between the privileged and the non-privileged, and *far* has become *near*.

The former separation of Jew and Gentile is called *the barrier of the dividing wall*. The word *barrier* (φραγμός = phragmos) means *fence, wall, hedge, or railing*. The word *dividing wall* (μεσότοιχον = mesotoichon) is literally, *middle wall*. Josephus used both of these words to refer to the balustrade in the temple at Jerusalem that divided the court of the Gentiles from the temple proper. The Jewish historian tells us that the following words were inscribed on this wall of partition: “No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.” This exercise of capital punishment was upheld by the Roman authorities. One should recall the upheaval that took place when Paul was accused of taking Trophimus, a Gentile, beyond this checkpoint (Acts 21:28-32).

Paul had available to him a word that means peacemaker, but he did not use it. Christ did not make our peace and then retire to the sidelines. He Himself is the very substance of our peace; His very existence established and now maintains our relationship with God. The bringing of peace by the Messiah is a theme of the prophets (Isaiah 9:6, 52:7, 53:5 [*well-being* is the Hebrew word *shalom* meaning *peace*] and 57:19).

The pronoun *He* is important because it is emphatic, both by form and by position in the sentence. Our translation attempts to bring this out by the words *He Himself*.

There is no iron curtain, no class distinction, no color barrier, or any other national frontier more absolute than the ancient distinction of Jew and Gentile. Acts 21:28-31 well illustrates this separation. But Jew and Gentile now form one new body, one new man—the church. It is not as though God brought one up to the level of the other; it is rather that God has taken two and made something

grander than before. Chrysostrom said, “It is as if one should melt a statue of silver and another of lead and the two together become a statue of gold.”

Historically, the barrier came down with the destruction of the temple at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70 Spiritually, the barrier came down at the cross. Notice the emphasis on *one* in verse 14, *one new man* in verse 15, and *one body* in verse 16.

Verse 18 speaks of our *access* (προσαγωγή = prosagoga) that literally means *to lead toward, to open up a way of approach*. It was used of those who secured the privilege of an interview with the king. The blessing of access to God is among those given to every Christian. Romans 5 lists the blessings of justification, and among them is an *introduction by faith* where Paul uses the same word found here in Ephesians 2:18.

The New Relationship 2:19-22

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, ²⁰having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

OUR CITIZENSHIP 2:19 In order to highlight the privilege that is now ours, Paul uses two terms expressing inferiority. The word *strangers* (ξένος = xenos) referred to a short time resident, a transient; and *aliens* (παροικος = paroikos) referred to a person who settled in a country other than that of their birth. This person had no inherent rights and had to secure protection of the laws of the land by payment of a tax.

OUR FOUNDATION 2:20 Paul now advances the thought of being part of God’s household to our position as the house itself. Does *foundation of the apostles and prophets* mean that apostles are the foundation, or did they *lay* the foundation? The latter interpretation seems to be dictated by the words of I Corinthians 3:11, “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

The word *cornerstone* conveys two ideas. First, when it was dropped into place it bonded the structure together. Second, it showed whether the building had been constructed according to the architect’s instructions.

OUR GROWTH 2:21-22 The phrase being fitted together precisely defines the function of the cornerstone. Perhaps to say the building was “aligned” on Him gets at the sense best. One should remember that the church had no buildings for the first three centuries; and yet, they were very much a building in a spiritual sense. Physical temples have done their part in causing the church to forget its identity as the true temple.

The present tense of *being built together* brings out the idea of continuous activity extending through the entire church age. Ephesians 4:11-16 will tell us how this building is to take place; it is the key New Testament passage on church growth.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH 3:1-21

With the opening of chapter 3, Paul once again begins a sentence and then he immediately breaks it off. Notice the three opening words of verse 1 and verse 14 are *for this reason*. The subject of the broken sentence starts in verse 1 with the words *I Paul* and the verb is suspended until verse 14 where he continues, saying *bow my knees*.

To what do the words for this reason refer? They refer to the glorious truth of Jew and Gentile brought together into one body called the church. The flow of Paul's thought runs this way.

- He begins—by reminding his gentile readers that he is in prison for their sake (Ephesians 3:1).
- He digresses—by explaining his special place in the church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:2-13).
- He concludes—by resuming the prayer he began in verse 1 (Ephesians 3:14-21).

An Explanation of Paul's Mystery 3:1-6

His Imprisonment 3:1

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—”

The words *for this reason* look back to the great blessings that have been bestowed on the Gentiles as described in verses 11-22; and now, as Paul looks at his chains, he is reminded of where he is and why he is there.

To this point in the epistle, Paul has been unlike himself in one particular way. His words have been impersonal. His only reference to himself since the salutation is found in 1:16 where he says he does not *cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers*. He has said nothing of his office, of the special relationship he bears to the church, or of his sufferings and hard labor expended in order to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. Now in Ephesians 3:2-13, Paul becomes intensely personal as he describes the role he has played in bringing the truth of the gospel to the Gentiles. The emphatic *I, Paul* underscores the intensity of his feelings and the authority of his words.

Nero's prisoner? Absolutely not! Driven to despair by the Jews who had dogged his footsteps across the continent? Never! Paul in chains was the freest of all men for he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ—in chains by His will and for His work. Paul knew that true servanthood is true freedom. It was the jailer, not the prisoner, who was in bondage. As chapter 3 opens, Paul begins a personal

description of his ministry with regard to the Gentiles: and with this word Paul begins his digression.

His Stewardship 3:2-6

ITS EXISTENCE 3:2

“if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you”

The words *if indeed* do not suggest doubt. The same words are used in Ephesians 4:21 where Paul says, “If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus.” Paul surely does not mean they have never heard of Christ! The words introduce a presupposition—Paul assumes they have heard of the stewardship that had been given to Paul. We might translate “Most surely you have heard”

The word *stewardship* (οἰκονομία = oikonomia) literally means *law of the house* and thus *an arrangement, a plan, or an established way of doing things*. It is descriptive of the new arrangement God is working out called the church, or the mystery. The words of *God’s grace* tell the leading feature of this plan. We live in a “grace administration” under a “grace plan”, a “grace arrangement.” It was from God, to Paul, and to them and us.

Literally, Paul speaks of “the grace of God which was given to me for you.” This is a favorite expression of Paul found also in Galatians 2:9, Romans 15:15, and Colossians 1:25. In each instance the grace referred to is not that which was given for Paul’s personal enrichment but instead refers to the gospel he was to communicate to the Gentile world. In God’s “house arrangement” (2:19), Paul’s special function was the building of the gentile portion.

ITS SOURCE 3:3-4

“... that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ ...”

The word *revelation* (ἀποκάλυψις = apokalupsis) is a compound word with a preposition *from* and a verb *to hide or conceal*, or the noun form *veil*. Revelation is the act of unveiling. When we speak of the Bible as a revelation, we are referring to the act of God whereby He makes truth known that man would not and could not discover on his own. The verb *made known* is passive voice, which means the subject is the receiver of the action, not the producer.

The word *mystery* occurs about twenty-eight times in the New Testament, twenty-one of which are found in Paul’s writings (six in Ephesians). It consistently refers to something previously concealed but presently revealed. It is not something that is in itself incomprehensible but something unknown until God chooses to reveal it. In Ephesians the *mystery* refers to God’s secret plan to integrate Jew and Gentile into one body. The mystery was not that Gentiles could be saved, this was known in Old Testament times

(Genesis 12:3), but that the two should become *one new man* (2:15). Colossians 1:27 presents another aspect of the mystery, namely, the residence of Christ in and among believers. Paul tells three things about the mystery—

- He has placed it in writing—The content and explanation of the mystery has become “inscripturated.” As such, it is part of the revelation of truth found in the word of God.
- He has done so briefly—The words briefly (ἐν ὀλίγος = en oligos) may refer to few words or short space. Paul is probably referring his readers to what he has already written to them, i.e., Ephesians 2:11-22 or 1:9-10.
- He has done so with purpose—First, Paul has placed the content of the mystery in writing so it can be read. Second, if given by God to be read, it follows that God intends that it be understood.

ITS UNIQUENESS 3:5

“... which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit ...”

The antecedent of the pronoun *which* is *the mystery*. Here Paul brings up a new point—the newness of the revelation of the mystery. By the words *sons of men*, Paul lays stress on succeeding generations. Sons were born who died, and to them were sons born who also died, and to them sons—generation after generation. And now, Paul says, the day of revelation is upon us!

The word *as* (ὥς = hos) introduces several points of comparison. First is comparison in point of time—previous generation versus *now*. Second is comparison of breadth of revelation—general information versus full information. The third comparison is in the objects of revelation—*sons of men* compared to *apostles and prophets*. They are described as *holy*, meaning they were appointed, supported, inspired, and acknowledged by Him.

The Old Testament is full of revelation concerning the blessing of God on the Gentiles through Israel. The Old Testament did not envision the superceding of the age of Israel for a new body called the church. The “half-lights” of the past are compared to the new revelation given to Paul. The *sons of men* of the past, are compared to the *holy prophets and apostles* of the present.

ITS NATURE 3:6

“... to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel ...”

Verse 6 is a summarizing verse, pulling together Ephesians 2:11-22. Three terms are used to express the relationship of believing Jews and believing Gentiles in the church age. They are an exposition of the words of Ephesians 2:15, *one new man*.

Gentiles are fellow-heirs—Paul speaks of believers as co-heirs with Christ in Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:29, and 4:7.

Gentiles are fellow-members—This word may have been coined by Paul since it is not found in the Septuagint and only here in the New Testament, and later only in Christian writers.

Gentiles are fellow-partakers—This expression is found also in Ephesians 5:7.

An Explanation of Paul's Ministry 3:7-13

Its Divine Origin 3:7

“... of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.”

Colossians 1:24-27 is a parallel passage to Ephesians 3:7. In both places the magnitude of Paul's ministry matches the wideness of God's mercy to the Gentiles. The words *according to the working of His power* shows that while Paul glorified his ministry, this was not equivalent to glorifying himself. His ministry was based on God's grace and infused with God's power. The passive voice of the verb *was made* shows Paul's ministry was not of his own choosing.

The Greek language is rich with words that designate high office. However, the New Testament rejects all of these titles and focuses on a word unassociated with prestige. It is the word *minister* (διάκονος = diakonos), which referred to a table waiter who was always at the bidding of his customers.

The words *according to* (κατά = kata) occur twice introducing two parallel clauses. The first describes the gift of grace given to Paul at his calling (Acts 9). The second points to the divine power that sustained that gift daily.

Its Specific Responsibility 3:8-12

TO PROCLAIM 3:8

“... To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ ...”

The words *very least* (ἐλάχιστο = elachistos) translate a double diminutive that means *very small, quite unimportant, insignificant*. The magnitude of the grace entrusted to Paul overwhelms him with a sense of unworthiness. The only counterbalancing truth is Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” No man ever pressed his claims to the high office of apostle as fervently; yet no man ever had a greater sense of personal unworthiness than Paul.

If Paul's statements of unworthiness are placed in chronological order, one observes a display an increasing humility. First, in I Corinthians 15:9 he calls himself *the least of the apostles*. Second, here in Ephesians 3:8 he is *least of all saints*. Third, in I Timothy 1:15 he speaks of sinners *among whom I am foremost of all*.

The word *unfathomable* (ἀνεξιχνίαστος = anexichniastos) literally means *not to be tracked out* and thus *inscrutable*. All spiritual wealth is in Christ, so that Paul and all believers stand in themselves possessing nothing but in Christ possessing all! The word is used one other time in the New Testament where it describes the *ways of God* (Romans 11:33).

The word *riches* in the figurative sense has no biblical parallel outside the writings of Paul. He uses the word five times in Ephesians (1:7, 18, 2:7, 3:8, 16).

TO ENLIGHTEN 3:9-10

“... and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; ¹⁰in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.”

Why does Paul use the metaphor of light; why does he not say “to teach”? Perhaps it is because teaching is external, whereas enlightenment is internal. The aim of teaching is to enlighten, and Paul wants to see that goal achieved. It is never the will of God for believers to be in the dark concerning their function within the body of Christ.

What had been screened from angels and hidden from men in time past is now to be declared through the church (Ephesians 2:6-7). The church is a mirror through which the wisdom of God is reflected to men and angels in both time and eternity.

The word *manifold* (πολυποίκιλος = polupoikilos) is very colorful. It may describe something as *many-sided* or *multi-colored* (of cloth); *diversely colored* (of flowers). In modern use it is a technical term used in biology for unusually assorted crystals. We could translate “many-splendored” or “iridescent.”

TO REVEAL 3:11-12

“This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.”

The plan of the ages is carried out in Jesus Christ; and because of our position in Him, we are an integral part of this great plan.

Verse 12 is a practical application of the truth being taught. Because we are in Christ, we need not have inhibitions concerning our own lack of merit. The word *boldness* (παρρησία = parrasia) literally means telling all and is used of free speech.

Its Practical Application 3:13

“Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.”

In verse 1 Paul had made the statement that his imprisonment was on behalf of the Gentiles. Now he repeats himself with the added note that this fact should not be discouraging to them. The Gentiles represent the price he paid so blessing could come to them. Paul

viewed his trials as their glory, and he desires them to view things the same way.

The Passion of Paul's Ministry 3:14-21

The Motivation of Paul's Prayer 3:14-15

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name..."

Ephesians 3:14-21 does two things. First, it completes the sentence that was started in 3:1. Second, it closes the doctrinal section of Ephesians with a benediction. The prayer is trinitarian in nature. Verse 16 speaks of the power of the Spirit; verse 17 of the indwelling of Christ; and verse 19 speaks of the fulness of God.

MOTIVATION DERIVED FROM DIVINE ACTIVITY For this reason points back to God's activity in making a building of Jew and Gentile (2:22); of making a temple of Jew and Gentile (2:21); and of making a household of Jew and Gentile (2:19-20).

MOTIVATION EXPRESSED IN HUMAN ADORATION Paul's kneeling posture is unusual. In the New Testament, standing to pray is the rule. Kneeling was expressive of unusual and deep emotion (Luke 22:41, Acts 20:36-38, and 21:5). The words gain more significance when they are related to Isaiah 45:23, "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance." Kneeling conveys the ideas of submissiveness, adoration, and solemnity.

The preposition *before* (πρός = pros) means *facing*—it is the "face-to-face" preposition, denoting directness, and is used of intimate relationships.

The words *every family* should probably be understood in the sense of *whole family*. This interpretation confines the statement to believers—the family of God. The emphasis lies on unity, not plurality. The family of God idea certainly fits the theme of Ephesians. The words *in heaven* would include deceased believers.

The Petition of Paul's Prayer 3:16-19

"... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

Paul sets forth the content of his prayer by the word *that* (ὅτι = hina) the Greek purpose clause.

THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE THE STRENGTH OF THE SPIRIT 3:16 The generosity of a gift is determined by the resources of the giver. God's giving never depletes or even lessens His resources. The

word *strengthened* is the exact opposite of the word *lose heart* in verse 13. To fix one's eyes on man, even one as great as Paul, is to *lose heart*. On the other hand, to look to the Lord is to be *strengthened*. The preposition *in* (εἰς = eis) coupled with *the inner man* emphasizes depth of penetration. "Deep into the inner man" expresses the idea.

THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE THE COMPREHENSION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST 3:17-19A The word *dwelt* (κατοικέω = katoikeo) is a compound verb meaning *to dwell down*. We would say "settle down." It is used in the sense of one being at home.

The ultimate end of the power of the Spirit is expressed by two metaphors. The first is biological, expressed by the word *rooted*. The second is architectural and is found in the word *grounded*.

THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE FULNESS OF GOD 3:19B The *fulness of God* points to the fulness that He requires of His children. The creature is never equal to the Creator, but the creature can be that for which he was created.

The Doxology of Paul's Prayer 3:20-21

"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

The benediction represents the high point in the book of Ephesians. Much is yet to come, but its theme is the outworking of our high position in Christ. We are *in Christ*—we can ascend no higher.

The chief thought here is this: Has Paul asked too much? Certainly not, and this is expressed by Paul's use of a "super superlative." It is the word *exceedingly abundantly* (ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ = huperekperissou), an adverb meaning *quite beyond all measure*, indeed, the highest form of comparison imaginable. We could translate *infinitely more*. The word occurs also in I Thessalonians 3:10 (*most earnestly*), and 5:13 (*very highly*).

God's power is super-abundant with regard to two things: first, with respect to anything we can request in prayer; second, anything we can conceive of by anticipation. A poet put it this way.

*Thou art coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.*

The Duty of the Church

or “*The Conduct of the Body of Christ*”

Ephesians 4:1-6:24

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH 4:1-6

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4:1

“*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...*”

The Metaphor for Conduct

The same words that open Ephesians 4 are also found in Romans 12:1. In each case they follow a doxology that brings the first part of the epistle to a close.

Paul begins by reminding his readers that he is a prisoner. Why does he do this? He is implying that whatever one’s condition in life, pleasant or unpleasant, the joy of serving the Lord need not be lost. Paul lived for the Lord as effectively and faithfully as a prisoner as he would have as a free man. Nothing in life frees us from the obligations of Christian living that he is about to expound. The chains that held Paul’s hands did not bind his soul.

Walking is Paul’s favorite metaphor for one’s conduct. Why is it an appropriate figure? First, it is comprehensive in nature. Few of the activities of life can be carried out without walking. Even preparation of a meal requires walking. One walks to the stove, to the refrigerator, to the cabinets, and to the table. Second, it is progressive in nature. If we walk too fast, then we are running; if both feet leave the ground for a significant time, we are jumping or leaping. Walking is the progressive and continuous taking of steps, one after another—and so is the Christian life.

The Standard for Conduct

The foundation of Christian conduct does not consist of rules but of a general principle repeated in four of Paul’s epistles. That principle is conveyed to us in Ephesians 4:1 by the word *worthy*

(ἄξιως = axios), which means literally *to bring up the other beam of the scales*. This assumes we understand what the scales of Paul's day looked like. On one side one placed an object of known weight, a five pound ingot, for example. On the other side, grain was placed. When the two balanced, one had five pounds of grain. This word is found in Romans 16:2, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 1:10, I Thessalonians 2:12, and III John 6; it is translated *worthy* in each case.

Used metaphorically, the word means *create an equivalence*. Ephesians 1-3 has laid great stress on correct doctrine. Chapter 4 opens by saying correct doctrine needs to be balanced with appropriate conduct. Our walk should not contradict our belief; it should complement our belief. People who believe a certain way should live a certain way. All that we do should be in keeping with our calling. Our beliefs determine the path our feet should take.

The standard for living is *the calling with which you have been called*. Our calling is the divine expression of God's will for His children. We can only know that calling in the measure we know the word of God, which enlightens us to its content.

THE SPECIFIC ITEMS 4:2-6

That are Personal in Nature 4:2

"...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love..."

Verse 2 begins to list the virtues that are needed to balance good doctrine with good conduct. We are going to be told how to create an equivalence between what we believe and how we live. There are four items that create essential proportion between calling and character.

Humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη = tapeinophrosune)

As far as we know, no Greek writer used this word to express a virtue before Christianity. In classical Greek it is a derogatory term. Liddell & Scott, in their classical Greek lexicon, give meanings such as *mean, base, abject*. In pagan thought, an attitude of humility was considered a vice. To the pagan, the greatest manifestation of power was self-assertion and dominance.

It was Jesus Himself who elevated the term to the highest level, describing Himself as *gentle and humble in heart* (Matthew 11:29). Christianity introduced a revolutionary concept: The greatest manifestation of power was self-sacrifice! John 13:3-5 is an excellent example taken from the conduct of Jesus with respect to washing the disciples feet. To Paul, the incarnation of Jesus was the supreme lesson in humility (Philippians 2:5-8). Humility is the law of mutual service and is the only road that leads to true greatness. The proud man always focuses on what he believes to be below him. It is from the downward look that he achieves the haughty countenance

Humility is not making oneself small; this would be hypocrisy. Humility is the conviction that nothing that we have is self-procured, but all is God-given. Paul's rhetorical question in I Corinthians 4:7 makes the point: "And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

Gentleness (πραΰτης = prautes)

This virtue is closely tied to humility. It incorporates the ideas of considerateness and courtesy and alludes to controlled strength; meekness is certainly, not weakness. Jesus described Himself as *gentle and humble in heart* in Matthew 11:29. This is the most direct description Jesus gives of Himself. It is also ascribed to Him in II Corinthians 10:1. Paul's essential theme in these opening verses of Ephesians 4 is the obligation of the believer to be Christlike. Gentleness is never insubordinate to God or resentful toward man.

Patience (μακροθυμία = makrothumia)

This virtue is manifested by one who is reluctant to avenge wrongs. It is the attitude that makes allowances for failures. II Peter 3:9, 15, and I Peter 3:20 demonstrate that it is the perversity of man that brings out this characteristic in God Himself and is revealed in His postponing of deserved judgment (Romans 2:4).

Forbearance (ἀνέχω = anecho)

Forbearance is the natural result of the foregoing virtue of patience. The words *showing forbearance* translate a single Greek verb that means *to put up with*. It is an intensely practical word because it is realistic about the makeup of each one of us. We all have faults that others must endure, and this endurance of one another is a godly characteristic. Each of these four virtues is an aspect of Christian love. The words *in love* that end verse 2 should be taken in connection with each.

That are Corporate in Nature 4:3-6

The Requirement for Unity 4:3

"...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Being diligent (σπουδάζω = spoudazo) suggests two things. First, it implies difficulty. It is a word frequently used to describe tasks that are difficult to complete. Second, it implies determination. The present tense shows it is a never ending task.

Verse 3 assumes that unity among Christians already exists. This unity was explained in Ephesians 2:13-18. That we are bound to Christ and to one another is fact; we are to exert great effort to see that we are likewise bound in practice. The church at Corinth illustrates the absence of such practical unity (I Corinthians 3:1-5).

The Basis for Unity 4:4-6

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

THERE IS UNITY IN THE SPIRIT 4:4

There is “one body”—The reference is to the church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). In the pagan world, there were an enormous number of religions from which one could choose. Religion was not unified; it was diversified and competitive.

The unity of the body of Christ of which Paul speaks crosses all demarcations—sexual, racial, and social. The condition of membership in the church is faith in Christ, making all who share this faith one body.

There is “one Spirit”—On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit spanned the greatest of all chasms, the separation of the Jew and the Gentile. The same Spirit that put Paul into union with Christ does the same for all believers. He reminds the Corinthian believers of this fact in I Corinthians 12:12-13. The doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit is strong argument for practical unity among Christians.

There is “one hope”—The hope of the believer has two aspects to it. Romans 8 teaches the hope of glorification, the third phase of salvation that makes us body, soul, and spirit *like Him* (I John 3:1-2). Titus 2:13 speaks of the return of Christ as *the blessed hope*. Both are related—glorification tells what is in store for us; the return of Christ tells when this will happen.

THERE IS UNITY IN THE SON 4:5

There is “one Lord”—The next three statements are separate ideas and yet contain a fundamental unity. They could be put into one sentence saying, There is only one Lord in whom we all believe and in whose name we are all baptized.

Recognition of Jesus as Lord was particularly significant to men and women of the first century. The Roman Emperor claimed the title also, and to refuse him the title could put one’s life in peril. A true Christian could never apply it to any other than Jesus if it implied an infringement of His deity.

The pagan world was polytheistic to the core. It knew scores of gods and scores of lords. But not so with Christianity for everyone who was a Christian became so by directing his or her faith to the same Lord Jesus Christ. There are no exceptions to this truth, and this truth argues for unity and harmony.

There is “one faith”—Faith incorporates two ideas. It may refer to one’s attitude of believing in Christ, and it may also refer to the substance of one’s belief. In our day of doctrinal laxity, we should note that the early church was not a creedless body. All believers have common beliefs about who Jesus Christ is and what He has

done. He is deity incarnate; He is fully God and fully man. His work on the cross is all that is needed for man's salvation. He is Redeemer, Savior, Lord, and King. All believers also have placed their hope of salvation in Christ in a personal and subjective sense.

There is "one baptism"—The reference here is to Spirit baptism—that act wherein those who place their faith in Christ are placed (baptized) into Christ by the act of the Holy Spirit. Since the baptism spoken of here is associated with the Son, water baptism should not be excluded since it is the symbol of the former.

The oneness and unity of Christians is even reflected in the grammatical gender of the word *one* found three times in verse 5. The first *one* is masculine, the second *one* is feminine, and the third *one* is neuter. The church is one viewed from any perspective.

THERE IS UNITY IN THE FATHER 4:6

He is "over all"—Transcendence focuses on the awesomeness of God in terms of the great distance that exists between Him and His creation. This is the meaning of the words *over all*.

He is "through all"—This expresses God's creative and sustaining activity.

He is "in all"—This expression views the opposite of transcendence which is immanency. The personal presence of God in His creation and His personal relationship to man is focal. God is both near (immanent) and far (transcendent).

Considering all three prepositional phrases, we may say the Father is sovereign for He is over all; He is omnipotent for He works through all; and He is omnipresent for He is in all. The Father rules, pervades, and sustains.

The words *one Spirit...one Lord...one God and Father* remind us that the doctrine of the Trinity is firmly rooted in the teaching of the apostles. Paul makes a similar statement in I Corinthians 12:4-6 where he speaks of "the same Spirit...the same Lord...the same God...."

The Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) reflects the teaching of the apostles by stating, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty...in one Lord Jesus Christ...and in the Holy Ghost...."

THE MATURITY OF THE CHURCH 4:7-16

CHRIST'S GIFT: ITS BESTOWAL 4:7-10

The Fact Stated 4:7

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

Paul has been speaking of the unity of the church; now he turns to diversity in the church. Unity is not uniformity and is therefore consistent with diversity. He has been speaking of all; now he speaks of each. The words *to each one* are in the emphatic position in the sentence and mark Paul's transition.

The word *one* added to the word *each* stresses the idea of distribution. This means the church is a ship on which there are no passengers; everyone aboard is a crew member. The words *each one* are explained in more detail beginning in verse 11 where Paul refers specifically to those given a place of leadership whose ministry extends to the whole body.

The verb *was given* is passive voice showing the gift was not something pursued by us but something bestowed upon us.

The noun *grace* has a definite article with it. It must be understood in light of Paul's usage of the word in Ephesians 3:2, 7, 8. In each of these verses it is preceded by the definite article and refers to the special mission given to Paul. Saving grace is not in view here; grace that enables each one to perform a specific service in the body of Christ is the subject about which Paul is speaking. The context will show it to be the gracious endowment that makes each of us capable of filling our particular place in the body of Christ. We might call it "equipping grace."

The words *according to the measure of Christ's gift* convey important truth. They teach us that each gets the gift that Christ has to bestow in his special case. The grace is always the same, but the measure varies according to the sovereign choice of Christ.

The noun *gift* ($\delta\omega\rho\epsilon\acute{\alpha}$ = *dorea*) is most often used of a gift that is both spiritual and bountiful. It is found eleven times in the New Testament. It was used by Jesus when he spoke to the woman at the well and offered her the *gift* of God, which He said, was *living water*. It is used four times in the book of Acts and each instance refers to the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, and 11:17). Romans 5:15, 17 uses it to refer to the gift of salvation. II Corinthians speaks of God's indescribable gift which is Christ. It is used two times in Ephesians, referring to the bestowal of the gift of apostleship on Paul (3:7), and of spiritual gifts upon all believers. Finally, in Hebrews 6:4 it refers to a *heavenly gift*.

While I Corinthians 12 refers to the gifts as coming from the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:7 speaks of them as *Christ's gift*. There is no contradiction or inconsistency here. The Holy Spirit Himself was given by Christ to the church, and so the gifts of the Spirit may be conceived of as the gifts of Christ also.

The Time Stated 4:8-10

"Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.'⁹(Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

The Quotation

In Ephesians 1:19-21 Paul connected the exaltation of Christ with the power at work in members of His body. The bestowal of gifts from His exalted state now reminds Paul of Psalm 68:18. The primary application of this passage refers to David's capture of the Jebusite acropolis and his ascent with the ark up Mt. Zion (Psalm 24). Paul comments only on the words *He ascended* and *He gave*.

The Logic

Ascension implies a descent. How could He go up without first going down? That He ascended is clear. The question is where He descended. The logic of Paul's statement does not address this question.

The Results

First, captives were led captive. The *captives* were those once held in Satan's control that are now taken and led captive by the risen Christ. Second, gifts were given to men. Spiritual gifts are the ascension gift of Christ. This subject will be developed beginning in verse 11.

What is meant by the *lower parts of the earth*? There are three major views that attempt to answer this question. First, the reference may be to Hades (Sheol), the abode of the dead. Support for this view is found in that Hades is always viewed as *down* from the earth's surface. Second, it may be taken to refer to the grave in which Christ was laid. Third, some take the phrase *of the earth* to be a genitive that defines the lower regions. If this is true, the reference is to the incarnation and the condescension and humiliation connected with it. From earth He ascended and to earth He came. Romans 10:6-7 seems to suggest that the first view is the correct one. Philippians 2:8-9 also contributes the idea that Jesus went from the most ignominious death to be exalted by the Father.

In the days of Jesus life on earth, men could enjoy His presence in only one place at a time. With His ascension, however, *He fills all things*—His presence fills the universe.

CHRIST'S GIFT: ITS DESCRIPTION 4:11-16

The Men Involved 4:11

Those Who Laid the Foundation

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets..."

THE APOSTLES The verb *gave* points to the double gifts of the ascended Christ. He first endowed men with special abilities; He then gave the endowed men to the church. The first three gifts, the apostle, the prophet, and the evangelist, were given a ministry to the whole body of Christ; the pastor-teacher was limited to a single congregations.

He is an emphatic pronoun that means *He Himself* or *He alone*. Apostles, prophets, etc. did not spring up on their own; they were deliberately and purposely given to the church in order to secure its stability and growth. Christ is the provider of gifted men, and He is also bestower of special ability on these men.

Here we have a listing of certain ones endowed with gifts for the building up of the church. I Corinthians 12:28 parallels this verse with one exception: It prioritizes these gifts in a first, second, third manner.

Apostles and prophets have already been paired together as those whose function was to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). Each of these gifts was operational in the foundation laying period of the church. Even now, in our consideration of the book of Ephesians, we are building on the foundation laid by the apostles; in this case, the apostle Paul.

Paul used the term apostle in two senses. First, it applied to those commissioned by Christ immediately. Second, it extended to those who preached the gospel in close association with those directly commissioned apostles. For example, Paul links Timothy and Silvanus with himself as *apostles of Christ* in I Thessalonians 2:6.

Those who were apostles in the narrow sense were chosen directly by the Lord (Matthew 10:1-2, Mark 3:13-16, Acts 9:16). They were given sign gifts as credentials (II Corinthians 12:12). They were eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1:22, I Corinthians 9:1). They possessed the most important position in the early church (I Corinthians 12:28).

The office and the gift of apostle ended with the death of these men. Several facts need to be noted concerning the gift of apostleship. First, no one exists today who has seen the resurrected Christ. Second, foundation laying is by nature a function that comes to an end. Third, no provision is found in the New Testament for their successors. Fourth, the foundation upon which the church rests is found in the writings of the apostles—the completed canon of Scripture.

THE PROPHETS The gift of prophecy was apparently possessed by many during the apostolic age (Acts 11:27-28, 21:10-11) and was not limited to men (Acts 21:9). The gift of prophecy fulfilled a pre-canon need. Prophets were those who spoke to the church under the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit. As time passed, it became necessary to test such prophets to be sure their message was truly of the Holy Spirit, not of other spirits (I John 4:1).

Those Who Extend the Church

“...and some as evangelists...”

The evangelist is one who pioneers, taking the gospel to regions where it is yet unknown. Philip bears the title specifically (Acts 21:8), and doing the work of an evangelist was an aspect of Timothy’s ministry (II Timothy 4:5). The evangelist had an itiner-

ant ministry whereas that of pastor was confined to a local assembly.

How does the evangelist differ from the apostle and prophet? The apostle and prophet received their message by direct revelation from God; the evangelist did not. The gift of evangelist required a clear perception of truth as communicated by the apostle or prophet accompanied by a unique ability to present that message in a persuasive manner.

Those Who Instruct the Church

“...and some as pastors and teachers...”

Is this a description of one gift or two? Understanding these terms to describe one office is well-grounded in the grammar of the original. Pastor and teacher are joined by a connective and preceded by a single article that serves to unite them as one. In order to show this, we will join the two nouns with a hyphen and refer to the office as that of pastor-teacher.

While the evangelist increases the quantity of the church, the pastor-teacher increases the quality of the church. The gift of pastor-teacher is required of every generation. The church can never dispense with those who preach the gospel and those who teach the truth that brings believers to maturity. I Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28 describe their function in caring for the flock. Pastor-teachers are to nurture, protect, and supervise the local assembly of believers. Acts 20:28 calls them *overseers* who are to *shepherd* (verb from which *pastor* comes). Pastors are the same as elders and bishops spoken of elsewhere who must be *able to teach* (I Timothy 3:2).

The Purpose Involved 4:12-16

The Immediate Purpose 4:12

“...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...”

The preposition translated *to* and *for* (εἰς = eis) is the same in Greek. Its basic meaning is to indicate the direction toward which something is to move. We might translate “leading to the work of service, leading to the building up of the body of Christ.”

The goal of the ministry of these gifted men is expressed by the noun *equipping* (καταρτισμός = katartismos). The word has several ideas in it as can be demonstrated by three passages that use it.

- **To Mend** (Matthew 4:21)—One day as Jesus was walking near the shore of Galilee, he saw James and John in a boat with Zebedee their father “mending their nets.” Mending is the word equipping of Ephesians 2:12. Here the word referred to the mending of something that was damaged or worn and in need of repair.
- **To Prepare** (Romans 9:22)—Paul notes that God *endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*. Once again

the word *equipped* is found and is translated *prepared*. The word refers to the preparation of something to fulfill a known purpose.

- To Train (Luke 6:40)—Jesus speaks saying, “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” Here the word *equipped* is translated *fully trained*.

The ministry of a pastor-teacher is both negative and positive. The teaching of the word of God corrects the wrong thinking resident in all of us and inculcates Christian truth so that we may all function as the Lord desires.

The Ultimate Purpose 4:13-16

UNITY 4:13

“...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God ...”

The word *until* measures the period of time during which the aforementioned method of growth should be in operation. It shows how long the church should function under the concept of growth via the pastor-teacher. The phrase *we all* includes all believers, but it does not include all men.

We should think of these verses as a journey. The verb *attain* (καταντάω = katantao) is used nine times in the book of Acts, and in each case it is used of travellers reaching their destination.

There are three spiritual destinations spoken of in Ephesians 4:13, and each is introduced by the preposition *to* (εἰς = eis). Each of the three is a coordinate clause (clauses of equal rank).

The phrases *unity of the faith* and *knowledge of the Son of God* explain one another. Unity comes forth from a common appreciation of Jesus Christ. Common knowledge is the wellspring of unity.

MATURITY 4:13B

“...to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.”

The term *to a mature man* is the second aspect of the journey. It stands in contrast to *children* in verse 14 where we learn what a mature man is by learning what a mature man is not.

To what does the word *stature* refer? It may refer to one's age as in Matthew 6:27, or it may refer to one's physical height (Luke 19:3), or it may refer to one's spiritual attainment. The *fulness of Christ* means our experience matches our position.

STABILITY 4:14-16

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Negative aspect 4:14 Paul introduces several metaphors to express arrested spiritual development.

- The infant metaphor—The word *children* (νήπιος = nāpios) may mean *an infant* such as a nursing baby (Matthew 21:16). It may also refer to *childish ways* as in I Corinthians 13:11. It is also used figuratively, as here, to indicate a believer who has very little capacity to take in the solid meat of the word of God (Hebrews 5:13). It is also used of the carnal Christian in I Corinthians 3:1. It stands in contrast to the words *mature man* spoken of in verse 13.
- The nautical metaphor—The word *tossed* (κλυδωνίζομαι = kludonizomai) was a term used for a ship tossed out of control by waves. The immature believer is like a cork tossed in a surging sea (James 1:6).
- The vertigo metaphor—*Carried about* (περιφέρω = periphero) is literally *swung around* and was used of spinning tops and of vertigo or dizziness, for such is the effect of false doctrine.
- The gambling metaphor—The word *trickery* (κυβεία = kubeia) means *cheating at dice*. Every false teacher has a different “roll.” Absence of clarity in doctrine is a characteristic of false teachers as is secrecy.
- The psychological metaphor—The word *craftiness* (πανουργία = panourgia) is a compound made up of the word *all* and the word *work* and means *willingness to do anything to achieve an end*.

To sum up: If we neglect the divine order of growth, we will remain infants, remain unstable, and remain victims.

Positive Aspect 4:15-16

- Speaking the truth—Speaking the truth in love does not mean “soft-peddling” of truth. Love is always at home with truth. I Corinthians 13:6 says love *rejoices with the truth*. We often hear someone speak of one who is “all truth and no love” or, on the other hand, “all love and no truth.” Both expressions are contradictory because there is never any tension between love and truth. Truth cheers for love and love cheers for truth. The words *speaking the truth* translate a single participle in Greek and is literally *truthing*. Three elements may be involved here: speaking truth, living truth and holding truth. Any one or all of these could be taken as *truthing*. Concern for truth is the evidence of maturity in the church.
- Growing Up—This verse is full of physiological metaphor. It builds around the system of nerves and muscles that coordinate bodily activity under the direction of the mind. While the Holy Spirit prompts the words of Paul, one wonders if Luke the physician might not have suggested these terms. Each part of the body functions as it should when it is under the control of the head. In absence of this control, one part of the body can bring disastrous results to the whole.

THE DEMEANOR OF THE CHURCH 4:17-6:20

THE CHANGED LIFE 4:17-24

The Old Life Reviewed 4:17-19

Gentile Life Forbidden 4:17a

“This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk ...”

The pronoun *this* that opens the paragraph is singular in number. It serves to give unity to the commands. Not a multitude of commands but one singular expression of the will of God follows, though the parts are many.

The word *therefore* continues the exhortation that was started in verse 1, which commanded a life worthy of one’s calling. The word *affirm* turns the word *say* into a solemn declaration. NIV translates *insist*. Jewish Christians are to abandon the grave clothes of Judaism; Gentile Christians are to abandon their old self-indulgences. This makes each fitting for the body of Christ. The words *together with the Lord* show that these words are not those of Paul alone; they represent the will of God in the fullest sense of the word.

The words *no longer* imply two things. First, if the reader is living as he once did, then this practice should be brought to a halt. Second, if you are not presently living as you once did, never return to that kind of life again. The believer is not to linger over his past life, nor should he ever lapse into his past life. No longer should the lifestyle of the Gentile be the same as the believer.

The word *walk* (περιπατέω = peripateo) is a comprehensive term for one’s conduct and is used six times in Ephesians.

- Our walk comprehends the way we think (Ephesians 4:17-18, 23; 5:15-17).
- Our walk comprehends the way we relate (to others, Ephesians 4:25, 32, 5:21; to the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30).
- Our walk comprehends our set of values to which we submit (Ephesians 4:28, 6:1).

This negative description of Gentile life is now given to us in specific terms. How may we describe Gentile life; what are its elements?

Gentile Life Described 4:17b-19a

IN TERMS OF THEIR MENTAL STATE 4:17B-19A

“...in the futility of their mind,¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;¹⁹ and they, having become callous ...”

The word *futility* (ματαιότης = mataiotas) describes the condition that underlies irresponsible behavior. Synonyms for the word are: powerless, useless, fruitless, worthless. The word denotes waste of mental capacity on worthless objects and is therefore intimately associated with idolatry. See Acts 14:15 where the word is translated *vain things*, meaning idols. The word also refers to occupation with that which leads nowhere—occupation with the material to the exclusion of the spiritual, with the temporal to the exclusion of the eternal. The New English Bible translates it in a colorful manner—“good-for-nothing-notions.” While man’s wisdom always professes greatness, God brands it fruitless.

This attitude is now traced to its source: mental fog resulting in moral corruptness. The problem of man is moral, not mental, for his mental fog is due to his alienation from God. Notice the same sequence of ideas in Romans 1:21ff.

The unbeliever has no purpose to guide (*futility of their mind*); no light to see (*being darkened in their understanding*); and no life to inspire (*excluded from the life of God*).

The word *hardness* (πώρωσι" = porosis) is found three times in the New Testament. First, it is used of the synagogue crowd who preferred the man with the withered hand to suffer longer rather than heal him on the Sabbath day (Mark 3:4-5). Second, in Romans 11:25 it is used of the blindness of Israel’s heart until the full numbers of Gentiles is made up. Third, here in Ephesians 4:18 it refers to insensitivity to spiritual issues.

IN TERMS OF THEIR MORAL CONDUCT 4:19B

“... have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

The word *sensuality* (ἀσέλγεια = aselgeia) is *license* in the sphere of the physical and in the New Testament often refers to sexual misconduct. The word *practice* was often used in Greek of one’s business. Misconduct was not merely a casual matter or “here and there” in nature. It was rather their daily business and was pursued with all the vigor of an enterprising businessman. The word *greediness* (πλεονεξία = pleonexia) literally means *desire for more*. It is used to express the desire to satisfy oneself, regardless of cost or the rights of others. Moral failure is rooted in mental failure. The mind intent on futility and the pursuit of nothing is sure to manifest itself in a life-style of matching emptiness and futility. The mind of the flesh cannot be separated from the morals of the flesh.

The New Life Required 4:20-24

In Terms of Contrast 4:20-21

“But you did not learn Christ in this way,²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus ...”

Verse 20 opens with an emphatic pronoun *you*. The Greek emphatic could be represented in English by underline or boldface type.

Here it marks off Paul's readers as different from those described in verses 17-19.

What is the content of what they have learned? Verses 22-24 will tell us in general terms and verse 25 and following in more specific terms. Verse 24 gives no particulars; it leaves us with a question: What are the products of the new self that we are to put on?

Two major distinctions mark off their past condition from their present condition. First, they now know Christ. The word *Christ* has a definite article with it. They had come to know *the* Christ, the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament scriptures. Second, they now know truth. John Locke said, "There needs no proof for the truth of anything Christ has said but that He has said it." John Milton said, "Truth came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look upon."

It is clear that the readers had not heard Jesus teach in a direct manner. They had, however, heard the teaching of the apostles; and this is sufficient to say they had heard Jesus. Though we possess the teaching of Jesus and that of the inspired apostles in written form, this does not "distance" us from them. To know the word of God is to know Him. Believers should beware of the implication that knowing the Lord and knowing His word are essentially different. One could well ask, "If I set aside all that I have learned of Jesus from the scriptures, what is left?" To fail to know the Jesus of the scriptures is to know only the Jesus of our imagination.

In Terms of Duty 4:22-24

"...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

There are three infinitives telling us the action we are to take. First, we are to *lay aside* the old self, an aorist tense emphasizing definite and decisive action. Second, we are to *put on* the new self, another aorist infinitive pointing to definite and decisive action. Third, we are to *be renewed*, a present tense infinitive emphasizing repetitive and ongoing action.

What is meant by the *old self* and the *new self*? Two things may be said of the new self. First, it is not merely a refurbished old self. Second, the new self is not the Holy Spirit. Perhaps a chart will help us see the difference between the Holy Spirit and the new self.

The New Man

Created at salvation
(Eph. 4:24, Col 3:10)
Is patterned after God
Capable of growth and
defeat

The Holy Spirit

Received at salvation
(Gal 3:2)
Is God
Is unchanging and
undefeatable.

THE COMMANDED LIFE 4:25-5:14

Our Relationship to Truth 4:25

“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

The Command

The following commands give specific details explaining what it means to put off the old man and put on the new. *Laying aside* in verse 25 is the same Greek word as *lay aside* in verse 22. What does it mean to lay aside the *old self*? Verse 25 begins to answer this question in a concrete, practical manner.

A literal translation of the Greek makes it clear that verses 24 and 25 are closely linked. Verse 24 spoke of *the truth*, and verse 25 speaks of *the lie* (*falsehood*). The word *therefore* also ties the two verses together. The chief characteristic of the new man is affinity for truth. God is a God of truth whereas Satan is *the father of lies* (John 8:44).

The word *falsehood* is literally *the lie*. The presence of the definite article shows Paul is not referring to lying in the abstract sense but in the specific sense. It therefore refers to falsehood in any and every form it takes. With the future coming of the man of sin, we are told the entire world will go for falsehood. In II Thessalonians 2:11 the words *what is false* are literally *the lie*. Believers of our day should be aware that the absence of absolute moral values in our society has reduced terms such as *the lie* to a euphemistic “misspoken truth,” but the word of God teaches a lie is a lie is a lie.

The Quote

Paul reinforces his command to speak the truth by reference to Zechariah 8:16. The Old Testament context of this verse is the return of the exiles who are being instructed how they may be the objects of God’s blessing, not God’s wrath.

The Support

The Old Testament quotation is now supported by New Testament truth—the oneness of believers in the body of Christ. This oneness is stated briefly in Romans 12:5 and more extensively developed in I Corinthians 12:12-27. To the unbeliever, lying may be an offense against civilized society; but to the believer, lying is a sin against the body of Christ. Lying is despicable in all forms, but there is something especially inappropriate when a lie is perpetrated among those with whom we have intimate relationship and association. How ludicrous it would be for the arm to lie to the leg or the brain to the hand. Indeed the body would be reduced to a non-functioning spastic.

Our Relationship to Anger 4:26

“Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...”

The Command

The anger spoken of here is the reaction of purity to corruption. The command assumes a just occasion for anger. It is a response that is natural and normal to righteousness. Holiness is outraged by unholiness. A peacemaker is also a peacebreaker when sin is encountered. Only a deluded person extends an olive branch to evil. It is godlike to hate that which is ungodlike, and genuine love can frown as well as smile. The present tense of the imperative verb shows this is to be an ongoing attitude. Anger toward evil is part of the believer's daily existence.

The Qualification

IT SHOULD BE FREE FROM SIN What is anger? In verse 26 anger is a quality required of us; in verse 31 it is a quality that is forbidden us. The emotion in itself may be worthy of commendation or condemnation. The expression *and yet do not sin* helps us distinguish the two types of anger. Paul does not say "be angry, *but* do not sin," as though there were an antithesis. He does say "be angry, *and* do not sin." That is, anger should not be mixed with sin. Anger, unmixed with sin, is a characteristic of God Himself (Romans 1:18, 12:19) and was displayed in Jesus (Mark 3:5).

IT SHOULD BE FREE FROM DOMINATION The anger commanded is not "mindless rage." Anger, as with all emotion, must exist under the control of the believer's volition. Anger should not be allowed to simmer overnight. It is but a short step from righteous indignation to self-righteous indignation. Hatred of sin can easily become pride of righteousness. Anger that simmers all night often becomes irrational opinion the next day.

Our Relationship to Satan 4:27

"... and do not give the devil an opportunity."

The normal word for *and* (καί = kai) is a connective that ties two ideas together. This is not the word used to introduce verse 27. The word that begins verse 27 is *and* (μηδέ = made), a negative disjunctive particle. This is a word that continues a preceding negation. This means there is a direct link between unchecked anger and a door of opportunity for Satan. The truth is indeed striking—those who nourish anger overnight, nourish a child of the devil!

The verb *do not give* is a present imperative in a construction that commands an ongoing practice to cease. The word *opportunity* (τόπος = topos) means *place, territory, or space*. Believers often speak of a place of evil activity as "Satan's territory." This command should bring us face to face with a startling reality—the believer's own life can have areas that may be designated "Satan's territory"! The same word is used in Romans 12:19 where we are told not to take our own revenge but rather *leave room* (τόπος = topos) for the *wrath of God*. This is why we should never nurse anger. We should leave it to God to handle.

Satan is never satisfied with *a place*; it is his nature to desire to occupy *every place*. According to Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, he was created as God's anointed cherub. He was not satisfied to be a servant in subordination to God; he desired to replace God Himself on the throne of the universe. No less is his desire in the life of the believer.

Our Relationship to Property 4:28

"Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need."

The Command

The command assumes the right to private property. Stealing involves every kind of misappropriation of property. The command also forbids an action in progress. Paul is not being theoretical—the sin existed in the Ephesian church in reality, not as a possible sin. In the times of Paul, stealing was not considered much of a vice. The issue was not "don't steal," the issue was "don't get caught." Slaves regarded pilfering as a way of life; everyone did it. Our day differs little if at all from Paul's day. Living as these verses command becomes increasingly difficult when society drifts from moral absolutes.

Prohibition of stealing was part of the national constitution given to Israel by God (Exodus 20:15). The Hebrew verb *steal* means *to steal for any reason*. It included failure to protect another's property from theft (Exodus 22:10-12). It even incorporated stealing for a good reason (II Kings 11:1-3). Respect for personal and public property is one of the marks of a civilized society. Slaves justified their pilfering by saying it was mere compensation for their servile state. The Christian must reject such false reasoning. Abuse is no excuse for abuse in return. A believer is never justified in returning evil for evil or insult for insult (I Peter 3:9).

The Correction

The word *rather* introduces the solution to the gain of goods by forbidden means. The imperative verb *labor* (κοπιᾶω = kopiao) means *labor to the point of exhaustion*. If the thief is to be one no longer, he must employ himself. We live in a society that enshrines leisure. "TGIF" (thank God its Friday) means the work week is over, its time to play. It is not a frivolous question to ask, "Did Paul ever have any leisure time?" Perhaps Acts 20:34-35 answers the question. "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

The word *good* has a definite article with it—the *good*. The word refers to that which is useful and morally worthwhile. The occupation must have honorable ends.

The Compensation

The connective word *in order that* (ἵνα = hina) introduces the purpose of the command to work. The word *to share* (μεταδίδωμι = metadidomi) means *to distribute personally rather than through some other agent or official*. What a contrast to the welfare state!

Stealing is the use of another's labor to supply our own wishes. In contrast, Scripture teaches us it is our duty to make our own labor the means of supplying, not only our personal needs, but those of others. The believer not only works to gain, he works to give. The object of work is to earn more than one needs so there will be a supply from which to give to others. Nothing facilitates this more than the free enterprise system in which we live in America. It is criticized only by those who espouse the ignorance of liberalism.

The inspiration for labor is not personal gain but lavish generosity. We labor, not to gain, but to give. It is to this high level of motivation that God's grace elevates the believer who was once a thief. And what but divine grace could lift a pilferer to such heights?

Our Relationship to the Tongue 4:29

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Notice the link of the word *good* in verse 28 to the word *good* in verse 29. In the former we are to *do* good; now we are taught to *speak* good. We are to be good in works and words.

The word *unwholesome* (σαπρός = sapos) means *rotten*. It may refer to that which is innately rotten or that which communicates rottenness. The metaphor covers all speech sins such as gossip, slander, defamation, etc. It is used in the New Testament to express the thought “good-for-nothing.” The standards by which wholesome speech is judged are three.

- Good speech has good purpose.

The word *edification* means *to build up* in contrast to destroying or tearing down. Rotten speech is not merely bad language but includes gossip and slander. Anything that creates dissension or that injures others is involved. Both personal edification and edification of the whole body is in view (Ephesians 2:22-23, 4:12, 16).

- Good speech is timely.

Need for edification rises at different moments and in different ways. Wholesome speech is always at hand to aid.

- Good speech is helpful.

The benefit involved should take in both material and spiritual blessing. While God Himself is the source of all blessing, man may be the channel through which the blessing is communicated. Proper and edifying speech is one of those potential channels of blessing.

Our Relationship to the Holy Spirit 4:30

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

The connecting word *and* links the grieving of the Holy Spirit to speech. Though any sin grieves the Holy Spirit, it is unwholesome speech that is specifically in view here.

Three assumptions are made by the words of verse 30. The Holy Spirit indwells them; the Holy Spirit is personal; and the Holy Spirit has sealed them.

The words *the Holy Spirit of God* are set forth in a unique manner in the Greek New Testament. The definite article is repeated as follows: “the Holy, the Spirit, of the God.” Each article is a call to pause and think of whom we speak. In so doing, we should be reminded of the one whom we may grieve. While the Holy Spirit is awesome and dignified in His person, the word *grieve* shows that He is personal. He responds to the words, attitudes, and actions of believers.

The seal conveys three ideas. It points to a finished transaction, to ownership, and to security.

What is the day of redemption? It is the future day when everything accomplished by the death of Christ will be fully realized in us. It is often called our *hope*.

Our Relationship to One Another 4:31-5:2

Eliminating Sin 4:31

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”

Paul passes from sins of speech to sins of attitude. The connection is logical: Sinful attitudes lie at the root of sinful words. There are six items that we are to put away.

- *Bitterness* (πικρία = pikria) refers to harshness, resentment, and animosity. It is a spite that keeps records of wrongs and therefore develops a general attitude of resentment.
- *Wrath* (θυμός = thumos) means *rage that is poured out as a result of the aforementioned bitterness*.
- *Anger* (ὀργή = orga) refers to that which swells resulting in an outburst.
- *Clamor* (κραυγή = krauga) is used of people shouting back and forth in a quarrel.
- *Slander* (βλασφημία = blasphamia) refers to anything that hurts the reputation of others.
- *Malice* (κακία = kakia) refers to bad feeling of any sort. It should be noted that malice is attached to the rest of the sins in a special way by the preposition *with*. This indicates that malice is the source from which the others flow.

Stimulating Right 4:32

“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

The imperative verb *be* (γίνομαι = ginomai) means *become* in the sense of leaving one condition for another. Kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness are not native to the nature of man. Each must be developed in one’s life under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Kindness was a characteristic of Jesus (Matthew 11:29) and of the Lord (probably the Father, I Peter 2:3). The word *tender-hearted* is a compound of the word *good* plus the word *intestines*. The Greeks located the emotions in the larger viscera. Our matching idiom is *heart*.

The words *just as* set forth the motive for forgiveness. Our forgiveness of others is to be like God’s forgiveness of us. Christians are to forgive one another because we have all been forgiven by God. The word translated *forgiving* (χαρίζομαι = charizomai) is not the normal word for forgiveness. It means *to deal graciously with someone, to grant as a free gift*. It is the same root as found in the word *grace*. God forgave each of us on a grace basis, that is, apart from our personal merit. Christian forgiveness is to be extended on exactly the same basis. Luke 7:41-42 gives a good example. Forgiveness was granted without regard to personal merit or demerit. The deeper the appreciation of grace received, the greater capacity we have to treat others in like manner. We could translate as follows: *Grace each other, just as God in Christ has graced you. Pardoned sinners who refuse to pardon others are a scandal to the God of grace and defame the prince of peace.*

All pardon is cross-based, for it is not sufficient example to forgive as God does, but rather to forgive as “God in Christ” forgave. Forgiveness must pass through the Savior’s hands. Simply put, the richness of God’s grace is to conquer our petty sensitivities on every front.

Emulating God 5:1-2

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

This verse and the last of chapter 4 are intimately related. This is indicated by the common verb *be* found in each verse and shown by the word *therefore* that connects them. God’s gracious forgiveness is set before us in 4:32, and now we are exhorted to imitate it in practice in 5:1. Christ’s example has an authoritative power to it—it carries its own imperative. To imitate God is no unnatural act for we are to do so *as beloved children*. Is it not normal for children to imitate parents? If so among the children of men, much more so among the children of God. To retaliate against those who wrong us is natural; to withhold revenge is human good; but to compen-

sate those who wrong us with good requires nothing less than divine enablement. It is not enough to desire such virtue. Paul teaches we are required to exhibit such virtue—the verb *be* is imperative mood.

The *walk in love* to which we are enjoined is such a love as Christ displayed in dying for us. Since His sacrifice was acceptable to God, we who are united together *in Christ* may also conduct ourselves in such a way that He is pleased with us. The material gift of the Philippian church, for example, was *a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God* (Philippians 4:18).

Our Relationship to Morality 5:3-5

The Command 5:3-4

“But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

The first and emphatic word of this verse is *immorality* (πορνεία = porneia), which refers to sexual conduct. It assumes that moral absolutes exist. Immorality assumes morality, right assumes wrong. It assumes that God has the right to dictate to man what his sexual conduct should be. What Christianity considered immorality was acceptable in the culture in which Paul lived. Sexual immorality was associated with all the Greek-Roman seasons and festivals.

Why do we find *greed* associated with sexual immorality? It is common for the New Testament to move from outer manifestations of sin to the inner cravings of the heart. Jesus traced murder back to the angry thought and adultery back to the lustful glance. The word means *desire for more*.

What does Paul mean when he says these things are not to be *named among you*? The verb *named* (ὀνομάζω = onomazo) may mean several things. First, it may mean *to be known* (Romans 15:20). This meaning would teach these pagan vices should not exist among Christians. Second, the word may mean *to be professed* as II Timothy 2:19. Third, Luke 6:13 uses it to mean *designated*. Finally, it may mean *to be mentioned* in the sense of using a word or phrase. This meaning is eliminated by Paul’s “vice lists” in which these things are all named (Romans 1:29-32, I Corinthians 5:11, 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21, and Colossians 3:5). Paul certainly would not name what he says should not be named. It seems the first meaning is the most satisfactory. Immorality is not to be part of Christian conduct or conversation.

With verse 4, Paul begins to develop a list of unacceptable speech patterns. First, there is to be no *filthiness* (αἰσχροτή = ais-chrotas), which refers to both word and action. Its closest synonym is found in Colossians 3:8 where it is translated *abusive speech*. Second, *silly talk* is literally *fool talk*. New English Bible renders it

flippant talk. Third, coarse jesting (εὐτραπελία = eutrapelia) is literally a witty or clever turn of speech. Aristotle defined it as cultured insolence.

There are two major defects of this unacceptable speech. First, it fails to meet appropriate standards. Second, it replaces what is expected. It usurps the place of praise.

The Rationale 5:5

“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

This verse is descriptive, not prohibitive. Most of the members of the New Testament church came from the ranks who once practiced pagan immorality. In I Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul speaks of *fornicators, idolaters, adulterers*, etc. and reminds the Corinthians that “such were some of you.” He then says, “...you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”

There is a level of conduct that reveals an unsaved condition, and verse 5 describes that condition. The noun forms that Paul uses indicate that these immoral activities are the continual practice of those who are guilty.

Our Relationship to Mockers 5:6-14

A Command about Deception 5:6

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

Sexual immorality and the wrath of God are inseparably linked. God is saying, “I am not passive to the morals of the Roman Empire in which you live.” In the second century, a gnostic philosophy had developed that said practices such as Paul here condemns were irrelevant to spiritual life because they had to do with the body, whereas the spiritual life was concerned only with the soul. Some others, however, perpetrated a false doctrine concerning the believer’s relationship to the law. They argued that freedom from the law meant freedom to sin. Romans 6:17-18 corrects such error.

Teaching that allows permissiveness is deception, and deception is that which gives a false appearance to things—here sexual sin. The pronoun *you* is emphatic. “You, of all people, should not allow yourselves to become the victims of deceit.” The verb *comes* is present tense, showing that God’s wrath on these things is already on the way and will continue until the offenders have been dealt with.

A Conclusion 5:7

“Therefore do not be partakers with them...”

The verb *be* means *become*. Paul is warning about allowing oneself to be convinced by empty words that separate God's wrath and sexual immorality. There is to be no fellowship of iniquity. The word *partakers* (συμμέτοχος = summetochos) is the same word used in Ephesians 3:6 to describe the position now occupied by Gentiles with reference to the Messianic promise. The word denotes *casting one's lot with someone*. To fellowship with them is to participate in their sins and the punishment connected with it.

An Explanation 5:8-10

"... for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

With verse 8 Paul introduces a new metaphor: darkness and light. This figure is used in the New Testament to emphasize the contrast between God's truth and all that opposes it. Paul does not say they *lived* in darkness; he says they *were* darkness. Conversely, he does not say they now *live* in light, but they *are* light.

Here is the contrast of religion and Christianity. Religion says, "Do in order to become"; Christianity says, "Do because you are." Walk in light because you are light; let your position be your practice. But what does it mean to walk in the light? Verses 9 and 10 explain.

Light is known by its effects. Here we find four of them. First, light is expressed in *goodness* (ἀγαθωσύνη = agathosuna), which incorporates the idea of benevolent generosity. Second, it is found in *righteousness* (δικαιοσύνη = dikaiosuna), which includes giving everyone their rightful due. Third, *truth* (ἀλήθεια = alatheia) includes honesty and genuineness. The words *in all* mean these virtues appear in all forms and could be translated "in every form of goodness, etc..." Finally, light is revealed in desire to learn what pleases God. The participle *learning* (δοκιμάζω = dokimazo) means *to put to the test for the purpose of approval*. It refers to the process of analyzing things with reference to embracing that which is known to please God.

A Command about Participation 5:11-14

"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹²for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹³For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"

The separation required by these verses is from "deeds," not doers. Paul is not speaking of pharisaical separation and isolation. Galatians and Ephesians serve to interpret one another. Ephesians speaks of the *fruit of the light* and Galatians of the *fruit of the Spirit*.

Ephesians views the *works of darkness* and Galatians the *works of the flesh*.

The word *expose* (ἐλέγχω = elegcho) means *to bring to light, to point out, to convince someone of something*. The word is used in three contexts in the New Testament.

- The source of conviction is the Holy Spirit (John 16:8 *convict*)
- The means of conviction is the word of God (II Timothy 3:16 *reproof*)
- The agent of conviction is man (II Timothy 4:2 *reprove*)

How can we expose that of which we cannot speak? Is it not possible that certain practices done in secret are best exposed by silence? Sometimes sin is publicized by our reaction to it. Verse 12 says what is done in the dark is best kept in the dark. We often say problems are best solved by “getting everything out in the open.” This is certainly not what Ephesians 5:12 is saying. Vices can rub off on us if we continually talk about them—even if that talk comes in the form of condemnation. It is the function of light to make visible. Purity exposes pornography; purity, however, is not learned by examining pornography.

To what is Paul referring when he says, “For this reason it (He) says...”? There is no direct quotation from the Old Testament to which it can be tied nor is there any apocryphal reference. It is probably best to tie it to Isaiah 60:1, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” The exhortation could be directed to the lethargic believer. The word *dead* would indicate a carnal condition in which one lacks fellowship with the Lord. This fits the tone of the words Paul has been speaking—wake up, don’t drift into the thinking of the world.

As Paul now moves into the personal and home life of the believer, we should remind ourselves that we live in an environment of great hostility to Christian truth, morality, and conduct. Need we explain that the words “sexual preference” are merely a cover-up for man’s rejection of God’s standards, and to espouse and teach the moral absolutes of the Pauline epistles is “bigotry,” and “lack of sensitivity.” Then so be it!

THE FAMILY LIFE 5:15-6:9

General Duties of Personal Conduct 5:15-21

Care with Regard to One’s Walk 5:15-16

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

Paul often starts a thought, then digresses, then returns to his original thought. The *therefore* of verse 15 is resumptive; it returns to the thought of a worthy walk emphasized in verse 8. This is the seventh time that Paul has referred to the walk of the Ephesian believers. Ephesians 2:2 speaks of their pre-salvation walk and 2:10, 17; 5:2, 8, 15 speaks of their post-salvation walk.

The verb *be* is literally *see to it*. This implies they may have become forgetful of the imperative of Christian conduct. The adverb *careful* (ἀκριβῶς = akribos) means *to pay close attention to detail*. *How* is a word that requires careful choice. We should be alert, precise, and discriminatory in the way we walk.

Who is the wise man and who is the unwise man? Verse 17 provides the answer—the wise man knows the will of God; the unwise man does not. The wise man is truth oriented; the unwise man is ignorance oriented.

Verse 16 points to a specific area of walking wisely—the judicious use of one's time. The word *time* (καιρός = kairos) refers to an epoch, or critical moment, and thus *opportunity*. *Making the most* is literally *buying up*. We are to make the most of every opportunity like a good merchant or businessman does. We must remember that time is a daily treasure that attracts many robbers.

The words *the days are evil* tell why careful attention to one's walk is so important. One watches each step very carefully when walking a path covered with ice, whereas a straight and level path would not require such care. In days when the path we must walk is full of the debris of sin, we must tread with care and diligence.

Persistence With Regard to God's Will 5:17

“So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

The word *foolish* (ἄφρων = aphron) is stronger than *unwise* in verse 15. It refers to stupid and totally senseless action. The word *understand* (συνίημι = suniami) means *to give the mind to something with a view to getting hold of it*. Our idiom “get it together” expresses the meaning of the verb quite well.

Control With Regard to God's Spirit 5:18-20

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

DISSIPATION FORBIDDEN 5:18A The grammatical structure of these five verses is very important. They open with two contrasting commands, the second of which (be filled) is explained by five participles.

The opening command is a quotation of the Septuagint translation of Proverbs 23:31. The climate of Greece caused the ground to produce the fruit of the vine prolifically. Drinking of wine was not only a social custom but was closely linked to the heathen festivals. If historical accounts are accurate, Alexander the Great hastened his death by the use of alcohol.

The danger of drunkenness lies not so much in drinking itself, but in what it produces. Paul calls it *dissipation* (ἄσωτία = asotia),

used in classical Greek for the squandering of both money and physical appetites. The adverbial form is found in Luke 15:13 and describes the activity of the prodigal son as *loose living*.

FILLING COMMANDED 5:18B One might expect that Paul's prohibition of drunkenness would be followed by an exhortation to abstinence. But this is not the case; the exhortation is instead to be filled with the Spirit. Christians are to know a "Christian drunkenness," that is, the filling of the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit provides a genuine exhilaration that others seek from alcohol.

While the prohibition concerning drunkenness stands by itself, it also clarifies what is meant by being filled with the Holy Spirit. One who is drunk is controlled by something other than himself—namely, alcohol. The same idea is involved in filling: One is controlled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Filling is not a matter of quantity but of control, a concept that can be established by noting its uses in the book of Acts. The contrast between the two commands is between wrong animation and right animation. The words *with wine* stand in contrast to *with the Spirit*. Both verbs are present tense, indicating habitual action. Paul is not speaking of a charismatic experience; he is commanding an ongoing condition.

The Greek text does not tell us whether Paul is referring to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit. It is not unusual for Paul to speak of the human spirit as the instrument of the Holy Spirit. The same ambiguity is found in Ephesians 2:22, 3:5, and 6:18. Is Paul telling us where to be filled or with whom to be filled? When one considers the numerous references to the filling of the Spirit, it seems best to capitalize the noun Spirit making it a reference to the person of the Holy Spirit.

The significance of the verb *be filled* (πληρώω = plaroo) is critical for a sound doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The imperative mood makes it clear that filling is expected of all believers, and the present tense forbids a once-for-all experience, specifying instead a continuous replenishment—"keep on being filled." The passive voice means this is not a manufactured experience but a gracious gift of God available to all.

RESULTS ASSURED 5:19-21

The Control of the Holy Spirit is Manifested by Speaking—Five participles follow with each describing the results of the filling of the Holy Spirit. In each of the expressions, the control of the Holy Spirit is manifested in some type of praise.

It is interesting that both here and on the day of Pentecost the thing affected by the Holy Spirit was the tongue. This is not to imply that the speaking referred to here has anything to do with tongues, but it was the organ of speech that was touched in each context. This harmonizes nicely with James words, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well." The word *speaking* (λαλέω = laleo) is not confined to words spoken in normal conversation but incorporates all

kinds of utterances, such as those that are lyrics of a song. Its general meaning is *using the voice*, in whatever manner. Under the relaxing influence of wine, the tongue is loosened; likewise, under the control of the Holy Spirit the tongue is loosened to offer praise to Him to Whom it is due. The speech is the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of the vine.

The words *speaking to one another* probably correspond with the words of Colossians 3:16, *teaching and admonishing one another*. *Psalms* suggests the Davidic psalter; *hymns* center on praise and worship, whereas *spiritual songs* refer to meaningful lyrics in a broader sense. A hymn is distinguished from a song in that hymns focus on the character or work of God. Hymns are not the expression of how we feel about God; they are statements recognizing and exalting His person. A song may speak of how we love Him; a hymn speaks of how He loves us. The participle *making melody* ($\psi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega$ = psallo) originally referred to plucking the strings of a lyre. In our usage it means to sing to the accompaniment of a harp or similar instrument. It is the word from which *psalm* is developed.

The words *to the Lord* show that these songs of praise do not need to be heard by men. They may thus be private and personal or public and corporate. The issue is *to whom*, not *before whom*. Jerome makes an interesting comment on this verse. He says, "Let young men hear this: let those hear it who have the office of singing in the church, that they sing not with their voice, but with their heart, to the Lord; not like tragedians physically preparing their throat and mouth, that they may sing after the fashion of the theatre in the church. He that has but an ill voice, if he has good works, is a sweet singer before God."

The Control of the Spirit is Manifested by Giving Thanks 5:20—How can one give thanks for all things when all things include unpleasant things? It is easy to thank God for the pleasant things of life, but it is another matter to thank Him in the midst of suffering. And yet, when men are controlled by the Spirit, this is not only possible but normal. The Spirit controlled believer knows "Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face." So many are His blessings brought by adversity that the Spirit controlled believer is not prone to hang his harp on the willows but rather strikes up a concert of praise. Remember those Spirit motivated apostles who, while in prison with their feet in stocks, were heard at midnight *praying and singing hymns of praise to God*? This counsel to give thanks in all things could well be understood to be the advice of those who expect perfection if we did not have the living example of Paul who practiced it himself.

The Control of the Spirit is Manifested by Being Subject 5:21—Paul now introduces a concept that permeates the entire household of husband and wife, parents and children, slaves and masters—mutual deference, dependence, and service—in short, *submission*. Success in the home comes only when our own insistence on per-

sonal rights is surrendered for those of others. Submission to one another is placed on the highest footing: mutual submission of all to the headship of Christ.

The word *submit* (ὑποτάσσω = hupotasso) is found about twenty-three times in Paul's writings. In each case it denotes subordination to those who are worthy of respect because of personal virtue or position held. Without submission, anarchy prevails, whether in the family, the church, or the state. And why does the Christian render such submission? The answer is easy: out of respect (*fear*) of Christ.

Specific Duties of Personal Conduct 5:22-6:9

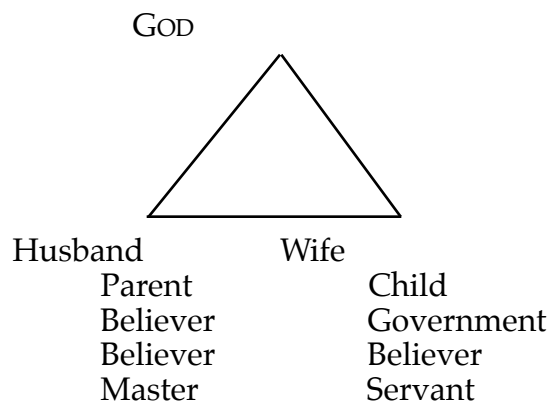
The Duties of Husband and Wife 5:22-33

AS PERTAINS TO THE WIFE 5:22-24

“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”

The Responsibility of Submission 5:22—These words about the submission of the wife to her husband must be viewed from the correct perspective. Christianity elevated the wife; it did not relegate her to a place of subservience. When a woman became a believer, her status was raised from the comparative servitude she once knew as a citizen of the Greek-Roman world to the new freedom of Christianity. Pagan civilization put women behind the plow—Christianity has always freed women.

The relationship of the Christian husband and wife, children and the parents, the slave and the master, Christian and government, and Christian to Christian is always triangular. The triangle involves the two human entities and God. Motivation and direction always come from God. It is the inclusion of God that makes Christianity unique and distinguishes it from the moral standards of the gentile world. Codes of domestic behavior are found in Colossians 3:18-4:1, I Timothy 3:4, 12, 5:14, 6:1-2, Titus 2:1-10, I Peter 2:13-3:7. We could represent this graphically as follows.



The words *be subject* are in italics, meaning there is no counterpart to them in the Greek text. Literally, we have “Wives, to your husbands...” It is correct to insert the words *be subject* because of their appearance in verse 21. Verse 21 spoke of the subjection to be found among all Christians, and now Paul focuses on a particular aspect of that submission to be found in marriage.

The words *to your own husbands* show that Paul is emphasizing to whom submission should be given. The verse is speaking of a woman’s responsibility to her husband. Paul is not implying that women are inferior to men nor that all women should be subject to all men.

What do the words *as to the Lord* mean? They do not mean that a woman should give her husband the same deference she gives to the Lord. They do mean submission to one’s husband is the duty owed to the Lord.

owed to GOD
 WIFE: Submission is
 given to HUSBAND

The Basis of Submission 5:23-24—The word *as* shows the husband-wife relationship is based on an analogy. Christ is to the church what the husband is to the wife. I Corinthians 11:3 reveals God’s hierarchy. God is over Christ and Christ is over man and man is over woman. It is important to remember that hierarchy does not mean superiority of nature or character. The point is this: God has order in everything He does. Believers should have the highest view of marriage. It is the earthly illustration of the relationship that exists between Christ and His church. Marriage is defined in the most sublime terms. It is compared to the marriage of the Lamb to His bride!

The word *subject* (ὑποτάσσω = hupotasso) was a military term meaning *to line up in order*. The issue is orderliness, not superiority.

Two ideas are stressed in the analogy. Christ is head and savior of the church (direction and deliverance); so the husband is head and savior of the woman (direction and deliverance). The word savior is never used in the New Testament of any other than Christ or God. The responsibility of the husband, however, is analogous to that of Deity, though certainly to a much lesser degree.

AS PERTAINS TO THE HUSBAND 5:25-31

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; ²⁶that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, ³⁰because we are members of His body. ³¹For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.”

As the duty of the wife is submission, so the duty of the husband is love that answers to the love of Christ exhibited in the giving of Himself for us. If Paul places the duty of the wife on such a high level, the obligations of the husband are no lower. There are five major aspects of this love.

His Love is to be Realistic 5:25a—Verse 25 leads us into the concept of reciprocal relationship; each owes something to the other. In the Greek-Roman society it was recognized that wives had duties to their husbands, but it was not recognized that husbands had duties to their wives. In assigning responsibility to the husband, Christianity was introducing a revolutionary approach to marriage. The single word *submit* summarized the duty of the wife; one single word summarizes the duty of the husband, *love*.

The husband’s love is rooted in his response to the love of Christ for us. No husband who is a stranger to the cross of Christ can truly love his wife. He has no motivation higher than her own merits, and the union of the two is only mundane; it is devoid of the highest divine blessing.

Christ reminded the disciples of His love repeatedly as seen in John 13:34, 15:9, 12. Christ loved the church, not because it was lovable, but in order to make it such. So the husband is to love his wife with the same noble purpose.

His Love is to be Sacrificial 5:25b—It is extremely important to understand that the primary thrust of this passage pertains to Christ and His church. Understanding of the husband-wife relationship is born of a knowledge of Christ and the church. The doctrine of the church is the foundation upon which the Christian view of marriage is based. The primary reference of the pronoun *her* is the church; the secondary reference of *her* is to the Christian wife.

The analogy of the husband’s love for the wife is strengthened in that the word *church* is feminine gender. These words of Paul show us that Christian doctrine is the foundation of Christian conduct. Were it not for the church, the wife would have no pattern to follow in obeying the command to submit in verse 22. In a day so oriented to Christian counseling and psychology, one should bear in mind an important fact: Biblical teaching concerning marriage is

not psychologically based; it is doctrinally based! It is a sad commentary that a believer with a marriage problem will often consult a psychologist before a Bible teacher. Psychology, even Christian, can assault the sufficiency of the word of God.

His Love is to be Purposeful 5:26-27—In these two verses Paul digresses from the subject of marriage in order to dwell on the purpose of Christ for the church. This is doubtless triggered by the word *church* in verse 25. Christ's purpose for the church is stated three times in these verses (see the word *that* in English or the Greek ἵνα clause.)

- He intends to sanctify her, 5:26.

The word *sanctify* (ἀγιάζω = hagiazo) means *to set aside*, usually, for a particular purpose. The words *having cleansed* tell us how Christ sanctifies the church. It is through the word of God that she is cleansed. The word cleanses us as our old way of thinking is replaced by divine viewpoint on life. The word *washing* (λουτρόν = loutron) means *a bathing* (the action, not the bath itself) and is probably equivalent to the words of Titus 3:5 that speak of the *washing of regeneration*. This washing is accompanied *with the word*. The word of God has regenerative, life-giving power so that we may say with James, "He brought us forth by the word of truth"

- He intends to glorify her, 5:27.

The general expression for the final end of the church is "in all her glory." This glory is described by the words "having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Revelation 21:2 describes the new Jerusalem, "coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." This is the imagery of verse 27. The verb *present* (παρίστημι = paristami) was used of Jesus' presentation in the temple (Luke 2:22) and of the church to Christ (II Corinthians 11:2). The absence of the best man is worth noting. The groom presents the bride to Himself without any other intermediary. Should we say Christ is His own match-maker?

The glorified church will have no *spots* (of ugliness) or *wrinkles* (of age or disease). The love that moved Christ to die for us is not satisfied until we stand before Him in unsullied purity.

His Love is to be Unreserved 5:28-30—The word *so* signals Paul's return to his analogy between Christ and the church and the husband and the wife. Christ does not love the church as though it were His body; He loves the church because it is His body. The husband's love is derived from the oneness of marriage. The oneness is so strong that to love her is to love himself. This stands in strong contrast to the way a wife was treated in a pagan society wherein she was regarded as a piece of property only.

The words *no one ever hated his own flesh* mean it is as unnatural not to love one's own wife as it is to hate oneself. The word *nourishes* means *to supply nutriment* (food), and *cherishes* means *to supply warmth*. When Paul speaks of husbands loving their wives *as their*

own bodies, does he mean *as they love their own bodies* or does he mean *as being their own bodies*? The latter seems better because the church is truly the body of Christ.

To speak of a man loving his wife as his own body is a significant concept. Altruism is the unselfish concern for others and is the opposite of egoism. From a biblical standpoint, however, a husband's love for his wife is not altruism for she is to be regarded as an extension of himself. Since this is the case, a man who does not love his wife does as much damage to himself as he does to her.

The statement *no one ever hated his own flesh* is the death knell of ascetic practice. Severe treatment of the body is condemned by the New Testament as unnatural and has no place in Christianity (Colossians 2:23). Christians are never called upon to walk upon a bed of nails as a means of gaining control of one's life. Paul's self-discipline of I Corinthians 9:27 falls into an entirely different category.

Paul bases his appeal to the husband on the same principle as his appeal to the wife. Wives are to obey their husbands as the church obeys Christ. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. In each case, a relationship to the Lord is assumed. Without this, the exhortations are without meaning.

His Love is to be Exclusive 5:31—This is the most foundational statement found anywhere in Scripture concerning God's plan for marriage. Adam regarded Eve as "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." The marriage tie takes precedence over every other relationship and for this reason is to be regarded as inviolable. The verb *shall cleave* (προσκολλάω = proskollao) literally means *to be glued to* but is used figuratively in the New Testament to mean *to be faithfully devoted to*. Polygamy, divorce, and adultery have no place in New Testament Christianity. Marriage is not the extension of an old home but the establishment of a new one with its own separate and independent existence.

Jesus quotes this verse from Genesis 2:24 in Mark 10:7-9. He uses it to teach that marriage is a lifelong union. He does so by adding to the words from Genesis His own interpretation of its meaning saying, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." The permanency of marriage parallels the permanency of the believer's relationship to Christ. Lifelong marriage teaches the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. Need we argue that there is no divorce of the believer from the body of Christ?

AS PERTAINS TO THE MYSTERY 5:32-33

"This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³²Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband."

The word *great* does not point to intensity but to magnitude. It has been paraphrased "it is of far-reaching importance" and "has many

implications.” It is a mystery in the sense of being wonderful truth hidden in Christ and not revealed until Christ came to die for, sanctify, and glorify His bride, the church.

Verse 33 summarizes the whole matter. Paul’s readers may not understand all that is involved in the mystery, but the essential truth Paul is trying to convey is found in this verse.

The Duties of Children and Parents 6:1-4

THE CHILDREN 6:1-3

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise). ³that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.”

Commanded 6:1-2—First, the children are addressed directly. These words are not a message to be delivered by parents to the children; the noun *children* assumes they were present and listening when this letter was read. Paul does not speak *about* the children but *to* the children. This assumes the children were interested in hearing what Paul was saying. Paul offered the children the same thing, in the same form, that he offered their parents—the word of God. Nehemiah 8:1-3 makes the criteria for listening to God’s word ability to understand, not age. It is important to note that Paul lifts the common relationships in life to celestial heights. Christ and the church is the heavenly relationship that becomes the pattern for the husband-wife relationship, and now it becomes the pattern for the child-parent relationship.

Second, the children are addressed doctrinally. The words *this is right* assume the children have been taught moral absolutes. They were aware their conduct could please or displease God (Colossians 3:20). It is important to remember in our day that our children will not learn moral absolutes from school, television, or any other part of their environment except home.

Third, the children are addressed scripturally. The words are taken from Exodus 20:12. The word *honor* covers more than obedience; it refers to the respect given to those who are placed over us by God.

The word *obey* (ὑπακούω = hupakouo) is literally *to listen from under*. It incorporates obedience and more—taking advice. Isaac’s willingness to be sacrificed is a model for this kind of submission (Genesis 22). *Parents* includes both husband and wife, but verse 4 turns to *Fathers*. Once the headship of the husband is understood, the reason for this arrangement is clear. He does not act in place of the wife, but she is represented by him as the family head.

What do the words *in the Lord* mean? Paul has a Christian home in view as he writes these words. A Christian home knows no conflict of loyalties among any of its members. There is no family problem that is beyond cure when each member is submissive to the Lordship of Christ.

One thing cannot be said too often or too forcefully. Christian parents should teach their children never to marry an unbeliever. There are two compelling reasons for this. First, if one does not marry a believer, one does not have a Christian home. Second, we are taught that as Christians God is our heavenly Father. A young lady should remember that the man she marries will be her children's image of God. To marry an unbeliever robs one's unborn children of a Christian mother or father.

In what sense does verse 2 contain the *first commandment with promise*? Paul probably has more in mind than chronological sequence when he speaks of *first commandment with promise*. The idea of priority is prominent. Disobedience in children is a symptom of a disintegrated society (Romans 1:30, II Timothy 3:2). Paul's teaching in these two verses is based on spiritual relationship, moral perception, and scriptural teaching.

Promised 6:3—In what way does obedience to parents contribute to long life on earth? Is it not possible that heeding parents good advice will prevent one from engaging in some of the excesses that shorten life? For example, what parent has not discouraged using drugs, tobacco, or alcohol, all known to be life shortening?

THE FATHERS 6:4

“And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Here is another revolutionary concept concerning the family. In the Greek-Roman world, the father's authority was held to be absolute; but here we are taught that the feelings of the children are to be considered. Colossians 3:21 warns of the results of unreasonable demands—the child loses heart. If children must obey, then parents must deserve that obedience. Psalm 127:3 tells us children are a heritage of the Lord. Training them, therefore, should be done out of a sense of responsibility to the Lord.

On the Negative Side of Things 6:4a—*Provoke...to anger* is one word in Greek (παροργίζω = parorgizo) and means *to provoke by being overexacting*.

On the Positive Side of Things 6:4b—The word *bring them up* (ἐκτρέφω = ektrepho) means *to nourish the body*. In a wider sense it refers to providing total education. Parents may not be the direct instrument of their children's total education, but they are fully responsible for it. As a practical matter, three rules must be remembered in parenting.

- Let a Child Know What is Expected.
- Let a Child Know Why this is Expected.
- Let a Child Know the Consequences of Disobedience, and Always Follow Through!

The word *instruction* (νουθεσία = nouthesia) is literally *to place in one's mind*. In usage it refers to correction by word of mouth. Reproof is implied, but so is encouragement.

The Duties of Slaves and Masters 6:5-9

THE SLAVE 6:5-8

“Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”

That which is learned in childhood prepares us for success or failure in adult life. The requirement for the servant is the same as for the child. Those who successfully meet the requirements of childhood also meet the requirements of later life.

What is the biblical perspective on the social conditions of the Roman Empire, particularly with regard to the subject of slavery? The word of God does not state its approval of slavery, nor does it suggest, or even imply, the revolt of slaves. The New Testament clearly teaches servants to be good workers and continue in submission to their masters.

Why does the New Testament do this? Being a slave was no disadvantage in living for the Lord, and living for the Lord is all that counts. If the believer's life honors Him in every respect, then all is well.

How does the New Testament teach this? It shows that a master can be served as unto the Lord. God's word did not free the slaves who were believers; it rather gave them new motives for being good slaves.

One's job on earth, whatever it may be, is related to the temporal order of things, but how it is performed has eternal impact. Servants had masters *according to the flesh*, which shows how truly limited their slavery really was. The quality of their work and ultimate reward comes, not from their masters, but from the Lord (6:8).

The *fear and trembling* refers to the deep desire to be a good servant. There is nothing wrong with anxiety to do a job well. The effort must be sincere and not performed *by way of eyeservice*. This is a single Greek word (ὀφθαλμοδουλία = ophthalmodoulia) that conveys several ideas. First, it denotes the performance of a job only when the master is looking. Second, it may also refer to doing a job in order to gain the master's attention. Either of these two ideas shows we are serving man, not God, and are unacceptable motives for service. Notice that Paul teaches that doing our job well is identical to doing the will of God. Final and full compensation comes, not from the master, but from the Lord. Eternal reward is unrelated to earthly compensation, but the quality of work put forth on earth has direct bearing on that eternal reward.

The earthly employer of the believer is only the agent through which the Lord Himself is served. Full-time Christian service is for everyone, and to regard a job as secular is sinful. The service of a believer as a check-out clerk in a grocery store is as holy and God-honoring as the missionary to a foreign land.

THE MASTER 6:9

“And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

The early church did not have many people of great prominence nor many slave owners (I Corinthians 1:26-29). However, there were some, and it is noteworthy that Paul did not exhort them to release their slaves. They were rather instructed in right treatment of them. Paul wrote a personal letter to Philemon at Colossae about receiving back Onesimus, his fugitive slave.

The master is to practice what has often been called “the golden rule”—“do the same things to them (as you would have done to yourself).” They are to give orders as ones who are themselves under a master. The slave and the master are equal on one major point: both diligently seek to do the will of God.

Cruelty was the watchword of many masters, and the slaves had no legal recourse. Christian masters should stand in complete contrast by treating their slaves kindly and fairly. Anything inconsistent with their heavenly Father should be rejected. Both slave and master must know that there is no partiality with God. The word (προσωποληψία = prosopolampsia) is literally *to receive face* or looking upon the face of someone to determine how they are to be treated. Both slaves and masters are precious to the Lord and their treatment of one another should reflect this.

THE WARRING LIFE 6:10-20

The Power for the Warfare 6:10-11

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

Paul issues a call to arms. Ephesians 6:10-20 is the external counterpart to the call for internal change in the believer as seen in Ephesians 4:22, for example. The control of the *new self* (4:24) is not a mystical matter; it finds manifestation in concrete actions such as those stated in 4:25 and following. The new self does not lie (4:25), the new self does not give the devil a base from which to operate (4:27), the new self does not steal (4:28), etc. Now, Paul teaches, the new self is fully arrayed in the armor of God.

The word *finally* (τοῦ λοιποῦ = tou loipou) is literally *for the rest*. It refers to that which remains to be done. It does not mean that Paul is about through writing. Ephesians 6:10 introduces the final summation of the believer’s duty.

The central idea of verse 10 is strength. Three of the four synonyms for power used in Ephesians 1:19 are found repeated here. It was the power that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19) and is also the power that brought us to life (Ephesians 2:1), so its adequacy cannot be in doubt. The concept of spiritual strength is

common to the New Testament as may be seen in I Corinthians 16:13, II Timothy 2:1, 4:17, Philippians 4:13, I Timothy 1:12. The command to *be strong* is passive voice, meaning the subject is acted upon and receives the action of the verb. The present tense of the verb means the power needs to be experienced daily, on a moment-by-moment basis. The term *strength of His might* is a Hebrew type construction meaning *His mighty strength*.

Paul was in the imperial city from whence came the invincible instrument of conquest, the Roman army. In all likelihood, he was chained to one of her soldiers equipped with the gear of a soldier on duty. The illustrations that follow are borrowed from the equipment of the soldier.

Verse 11 tells how to realize the power spoken of in verse 10. It is done by putting on the *full armor of God*. The word *full armor* (πανοπλία = panoplia) is the English word panoply, meaning *complete outfit, with no part missing*. The word is compound, made up of *all* and *weapon(s)*. The panoply described here is seven-fold. We cannot forge our own weapons nor neglect even one of those prescribed by God.

The words *put on* are metaphorical and mean *to get dressed, clothe yourself*. There are two possible sources for this metaphor. Paul could have derived it from the Roman soldier that stood by his side. It is also an allusion to the clothing that God Himself is said to wear (Isaiah 11:5, 59:17).

The word *that* in verse 11 introduces a purpose clause. We are to wear the armor so that we can *stand*, a key word in this section (6:11, 13, 14). It was a military term for holding a position. One cannot make an offensive move until his own ground can be held. The preposition *against* (πρός = pros) denotes intensity, whether hostile or friendly. It is repeated six times in verses 11-12. It is used here to indicate the hostility of the forces that oppose the Christian. Notice the repetition—“against,” “against,” “against,” “against,” “against,” “against.” Make no mistake about the vitriolic character of the forces that oppose the believer.

The word *schemes* (μεθοδεία = methodeia) means *ingenious stratagems*. Satan works out his schemes through men (Ephesians 4:14); he can put obstacles in the way of service (I Thessalonians 2:18); and he can take the form of an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:3, 14). It is not as though Satan fights from a fixed battlefield; it is rather his sudden and unexpected assault, his attack from what seems to be a “safe” quadrant that calls for complete armor. We are to be equipped for all out warfare, not for an isolated or intermittent skirmish.

The Nature of the Warfare 6:12

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

For this single verse, Paul changes his metaphors from military to athletic. The word *struggle* (πάλη = pala) means *wrestling*. Why the shift in metaphors? First, the loser in a wrestling match suffered horrible consequences, i.e., often his eyes were gouged out! This stresses the seriousness of the contest. Second, a wrestler has to engage in his match without assistance. A soldier had other soldiers to back him; a wrestler did not. Paul is emphasizing personal, individual conflict.

The reference to *flesh and blood* designates physical, human battle, such as on the battlefields of earth. But more is involved than this. Paul is emphasizing that the battle is not on equal terms with the enemy—it is not men of strength versus men of equal strength and resources. It is the believer engaging forces of superior power to his own and thus making demands he is unable to meet in terms of natural weapons.

Nothing could be more disastrous in warfare than to underestimate the strength and nature of the enemy. It is important to note that the believer's enemy is spiritual, not mystical. While the opposition we face is demonic in nature, we need not go astray as many (most) seem to do into the mystical sphere of "how to fight demons." The opposition forces that Paul lists are not to be fought by direct encounter; they are fought by wearing and using the armor, and every item of armor is easy to discern. There is nothing mystical about the armor. It is all intelligible, tangible, and usable.

- We fight against *the rulers*—While four enemies are listed, it must be remembered that they constitute but one opponent. They should be viewed as four aspects of one corporate menace. Each of the terms is morally neutral but takes on sinister meaning in the context in which Paul places it. Reference to *rule and authority and power and dominion* was first made in Ephesians 1:21, and 3:10 mentions *rulers and authorities*. Colossians 1:16 gives us more detail teaching us that they were created by Christ who is the *head over all rule and authority* (Colossians 2:10). Some among these angelic powers have fallen and launched an assault on Christ and all those who are His. Jesus Christ by His death on the cross has "disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him (Colossians 2:15)." These hostile powers are vanquished by Christ but are encountered by believers who must achieve victory based on their union with Christ and by use of the armor graciously provided by God.
- We fight *against the powers*—The word *power* (ἐξουσία = exousia) denotes authority. While defeated by Christ at the cross, limited authority is given to Satan's agents to be exercised until the end of the age.
- We fight *against the world forces of this darkness*—The term *world forces* (κοσμokrátor = kosmokrator) denotes ones who desire or have world control. Whenever it is used of an earthly sovereign, it refers to those of extensive sway.

- We fight *against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places*—There is evidence indicating that this was the language of contemporary astrology in which heavenly bodies were regarded as the dwelling place of demons and from which the destinies of men were directed. Daniel 10:13, 20 teaches us that the affairs of the Persian and Greek empires were controlled by two angel-princes who could impede but not prevent the execution of God’s commands. While Christian Science teaches we should treat evil as non-existent and we should shut our eyes to such disagreeable things, the word of God does not. Evil is real, Satan is real, and his votaries are real—and effective as well—among those who neglect the armor of God.

The Command for the Warfare 6:13

“Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

The command to put on the armor of God was found in verse 11 and is now repeated in verse 13. This repetition reveals the urgency of the matter. The command, however, is not only repeated but is also reinforced by the addition of a reason why it should be carefully heeded.

The word *therefore* is not the usual connective (διό) but is literally *because of this*, a more definite reference than *therefore*. It is *specifically* because of our spiritual opponents that we are to don the armor.

The verb *take up* pictures the armor as lying at the feet of the one for whom it is prepared. While the believer is clothed with Christ’s righteousness by faith, the armor awaits our action. It will not clothe us; we must put it on and this means effort!

The *evil day* is not an eschatological expectation; it is the present reality. Paul makes this clear when he exhorts “making the most of your time, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16).” Modern man likes to think of himself as freed from the “outmoded” beliefs in supernatural powers and demons. The Christian who bows to the authority of the word of God is no such fool. The enemy is as real as the word describes him to be.

The words *having done everything* (κατεργάζομαι = katergazomai) are very encouraging. The Greek word had to do with victories achieved either in war or sports. Victory is not a theoretical goal, it may be a practical reality—if we don the armor!

Verse 13 speaks of standing firm in the midst of the battle; verse 14 turns to the subject of standing ready for battle.

The Weapons of the Warfare 6:14-20

The Belt 6:14a

“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth ...”

The items are listed in the order in which they would be put on. Therefore the spiritual truth associated with each one is presented in order of importance.

The belt is the first item we meet. This belt was not ornamental but served an intensely practical purpose. It did three things.

- It gathered in the short tunic to keep it out of the way for free movement.
- It helped to keep the breastplate in place.
- From it hung the scabbard in which the sword was sheathed.

The tightly tied belt indicated preparation; to loosen it was to go “off duty.” The fundamental armor in the Christian warfare is truth. This is not a reference to the honesty or integrity of the soldier; it refers to truth in an objective sense—we would call it doctrine. All else hangs on this.

The pursuit of truth and all of the pieces of armor that follow require great effort. One of the features of the armor of the Roman soldier was its weight. Gibbon, in *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, notes that relaxation of discipline and the disuse of exercise made the soldiers unable to survive the fatigue of service. They, Gibbon says, complained of the weight of the armor and finally obtained permission to lay some of it aside. In particular they objected to the helmet—protection for the head. Need more be said for the value of truth?

The two participles, *having girded* and *having put on*, describe an action that precedes that of the main verb, *stand*. The loins must be girded and the breastplate must be in place *before* one can stand.

The Breastplate 6:14b

“... and having put on the breastplate of righteousness ...”

That righteousness would follow truth is logical. How, apart from an objective revelation of truth, are we to know what righteousness is? The word of God establishes the norms and standards of truth. See Ephesians 4:24 and 5:9 for the close connection of righteousness and truth.

The breastplate (θωράξ = thorax) covered the body from neck to thigh. Polybius called in the “heart-protector.” This helps us understand the type of righteousness involved. It must be the type that is protective in nature.

What kind of righteousness is in view here? Is it the righteousness that we have by faith—imputed righteousness; or is it practical righteousness—that rightness of character and action that should characterize the children of God? It seems the best answer is both. Why should one exclude the other? However, we should remember that our ultimate protection lies in Christ’s righteousness, not ours. When Satan assaults us with accusations of our

own unworthiness, we should be ready to repulse his attack by claiming the righteousness of Christ that is ours by faith. At the same time, our righteous actions serve to stop the unrighteous one in his tracks. Our protection, however, rests not in works of our own but rather in what Christ has done *for* us and *in* us by His grace.

The Feet 6:15

“... and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;...”

The boots, to quote Josephus, were “shoes thickly studded with sharp nails.” This type of shoe was built to provide sure footing and swift movement. The NIV says, “with your feet fitted with the gospel of peace as a firm footing.” The military success of both Alexander and Julius Caesar was due in large measure to the ability of their armies to move incredibly fast over rough terrain. No obstacle or turn of the weather could halt their forward march.

The word *preparation* (ἑτοιμασία = hetoimasia) was used of a ship’s tackle and thus the idea of equipment. To be equipped is to be prepared, but preparation is not the fundamental idea of the word. The Septuagint uses the word frequently to refer to a foundation. This would convey the idea of the gospel as the soldier’s firm footing upon which he moves about. The thought of readiness in the proclamation of the gospel of peace is also found in Isaiah 52:7. The genitive *of peace* indicates the content of the gospel. This harmonizes well with the word *gospel*, which means *good news*.

The Shield 6:16

“... in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.”

Perhaps the imagery of the shield is best understood as a sort of “portable door.” The shield was usually two feet by four feet and afforded protection for the whole body. Two soldiers often stood side by side with their shields forming a solid wall of defense. In one account of a battle, a soldier reported 220 darts sticking in his shield.

The fiery dart would represent any situation that challenges the truthfulness of God’s word. The word *all* assures us the shield provides complete protection. This does not mean we have victory all of the time; it does mean when we get hit, it is not for lack of resources.

The evil one is a consistent reference to Satan as seen here and in Matthew 6:13, John 17:15, II Thessalonians 3:3, and I John 3:12, 5:18. The words *flaming missiles* refer to a dart tipped with a combustible material.

Faith is our comprehensive coverage in spiritual warfare. It is the attitude of certainty with respect to the word of God. Scripture is divine in origin and thus reflects the veracity of its author. Faith is the logical and appropriate response to it. Faith not only stops

Satan's fiery darts but also extinguishes them. It is worth noting that this is the only piece of armor whose effect is noted. Perhaps this is because of the dramatic results of resolute faith. Satan's darts are not deflected, diminished, avoided, or stopped—they are extinguished so that their effect is brought to an immediate halt. One would do well to scan Hebrews 11, the “Arc de Triomphe” of the New Testament, to see the dramatic victories of faith. One should not overlook implacable Job to see how he routed Satan with his unshakable faith. Girded, guarded, and shod, the believer readies himself for daily battle.

The Helmet 6:17a

“And take the helmet of salvation ...”

There is a difference in the way this piece of armor is appropriated. To this point, each item had been laid out and then picked up by the soldier. Here he is commanded to *take* (δέχομαι = dechomai) the helmet of salvation. The verb means *to welcome* and points to an enthusiastic, appreciative, personal reception. It was Roman custom for the armor bearer to hand the soldier his helmet. The imagery is clear: Salvation is God's gift to us, and it is to be welcomed as a gift from God.

In interpreting the meaning of the *helmet of salvation*, one should consider I Thessalonians 5:8, which defines the helmet as *the hope of salvation*. What helps the believer “keep his head up” more than the anticipation of the day when our salvation is completed?

The Sword 6:17b

“... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The sword is the first offensive weapon to be mentioned; all those previously mentioned have been defensive in nature. Why is the word of God called the *sword of the Spirit*? It is because it is *supplied* by the Spirit (the doctrine of inspiration) and because it is *used* by the Spirit. The *sword* (μάχαιρα = machaira) was the short two-edged sword. It was the “cut-and-thrust” type. Military advancement has made the sword obsolete, but one must remember it was the supreme instrument of warfare in ancient times. The association of speech and sword is common in the Old Testament (Psalm 57:4, 64:3, Isaiah 49:2) and the New Testament (Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 1:16,19:15)

Here the expression *word of God* is different than usual. The noun normally used is *logos*; but here *word* is *rama*, which means *saying* and refers to a particular portion of Scripture. The emphasis is not on the scriptures as a whole but on the various selected parts of it. This is illustrated by Matthew 4:4 where Jesus dealt with Satan by quoting Scripture speaking of *every word* (ῥῆμα = rama) *that proceeds out of the mouth of God*. Jesus selected and quoted the passages of Scripture that were relevant to the Satanic attack He was experiencing at the moment. Jesus repelled Satan by three

brief citations of Scripture. Diplomacy and argument do not defeat Satan; the sword must be unsheathed and used. No word of man can defeat Satan; but when God speaks, he cannot hold his ground.

The Attitude 6:18-20

PERSONAL PRAYER 6:18A

“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit ...”

While prayer is not said to be part of the armor, it does prescribe the spirit with which the armor is donned. We move, then, from sufficient armor to the prayerful attitude. Prayer is closely linked to the sword of the Spirit mentioned in verse 17. This becomes obvious when we remind ourselves that prayer, in its purest sense, is the utterance of the Spirit from within the believer (Romans 8:15, 26).

Though the distinction should not be pressed too much, it is true that *prayer* is approach to God in general, whereas *petition* is the more specific request. *Pilgrim’s Progress* misses the point when the weapon “All-prayer” is given as one that will stand the Christian in good stead when all else fails. Prayer is to accompany all else. It is not an option left when all else fails. Jesus taught *at all times they ought to pray* (Luke 18:1).

What is the significance of the word *all* attached to prayer? It is the idea of “all kinds” of prayer—public and private, expressed and unexpressed, formal and spontaneous—any and all forms that it may take. It is unlimited as to time and season. Prayer is always effective and always appropriate no matter the when, where, why, and how of it.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER 6:18B-20

“... and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

The word *alert* carries on the military metaphor of the preceding verses. God’s warrior must be awake lest all the preparation be in vain. Warfare demands presence-of-mind, and prayer is spiritual presence-of-mind.

Prayer is to be for all (6:18b) and for Paul (6:19-20). Since we are united in battle with all believers, it follows that our prayers should reach out to them as well.

One should not miss the repetition of the word *all* four times in verse 18. The first refers to the mode in which all things are done. The second refers to the time in which prayer should be practiced (*at all times*). The third refers to the intensity with which we should pray (*with all perseverance*). The fourth refers to the persons for whom we should pray (*all the saints*).

Paul is not hesitant to request prayer for himself as he does here in Ephesians 6:19 and Colossians 4:3. In each case Paul does not ask for success or deliverance from prison but rather for boldness in the proclamation of the word of God.

The word *chains* is singular in the Greek. When we think of prison, we think of buildings with walls and windows with bars. Paul was not imprisoned in this manner. He was rather shackled to a Roman soldier. The chain, then, was what we might call a handcuff. The soldier would be relieved every four hours or so, but there was no relief for Paul—he remained bound around the clock.

The term *ambassador in chains* is an oxymoron. It features a strange paradox: God’s spokesman wears chains. How then can he move about with the message? How can Paul be unrestrained in the preaching of the gospel when he is restrained by his chains? The answer is easy: “...I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned (II Timothy 2:9).” Though shackled in body, Paul yearns for freedom of spirit, that blessing of open and free speech in the preaching of the gospel. Does not the resonant message of Ephesians leap the centuries and bring blessing to us today? How then, did the chains limit Paul—wherein was he truly confined? Paul in prison was the freest man in the world!

THE CONCLUSION OF THE LETTER 6:21-24

TYCHICUS DISPATCHED 6:21-22

“But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²²And I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.”

These closing words are almost identical to Colossians 4:7-8. Tychicus, along with Onesimus who was his travelling companion, was Paul’s personal representative to the church of Colossae and probably to other Asian churches. It is the single personal reference in the book of Ephesians. Since Paul entrusted the reporting of his condition to Tychicus, we can well understand why Paul commends him so highly as beloved and faithful. He was a native of Asia (Acts 20:4) and accompanied Paul and others to take a gentile gift to the church at Jerusalem. II Timothy 4:12 and Titus 3:12 show him to be a messenger and special envoy for Paul.

Why should Paul be so anxious to report his present activities to the churches? First, his sufferings on their behalf created the possibility of discouragement on their part (Ephesians 3:13). There was also good news, for Paul was being treated well and was free to teach those who came to see him in his imprisonment (Acts 28:17-31).

BENEDICTION PRONOUNCED 6:23-24**The Essentials of Unity 6:23**

“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The peace that Paul desires for them is not ordinary for it issues from God Himself. Peace and love are both gifts of God that are appropriated by faith.

The Basis of Salvation 6:24

“Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible.”

Grace is the distinguishing mark of all Paul’s letters. It has recurred throughout Ephesians (1:2, 7; 2:5, 7-8; 3:2, 8; 4:7). It has a definite article with it indicating previous reference—the grace that he has previously written so much about in this epistle.