

## EPHESIANS

### Christ: The Head Over All Things

Ephesians was written by Paul from prison in Rome. Ephesus was in the general area of Colosse. The letter to the Colossians, this letter, and Philemon were all carried by the same messenger. Many of the same issues are treated in Ephesians and Colossians.

#### I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-3):

##### I. Salutation (1:1):

As is customary in Paul's letters, the opening verse identifies the writer and the readers. As to the writer, four things are said. First, *the writer is Paul*. His Hebrew name was *Saul*; his Latin name was *Paulus*. He once was an enemy of the faith. He was baptized in Damascus by Ananias about the year AD 34. Paul became the most notable convert to Christ in the early days of the church. Second, *the writer is an apostle*, i.e., one who was *sent out*. Third, *the writer holds a special office*. He was not just an apostle of the church at Antioch, but *an apostle of Christ Jesus*. Like the original Twelve, he was called by the Lord himself to fill this office. The signs of an apostle were fully demonstrated in his life and ministry. The apostles were ambassadors of Christ. They spoke authoritatively on his behalf. Fourth, *the writer has an appointment*. Paul did not aspire to his office of apostle. He was not nominated for that office by men. He did not usurp that office from any other. He was appointed to that office by the sovereign *will of God*. Even before his conversion, God foresaw that Paul would become the apostle to the Gentiles.

As for the readers, the salutation also mentions four points. First, Paul speaks of *their consecration*. They are called *saints*. The word refers to those who have been consecrated or set apart to proclaim the glories of God (1 Pet 2:9). Second, Paul mentions *their location*. The readers were in Ephesus. Paul had spent three years in that city on his third missionary journey. Ephesus was located in the far western region of modern day Turkey. Third, Paul speaks of *their devotion*. He calls them *the faithful*. Some prefer to render this word as a noun--*believers*--rather than an adjective. Those who are truly *saints* put their faith in Christ and are *faithful* to him in all things. Fourth, Paul speaks of *their position*. They are *in Christ Jesus*. The phrase *in Christ* is the most important phrase in this letter. With slight variation it appears some twenty-six times. People become *saints* (Christians) because of their union with Christ. Salvation is basically a personal relationship with Christ.

##### II. Greetings (1:2):

The greeting in this letter is familiar to readers of Paul's other letters. He speaks first of the twin blessings of *grace and peace*. *Grace* is God's spontaneous, unmerited favor in bestowing salvation upon guilty sinners. Grace is the fountain that brings forth all the other manifold blessings of God. *Peace* is the assurance of being reconciled with God. In terms of the individual believer, *peace* results in true spiritual wholeness and prosperity, a calm confidence in our relationship with God. Second, Paul speaks of the twin benefactors. The *grace and peace* come *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. The ultimate benefactor is *God our Father*. He provides every blessing, both physical and spiritual (Jam 1:17). The immediate benefactor is *the Lord Jesus Christ*. *Lord* means master, owner, conqueror. *Jesus* portrays the Lord as Savior. *Christ* refers to the office of the Lord. He is anointed one (Messiah) who is prophet, priest and king. By his perfect life, his atoning death and his triumphant resurrection he earned for us the twin blessings of *grace and peace*. Elsewhere Paul stresses that the *peace* bestowed by Christ (John 14:27) surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7).

##### III. Doxology (1:3):

Paul's letters usually begin with a doxology or praise statement. In this verse Paul speaks of two matters. First, he names *the object of praise*. Paul directs his *praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Those who have been richly blessed should humbly, gratefully and enthusiastically acknowledge such in thought, word and deed. The Lord blesses us, and we in turn *praise* or bless his holy name. *The God . . . of our Lord* points to the humanity of Christ. Jesus himself referred to his Father as *my God*. *The Father of our Lord* points to the divinity of Christ. Throughout this epistle the Son is mentioned in the same breath with the Father and the

Spirit. If God is the Father, Christ is the eternal Son. Every Christian has a connection with Christ (*our* Lord) who in turn is the Son of the Father. Christ is the channel through which the loving Father bestows all of his blessings. Second, Paul speaks of *the reason for praise*. He cites four reasons for the praise. First, the Father has ***blessed us***. He lavishes an abundance of gifts upon us. Second, *the Father has blessed us in the heavenly realms*. We are part of the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is ruled from heaven. It focuses on heaven. It is destined for heaven. The blessings we receive originate in heaven. From heaven they descend on faithful saints in this world. Third, *the Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing*. Under the Old Testament system when Israel was a child, the blessings were mainly material. Under the New Covenant, the emphasis is on the ***spiritual***. Paul is thinking specifically here of the blessing of election which will be explained in the following verses. Fourth, *the Father has blessed us in Christ*. To be ***in Christ*** is the same as being ***in the heavenly realms***. Every spiritual blessing becomes ours because of our connection with Christ. To be ***in Christ*** is to be a Christian, a member of the body of Christ, the church. Because we have accepted Christ God has positioned us for receiving blessings here and hereafter.

## II. BELIEVER'S POSITION IN THE WORLD (1:4-3:21):

### I. God's Plan (1:4-14):

#### A. Basics of Election (1:4):

This verse sets forth six basic facts about the doctrine of election. First, Paul speaks of *the author of election*. The pronoun refers back to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the previous verse indicates. God takes the lead in election. He selects those who will receive salvation. Second, Paul mentions *the nature of election*. God ***chose*** us. Out of the masses of untold numbers of humanity, God picks out or chooses for himself certain people. Election is an act of grace that defies explanation. Third, Paul identifies *the object of election*. God chose ***us***. Paul is writing to saints and believers (v 1). Thus God chooses those who choose him. Fourth, Paul alludes to *the foundation of election*. God chose us ***in him***, i.e., in Christ. God determined that all those who would be saved would be saved through the work of Christ. To be ***in Christ*** is to be a Christian, a member of the body of Christ. We come *into Christ* through our free choice of him as our Savior. Fifth, Paul speaks of *the time of election* as being ***before the creation of the world***. Before creation God promised that Christ would have a people. The whole plan of salvation was worked out before Adam set foot on the earth. The church is part of God's eternal plan. Sixth, Paul indicates *the purpose of election*. God chose us ***to be holy and blameless in his sight***. God works in the life of those he chooses to bring about holiness. We are not chosen because we are holy, but that we might be a ***holy*** witness in this world. Sinners though we are, he cleanses us and then empowers us to live a godly life. ***Holy*** speaks of a life set apart from the world for the work of God. ***Blameless*** speaks of a life that has no observable defect from the standpoint of men. The goal of election is to be perfect, not in the sight of men, but in the sight of God.

#### B. Results of Election (1:5-12):

##### 1. Our sonship (1:5-6):

###### a. Plan of our adoption (1:5):

This verse speaks of how we came to be part of the family of God. The whole process is likened to an adoption. Paul deals with three aspects of our adoption. First, we were *adopted according to plan*. ***Predestined*** is a verb that is equivalent in meaning to the noun *election*. Motivated by his boundless ***love***, the Father drew a circle around those he knew would accept Christ. He destined those within that circle to be members of his own family. This adoption to sonship confers upon believers a new name, a new legal standing with God, a new family relationship, and a new image, that of Christ (Rom 8:29). In one respect our adoption is unlike adoptions on this earth. Earthly adopting parents cannot impart their spirit to the child. When God adopts, he imparts his Spirit! Second, we were adopted ***through Jesus Christ***. Through the work of Christ the adoption anticipated by God before creation actually becomes a reality. Third, we were adopted ***in accordance with his pleasure and will***. God takes supreme delight in transforming men and women into the image of his dear Son. He loves to see the family of the redeemed grow by new adoptions.

b. Purpose of our adoption (1:6):

Why does God adopt sinful people into his family? The short answer is because of his grace. Concerning this grace Paul makes three points. First, *God's grace is glorious*. God adopts sinful people into his family **to the praise of his glorious grace**. The immediate purpose of election was stated in verse 4. Here is set forth the ultimate purpose. **Praise** is *adoring recognition*. God desires that all of us come to know the glories of his grace, God's favor to the undeserving. Second, *God's grace has been freely given to us*. God's love is freely bestowed on those who are lost in sin. Heathen praise their gods in order to curry favor with them. Christians praise God for what he already has done. Third, *God's grace is available in Christ*. **The One he loves** is Christ. He is the beloved of the Father (cf. Col 1:13). Christ is here called **the One he loves** because he delighted to do the will of the Father. During his ministry the Father publicly recognized Jesus as his beloved Son on more than one occasion (Matt 3:17; 17:5). God dispenses his grace through Christ. By his death and resurrection Christ has earned every spiritual blessing for us. He wants us to have these blessings. For his sake, the Father will gladly grant us whatever we need.

2. **Our redemption** (1:7):

Another result of our election is that our past sins are pardoned. This is why we can be adopted into God's family. Concerning our redemption Paul makes four points. First, *our redemption comes in Christ*. **Redemption** is deliverance that comes as a result of the payment of a ransom. In Christ, i.e., because of our relationship with him, we have been set free from the guilt, punishment, and power of sin. Second, *our redemption comes through Christ's blood*. To redeem us, Christ paid the supreme price, viz., his life. He died in our place. Only his **blood**--the life of the perfect Son of Man--was sufficient to accomplish the desired result. Jesus came into the world to do many things; but primarily, he came to die as the Lamb without spot or blemish. All the blood of bulls and goats which was shed under the Mosaic system could not take away sin. His **blood**, however, was sufficient. Third, *our redemption provides pardon or the forgiveness of sins*. Redemption would not be complete if it did not bring about pardon. The word translated **forgiveness** means complete removal of sin. The word **sins** here means *trespasses*, deviations from the path of truth and righteousness. Those deviations may be inadvertent or deliberate. No sin is so black that it cannot be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. Fourth, *our redemption results from God's grace*. God is not stingy when it comes to pardon. He is rich in grace. The measure of his **forgiveness** is the depth of his **grace**.

3. **Our enlightenment** (1:8-10):

A third result of our election is that our past darkness is removed. Concerning this enlightenment Paul makes two points.

a. *We have received wisdom and understanding* (1:8):

Grace not only provides pardon, it floods the souls of believers with a new view of life. **Wisdom** is the ability to apply knowledge to the best advantage. It enables one to use the most effective means for attaining the highest goal. **Understanding** is special insight that is the result of setting one's mind on God's revelation of redemption in Christ. The word **lavished** underscores the abundance of the enlightenment God provides through his word.

b. *We have received a revelation* (1:9-10):

A revelation is something we cannot discover on our own; God must show us or tell us. Concerning the revelation that we have as Christians Paul makes five points. First, it is a *revelation of divine mystery*. **He made known to us the mystery of his will**. The **mystery** is God's desire, will or eternal purpose. God made this **mystery** known to Paul, and he delighted to share it with the rest of us. God did not keep his will to himself. He did not want us to be ignorant of our riches in Christ. The cults of Paul's day made their devotees swear not to reveal secrets. Christianity, however, is transparent. We have no secrets. We want people to know what God has provided for us. In Old Testament times God's will for the future was a mystery. Now the mystery has been solved, disclosed, unraveled. Second, we have received a *revelation of divine pleasure*. The Father takes special delight in planning whatever must be planned in order to bring about our salvation. He takes equal **pleasure** in telling us about this marvelous plan. Third, we have received a *revelation of divine purpose* (1:9c): **which he purposed in Christ...** All of God's will, desire and good pleasure is focused in the work of Christ. He is at the heart of all the eternal planning of the Father. *In Christ* we have salvation. *In him* we have blessing. *In him* we have deliverance and pardon. This is exactly what the Father **purposed** or intended. Fourth, we have received a *revelation of divine planning*. God's purpose was set forth in eternity past, long before the world was created.

The plan was to be put into effect in the fullness of time. When the Old Covenant period finally fulfilled its purpose, it was time to usher in the New Covenant age. God eternal purpose for complete redemption began to unfold when Christ was born (Gal 4:4). **The times** refers to the entire New Testament age. This age of the unfolding redemptive program will not end until the Lord returns in glory to execute judgment. That is when **the times will have reached their fulfillment**. Fifth, we have received a *revelation of divine position*. The mystery of God is unraveled in Christ. By virtue of his sinless life, his atoning death, triumphant resurrection and glorious ascension Christ has earned the right to be ruler over literally everything. God has brought **all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ**. This fact is a mystery because no one would have guessed it had it not been revealed. It takes faith to see Jesus crowned with glory and honor and functioning as exalted Ruler (Heb 2:9). While it seems at times that the world is out of control, Christ is in fact on his throne. He governs the entire universe in the interest of his body the church.

#### 4. **Our inheritance** (1:11-12):

The fourth result of election is our future glory.

##### a. God's plan (1:11):

**In him**, i.e., Christ, we **were also chosen**. **Chosen** here means *made heirs* as in NIV notes. Heirs are those who, apart from any merit of theirs, are given the right to all the blessings of salvation in Christ. The inheritance comes in two stages. Certain blessings are bestowed upon us in this world and others in the world to come. **Predestined** refers to God's purpose is fixed. **The plan** called for us (Christians) to be holy (v 4), sons of God (v 5), and glorify him (v 6). It is all part of his grand **plan** that was worked out before the world was created. God not only plans his work, he works his plan. He **works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will**. As history unfolds, God is working out the plan that he formulated before the beginning. God **works** in all things, in all events, in and through all persons, both believers and unbelievers. Absolutely nothing can thwart the future glory that he as purposed for us. God will finish what started. He will carry out his plan to the very finish.

##### b. God's praise (1:12):

All the **glory** in our salvation both in its present and future aspects goes to God. Whatever we are, or have or accomplish is of God. What we shall be in the world to come is not due to merit on our part. We Christians have centered our **hope in Christ**. What God makes out of us through Christ reveals his true character to the universe, his wonderful power, and his boundless grace. **We who were the first to hope** indicates that Paul anticipated many others down through the years who would place their **hope in Christ**.

#### C. **Proof of Election** (1:13-14):

##### 1. Mark of the seal (1:13):

In identifying those who were the elect of God, Paul makes three points. First, we are **included in Christ**. We must never doubt that we are in Christ. We must never doubt that we have all the benefits that derive from that relationship. Second, *we were included in Christ because we responded to the gospel*. The Ephesians **heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**. Paul's readers had listened attentively to God's word (cf. Acts 19:10). God's word is the word of truth because it reveals the true condition of man. It proclaims the only way of escape from sin. God's **word of truth is the gospel** or good news that Christ has paid our debt for us. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). The Ephesians not only heard the gospel, they **believed** it. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17). They had surrendered their lives to their Lord. In loving trust they obeyed his commands and claimed his promises. It is this obedient faith that brings a person into Christ. Third, *the proof that we were included is the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is **a seal** of authenticity. (1:13c): **you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit..** A seal was attached to an object in ancient times. A seal (1) authenticates character; (2) declares ownership; and (3) provides protection. The Spirit performs all three of these functions for us (Rom 8:16, 17, 28). The Spirit testifies through the word and he testifies within our hearts that we are children of God (1 John 3:24). In addition, the Spirit testifies to the world through the fruit that he produces in our lives that we belong to God (Gal 5:22-23). The **Spirit** is called **Holy** because he is holy in himself, and because he is the source of holiness in the life of the believer. This holiness is manifested in the words and deeds of God's people. He is **the promised Holy Spirit** because he is the one given in fulfillment of Jesus' promises (John 14:16,17; 15:26 etc.).

b. Purpose of the seal (1:14):

The teaching concerning the Holy Spirit continues from the previous verse. Paul makes three additional points. First, *the Holy Spirit is a deposit*. The fact that the Spirit comes to dwell within us as promised by Jesus is an indication that promises of future glory will likewise be fulfilled. The Spirit is a *deposit* or first installment of those glories to come. Those who wish to purchase a home are asked to pay earnest money as a pledge that they will complete the purchase procedures. So God gives us his Spirit as indication of his good intentions to complete our transformation in the glories of heaven. Second, *the Spirit is a guarantee*. We belong to God by virtue of creation and again by *the redemption* that was purchased for us at the cross. When Christ returns, we will receive *our full inheritance*. When we receive our glorious resurrection body, *the redemption* process that commenced at Calvary will be complete. Fully released from the effects of sin, we shall be revealed publicly as *God's possession*, i.e., those who belong to God in a special way. Third, *the Spirit is another ground of praise*. The presence of God's Spirit within is another reason for praising God for his glorious plan. His presence points to the final climax of the whole story of redemption.

II. Paul's Prayer (1:15-19):

Paul's heart-felt gratitude was called forth by the blessings enumerated and described in vv 3-14. Here we have expressed yet another reason for his gratitude, viz., the reports that he had received about the Ephesian Christians.

A. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15-16):

1. Reason for the thanksgiving (1:15):

Many from the region of Ephesus had traveled to Rome. They were permitted to meet with Paul, who was under house arrest there. Though he had been absent from Ephesus for about four years, yet he has kept informed about matters there. Paul mentions the good report that he has heard about them. There are two particular things for which Paul expresses gratitude. First, Paul was thankful for *their faith in the Savior*. Paul delighted in bestowing praise upon his converts for every positive development in their lives. There was a robust *faith* among the brethren at Ephesus. They continued to trust *Jesus* as their only Savior. By their joyful obedience, they testified to the world that this Savior was also their *Lord* or Master. Second, Paul was thankful for *their love for the saints*. Genuine faith draws believers together in *love* for fellow believers. As the spokes of a wheel come closer together near the hub, so the closer we get to Christ, the closer we will come to one another. This love manifests itself in warm affection, eagerness of association, practical help and concern for one another.

2. Repetition of the thanksgiving (1:16):

God deserved the credit for the continuing steadfastness of the Ephesians. Paul believed in thanksgiving, and practiced it. It was an essential part of every prayer that proceeded from his lips. Thanksgiving is remarkable here because it was uttered with great regularity, and by a man who was a prisoner in Rome. Of course we must continue to mention the needs of others in our prayers. We, however, need to remember also to thank God for all the positive things that he is bringing to pass in the lives of others.

B. Petition for Blessing (1:17-18):

1. Petition for present blessing (1:17):

Normally Christian prayers are addressed to *God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We cannot think of God apart from Jesus. The triple designation for Jesus is repeated from verse 2. In view of all that has been said about the work of God in election, foreordination, redemption, enlightenment and certification, Paul refers to God here as the Father. Paul's petition for their present reward is threefold. First, he prays for *the Spirit of wisdom*. They already possess the Holy Spirit; but they need a greater experience of his presence. The Holy Spirit assists the believer to have clearer insight into the right course to follow in any given situation. Second, Paul prayed for *the Spirit of revelation*. The Spirit reveals the meaning of the gospel and the will of God. He did this in the first century in two ways: (1) through the written word which was then available, i.e., the Old Testament and such books of the New Testament as had been written; and (2) through individuals, who were directly enlightened by the Spirit, i.e., apostles and prophets. Third, Paul prays for *a closer walk with God*. To

*know* God is not the same as knowing about God. The word **know** has the meaning of *personal experience*. One of the rewards of the gospel is that our walk with God becomes more intimate.

## 2. **Petition for future blessing** (1:18):

Christians have an incomparable hope. Concerning this hope Paul has a threefold prayer. First, Paul prays for the *enlightenment of mind*. In Scripture the **heart** is the center of man's being--his inner self. The **eyes of the heart** refer to our understanding. Through God's word, our understanding is **enlightened**. Second, Paul prays for the *focus of thought*. When the heart is purified from the things of this world, we come to have a better appreciation for the things of God. The best way to drive away the old sinful tendencies is to concentrate on the blessings of salvation. God calls us through the gospel to **the hope** of a glorious future. Our **hope** is not wishful thinking. It is grounded in the promises of God who cannot lie. To **know** that **hope** is to live our lives in the light of that future destiny. Third, Paul prays for *appreciation of inheritance*. What awaits us as Christians is called an **inheritance** because it is future, it is unearned, and once received it can never be taken away. Our inheritance consists of **riches**. The plural **riches** points to the many blessings that await us. Our inheritance is glorious. When Christ returns, we will share in the glory of his coming (2 Thess 1:10). *Our inheritance is shared*. We do not look forward to an inheritance just for us as individuals. We will enjoy that inheritance with all **the saints**--the sanctified ones--our fellow Christians.

## III. **God's Power** (1:19-23):

### A. **Assertion of God's Power** (1:19):

Our hope can only become our inheritance through the **incomparably great power** of God. God's power is revealed both in nature and in Scripture. His power, however, is exerted only in the interests of those who believe. They alone receive the inheritance. Paul wants his readers to come to a better understanding of that divine power. God has at his disposal **mighty strength** to fulfill any promises that he has made to us in Christ.

### B. **Demonstration of God's Power** (1:20-21):

Concerning the demonstration of God's power, Paul makes four points. First, *God demonstrated his power in the resurrection*. The power necessary to take our hope and make it a reality already has been demonstrated in history when he **raised Christ from the dead**. Christ's resurrection foreshadows what will happen to believers at the Second Coming. We too will conquer death. We too will enter the presence of God. Jesus' victory over death is proof-positive of our justification before God. It is therefore a pledge of our eternal glory. Second, *God demonstrated his power in the ascension*. The Father not only raised Jesus from the dead, he **seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms**. Scripture abounds in testimony that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father. He again occupies the throne that he temporarily vacated to come into this world to become our Savior. The **right hand** was the position of prominence and authority in that day. From that throne Christ now rules the universe in the interest of his church. See Acts 2:33, 36; 5:31; 7:56; Rom 8:34; Phil 2:9; Col 3:1; Heb 2:8-9 etc.). Third, *God demonstrated his power in the exaltation*. Christ has supreme honor now. He is **far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given**. **Rule, authority**, etc. appear to be titles given to various categories of angels. Christ on his heavenly throne is superior to all classes of angels. The false teachers in Ephesus emphasized angels. They gave names to them, organized them into categories, and perhaps even rendered worship to them. Paul stresses that these angels, whether good or bad, have no power apart from Christ. By whatever exalted titles they may be called, they are lesser beings. Christ has supreme honor forever, **not only in the present age but also in the one to come**. The age to come is that which will be ushered in at the coming of Christ. Whatever role angels may play in that age, they will still be subordinate to Christ. His majesty is eternal.

### C. **Appointment to Authority** (1:22-23):

#### 1. **Authority of headship** (1:22):

The ascended Jesus is viewed here as a mighty conqueror. When Israel's army was victorious over enemies, the Israelite commanders put their feet on the necks of the defeated enemy (Josh 10:24). All those things that might potentially hinder God's people from receiving their inheritance have been defeated. Nothing can stand between

us and our glorious destiny. The Father has *appointed him to be head over everything for the church*. This sentence stresses the same truth as the previous one, viz., that the resurrected Christ is the supreme authority in the universe. Later Paul will stress the head-body relationship between Christ and the church. Here, however, another thought is set forth. Christ exercises his power in causing the entire universe to cooperate, whether willingly or unwillingly, in arriving at the destiny that he has promised to his church.

**2. Authority of ownership (1:23):**

The church is Christ's *body*. It belongs to him even as a body belongs to the head which is attached to it. He therefore has all authority within the church. He has a loving relationship with the church. The church is the fullness of Christ. A bridegroom is incomplete without a bride; a vine is incomplete with branches; a shepherd is incomplete without sheep. So the *head* (Christ) is incomplete with his body (the church). Christ *fills everything*--the entire universe--in all respects. The entire universe is dependent on him for the fulfillment of every need, and it is governed by him in the interest of the church.

**IV. Our Blessings (2:1-10):**

**A. Our Life before Christ (2:1-3):**

**1. State of the unconverted (2:1):**

*Transgressions* are deviations from the straight and narrow path. *Sins* are inclination, thoughts, words and deeds that miss the mark of glorifying God. The unconverted are under the sentence of eternal death. As far as the influence of God in their lives, they are *dead*. Paul is not talking about physical death, but spiritual death.

**2. Walk of the unconverted (2:2):**

Paul says four things about the walk of the unconverted. First, *they are at home in world*. The unconverted are perfectly at home in the world of sin. They know their way around. They speak the language of the world. They relate to the people of the world. They accept the conduct of the world. The Ephesians *used to live* in the same way before they became Christians. Second, *they follow the world's ways*. *This world* of sin is at odds with the Father. The ways of *this world* are opposed to the Father. The unconverted often think of themselves as free and independent. Actually they are followers who attempt to find acceptance among those who have no inclination toward holiness, God and spiritual things. The Ephesians had once *followed the ways of this world* before they turned to Christ. Third, *they are influenced by Satan*. Jesus called Satan *the prince of this world* (John 12:31; 14:30). Spirit beings are a part of the created order. Some of these spirits are evil. Such evil spirits must exist somewhere. They cannot exist in heaven, and during the present age, they do not reside in hell. God has permitted the prince of evil to carry on his ungodly work by sending his legions to our globe and its surrounding atmosphere. Satan is *ruler* over this host of evil spirit beings. Paul refers to this realm of Satan as *the kingdom of the air*. Those who are *disobedient* are unbelievers who have never surrendered their lives to Christ. In such people Satan, personally and through his minions, is *at work* deceiving, misleading, and urging that conduct and way of thinking that are opposed to God. He opposes God and everything God loves. He works to make good people bad, and bad people worse. He never rests.

**3. Jeopardy of the unconverted (2:3):**

By their lifestyle the unconverted place themselves in jeopardy in two ways. First, *they follow fleshly inclinations*. Jews as well as Gentiles yielded to the *cravings* of their *sinful nature*. The Gentiles were steeped in immorality; and the Jews imagined that they could obtain salvation by their works. The *sinful nature* is anything apart from Christ on which one bases his hope for happiness or salvation. The *desires and thoughts* of the sinful nature are either *self-righteous* as in the case of the Jews, or *unrighteous* as in the case of Gentiles. These are evil *desires* that lead to illogic and rationalization as we try to justify ourselves and our conduct. Second, *they are under God's wrath*. Jews as well as Gentiles were *objects of wrath*, i.e., were under the *wrath* of God. Human nature, outside of the redeeming work of Christ, tends toward evil. We inherited from our fathers, not the guilt of their sin, but their tendency to do evil. For time and for eternity those who spurn Christ have the *wrath* of God fixed on them.

**B. Our Life in Christ (2:4-6):**

## 1. **Divine motivation** (2:4):

This verse is a partial sentence continued in the following verse. There are two things about God that motivates the unconverted person to seek the Lord. First, *there is the greatness of his love*. God loved us in spite of our unworthiness, our sinfulness, our rebellion. He loved **us**, i.e., both Jew and Gentile. The **love** of God is so **great** that it defies definition. Nothing can separate us from that **love** (Rom 8:39). Second, *there is the richness of his mercy*. When love is directed toward sinners in their misery and wretchedness, it is called **mercy**. **Mercy** is pity. **Mercy** withholds from someone what he justly deserves.

## 2. **Divine miracle** (2:5-6):

What happens to the sinner that transforms him into a saint is miraculous. Paul describes this “miracle” of conversion in two ways.

a. *Raised to life* (2:5): In baptism we rise to walk in newness of life, filled with the invigorating presence of God's Holy Spirit. The deadness, emptiness, and meaninglessness of life are gone. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. When the Father raised the Son to life, he furnished proof that the sacrifice of Christ had been accepted. Our sins have therefore been forgiven. The sentence of death has been removed. So when we identify by faith with Christ we share in his resurrection. As Christ was made alive after dead, so we are **made alive** after living in the deadness of sin. This transformation can only take place through the **grace** of God. **Grace** bestows on people what they do not deserve. God saves us from everlasting damnation. He bestows freely upon us eternal life with all the rights, privileges and honors that pertain thereto.

b. *Raised with Christ* (2:6):

Christ has been **raised** to the right hand of the Father in the **heavenly realms**. This exaltation is (1) a guarantee of our glorious bodily resurrection; and (2) the basis of our present blessings. By faith we identify with Christ and thereby share in all that his ascension to glory implies. Because of his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension our right to enter heaven has been secured. Our citizenship is there already. Our names are inscribed in the Lamb's book. The blessings of heaven constantly flow down into our lives. Heaven's grace fills our hearts already.

## C. **Our Life for Christ** (2:7-10):

### 1. **Exhibits of God's grace** (2:7-9):

a. Purpose of grace (2:7):

Regarding why God has transformed sinners into saints by his grace Paul makes four observations. First, *God's grace is the theme of coming ages*. God's purpose in saving his people reaches beyond man. His own glory is the chief aim of what God has done for us. Throughout all ages to come, God will put Christians on display as an exhibition of his marvelous grace. This is why he bestowed on us the great salvation mentioned in vv 4-6. God wants all the inhabitants of heaven and earth to understand that he is preeminently the God of grace. Second, *God's grace is valuable beyond comparison*. There is nothing stingy about God's grace. It is abundant. That God would reach down to save self-righteous Jews and self-indulgent Gentiles is proof of the manifold **riches** of that grace. His grace reaches to the even the chief of sinners and delivers people from the hellholes of their own making. His grace is so rich that it enriches every heart and life that it touches, filling them with marvelous love, joy, peace, etc. Fourth, *God's grace has been expressed to us*. His grace is revealed in the tenderness that he extends to the confused, the rebellious, the filthy, and the arrogant. He treats all of us better than any of us deserve. Fourth, *God's grace is available in Christ Jesus*. God's grace caused him to send Jesus into the world. Here is the designated shelter for all who would avail themselves of God's grace. We come into Christ by obedient faith. Outside of him we face the wrath of God. He is the way of escape. He is the safe harbor. He is the source of life and healing for our souls.

b. Power of grace (2:8):

God's **grace** makes salvation possible. God's **grace** causes him to provide the plan of salvation. To avail ourselves of that plan is to experience God's **grace** in our own lives. Salvation grace is accessed **through faith**. To be **saved by grace** is equivalent to being saved through **faith**, apart from good deeds, morality, personal goodness, or anything us that might be considered worthy in man. **Faith** means trusting Christ for salvation, claiming his work on the cross as the payment for our sinful lives, believing without reservation the promises he has made, and obeying his commands without question. Salvation is not earned. Salvation is not something we

work up. We do not earn it by our good deeds, because good deeds cannot erase a single sin. Salvation is a gift. While it cannot be earned or deserved, it must be accepted. If we do not accept the gift, it will never be ours.

c. Priority of grace (2:9):

Because salvation is **not of works**, we have nothing to **boast** about except what God did for us through Christ. That's the way God wants it. He gets all the glory, not us.

2. **Examples in good works** (2:10):

We are not saved by our works; but good works play an important role in the life of the Christian. Paul makes two points in respect to what is expected of us as believers. First, he speaks of *God's design in us*. Christians are part of a new creation of God. We have been born from above. We are **God's workmanship**; we have been fashioned by him for a special purpose. To him we owe our entire spiritual, as well as physical, existence. This new creation takes place **in Christ Jesus**, i.e., through the power of our relationship to him. Apart from him, we are nothing, and can accomplish nothing. The point is that a Christian is a special creation of God. Second, Paul mentions *God's design for us*. Christ enables us to do **good works**. He is our example in **good works**. By initiating a salvation by faith, God has in effect ordained that we Christians shall perform **good works**. The faith that brings us into Christ is a faith that will demonstrate itself in **good works**. We are not saved by our **good works**, but we perform **good works** because we have been saved by faith. By setting forth the faith plan of salvation, God was preparing **in advance** for the **good works** that he expects us to perform.

V. **Our Gratitude** (2:11-22):

A. **Remember What You Were** (2:11-12):

1. **Social condition** (2:11):

The Ephesians were once dead. Now by grace through faith they have been made alive for good works (vv 1-10). Paul wants them to consider their present high estate in the light of their former low position. The term *Gentile* is practically equivalent to the term *heathen*. By physical birth they were born **Gentiles**. Whatever their former economic and social status may have been, they were in fact **Gentiles**. The Gentiles bore on their bodies the evidence that they were heathens, for they were **uncircumcised**. Jews contemptuously referred to them as the **uncircumcised**, a term by which the Jews meant *filthy, vile, ungodly, unbelievers*. Of course the Jews proudly referred to themselves as **the circumcision**. They had on their bodies a sign of being a special people of God. For them, however, the sign had lost its significance. They were only circumcised in the flesh, not in the heart. Their circumcision was outward, not inward. Their hearts were not submissive to God.

2. **Spiritual condition** (2:12):

Paul uses six expressions to depict the spiritual condition of the Gentiles before they heard the gospel. First, they were **Christless**. Before they accepted Christ as their Savior, the Gentiles lived in filth, darkness, and the despair that darkness brings. The greatest joy of the believer is to realize that nothing can **separate** Christians **from** the love of **Christ** (Rom 8:35). Second, they were **stateless**. Before they accepted Christ, Gentiles were **excluded** from the many blessings that God showered on Old Testament Israel. To Israel God had revealed himself. To Israel God had given his law, his prophecies and promises. From all of this, the Ephesians formerly had been excluded. They could not be citizens of God's special nation **Israel**. Third, they were **friendless**. **Foreigners** are those who are outside the group, those who are not accepted, those who are not entitled to citizenship rights. Before accepting Christ Gentiles were strangers to **the covenants** which God made with the Patriarchs. The plural is used because the covenant was repeated so many times to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The main element in this covenant was God's **promise**. This covenant promised numerous descendants, a land in which to live, and a special relationship to God. Fourth, they were **hopeless**. Old Testament Israel had **hope** in their relationship with God--**hope** of abundant life and divine favor here and hereafter. Such **hope** is one of God's most precious blessings. The opposite of **hope** is anguish and despair. That is what those outside of Christ experienced. Fifth, they were **Godless**. Before Christ, the Gentiles had numerous gods, but they were no gods. They were without any knowledge of the Creator, the Heavenly Father who revealed himself through his Son Jesus. Being **without God**, they were without holiness, righteousness, peace and the joy of salvation. Sixth, they were **clueless**. They were **in the world**, but did not realize that there was something better to be experienced in Christ.

## II. Realize What You Have (2:13-18):

### A. Christ Closed the Gap (2:13):

Paul makes three points about how the Lord bridged the gap between Gentiles and his people. First, *Christ makes the difference*. It is appropriate that history is divided into B.C. and A.D. Our personal history can be divided the same way. The words **but now** indicate a sharp contrast with *formerly* in v 11 and *at that time* in v 12. Being **in Christ Jesus** makes all the difference in the world in our spiritual condition. Second, *Christ makes the difference for Gentiles*. In the Old Testament days the Lord dwelled in the temple among his people. Israel, therefore, was **near** and the Gentiles were **far away**. Gentiles lacked the true knowledge of God. As time went on even those who lived near the temple became spiritually distant from God. The prophet Isaiah predicted the day when those who were **far away** would come near to God (Isa 57:19). Peter indicated on Pentecost that those **far away** could also claim the promise of God (Acts 2:39). Through faith in Christ, all have the opportunity to draw **near** to God. Third, *Christ makes the difference through his blood*. **Blood** points to the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Only through the sacrificial death **of Christ** could sinners be brought near to God. By faith we claim the death of Christ as the punishment for our own sin. Thus the justice of God can now forgive our sin. In this manner the barrier between God and man is removed.

### B. Christ Made Peace (2:14):

Christ is the great peacemaker. He brings Gentiles and Jews together. On this topic Paul makes three points. First, *Christ is our peace*. Jesus alone did what no other person or program can do. He is the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). By means of his voluntary sacrifice, he has brought about **peace** (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19-20). Here **peace** refers to reconciliation with God. Second, *Christ creates peace*. **Two** refers to Gentiles and Jews. In Christ Jew and Gentile are reconciled. In fact, God has welded those two groups, which were for centuries at odds with one another, into **one** cohesive unit, viz., the church. Third, *Christ made peace when he destroyed the barrier*. Jews had enormous hostility toward Gentiles. They called them "dogs" and "unclean." They would not eat with them. In the temple courtyards a barricade kept Gentiles from entering the Court of Israel. On that barricade was an inscription that threatened death to any Jew who passed beyond it. Gentiles had similar contempt for Jews. Jesus came to remove that **barrier** of hostility between the two groups.

### C. Christ Created a New Body (2:15):

Paul makes three points by way of explaining what he alluded to in the previous verse. First, he speaks of *the means by which Christ created a new body*. Christ could create a new body because he abolished the Law of Moses. That law consisted of **commandments and regulations** that were designed to be a barrier between God's people Israel and the sinful peoples of the world. That wall had to be abolished if there was to be peace between Jew and Gentile. **In his flesh** refers to the body of Jesus being nailed to the cross, where he shed his blood. The Law of Moses as a system ceremonies and separation principles has been abolished. Christ fulfilled all the demands of the law for us. All of the physical ceremonies and principles were but pointers to Christ, and to the spiritual realities of the present age. Second, Paul speaks of the *elements of the new body*. **One new man** refers to the new body of Christ, the church. **The two** refers to the categories of Jew and Gentile. Out of Jews and Gentiles, Christ created in himself a new category of humanity, viz., Christians. We are neither Jews nor Gentiles. We are in Christ. That fact gives us our spiritual identity. We belong to Jesus. That means we belong to each other. Third, Paul speaks of *the result of the new body*. In this new man--the church--there is no longer hostility between races, nationalities, or any other system of dividing the human race. Christ brings all people together; he makes **peace** between them. Our allegiance to Jesus overrides all other considerations.

### D. Christ Made Possible Reconciliation (2:16):

In this verse Paul speaks about reconciliation. He makes three points. First, *reconciliation is available in the body*. The **one body** is the church, the community of the saved. Members of the church are reconciled to one another because they have been reconciled to God. Second, *reconciliation is possible through the cross*. The death of Christ on **the cross** made possible reconciliation. God can now forgive us, for Christ paid the penalty

for our sins. Since we are saved by faith in Christ's work on *the cross*, we no longer depend on the ceremonies of the law or our own ideas of good works to save us. Since we all have been saved in exactly the same way, we stand on level ground. We are equal in terms of our standing with God. Third, *reconciliation is reflected in harmony*. Calvary not only made possible reconciliation to God, it also *put to death* (abolished) that monster of *hostility* that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The same is true for the *hostility* between social, political, language, and national groups. In Christ there should be harmony in order to reflect to the world the reconciliation that we have experienced in Christ.

**E. Christ Preached Peace (2:17):**

Christ wants all men to know about the *peace* that he made possible through his death on the cross. This *peace* is the inner assurance that all is well. The curse of the law has been removed. The punishment for sin has been canceled. *Preached peace* refers to the earthly preaching of Jesus, and the preaching of the apostles in the name of Jesus after his ascension. Those who are *far away* are Gentiles; those who were *near* are Jews. All need the salvation that Jesus offers. All can have *peace* with God through him.

**F. Christ Made Possible Access (2:18):**

Peace with God means that we have *access* to *the Father* in prayer. *Access* means the right to approach, and the confidence that we have found favor in his sight. The *access* is made possible through (1) the shedding of his blood (v 13); (2) the sacrifice of his flesh (v 15); and (3) the bearing of the curse on the cross (v 16). *We both* refers to Jews and Gentiles. All Christians have *access* to *the Father*. Our *access* to *the Father* is *by one Spirit*. It is the Holy Spirit who convinces us through the testimony of God's word and our heart that we are welcome to approach the throne of grace.

**III. Recognize Who You Are (2:19-22):**

**A. We are Citizens of God's Kingdom (2:19):**

Paul makes three points about the status of Christians. First, *past inequalities are removed*. Most of the Ephesians had been Gentiles. As such they were like citizens of another country. Now that they were Christians, they were no longer to be considered *foreigners* who happened to be visiting the people of another land. They were not to be considered *aliens* or sojourners like the Gibeonites of old who dwelt in the midst of Israel without enjoying full citizenship rights. Second, *full citizenship rights are bestowed*. *God's people* are those who are separated from the world and consecrated to God as a people for his own possession. Concerted Gentiles now have full citizenship rights in the kingdom of God. The church is not divided into first-class members (Jewish converts) and second-class members (Gentile converts). The terms of admission are the same for all: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. Third, *family membership is included*. God's kingdom is not like earthly nations. It is more like a *household*, or family. Gentiles and Jews who are Christians are now brothers and sisters.

**B. We are God's Temple (2:20-22):**

*1. Foundation of God's temple (2:20):*

The metaphor now shifts to architecture. *The apostles and prophets* bear testimony to Christ. The church builds its teaching on that testimony. For that reason *the apostles and prophets* are compared to *the foundation* of the spiritual temple. On the term *apostle*, see on 1:1. A *prophet* is one who received direct revelation from God. *Prophets* may refer to the Old Testament prophets who spoke prophecies about Christ, or to New Testament prophets who served the church in the days before the written word was complete. The *chief cornerstone* of God's temple is *Christ Jesus himself*. Several references refer to Christ as the *cornerstone*: Isa 28:16; Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11. The cornerstone was the *chief* stone in the foundation. The *cornerstone* supported the superstructure.

*2. Superstructure of God's temple (2:21):*

Paul makes two points about the spiritual temple itself. First, *it is joined together*. The cornerstone gave shape to the *whole building* by joining together two primary walls. All other stones had to be adjusted to the

cornerstone. It is Christ who gives stability and direction to the church. He is the cement that binds every living stone into that structure. Second, the temple *is rising*. God's **holy temple** (the church) is ever growing. Every Christian is a living stone in that temple (1 Pet 2:5). The phrase *in the Lord* stresses the relationship between the church and Christ. All members of the church are *in Christ*. Each living stone makes its own contribution to the growth and beauty of the (spiritual) building. This spiritual structure is in the process of becoming a **holy temple**. It is **holy** because those who are part of it have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. The structure will not be complete until the last stone is in place. Then Christ will come.

3. *Occupation of God's temple (2:22):*

Though they once had been Gentiles, the Ephesians are now part of that holy sanctuary. Christ was building them up together, i.e., in the closest possible fellowship. When Christ comes, the church will become in perfection what it already is in principle, viz., the dwelling place of God. This will be made possible through the work of God's Holy **Spirit** who works from within each believer to make him/her a suitable stone for the spiritual temple. While the Jerusalem temple faded and eventually disappeared from the scene, the New Testament temple continues to grow. Unlike the pagan temples in Ephesus that housed lifeless idols, this temple is the sanctuary of the living God.

### III. A GLORIOUS MINISTRY (3:1-13):

#### I. Paul the Prisoner (3:1):

*For this reason* ties this chapter to what precedes. Because blessings so great have been bestowed upon Jew and Gentile in the church, Paul cannot help but burst forth in more praise for the Lord. This verse is an introduction to the prayer which begins in 3:14. The intervening verses are a digression. Paul says two things about himself in this introductory verse. First, there is a *reminder of his identity* when he writes **I, Paul**. Before reminding the church of its lofty goal of proclaiming God's marvelous wisdom, Paul needs to remind his readers of his authority as an apostle, and of his previous association with the Ephesians. This he emphatically does by mentioning again his name. Second, there is a *reference to his imprisonment*. Paul was in prison because of his relationship to Christ. For this reason he refers to himself as **the prisoner of Christ Jesus**. In every reference to himself as a **prisoner**, Paul stresses the fact that he belongs to Christ. It was while engaged in his service, and thus for his sake that he became a **prisoner**. The outcome of that imprisonment was in the hands of Christ. Since he was suffering for the sake of Christ, Paul's claims to apostleship were strengthened. Though his enemies were probably using his imprisonment against him, Paul was not embarrassed by it. Instead of carefully avoiding this subject, he starts right out by boldly calling attention to it. Paul was in prison *for the sake of you Gentiles*. Because he had preached the love of God for Gentiles as well as Jews, Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17ff.; 22:21-24). Trophimus the Ephesian was with Paul at the time. Paul had been charged by the Lord to be an apostle to the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Acts 9:15). His work on behalf of the Gentiles had landed him in prison.

#### II. Paul the Prophet (3:2-7):

##### A. Sacred Trust in General (3:2):

The Ephesians knew of Paul's special ministry. Most of those living in the area of Ephesus had **heard** about Paul and his commission. Paul had spent almost three years in the area. It had been some time, however, since he had been there. Some of the newer converts may not **have heard**, at least from Paul himself, about his special commission. Paul had received a special trust from God which he calls **the administration of God's grace**. **Administration** means stewardship. The gospel of the **God's grace** in Christ had been assigned to Paul as a sacred trust (1 Cor 4:1, 2; 9:17; 1 Tim 1:4; Titus 1:7). The Ephesian Christians, most of whom had been Gentiles, had benefited directly from Paul's special emphasis that the grace of God made salvation possible for every person.

##### B. Sacred Trust in Particular (3:3-6):

1. *Revelation of the mystery (3:3):*

A **mystery** is something that remained unknown had it not been revealed. Paul had received some form of divine communication. It clearly indicated to him that God intended the gospel for Gentiles as well as Jews. As a former Pharisee, Paul never would have come to see that Gentiles could be saved. Certainly the other apostles did not give him this message. It took a vision on a housetop before Peter recognized that Gentiles could be saved (Acts 10). So Paul must have been given a special message from God. Paul had referred to this mystery earlier. **Briefly** Paul had mentioned God's plan of salvation for both Gentiles and Jews in 2:11-22.

2. *Publication of the mystery (3:4):*

Paul intended for this epistle to be read. The various churches in the Ephesus area would read this letter publicly in their worship services. By **reading** this letter Paul expected the mystery to be understood. What Paul had just written unraveled **the mystery**, i.e., made it clear. Christ is the source of **the mystery**; Christ is the solution to **the mystery**. **The mystery** is how God could gather into one body of redeemed persons both Jews and Gentiles.

3. *Unraveling of the mystery (3:5):*

Paul makes two points about the unraveling of the mystery. First, the mystery was *not clearly perceived previously*. The Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, for example, had some understanding of the blessings awaiting the Gentiles. What those prophets did not perceive is that, with the coming of Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit, the Old Testament system would be completely abolished. In its place a new system would arise in which Gentiles and Jews would share equally. Second, the mystery is *now clearly perceived*. The same Holy **Spirit** who inspired the Old Testament **prophets** was now guiding the New Testament leaders in understanding God's intentions for Gentiles. The **apostles** were those who were the official eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection. The office of apostle was **holy** in that it was appointed by Christ himself. New Testament **prophets** also received direct revelations from God in that era before the New Covenant Scriptures were completed. **The apostles and prophets** within the church were able to give to us infallible explanations of the old prophecies and their application in the present age.

4. *Description of the mystery (3:6):*

Finally Paul summarizes what the great **mystery** was. He describes it in three phrases. First, *Gentiles are fellow-heirs*. There is not merely an alliance between Jews and Gentiles; they are fused together in one family. In the church there is a perfect spiritual union of these two formerly hostile groups. All share equally in the inheritance that God has in store for his people. Second, *Gentiles are fellow-members*. Lest someone think of Gentiles as outsiders who had been given a share of the family inheritance, Paul makes this statement that they are **members together of one body**. Gentiles are actually members of God's church. They are equal in standing with all other members. Third, *Gentiles are fellow-sharers*. They share **together in the promise in Christ Jesus**. As a result of being full members of the one body, Gentiles have full participation in all the blessings of salvation that God promised to us because of our union with Christ.

### III. Paul the Preacher (3:8-13):

#### A. He Viewed Ministry as a Gift (3:7):

Paul had a profound appreciation for his ministry. First, he considered *his call was a gift*. Paul became a minister (**servant**) of the **gospel** because God had assigned him that task. He was set apart in a special way to preach the **gospel** (Rom 1:1). He had not arrogated to himself the distinction of being a gospel minister. Second, he considered *his power was a gift*. Not Paul, but the Lord deserved all the credit for whatever he as a gospel minister had accomplished. He had permitted the **power** of the Lord, freely given to him, to work through his life.

#### B. He Sees Ministry as Proclamation (3:8):

Paul makes two additional points about his ministry. First, he felt *undeserving of this gift*. Paul was not a proud individual (cf. 1 Cor 15:9; 1 Tim 1:15). He felt so unworthy of the mantle of leadership that he was called to wear because he had once been a persecutor of the church. Paul regarded himself as **the least of all God's people**. He considered his ministry as due only to God's **grace**. Second, *Paul saw his ministry as directed primarily to Gentiles*. For Gentiles, everything about God and Christ was exciting and new. People who

spiritually were bankrupt were told that through Christ they could have hope for this life and hereafter. Paul could share with them *riches* that cannot be measured. Christ's storehouse of blessings is inexhaustible. What a privilege it is to see those who have no hope transformed through the message of Christ's love and promises.

### C. He Sees Ministry as Illumination (3:9):

Paul's ministry was helping people to see the true significance of the Christian community. He makes three points about this illumination. First, the *illumination was for everyone*. Paul was **to make plain to everyone**, i.e., Jews as well as Gentiles, the nature of God's grace and Christ's church. Second, *this illumination concerned the administration of this mystery*, i.e., how the mystery was actually working out in that day. Paul could testify that fear was being replaced by trust, gloom by gladness, hatred by love, and separation by fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. Third, *this illumination was necessary*. From the beginning of time the mystery had been concealed. Now, however, it was being revealed in the worldwide preaching of the gospel, and the establishment of congregations that demonstrated true unity between Jews and Gentiles. For his own reasons, the great Creator chose to conceal his ultimate purpose. Now, however, in the gospel it was being revealed.

### D. He Regards Ministry as Noble (3:10-11):

#### 1. The church reveals the wisdom of God (3:10):

The church is God's masterpiece that mirrors unspeakable *wisdom*. The word *manifold* means literally *multi-colored* or *many-sided*. It points to the infinite diversity and sparkling beauty of God's *wisdom*. In every phase of redemption, as in creation, God's wisdom reveals itself. In **the church** the *wisdom of God* reconciles what seems irreconcilable. The church testifies to angels here designated as **the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**. The church exists for God's glory. When the angels behold the works and *wisdom* of God displayed in the church, their knowledge of God is increased. Therefore, they glorify him.

#### 2. The church reflects the purpose of God (3:11):

**according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord**. From the very beginning, God planned for the church to be an exhibit through which angels might learn more and more about his marvelous wisdom. The *eternal purpose* of God is what has governed all the ages. This *purpose* centers **in Christ Jesus our Lord**. His name here is fully spelled out, for he is Messiah, Savior and Master. The word **our** suggests that the purpose of God is fulfilled when men claim Christ by faith as their own.

### E. Paul Recognizes the Rewards of Ministry (3:12):

Paul mentions three of the rewards of understanding the message that he preached. First, *men have access to God*. Access means freedom of approaching the Father, primarily in prayer. Second, *men have freedom with God*. The word connotes courage in approaching God, boldness (Heb 4:16). Third, *men have confidence before God*. Our *confidence* is that we have found favor with him.

### F. Paul Sees the Implications of Ministry (3:13):

Paul spells out two implications of the message that he preached. First, *we should rise above discouragement*. Joy in the Lord should fill our hearts at all times. Nothing can deprive us of the blessings that God has for us in Christ. Second, *we should expect sufferings*. Paul was suffering at that very moment in prison. Yet his *sufferings* were for the Ephesians and other Gentile Christians. It had to be considered an honor that God regarded them so highly that he would permit Paul to suffer so much in their behalf. Paul's suffering was proof that they were indeed precious to God! Therefore, there was no need for them to be discouraged over his suffering.

## IV. PRAYER OF A PRISONER (3:14-21):

### I. Posture of Prayer (3:14-15):

Here Paul resumes the sentence that began in 3:1 after a lengthy digression.

#### A. He Kneels in Gratitude (3:14):

*For this reason* indicates the connection between the prayer and preceding teaching. Because blessings so rich have been bestowed upon both Gentile and Jew, therefore Paul bends his knees in prayer. He kneels in reverence. Scripture nowhere prescribes only one posture in prayer. Kneeling certainly pictures humility, solemnity and adoration. Paul addresses his prayer to *the Father*. God is our Father not only by creation, but by redemption.

**B. He Kneels in Awe (3:15):**

In the Greek language the words *Father* and *family* sound alike. Christians constitute the Father's family. The *whole family* includes both Jews and Gentiles (2:18-19); it also includes those who still live in this world, and those who have gone on to live with the Lord. God is the Father of all who acknowledge the Son as Lord and Savior. All such believers belong to the Father's family.

**II. Petition of Prayer (3:16-19):**

**A. He Prays for their Enrichment (3:16):**

God is glorious in all of his attributes. Paul previously has spoken of the glory of his power, his love, his mercy, his grace, and his wisdom. All of this is called *his glorious riches*. Paul is praying that the powerful presence of God's *Spirit* will *strengthen* these believers in their Christian walk. The *inner being* is the heart or soul that directs all the affairs of life. Paul would have the believers come more and more under the control and influence of God's Holy *Spirit*.

**B. He Prays for their Establishment (3:17):**

*Christ* cannot be separated from the Spirit. When believers have the Spirit within themselves, they have *Christ* as well. *Faith* is full surrender to God in Christ. As we surrender more and more of ourselves to God, the Lord through the Holy Spirit comes in his powerful presence into our lives. If Christ is filling our hearts, we will be firmly *rooted in love*--a *love* for God in Christ, a *love* for our fellow believers, a *love* for our neighbors, and even for our enemies. The term *rooted* suggests the picture of a tree; *established* (or *founded*) suggests the picture of a building. Both metaphors point to stability. When believers are firmly rooted as a tree in the love of God they will bear fruit for the Lord. When they are solidly founded in that love, they will grow into a holy temple in the Lord.

**C. He Prays for their Enlightenment (3:18):**

In this verse Paul speaks of two things. First, he mentions *the path to enlightenment*. Paul wants the Ephesians to have *power* to persevere in their faith. The Ephesians must persevere in the faith if they are to have any comprehension of the love of Christ. They must set their goal with single focus to experience Christ's love. They must never become complacent or think that they have arrived at the goal, and have nothing more to learn. Discovering Christ's love is easier when we participate in the life of the church *with all the saints*. None of us individually can ever fully avail ourselves of the immeasurable love of Christ. The *saints* will tell each other about their discoveries and experiences with respect to his love. Second, Paul speaks of *the area of enlightenment*. He prays that they will be able *to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ*. To *grasp* is to *comprehend*, to *appropriate*, to *claim possession of*. The love of Christ is vast indeed. It reaches to the highest heaven, and to the lowliest sinner. It stretches across all oceans and continents. It encompasses every human being and more.

**D. He Prays for their Empowerment (3:19):**

Paul wants the Ephesians to *know* by experience the *love* of Christ. Here Paul moves past head knowledge to the knowledge of the heart or soul. The heart is the very core and center of life. It influences all of life's activities. Paul speaks of *this love* as a love *that surpasses knowledge*. We begin the process of getting to know more and more about the love of Christ here in this life. We will continue to learn of his love in eternity. We will never be able to fully understand Christ's infinite love. There will always be more and more to tell about his love. Though we can never know his love completely, we will profit much from all that we can learn of it from

Scripture, experience, and testimony. Paul wants his readers to be *filled* with Christ's love. The ever-increasing knowledge of the love of Christ is life-transforming. Little by little the experience of the love of Christ will transform us into his image. A *measure* of the *fullness* of God's holy attributes will come to fill our lives.

### III. Praise of Prayer (3:20-21):

This outburst of praise is a fitting conclusion to Paul's prayer. It is an appropriate expression of gratitude for all the blessings enumerated in the preceding chapters.

#### A. Power of God (3:20):

In respect to the power of God Paul makes two points. First, he speaks of *what God's power can do*. God is able to do all that *we ask* him to do, and even more. In fact, God *is able to do more than* we dare to ask because we cannot even *imagine* it. He does not need to over-exert himself in order to fulfill our desires. Second, Paul speaks of *what God's power is doing*. His *power* called us out of darkness into light. It made children of wrath into sons of God; it brought about reconciliation between God and man, and between Jew and Gentile. It was God's mighty *power* that raised up Jesus from the dead, and that is operating in our spiritual resurrection.

#### B. Praise of God (3:21):

In respect to the praise of God Paul makes two points. First, he speaks of *the focus of praise*. Paul praises God for his splendor in the church. The splendor of God's amazing attributes--power, wisdom, mercy, love, grace, etc.--are manifested *in the* structure, life, and purpose of the *church*, the body of Christ. Paul also praises God *for his splendor in Christ Jesus*. God's amazing attributes are also seen in the person of Jesus, the head of the church. Second, Paul speaks of *the duration of the praise*. Praise for God will last *throughout all generations, for ever and ever!* *Generations* refers to life on earth. Paul wants the praise for God to continue as long as the world remains, and even beyond. The heart of Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to express a hearty approval of what he has just written, and so he concludes the prayer by saying *Amen*.

### III. BELIEVER'S PURPOSE IN THE WORLD (4:1-6:17):

#### I. Body Life (4:1-6):

##### A. Plea for Unity (4:1-3):

###### 1. General plea (4:1):

Paul has been faithful to his trust. His imprisonment came about because of his loyalty to the Lord. He therefore is qualified to challenge the Ephesians to fulfill their responsibilities as Christians. Christians have the responsibility to behave in the manner in which adopted children of the heavenly Father should behave. This includes believing his teachings, trusting his promises, and obeying his commands. In the light of the blessings that he has showered down on us, we should live a life of gratitude, abounding in good works. *The calling* that we have received is the gospel call to leave the world, and come into Christ.

###### 2. Plea for godly disposition (4:2):

Paul mentions four attributes of a godly disposition. First, he wants the Ephesians to be *humble*. In the light of the great blessings that God has given us, we might be tempted to become arrogant. Yet when we realize that these blessings are completely undeserved, we should be humble. This is no false humility, but complete, i.e., genuine humility. Second, Paul wants the Ephesians to be *gentle*. The gentle or meek person is one who is slow to insist upon his/her rights. We have no "rights" by nature; they are only ours by grace. This person would rather be wronged than to wrong others. Third, Paul wants the Ephesians to be *patient*. Believers in the first century suffered misunderstanding, harshness, and cruelty from those who did not share their faith. Fourth, Paul wants the Ephesians to be *forbearing*. Literally, the Greek says *enduring one another in love*. When a Christian endures injury, he tries to pay no attention to it. He always is seeking what is best even for those who abuse him. That is how love works in the heart of a Christian.

###### 3. Plea for Christian unity (4:3):

In regard to Christian unity Paul makes two exhortations. First, Christians *must keep the unity of the Spirit*. The unity that the Holy Spirit imparts to the church must be maintained by the proper disposition of believers. The qualities that are named in the preceding verse have as their goal unity within the body of Christ. Unity in the church is something all must work at all the time. What Paul desires is oneness of Jew and Gentile, oneness of purpose, oneness of doctrine, and oneness of love. Second, Christians *must keep the bond of peace*. Unity results in *peace* in the body. Where there is strife, there is disunity. The bond that binds believers together in a peaceful fellowship is love.

## **B. Platform for Unity (4:4-6):**

Seven "ones" form a platform upon which all Christians must unite. These "ones" break down into two triads with one added to get seven, the number of perfection.

### **1. First triad of "ones" (4:4):**

In the first triad of *ones*, the Holy Spirit is prominent. First, *there is one body*. The *one body* is the church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles. It is the one family in heaven and on earth (3:15). Second, there is *one spirit*. The Holy Spirit is the common possession of all Christians. It is this *Spirit* that brings every believer into the body. Through the gospel, the *Spirit* calls people to the Lord. Third, there is *one hope (4:4c): just as you were called to one hope when you were called...* The response to the gospel had brought to the Ephesians *hope*. This *hope* is firmly grounded in God's promises that cannot fail, and in the God's power as indicated in the resurrection of Jesus. The possession of the Spirit is the first installment of our inheritance (1:14). There is *one hope* for Jew and Gentile, *one hope* for men and women--the *hope* of eternal life. By the gospel people are *called* to this *one hope*.

### **2. Second triad of "ones" (4:5):**

In the second triad of "ones" the Lord Jesus is prominent. First, there is *one Lord*, the one Lord is Jesus Christ, the head of the church. He is our *Lord* in the sense that since he bought us, we are his. He owns us, loves us, cares for us, and protects us. We recognize that he is our Boss, our Deliverer and Ruler. We trust him, obey him, love and worship him. Whether Jew or Gentile, men or women, we acknowledge Jesus as *Lord*. Second, there is *one faith*: We embrace Christ with *one faith*, i.e., we totally trust him as our Savior. It is that common *faith* in Jesus which binds all Christians together in the one body. Third, there is *one baptism*. All Christians have been baptized in the same manner by the authority of the one Lord. By means of this one baptism, we all entered into the one body. The baptism practiced in the New Testament was immersion for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

### **3. One God (4:6):**

The Father is prominent in this seventh "one." Thus we have a reference in this and the preceding verses to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We worship *one God*, not three gods. The *one God* is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The one Creator in Christ became *the Father* of *all* believers. In redemption the Father recreated what he had created in the beginning. The *one God* is *over all*. For he exercises control over all things he created, and over all that he recreated in Christ. The *one God* is *through all*. He blesses us all through Christ our great Mediator. The *one God* is *in all*. He draws us close to his heart in the Spirit.

## **II. Body Building (4:7-16):**

### **A. Provisions for the Body (4:7-11):**

#### **1. Source of the provisions (4:7):**

We are one in the Lord; but we each have our own unique contribution to make to the work of the church. We are saved by *grace*, and it is by *grace* that God has endowed us in Christ for the work of the ministry. The believer recognizes that his abilities come as a special gift from God. Those abilities are to be used for his glory. Christ, in his role as the head of the church, has *apportioned* these special gifts to the individual members.

#### **2. Time of the provisions (4:8-10):**

##### *a. At his ascension (4:8):*

Paul cites Psalm 68:18. He interprets this psalm as a prophecy of the ascension of Christ. The custom in the ancient world was for a general who had defeated a nation to lead a host of *captives* in a parade through his

capital to proclaim himself the victor. So after his resurrection, Christ returned to heaven as the Victor over sin and death. It was also the custom for a victorious general to divide the spoils of war with his soldiers. So our Victor, Christ, dispensed spiritual **gifts** to his people after he **ascended** to heaven (Acts 2:33).

b. *After his resurrection (4:9):*

Paul explains that the ascension of Jesus took place only after the Lord had **descended** to earth. Paul offers the best commentary on this verse in Philippians 2:5-11. The great ruler of the universe once walked among us. He showed us his compassion and love. He died on Calvary. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. He entered **the lower, earthly regions**, i.e., Sheol, the abode of the dead. This is the same Jesus who now sits in glory at the right hand of the Father.

c. *To his destiny (4:10):*

From earthly humiliation, Jesus **ascended higher** than **the heavens** where the birds fly, higher than **the heavens** of the stars and planets, to the throne room of God himself. He did this in order **to fill the whole universe** with his influence, glory and blessings. The blessings of Christ's victorious ascension have had an effect on the whole universe. In the verse that follows, Paul names some of those gifts or blessings.

### 3. **Diversity of the provision (4:11):**

Paul gives four illustrations of the gifts that Christ gave his church when he ascended into heaven. He mentions four important offices. First, Christ **gave some to be apostles**. The **apostles** consisted of the Twelve plus Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. They were the official witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. They were given life-long and church-wide authority over the doctrine and practice of the church. Here, however, the stress is on the service that this group rendered to the church. Second, Christ gave **some to be prophets**. Men like Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11) received direct communication from the Lord. Together with the apostles, they are described as being the church's foundation (2:20). After putting the teaching that became foundational for the church, the apostles and prophets ceased to exist in the church. They had completed their mission in those earliest years. Third, Christ gave **some to be evangelists**. Men such as Philip (Acts 21:8) traveled about as missionaries. Fourth, Christ gave **some to be pastors and teachers**. This refers to the elders who are also charged with the responsibility of teaching in the church. Some see here a reference to what we call today the local minister.

## B. **Purpose of the Body (4:12-13):**

### 1. **Immediate goal (4:12):**

The leadership gift to the church had as its immediate goal two labors. First, the leadership team labored **to prepare God's people for works of service**. God gave the church leadership ministers so that they might train all the members of the body to perform **works of service** to one another in the name of Christ. Second, the leadership team labored **so that the body of Christ may be built up**. The works of service build up the entire **body of Christ** numerically and spiritually. The entire church should be engaged in spiritual labor. Everyone should shoulder part of the responsibility of carrying forward the work of the church. Christians must be players, not spectators. The challenge to the local minister and elders is to match each member's talents and interests to a specific ministry within the church.

### 2. **Long-range goal (4:13):**

Preparing people for service and building up the body have a fourfold long-range goal. First, Paul mentions the **unity in the faith**. Again Paul brings us the **unity** that he demanded in v 3 and the **one faith** that he mentioned in v 5. The goal of the entire church--leadership and membership alike--is to promote **unity** and spiritual growth. All must be involved in the work. There is no room for slackers in the church. When the church is a beehive of activity, there is **unity** of service. Usually disunity is created by those who have no desire to work. They often resent those who do the work. Second, the leadership team has the long-range goal of **developing knowledge of the Son**. Paul is not speaking about head **knowledge**, but heart **knowledge**. Faith in Christ must be according to **knowledge**. We must of course come to God's word to learn the facts about Jesus. But it is in our daily walk that we come to know Jesus by experience. When the church is busy in service to others, the members will grow in the **knowledge** of the Lord. Third, the leadership team has the long-range goal of **helping members become spiritually mature...** A body-builder wants to develop every muscle to the maximum. So the goal of every church and individual member is to become robust, strong, and fully developed in every area of spiritual life, e.g., prayer, service, knowledge of God's word, witnessing, etc. Fourth, the leadership team has as a long-range

goal *helping members grow more Christ-like*. Christ lived a perfect life. He fully accomplished all that he came into this world to accomplish. The more we love and serve one another within the church, the more we are imitating the example of Jesus. We need not remain babes in Christ. We can mature. But we can never *measure* up to the *fullness of Christ* fully. We should never *measure* our spiritual progress by comparing ourselves to others. Only when we *measure* ourselves by the perfect standard of Christ can we get a true perspective on our spiritual growth.

### C. Program for the Body (4:14-16):

#### 1. Growing in conviction (4:14):

Paul makes two observations about immature Christians. First, *immature believers quickly change directions*. *Infants* in this verse are immature believers. Paul paints a word picture of a storm-tossed sea. The *wind* represent popular doctrines or teachings. Believers should grow beyond being like helpless children in a storm-tossed boat that they cannot control. Paul knew this metaphor from experience. On his voyage to Rome, his ship was *tossed* about in a storm, and wrecked on an island. We must not be swayed by what is popular at the moment. Second, *immature believers are easily deceived*. False teachers and religious hypocrites are known for their *cunning and craftiness* and *their deceitful scheming*. Those who mislead immature Christians will use any trick to deceive. They actually scheme about how they might hoodwink the gullible. Simple Christians often send money to support those who are bilking them for personal gain.

#### 2. Growing in integrity (4:15a):

Paul identifies three evidences of growing integrity in the life of a Christian. First, Paul mentions *adhering to the truth*. Truthfulness of life and lip is the goal of every true minister of the gospel. One committed to this goal will not water down *the truth* on any subject. There must be no compromise with falsehood. Second, Paul mentions *practicing love*. We must speak *the truth* in *love*, not in a haughty or holier than thou attitude. We must never become like the Pharisees who spoke *the truth*; but they also were hard hearted and indifferent to the problems of others. Third, Paul mentions *growing up in Christ*. When we practice the truth in love we will benefit most. We will grow up into union with Christ. We will not become Christ, but we will become more and more attached to him. Paul is speaking of a oneness of spirit with Christ. Christ is clearly distinguished from Christians in that he is *the head*, we are the body. As the human body is subordinate to its *head*, so the church is subordinate to Christ.

#### 3. Growing in body life (4:16):

Paul mentions three things that contribute to the growth of the body and growth within the body. First, *there must be a vital connection with the head*. *From him the whole body...grows*. The ultimate source of life and growth for the body is Christ himself. Just as the human body must be united under the head so spiritual growth will take place when all Christians are bound together in unity under the head of the church. Second, *the body grows when there is mutual support*. The body (the church) must be *joined and held together by every supporting ligament*. Members of the church should be mutually supportive of one another. When they engage in mutual support the body grows. Third, *the body grows when there is mutual ministry*. When each member supports and maintains loving contact with other members and with Christ, the church will experience growth. Each member must make a personal contribution to the overall growth of the body. *Each part* of the body must do *its work*. The more body parts that do not work, the less growth will be experienced by the church.

### III. Body Directives (4:17-24):

#### A. Prohibition of Gentile Life (4:17):

*So* indicates the logical connection to what precedes. In view of our high calling--our duty to render service in the body, we must no longer live life as Gentiles do. Paul asserts his apostolic authority in issuing this prohibition to Christians. *I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord*. Paul is here testifying in the most solemn way. He is testifying in the sphere of *the Lord* and by his authority. He clearly expects his readers reverently to obey the instructions that follow. The prohibition takes two forms. First, Paul insists that Christians *must not live as Gentiles*. The Ephesians were no longer Gentiles. They were Christians. They must put aside their former manner of life. They must not imitate their present evil environment. Second, Paul insists that Christians

*must not think as Gentiles.* All the efforts that Gentiles put forth in pursuit of happiness end in **futility** and frustration. The non-Christian lives a life of one long series of disappointments. The intellect of these people is fruitless.

B. Description of Gentile Life (4:18-19):

1. **Mental state of Gentiles** (4:18):

In regard to the mental state of Gentiles Paul makes three points. First, *they are spiritually blind*. **They are darkened in their understanding**. Gentiles prefer the darkness to the light. It is as if they are blind to the light which God would shed upon their lives. Not only do they dwell in darkness, darkness dwells in them. Second, *Gentiles are alienated from God*. They are **separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them**. Gentiles know nothing of **life** more abundant, **life** eternal. They merely are existing, not living. Third, *Gentiles have hardened their hearts*. Gentiles are estranged from God because they have hardened their hearts against the will of God. At some point in the distant past their ancestors had received God's special revelation; but they had rejected it. Even now Gentiles were suppressing the light of nature which testifies to the Creator.

2. **Moral state of Gentiles** (4:19):

Paul makes four observations about the moral state of Gentiles. First, *they had lost all sensitivity*. By constantly saying "no" to God's voice in conscience, these Gentiles had become as hard as a stone. They were dead to all responsiveness to what is good and uplifting. Second, *Gentiles had surrendered to sensuality*. While they had no feeling for the good and the holy, Gentiles had feeling and desire for evil indulgence, the gratification of the flesh. Adultery and prostitution were common in the Roman world. People felt no more guilt about indulging in these sins than we might feel in partaking of a meal. Third, *Gentiles indulged in impurity*. Because fleshly sins bring no lasting satisfaction, Gentiles were ever looking for new indulgences. In the pursuit of happiness they were willing to experiment with the most degrading kinds of conduct. Some of these activities will be enumerated later in this chapter. Fourth, *Gentiles burned with lust*. Sin makes slaves of those who give themselves over to it. So Gentiles never get enough of the sins of the flesh. Such people disregard the rights and feelings of others. Nothing matters except the momentary thrills. Dignity, propriety and morality do not matter. Such people are digging their own grave by such unbridled **lust**.

C. **Description of Christian Life** (4:20-24):

1. **General teaching** (4:20-21):

a. *They had come to know Christ* (4:20):

When people come to **know Christ** as Savior, they are no longer Gentiles or Jews, but Christians. The Ephesians had been led by the gospel to surrender their lives to Christ. They had signaled the world of this change by being baptized into Christ. When we learn with heart and mind, by study and by experience, about Jesus, our lives will be changed. The point here is that Christ does not sanction a life of sin and selfishness, of lewdness and immorality. No longer is our understanding dark.

b. *They had been taught in Christ* (4:21):

The Ephesians had been taught *about* Christ. Many of the Ephesians had been taught personally by Paul during his lengthy ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19; 20:17-35). They also were taught *in* Christ. The entire atmosphere of the teaching in Ephesus had been Christian. Christ, speaking through his ambassadors, had been their teacher. The Ephesians had been **taught in accordance to the truth**. Jesus is *the truth--the truth* about our sinful condition, and the glorious salvation that he provides to those who trust in him; **the truth** of faith working through love; **the truth** about principles of Christian conduct. Christ is the center of all Christian doctrine. His example had been held up for the Ephesians to follow. Paul had stressed a personal relationship with Jesus as the means of claiming salvation.

2. **Specific teaching** (4:22-24):

a. *Taught to put off the old life* (4:22):

Christian teaching emphasizes that a total turnabout in mental outlook and in manner of life is necessary. The **old self** is all that we were before we met Christ. That lifestyle must end. We must **put it off**, like we would remove a filthy garment. Our initial commitment to Christ must be followed by daily commitment to him. The old nature is not easy to shed. Getting rid of it is difficult and painful. Paul likens it to a personal crucifixion

(Rom 6:6). We must fight the old man of sin constantly and vigorously. The old self is constantly being **corrupted**, i.e., being deceived and led into destructive conduct. Sin is **deceitful**. It promises so much and delivers so little.

b. *Taught to develop a new **attitude** (4:23):*

Christ had taught us to have a **new** outlook on life, to change our priorities, to face up to our responsibilities to God and to our fellowman. We must allow Christ to give us a **new attitude** in our **minds**.

c. *Taught to put on the new self (4:24):*

Concerning the **new self** that we **put on** in Christ Paul makes two points. First, the **new self** is **created by God**. The Christian has turned his life over to God. The **new self** is the result of God at work in our lives through his Holy Spirit. Over time as we yield more and more to his word and will, he shapes us to be like himself. We become more God-like in attitude and action. We must **put on** the new self as we would put on a new suit of clothes. We must not stress the negative at the expense of the positive aspect of our faith. Our faith is a *do* religion as well as a *don't* religion. We must learn to say *yes* to Christ, and *no* to the world. Second, the new self is *characterized by Godly traits*. As God continues to work on the yielded life, we begin to behave **in true righteousness**, i.e., the right way toward our fellowmen. **Holiness** describes our relationship to God. Holiness is avoiding that which is offensive to God, and devoting ourselves to that which pleases him. The **righteousness and holiness** that mark the life of the Christian are **true**, not deceptive like the lusts of the old self. These qualities result in a life more abundant.

#### IV. **Body Practice** (4:25-5:2):

##### A. **Practice Truthfulness** (4:25):

**Therefore** indicates that what follows logically follows from putting on the new self. There are actions and attitudes that the Christian must practice. Practice makes perfect. Paul now gives the specific traits which should mark the new self. At the top of Paul's list is truthfulness. Each Christian **must put off falsehood**. Lying is characteristic of the heathen world. The habit of lying is one that is most difficult to break. God expects believers to always speak the truth to one another. Here the term **neighbor** refers to fellow Christians. The reason Christians are to be devoted to truthfulness is that **we are all members of one body**. The **one body** is the church, the body of Christ. Though believers are many, they are also one in Christ. We are part of the same body. Body parts do not lie to one another. The hand does not lie to the foot, nor the foot to the eye. Lying is morally wrong, and it is practically wrong. It creates trouble, friction, disunity and sadness in the church. For this reason, we must always tell the truth.

##### B. **Practice Self-Control** (4:26-27):

###### 1. Directive (4:26):

**Anger** need not be sinful. Even God experiences anger, and so did Christ (John 2:15-17). Righteous indignation against sin is commendable. **Anger**, however, is like a volatile chemical. It can easily explode into hatred and resentment. It is not ever easy to love the sinner but hate the sin that he commits. Every effort should be made to reconcile with those who have made us angry before the end of the day.

###### 2. Motive (4:27):

Left to fester, anger provides a **foothold** for the devil in our lives. Satan will quickly work to change our irritation into a grievance, a grudge, wrath and unwillingness to forgive. **The devil** must be resisted every step of the way in our Christian life. We must not let him take advantage of our anger.

##### C. **Practice Sharing** (4:28):

A Christian **who has been stealing must steal no longer**. Respecting the ownership of property is a fundamental biblical principle. Servants in that day were especially bad about **stealing** things from their masters. Some of these servants, who had become Christians, still had no conscience about "ripping off" their employers. The thief will usually rationalize his theft by reasoning that he is underpaid or disadvantaged, and therefore entitled to whatever he is clever enough to steal. **Stealing** must be replaced with **work**. Every Christian should be doing something **useful with his own hands**. A believer should seek to pay his own way in life. He should not count

on others to support him. He should seek gainful employment. Rather than using his hands to steal, he should use his hands in honest labor. Paul himself set a good example in this respect. He paid his own way by making and repairing tents. The motive for working rather than stealing is surprising. The Christian wants to **have something to share with those in need**. One who works with his hands will not only be able to support himself, he will have something he can share with the needy. Stealing grows out of selfishness. When we focus on helping others, selfishness disappears. As selfishness disappears so also does the urge to steal from others. The poor were very dear to the heart of Paul (Gal 2:10). On his third missionary journey he labored to collect money for the poor in Jerusalem.

**D. Practice Encouragement (4:29-30):**

1. Build up others (4:29):

**Unwholesome** or corrupt speech is speech that is putrid, rotten; hence also corrupting, defiling, injurious. Foul conversation is commonplace among non-believers. Seasoned believers often have great difficulty in purging the mind of the unwholesome words that they used before they met Christ. Profanity, crude speech, using God's name frivolously are unseemly coming from the mouth of a Christian. It is not enough to cease using bad language; the believer needs to use his tongue in a positive way to encourage others and to build them up in the Lord. Everyone who hears a Christian speak should **benefit** from what he hears.

2. **Don't grieve the Spirit (4:30):**

**The Holy Spirit** is responsible for the spiritual development in our lives. He produces whatever good fruit our lives display after we accept Christ. Our hearts are his temple. He fills us with the joy and assurance of our salvation. His presence in our lives is like a seal which identifies us as true believers, destined for glory in the day of redemption, i.e., the glorious return of Christ when the work of redemption will be complete. Reverting to our pre-Christian attitudes and actions is a manifestation of ingratitude toward our Holy Guest. He is grieved with every step we take backward. Grieving the Spirit is the first step toward quenching the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19).

**E. Practice Forgiveness (4:31-32):**

1. Garbage to **get rid of** (4:31):

Paul here lists six more trashy traits that must be cast away. They are fit only for the garbage can. **Bitterness** is the disposition of a person with a tongue as sharp as an arrow. A bitter person resents his neighbor and "needles" him at every opportunity. Both the words that he speaks and the tone in which he speaks them are ugly, disrespectful and mean-spirited. **All** such bitterness must be discarded. There is not room in the Christian's heart for the tiniest bit of this poison. **Rage** refers to strong feelings of antagonism that are expressed in "flying off the handle" or "blowing our top." **Anger** or wrath refers to a settled indignation that is burning like a furnace in the heart at all times. **Brawling** refers to a violent outburst by one who has "gone ballistic." Sometimes brawling is accompanied by physical gestures. **Slander** is abusive speech about another person in which facts are misrepresented, rumors spread, and lies are told. **Malice** refers to the mind-set that takes delight in inflicting hurt or injury on another person. **Malice** comes in different forms, from active injury to passive glee over the misfortune of another. **Every form of malice** must be discarded.

2. **Jewels to acquire (4:32):**

Paul lists three precious jewels that a Christian should seek to acquire. First, he mentions **kindness**. Kindness is Spirit-imparted goodness of heart. It is the very opposite of malice. Kindness is an attribute of God (Rom 2:4). A kind person will not spread gossip. A kind person will try to point out good qualities in a person when others are bad mouthing that person. Second, Paul speaks of **compassion**. This refers to a very deep feeling of sympathy, like that of Jesus toward other people. Third, Paul speaks of **forgiveness**. Kindness and compassion make one ready to forgive the shortcomings of others. We must forgive just as freely and generously as we have been forgiven by the Lord. Our forgiveness must be wholehearted and eager. Jesus set the example for us by forgiving those who nailed him to the cross.

**F. Practice Love (5:1-2):**

1. **Objective (5:1):**

Little *children* naturally try to imitate their parents. So we as God's children are to seek to model his love in this world. We are to *be imitators of God*. In every area of life, love should manifest itself. This we can do because we are his children, and his Spirit dwells within us. We cannot imitate his power or wisdom or knowledge; but in our own finite way we are here commanded to imitate his love.

## 2. Example (5:2):

We are to *live a life of love*, i.e., we are to let God-like love characterize all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Our love for others should be patterned after and motivated by God's love in Christ. In respect to Christ's example Paul says three things. First, *Christ loved us*. This is the kind of love that we should have. The Son imitated the Father's love when he left heaven to come into this world. Only those who have experienced love can dispense love. We have experienced Christ's love; we are capable of sharing that love. Second, *Christ gave himself up for us*. He voluntarily surrendered himself to his enemies. Third, *Christ was a sacrifice for us (5:2d): as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*. His death was an offering, for he willingly brought it. It was a *sacrifice* because it was a complete surrender. The sacrifices of the Old Testament burnt offering are said to be a sweet aroma to the Lord. That means the sacrifices were accepted by the Father as the penalty paid for sins. Certainly the sacrifice of Christ was acceptable to the Father. The implication is that when we imitate Christ's love, our deeds of love likewise will be well pleasing to God.

## V. Body Walk (5:3-20):

### A. Walk in Purity (5:3-7):

#### 1. Things to avoid (5:3-4):

##### a. Triad of sexual perversions (5:3):

Paul mentions three forms of impurity. First, he lists *sexual immorality*. This refers to unlawful sexual intercourse. It includes illicit relationships of every description. Evil in the sexual realm was especially associated with idolatry. Even some of the early Christians had not completely shaken off this sin (see 1 Cor 5:1 ff.). We should be so totally removed from such sin that there is not even the slightest *hint* or suspicion of sexual immorality among us. Second, Paul speaks of *any kind of impurity*. This would include words, thoughts, desires, passions as well as the actual acts themselves. Third, Paul mentions *greed*. In this context, greed refers to taking advantage of others sexually, for one's own selfish fulfillment. Sexual harassment, groping others, and even rape would be manifestations of sexual *greed*. All three of the manifestations of sexual misconduct listed here *are improper for God's holy people*. God has set us apart as his own special people. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. We have committed ourselves completely to Jesus as Lord. Sexual misconduct is therefore totally out of character for us.

##### b. Triad of perverted thinking (5:4):

Paul lists three types of behavior that manifest twisted thinking. First, he speaks of *obscenity*. The word means *filthiness or shamefulness*. It includes any thought, imagination, desire, word or deed that is inconsistent with the holiness of God. Second, Paul mentions *foolish talk*. This refers to the kind of foolish conversation one might expect to hear from the lips of a fool or of a drunkard. Third, Paul speaks of *coarse joking*. Off color jokes and sexual innuendo reveal a mind that is a garbage can. Such thinking and speaking are incompatible with the calling with which we have been called by God. Off color thinking and speaking can be conquered by focusing on all things bright and beautiful that God grants to us now and hereafter. A thankful heart and a grateful tongue will cause our fascination with indecency to vanish.

## 2. A warning (5:5-7):

### a. Concerning wicked conduct (5:5):

Paul emphasizes that immorality and salvation are opposites. The person who practices the sins mentioned in verse 3 and amplified in verse 4 has no inheritance in Christ's kingdom, i.e., they are not dwelling in the Promised Land of salvation. Every true Israelite had an inheritance in the Old Testament land of promise. Those who were not true Israelites had no such inheritance. The physical land of promise (Israel) was a type or preview of *the kingdom of Christ*. *No immoral, impure or greedy person* has any share in *the kingdom of Christ*. Such people are idolaters. The reference is specifically to the greedy person. Such a selfish person is worshipping something other than God. Basically he is worshipping himself. Therefore he is *an idolater*.

b. *Concerning wrath to come (5:6):*

Concerning wrath to come Paul makes two points. First, *false teachers play down the wrath of God*. Gnostic teachers taught that as long as the soul belonged to God, it did not matter what one did with his body. They provided the Gentile Christians with an excuse to continue in their immoral ways. In their view, as long as one's heart was right, immorality was no big deal. **Empty words** are those that are void of truth and filled with error. If the Ephesians listen to such teachers, they were heading for a downfall. Second, *future wrath is certain (5:6b): **Because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*** The verb is present tense. Those who practice the sins mentioned in vv 3-5 live under the wrath of God right now. That wrath will be fully and finally revealed to the world at the second coming (2 Thess 1:8-10). The **disobedient** here are those who ignore God's commands concerning immorality.

c. *Conclusion (5:7):*

Paul appeals to the Ephesians not to be **partners** with the immoral. Christians should not want to share in the sin, guilt and punishment of the immoral.

**B. Walk in Light (5:8-14):**

1. **Facts about our walk (5:8).**

In this verse Paul points to three facts about Christians. First, he speaks of *what we once were*. Not only had they been in **darkness**, the Ephesians themselves had been part of the **darkness**, i.e., the evil environment of the world. **Darkness** indicates the absence of the light from God's word concerning spiritual things. Without Christ in his proper place, nothing in this world really makes sense. Second, Paul speaks of *what we now are*. Now the Ephesians belong to the realm of **light**. Now they have the true knowledge of God, righteousness, holiness, and happiness. Only because they are **in the Lord**, i.e., in a vital relationship with Christ, are they now in the **light**. They also reflect the **light** of Christ, just as the moon reflects the light of the sun. Third, Paul indicates *how we should now live*. We must **live as children of light**. We are part of the family of God. We must reflect this fact in our daily life. God's word must be the standard by which we live. Righteousness and holiness must characterize all our attitudes, words, and actions.

2. **An explanation (5:9):**

The evidence that we are walking in the light is **the fruit** that we bear. Three qualities of life, from which good works spring, are mentioned as the fruit of having been exposed to the light of Christ. **All goodness** is moral and spiritual excellence of every description. **Righteousness** is doing what is right in the sight of God; walking in a straight path and never deviating from it. **Truth** is integrity, reliability, as opposed to the sham, falseness and hypocrisy that characterized our life before Christ.

3. **A promise (5:10):**

We need not worry about our standing with God. When we do the will of God, the proof of our standing will be supplied to us. Just as Jesus received heavenly assurance that God was pleased with him, so the Holy Spirit will speak to our heart. He will let us know that our efforts are pleasing to the Lord.

4. **An admonition (5:11):**

Paul admonishes the Ephesians to do two things. First, he admonishes them to *avoid works of darkness*. **Deeds of darkness** are such things as immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk, etc.--any and all **deeds** belonging to the realm of the devil. Such **deeds** are **fruitless** in that they do not glorify God, or win our neighbors to Christ, or lead to inner peace and joy within our own soul. We must either engage in deeds of light or **deeds of darkness**. There is no twilight zone. Those of us who have pledged allegiance to Christ must have nothing whatever to do to the dark works of this world. Second, Paul admonishes the Ephesians to **expose works of darkness**. We cannot compromise with evil. Sin must be exposed, i.e., identified as such. We cannot call it by other names. We cannot gloss over the wickedness around us. We must denounce it.

5. **Further explanation (5:12-14):**

a. *Shamefulness of deeds of darkness (5:12):*

How can we expose the sins of the wicked if we are not even to mention those sins? Our lives of righteousness, holiness and godliness will reveal the vast contrast between those who are walking in the light and those who are still in darkness. There are some sins so absolutely repulsive that it is better by far not to mention them. The

**disobedient** are non-Christians. What the people sometimes do in secret is **shameful** for decent people to talk about.

b. *Exposure of the deeds of darkness (5:13):*

The righteous lives of God's people expose the terrible deeds of wickedness for what they really are. **The light** is the truth of God's word lived out in the lives of Christians.

c. *Reproof of those who practice wickedness (5:14):*

One cannot turn on a light without exposing what is hidden in the darkness. So the light of God's word exposes the sinful and wicked deeds of the non-Christian world. In this verse Paul adapts the language of Isa 60:1. The lines may have been part of an early Christian hymn. Becoming a Christian is like rising from **the dead**. The gospel calls us to come out of the deadness of sin. We need to completely wake up and leave behind all the deeds performed during the night of sin. The more we distance ourselves from the works of darkness and death, the more **Christ will shine** upon us in blessing.

**B. Walk in Wisdom (5:15-20):**

1. **General principle (5:15):**

The **unwise** are those who have no insight into the things of God and salvation. They regard as very important what is of minor value or what may even be harmful. Those who are **wise** have the proper outlook on life and live accordingly. In the verse that follows, Paul indicates several characteristics of those who are living as **wise** people. **Wise** people are **very careful** how they **live**, because they have the light of God's word to illuminate the pitfalls along the way.

2. **Take advantage of opportunities (5:16):**

Wise people make good use of **every opportunity** that falls into their laps. Paul is speaking of opportunities for witness, opportunities for demonstrating the power and glory of the gospel in our lives and opportunities for good works. A missed opportunity never returns. **Evil** abounds in these **days**. Every opportunity to let our light shine points men toward the Savior.

3. **Focus on God's will (5:17):**

A wise person prizes the **will** of God above all else. Because the days are evil, he does not let popular opinion be the guiding force in his life. It is **foolish** to take our cues from those who walk in darkness. He does not listen to the advice of those who have no relationship with Jesus. He searches out the **will** of God through the word and prayer.

4. **Be filled with God's Spirit (5:18):**

**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.** Drunkenness is one manifestation of a foolish trait. The abuse of wine is condemned throughout the Scriptures. Intoxication solves none of life's problems. What satisfaction it might bring is the devil's poor substitute for the true joy of a personal walk with the Lord. **Debauchery** is unrestrained living, recklessness and total disregard for morality. It is far better for the Christian to be **filled** with God's **Spirit**, i.e., the Holy Spirit. Being **filled with the Spirit** leads to lasting joy, deep insight, and inner satisfaction with no hangover. The Spirit will sharpen our senses so that we can get more out of life, not deaden them like alcohol.

5. **Radiate joy (5:19):**

**Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord...** One manifestation of being filled with the Spirit is joyful outbursts of praise for the Lord. The **psalms** of the Old Testament were intended to be sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The **hymns** are mainly New Testament songs of praise to God and Christ. **Spiritual songs** focus on sacred themes other than praise to God or Christ. By means of these wonderful songs, believers **speak** to each other, bearing testimony to their personal faith. Singing is a distinctive part of a Christian gathering. We minister to one another in singing and other types of music. Such music should come from the **heart**, i.e., it should be heart-felt, a personal expression of faith.

6. **Dwell on thanksgiving (5:20):**

In this verse Paul answers four questions about thanksgiving. First, *when should we give thanks?* Paul's answer is that we should **always** be **giving thanks**. A wise person lives a life of thanksgiving. He regularly expresses that thanksgiving. Second, *to whom should we give thanks?* Paul answers: **to God the Father**. Every good gift

comes from above, even though God may use others as his agents. He cares deeply for his family, i.e., Christians, and he provides for them. Third, *for what should we give thanks?* Paul answers: **for everything**. The believer should be thankful for **everything**, both physical and material, the ordinary and the extraordinary, past blessings, present blessings and even future blessings. The man who wrote these words was in custody in Rome. No matter what our circumstances we can live a life of thanksgiving. Fourth, *how should we give thanks?* Paul answers: **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The believer recognizes that the Father's blessings come through Christ; so he offers the thanksgiving in the name of Jesus. It is Jesus who earned all those blessings for us. It is Jesus who purifies our petitions and presents them, along with his own intercession, before the throne of grace.

## VI. Body Disposition (5:21-6:9):

### A. General Principle (5:21):

Humility and a willingness to cooperate with other members of the body are implied in this verse. Each disciple must be willing to subordinate his own interests to those of the other members of God's family. **Reverence for Christ** is respect for the clearly revealed will of Christ. Because Christ has so willed it, every member must be willing to recognize the rights, needs and wishes of other members. This attitude promotes unity in the body and enables the church to make a united front to a sinful world.

### B. Application to Wives (5:22-24):

#### 1. Exhortation (5:22):

God placed ultimate responsibility regarding to the household on the shoulders of the husband. Love for the husband, respect for the institution of marriage, and obedience to the Lord all urge a Christian woman to look to her husband as the spiritual leader of the family. The submission must be voluntary, not coerced, either verbally or physically, by the husband. It is only to her own husband that a woman is to render such submission, not to every man. The submission to her husband will be easier because the woman is asked to render it **as to the Lord**, i.e., as part of her obedience to the one who died on the cross for her sins.

#### 2. Explanation (5:23):

A home without a **head** invites chaos. The husband must exercise his headship over the wife **as Christ** exercises his headship over **the church**. Christ's headship is loving and self-sacrificing. He gave his all on the cross that he might be **the Savior** of the church. So a husband earns the respect and love of his wife by tirelessly working in her best interest. It is not difficult for a woman to be in submission to a husband who, even in small measure, can imitate the self-sacrifice of Jesus.

#### 3. Illustration (5:24):

A wife's submission to her husband should be joyous, complete, and voluntary, just as the submission of **the church** to her head, even Jesus. **Everything** does not mean absolutely everything. If a husband should ask his wife to do what is immoral, illegal, or harmful to her or to her children, she is not under obligation to submit to his will. In this case, the principle of Acts 5:29 applies, viz., obey God rather than man.

### C. Application to Husbands (5:25-33):

#### 1. First standard of a husband's love (5:25-27):

##### a. Christ's love for the church (5:25):

Christians **husbands** are urged to **love your wives**. This is not speaking of an emotional love--the Hollywood kind--but of the deep-seated, thorough-going and willful desire always to act in the best interest of the wife. The husband's love for his wife is to like that love that Christ demonstrated for **the church**. The main characteristic of the husband's love for his wife is self-sacrifice. It is compared to the love of Christ, whereby he **gave himself up** for the church. A love more excellent than this does not exist.

b. *Christ's plan for the church (5:26)*: Christ's immediate purpose in giving himself up for the church was so that he might **make her** (the church) **holy**. He did this by delivering her from the guilt and pollution of sin. The **washing with water** refers to baptism. Obedience in baptism brings cleansing from sin because we are

baptized into Christ's death where he shed his blood. Baptism occurs in connection with the spoken **word** of God. The idea is that baptism is not a mere bath. It must be explained to the candidate and understood by him.

c. *Christ's goal for the church (5:27):*

Christ's ultimate purpose in giving himself up for the church was that he might have a spotless bride when he returns. The church is betrothed to Christ, and so can even now be called the bride of Christ. The wedding feast, however, is still future. Any bride wants to be her most beautiful for her husband on the wedding day. Christ himself readies the church in order **to present her to himself**. The church owes all her beauty to her bridegroom. On the wedding day, when the bride is at last manifested, she will be observed to be brilliant in purity.

## 2. **Second standard of a husband's love (5:28-33):**

a. *Principle (5:28):*

The husband is the head of the wife, so she, in a sense, is his body, just as the church is the body of Christ. The two are so intimately related that to love one's wife is to love one's self. Just as Christ helps his body, the church, along toward sanctification and holiness, so a husband should also help his wife toward these goals. This he can do by relieving her of routine labors from time to time so that she might focus her energies on building up her spiritual life.

b. *Illustration (5:29-30):*

As a rule, men do not disregard and disrespect their own bodies. A normal man certainly does not abuse *his body*. If the wife is the body of her husband, then he owes her respect, nurture and care. Again the model for the husband is Christ. He is constantly watching over his church. Each individual believer is part of that **body** for which Christ is so concerned. Each of us can be assured that our lives are precious to him because we are part of his body.

## 3. **Third standard of a husband's love (5:31-32):**

a. *Marriage unity (5:31):*

Paul recites from Genesis the three basic laws for marriage. First, there is the *law of leaving*. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24. God instituted marriage. He designed the marriage bond to be stronger than any other human tie, even that of parent and child. For this reason, God has ordained that **a man** should **leave** home in order to start a new family with the wife of his choice. Second, there is the *law of cleaving or uniting*. The man and the woman of his choice unite in the sacred union of marriage. People should not marry until they are sufficiently independent no longer to depend, economically, psychologically or in any other way upon the parents of either the man or the woman. Third, there is the *law of weaving*. **The two will become one flesh**. The primary reference here is to the sexual union that follows the covenant and commitment of marriage. The two literally become **one flesh** in that act. The language here excludes polygamy. Of course in a Christian marriage, the physical union celebrates the deeper spiritual union between the couple--union of mind, heart, purpose, etc.

b. *Illustration (5:32):*

How two people become one in marriage **is a profound mystery**. This earthly marriage relationship points to an even greater **mystery**, viz., the relationship between Christ and the church. That Christ would leave heaven to come here in order to carve out of rebellious humanity a people to claim as his bride is a **mystery**. That he would unite with his bride in intimate union by the indwelling presence of his Spirit is an even deeper **mystery**. The blissful relationship between Christ and the church should be reflected here on earth in the marriage of a Christian man and woman.

## 4. **Summary (5:33):**

In view of the fact that Christian marriage should reflect the Christ-church union, Paul makes this last appeal on the subject. A Christian husband has the obligation to **love his wife**. This obligation is universal, for it applies to **each one of you**. The obligation is specific, for each husband is to love **his** own **wife**, not someone else's. The obligation is on-going, for the Greek uses a tense that implies that this love is constant. The obligation is measured, for the husband is to love his wife **as he loves himself**, and no less. Thus he will always be looking out for her best interests, even as he always looks out for his own best interests. At the same time the Christian **wife** has the obligation to **respect her husband**. The **wife** should respond to her husband's love with total **respect**. She should never deliberately do anything that embarrasses her husband. She builds him up, rather than criticizes him for his failings.

#### D. Application to Children (6:1-3):

##### 1. Principle (6:1):

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord...** This admonition assumes that *children* will be present when this epistle is read to the church. The obedience that *children* should render to their parents should be done out of reverence to the Lord. **In the Lord** indicates that this obedience is not absolute. Children should not do anything that is illegal, immoral or against God's specific commands even if told to do so by their parents. Many reasons could be given for children obeying parents. Here, however, it is *right* for children to obey their parents simply because the Lord commands such obedience. It is the Lord alone who determines *right* and wrong. To disobey parents is to displease Jesus.

##### 2. Motivation (6:2-3):

###### a. Authority (6:2):

The fifth of the Ten Commandments stressed the responsibility of all children, old and young, to *honor* their parents. While children are living at home they *honor* their **father and mother** by obeying their instructions. Honoring parents includes showing respect and consideration. It also includes taking responsibility for elderly parents who are no longer able to care for themselves.

###### b. Reward (6:3):

There was a promise attached to the command to honor parents. As a rule, disobedience to godly parents shortens life. On the other hand, honoring parents leads to *long life* as a rule. Obviously obedience is not the only factor affecting life span; but listening to the guidance of godly parents definitely can affect how long we live. For example, if godly parents warn against drinking and drugs, and a teenager disregards that instruction, his life may indeed be cut short.

#### E. Application to Fathers (6:4):

Christian fathers are told: **do not exasperate your children.** Children may become frustrated by (1) inconsistent discipline; (2) favoritism; (3) over protectiveness; (4) abusive criticism; (5) neglect; (6) physical cruelty; (7) mockery; etc. Godly parents have the responsibility of training a child in Christian values. The most important thing parents can do for their children is bringing them to the Lord. **Training** refers to discipline by means of rules and regulations, rewards, and when necessary, punishments. It refers primarily to what is *done* to the child. **Instruction** refers to training by means of the spoken word, whether that word is teaching, warning, or encouragement. It refers primarily to what is *said* to the child. **Of the Lord** refers to the quality of the training and instruction. This must be *Christian* training. This certainly includes giving the child a proper example.

#### F. Application to Slaves (6:5-6):

Paul took the social structure as he found it and endeavored by peaceful means to change it for the better.

##### 1. Mandate (6:5):

Slaves have the same obligation toward their master that children have toward their parents in verse 1. The reference to **earthly masters** reminds Christian slaves that they have a greater Master, even Jesus. Paul stipulates three ways the slaves are to obey their masters. First, they are to *obey respectfully*. Paul wants these slaves to conduct themselves so that their masters will be able to see what the Christian faith can accomplish within the hearts of all who profess it. It is difficult to be respectful toward one who has earned no respect. Yet that is what God calls upon slaves to do. The *fear* is that they might give in to negative feelings, and thus destroy their witness to their masters. Second, slaves are to *obey sincerely*. **Sincerity of heart** means with an undivided mind, with integrity and uprightness. Third, slaves are to *obey devoutly just as they would obey Christ*. Their obedience to their masters should be rendered as unto Christ himself. The obedience of the slave thus becomes a religious duty.

##### 2. Manner (6:6-7):

###### a. Serve not as man pleasers (6: 6):

They must not *obey* just when they are being observed, but even when they are given a task and left alone. Their obedience was not a game to be played at times for personal gain. They needed to serve their masters energetically at all times. They are to serve **like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart**. Slaves must follow the example of the Servant of the Lord, even Jesus. He was obedient even unto death on the cross.

In effect, people cease to be slaves when they see themselves as working for the Lord, and not primarily for men.

b. *Serve as Christ pleasers (6:7):*

Slaves are to **serve wholeheartedly**. Whatever task they perform they should act *as if* they *were serving the Lord, not men*. No Christian would try to cheat Christ in service. Christians cheerfully and willingly carry out the wishes of the Lord. This is the manner in which Christian slaves are to serve their masters.

3. *Motivation (6:8):*

With God there is no partiality. In the final analysis both master and slave will have to give an account to the Lord. The **good** that we do, as measured by God, will be rewarded in that day. Social position on earth will have no bearing in that judgment. **The Lord will reward** those services that were rendered in love and obedience to him. Yet even this **reward** is by grace, not merit. By grace all believers, whether slave or master, receive a reward for the good they have done.

**G. Application to Masters (6:9):**

Christian slave owners are commanded to promote the welfare of their slaves. They should show the same interest in the affairs of their slaves that they hope the slave will show in the affairs of his master. Paul commands the Christian slave owners not to **threaten** their slaves. The masters should deal with their slaves positively, not negatively.

3. *A solemn consideration (6:9c): since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.* Christian slaves have a great defender in the Lord. Should the masters abuse their slaves, they face the wrath of that heavenly **Master**. He will show no **favoritism** in the day of judgment. Earthly wealth and standing will not matter when men stand before the final Judge.

**VII. Body Preparation (6:10-17):**

**A. General Principle (6:10):**

Apart from Christ we can accomplish nothing. We take our strength for spiritual struggle from the **mighty power** that God manifested in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and when he raised us from the death of sin (see 2:1).

**B. Need for Armor (6:11-13):**

1. **The devil's schemes (6:11):**

God is infinitely superior in power to the devil. His cause will not fail. But individual battles must be fought. Some individuals do fail in these battles because they do not avail themselves of the **armor** that God supplies to his children. The **devil's schemes** and tactics are crafty, for he is the great deceiver. Only when every piece of God's armor is in place can we withstand the attacks of Satan.

2. **The devil's supporters (6:12):**

The devil has his supporters both in the physical world and in the spiritual world. **Flesh and blood** refers to human opponents of Christianity. We do not fight only against frail men, though sometimes Satan uses men to assault Christians. Ultimately our **struggle** (lit., *hand to hand combat*) is with the invisible hosts of darkness. The demons or angels who follow Satan are here described. They are of various ranks (**rulers; authorities**) and **powers**. **This dark world** refers to Satan's kingdom. Demonic spirits rule the world of ignorance, sin and sadness. The demonic hosts are **the spiritual forces of evil** against with whom we engage in combat on a daily basis. **Heavenly realms** refers to the region above the earth, but below the heaven of the redeemed. See on 2:2.

3. **Need to stand (6:13):**

In view of the fact that we struggle against powerful evil forces, we need protection. Again Paul calls for Christians to **put on** all of the spiritual armor that God has provided. We must not allow the enemy to find us defenseless. At some point we will face **the day of evil**, i.e., severe trial, a moment when the devil and his minions will attack mercilessly. We never know when Satan's attacks will come. When we face them, we must **stand** firm, hold our ground, and even attempt to gain ground against him.

### C. Provision of Armor (6:14-17):

Paul uses a Roman soldier in full battle gear to illustrate the Christian in his conflict with Satan. **The belt** held the tunic close to the **waist**. **The breastplate** and sword were attached to it. **The belt** was basic. For the Christian warrior **truth** is the belt, i.e., sincerity of mind and heart; removal of all hypocrisy. Hypocrites are open to all kind of attack. Sincere people avoid such criticism because they are honestly trying to serve God as best they can. **The breastplate** covered the body from neck to thigh, both front and rear. Spiritually, the breastplate is **righteousness**, i.e., devout and holy living. If we are not trying to live the Christian life we have no defense to offer to Satan's attacks. A soldier was not prepared to fight until he had put on his protective shoes. Roman soldiers wore shoes thickly studded with sharp nails that enabled them to move quickly over all kinds of roads. Christians have experienced the sense **of peace** with God that comes from accepting the gospel. With this sense **of peace** with God, a person displays **readiness** to take on the worst attacks of Satan. **The shield** (4 ft. by 2.5 ft.) protected the body against **flaming arrows** dipped in flammable material and set on fire. The **evil one** is Satan. The fiery missiles of Satan include tribulation, suffering, persecution, etc. Only when we look away from self and look to God in **faith** can we overcome the doubt, greed, lust, etc. that Satan's fiery missiles engender. Just as a **helmet** is accepted by a soldier out of the hands of his commanding officer, so **salvation** must be accepted from our commander, even Christ. In the midst of hardship and persecution the assurance of **salvation**, both present and future keeps the Christian soldier fighting when he otherwise might give up the fight. The soldier used his **sword** for both defensive and offensive purposes. The gospel, **word of God**, or Bible is the Christian's **sword**. The Holy Spirit uses that word to bring conviction in the hearts of sinners. By using this **sword**, Paul had won many impressive victories for Christ.

## IV. CONCLUDING WORDS (6:18-24):

### I. Requests of the Ephesians (6:18-20):

#### A. General Requests (6:18):

Makes four general requests from his readers. First, he asks them to *pray on all occasions (6:18a): **And pray in the Spirit on all occasions...*** We should not wait for some great calamity to pray. We should claim every occasion as an opportunity to communicate with the Father. We do not have to limit our prayers to "in the church." We are **in the Holy Spirit** wherever we are, and that is holy ground. To pray **in the Spirit** is to pray with his help and in harmony with his will as revealed in God's word. Second, Paul asks the Ephesians to *pray all types of prayers*. Different occasions call forth different types of prayer: cries for help, confessions of sin, profession of faith, praise, thanksgiving, intercession for others, etc. We should learn to employ every type of prayer. Third, Paul calls upon them to *pray with all seriousness*. We should not be listless and indifferent to what is going on in our homes, in our towns, and in the lives of our fellow Christians. We should be **alert** to prayer needs. Those who find it difficult to spend much time in prayer are those who pay no attention to the needs of others in the light of God's word. Short, memorized prayers must be replaced by earnest, specific and heart-felt petition to the Father. Fourth, Paul asks the Ephesians to *pray for all the saints*. The greatest prayers are those we pray unselfishly for the needs of others. We must not restrict ourselves to praying for just our friends. In prayer we must not forget the young, the old, the Jew, the Gentile, the boss, the working man, etc.

#### B. Specific Requests (6:19-20):

##### 1. Pray for preachers personally (6:19):

Preachers need all the prayers they can get! In regard to praying for preachers the text makes four points. First, pray for preachers specifically. Paul especially felt the need for prayer. He was not too proud to request the prayers of others. He knew that as a leader in the church he carried a heavy load. Yet he was aware of his own weakness. He stood in need of divine guidance and strength every step of the way. Though he is in Roman custody, Paul does not ask for prayers for his release. Rather his desire is that his circumstances will lead to the furtherance of the gospel. Second, *pray for inspired preaching*. Paul prayed for a message. Certainly preachers need divine help in formulating their message--in presenting accurately, honestly, and sincerely the word that God would have them bring on a given occasion. Third, *pray for fearless preaching*. Paul asked them to pray

that he always will have the courage to proclaim God's message with courage. Fourth, *pray for faithful preaching*. The message that was the center of Paul's preaching, and the reason he had engendered such opposition among the Jews, was ***the mystery of the gospel***. This refers to a blessed truth that would have remained a mystery had not Christ come to reveal the answer. The now revealed mystery is that in Christ there is salvation full and free for everyone who embraces him by faith, both Jew and Gentile.

2. *Pray for worthy preaching (6:20):*

As he wrote these words, Paul was a prisoner in Rome. He was secured to a Roman soldier by a chain around his waist. His condition, however, is nothing of which to be ashamed. He is ***an ambassador*** of Christ, a representative of the King of Kings. He must never forget whom he represents. He asks for prayers that his preaching will always be worthy of the Great King. Again he asks for prayers for his fearlessness, repeating the request of the preceding verse.

**II. News for the Ephesians (6:21-22):**

**A. Commendation for the Messenger (6:21a): *Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord...***

*Tychicus* was one of Paul's best friends. He came from the province of Asia. He had accompanied Paul at the end of the third missionary journey when the apostle was bringing an offering to the Christians in Jerusalem.

*Tychicus* was a ***dear brother***. He had spent some time in Rome with Paul during his detainment there. The two men had become close friends. Furthermore, *Tychicus* was a ***faithful servant***, i.e., loyal to his Master in every respect. He would be the right person to carry out the mission Paul was about to delegate to him. The brethren in Asia would be concerned about Paul. *Tychicus* would bring them up to date, and ease their minds about Paul's well being. Just knowing about Paul's welfare would be an encouragement. This letter itself would also furnish encouragement.

**III. Wishes for the Ephesians (6:23-24):**

**A. Three Wonderful Blessings (6:23):**

***Peace*** is harmony among brothers. ***Love*** is the unselfish concern always to act in what is the best interest of others. ***Faith*** is trusting in God. The three blessings of life are made possible directly or indirectly by ***God the Father*** and our ***Lord Jesus Christ***.

**B. Final Blessing (6:24):**

Everything that God does for us is the result of his marvelous ***grace***--treating us better than we deserve. That ***grace*** is especially evident in the lives of those who ***love*** Jesus with unconditional ***love*** that cannot be shaken by any of the circumstances of life.