

# **Walking In The Lord's Way**

**A Class Commentary on Ephesians**

**by**

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## Lesson 1

# Introduction

### Ephesus

Ephesus was a part of the Roman province of Asia. Charles Pfeiffer, in *Baker's Bible Atlas*, tells us "Four districts of western Asia Minor--Caria, Lydia, Mysia and Phrygia -- were united as the Province of Asia. About 560 B. C., the city that was later to be called Ephesus was under the rule of Croesus, king of Lydia. In 546 B. C. it was conquered by Cyrus and became a part of the Persian Empire. Alexander the Great took it for the Greeks and Attalus II, king of Pergamos, willed it to the Roman Empire at his death. In 190, the Romans formed the province of Asia and made Ephesus a part of it. Much of the Roman communication with the East went through the city and ships travelling the coast both North and South bound would often stop there.

E. J. Banks, in his article in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, tells us Pergamos was the capital city of Asia, thus the center of Roman religion and government. However, Ephesus' location made it the commercial center and it was the home of the temple of the great local goddess, Diana. Seven times the temple was destroyed by fire. Each time it was rebuilt on a larger and more ornate scale than before. In New Testament times, it was 425 feet long and 220 feet wide. Its colonnade was 60 feet high and was supported by 127 pillars. Some of its columns were provided by the wealthy king Croesus and pilgrims from much of the oriental world brought their

wealth to it. Eventually, it owned valuable lands, controlled the fisheries and became a banking center. Many beautiful art pieces were displayed in it, including paintings and statuary. Banks also says a large number of artisans were employed by the temple to make statues to sell to temple visitors.

### **How Christianity Came to Ephesus**

New Testament Christianity may have come to the city as a result of the sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:9), but it was Priscilla and Aquila, with Paul, who really began to take the city for Christ. In Acts 16:6, we learn Paul was forbidden to preach in Asia while he was on his second missionary journey. On his return trip, he did make a brief stop in the city and left Priscilla and Aquila there (Acts 18:18-21).

Apollos, an eloquent Jewish preacher from Alexandria who was mighty in the scriptures, arrived at Ephesus sometime after Paul's departure (Acts 18:24-25). As McGarvey notes, he would have had to be quite a student of God's word since he was wholly dependent upon his personal knowledge of the scriptures to make his arguments, while the apostles could gain inspired insights from the Holy Spirit. Apollos taught such truth that he caused people to follow Jesus. Unfortunately, he did not know of Christ's baptism until Aquila and Priscilla taught him "the way of God more perfectly."

### **Paul Preached At Ephesus**

Remember, Paul had sailed from Ephesus to

Caesarea, gone up to Jerusalem, down to Antioch, then all over Phrygia and Galatia strengthening churches. In Acts 19, he returned to Ephesus and had to teach some of Apollos' early converts the difference between John's baptism and Christ's. After which, they were baptized in Jesus' name (Acts 19:1-7). Paul, as was his custom, began by preaching in the synagogue for three months. When strong opposition arose, Paul and the disciples separated themselves and began a two year program of daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus and all Asia heard of the Lord Jesus (19:8-12). All of Asia was effected by the works going on in Ephesus.

Magic played a part in the worship of Diana. There were some mystic formulas inscribed on the base of the statue and monograms were manufactured to be sold as charms. After hearing the gospel, a large number came together and burned their books on magic (19:13- 20). Demetrius, and other members of the silversmith guild that made silver shrines for Diana, began a riot against the Christians. Paul's friends kept him from entering the theatre where they assembled and the town clerk was eventually able to disperse the crowd (19:21-41). Having completed three years of work, Paul then said farewell to the disciples and went into Macedonia (20:1, 31).

### **Further Inspired Communication**

Later, Paul called the elders from Ephesus to Miletus and gave them instructions on overseeing the work of the church in their city (20:15-38). Paul charged Timothy with the job of opposing false teachers who began to work in Ephesus (I Timothy 1:3, 20). Christ addressed

the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7.)

The letter to the Ephesians contains clear references showing Paul to be the author (1:1; 3:1). Thus, serious challenge has never been made to Paul's authorship. Some early manuscripts, such as the Chester Beatty Papyrus, omit the phrase "that are at Ephesus." It is possible this was a circular letter sent from Paul by the hand of Tychicus to all the churches of Asia, as some suggest. However, it could also be that later copyists omitted Ephesus. Such would have allowed them to substitute the name of the group to whom they might read the letter. In either case, the Ephesian brethren would have heard its contents.

There is no doubt Paul was a prisoner when he wrote the epistle (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Since Tychicus bore this letter and the one to the Colossians, we believe they were written at about the same time (6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8). Likely, Paul was in his first Roman imprisonment and we can give it a date around A.D. 62.

Since there is no internal reference to actual happenings, Paul's purpose for writing cannot positively be found. Coffman notes, "Thirty times, the expression 'in Christ,' or its equivalent, is used, providing the most definitive and specific statement of the blessings 'in Christ' to be found in the NT." Such challenges us to greater thanksgiving and can prepare us to face life's storms with joy in our hearts.



6. What two places served as locations for Paul's preaching in the city?

7. How did the people respond to the preaching of the gospel?

8. What caused riots in the city?

9. What further contact do we know Ephesus had with inspired messengers?

10. Who wrote the Ephesian letter? Who delivered it?

11. What do you suppose was the letter's purpose?

## Lesson 2

# Giving Thanks for Redemption

Ephesians 1:1-14

### Greetings

Paul wrote this letter as one who was specially chosen and sent by the Lord himself (Acts 9:10-16). He wrote to the saints in Ephesus. A saint is one sanctified, or set apart, for God's service (1 Corinthians 6:11). Sanctification is an ongoing process God is completing in us as long as we are on this earth (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The "faithful" would be the same group of people as the saints (1:1). Notice, their location is "in Christ Jesus," an expression which is used some thirty-six times in this epistle. Since the Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), we conclude being in Christ is synonymous with being in the church, which seems to be supported by verses 22-23.

Grace, or some form of it, was the typical Greek greeting, while peace was the normal Hebrew greeting. The Father is the source of unmerited favor for lost mankind and that grace produces both an inner peace and a desire to live in peace with others. (1 Peter 5:10; Hebrews 13:20; Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 5:43-48.) God's grace and the peace it brings to us is extended to man through his Son, so Paul appropriately says it is from God and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2).



## **Spiritual Blessings Are In Christ**

We owe God thanksgiving and praise because of all the spiritual blessings we have in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The expression "in the heavenly places" occurs four other times in this epistle (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). Here, it is qualified by the words "in Christ" which suggest to us "the church, which is His body" (1:22-23). Thus, we believe to be in the church is to be in Christ's body and to be in Christ is to be in heavenly places. The church is the home of the saved on earth and its Lord is in heaven, so we are in heavenly places in two senses (1:3; Acts 2:47, 32-36).

If I want to be one of God's chosen ones, I must be in Christ. God chose only those who would meet his requirements for being "in him." Before God laid down the foundation of the world, he planned a means of saving man if he should sin. As Hendren notes, buying band-aids and keeping them in the cabinet does not make one's child receive a scrape or cut but it does prepare us for any eventuality. God's plan provided a means of those in Christ being set apart for his service without any lack. The love here mentioned could either be God's love in choosing a means of our being holy in Christ (John 3:16), or the love that motivates us to obedience so we might be made holy by the Father (1:4; John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

## **God's Sons By Adoption**

Under Roman law, a Roman citizen could take one not his child by birth and make him his child through a legal act properly attested to and witnessed. The child would thereby gain all the rights and privileges of a son in

the family. Similarly, those who because of their sinfulness were children of the devil can become children of God through the work of Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 8:1-17). All of this was, and is, accomplished in accord with what is pleasing to God. It should be noted that an adopted child is specially chosen, never becoming a son without forethought on the part of the father (1:5).

We become his adopted sons with the express purpose of praising and glorifying the Father and his great grace (Matthew 5:13-16). The words "has made" are in the past tense, which indicates God in a one time act made provision for our acceptance (Hebrews 9:28). Jesus' death stands as a one time sacrifice for our sins and can make us accepted in Christ Jesus, or "the Beloved" (Galatians 3:26-27). This can only happen in him (1:6).

### **Redeemed**

A redemption price is paid to buy something back. As Lipscomb says, in this case it is to rescue from bondage to the devil. It is in Christ and through his blood particularly, that we find release from, or forgiveness of, sins (Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Matthew 26:28; John 19:31-34; Romans 6:3-4). Coffman notes the word here used for forgiveness means "letting go" and is only used in Romans 4:7 and Colossians 1:14. This is done through the great wealth of God's unmerited favor bestowed upon sinful man (1:7).

Out of the riches of His grace, God went beyond our need and provided wisdom, or the full knowledge of the divine plan of salvation. He also provided prudence, which

is the understanding of that plan (1:8). The plan was a mystery because it was covered or hidden. (2 Corinthians 3:9-18.) The mystery was uncovered in Christ as it pleased God (1:9).

### **God's Purpose**

God was not rushed, or delayed, in the carrying out of his purpose. Instead, when the time was ripe, full or ready, God sent Jesus. He sent him to die, shed his blood, be buried and raised. Then, all the things that had been divided by man's rebellion could be united in Christ (1:10).

There are several things which might be included in the time being readied for the Lord. The Jews had seen their inability to live sinless. It was also obvious the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Romans 3:10, 23; 7:7-25; Hebrews 10:1-4). The Gentiles had seen the failure of their wisdom and the downward spiral into a depraved existence that had resulted from ignoring God and exalting man's wisdom. The Greek language had become the near universal language of the common mass. Rome had brought peace to much of the world through its conquests and had opened up highways for relative ease in travel.

### **A Divine Inheritance**

Paul went on to show the gathering together of the previous verses includes the Jews who had been God's chosen ones under Moses' law, thus he uses "we." The word "works" means God continually works. Notice, again it is those "in" Christ who will be a part of God's

prearranged plan. Any Jew who did what was necessary to be in him would be a part of God's scheme (1:11).

Man was created to glorify God (Ecclesiastes 12:13.) Such could only be accomplished through the coming of the Messiah who would set man free from sin. Faithful Jews had long hoped for the coming of the Messiah because of the prophecies God had made (Luke 2:22-39, especially 25 and 38). This is what Paul refers to when he speaks of those who had "first trusted (or hoped as the K.J.V. margin says) in Christ" (1:12).

### **The Spirit's Part In Man's Redemption**

If the "we" of verse 11 is the Jews, then, the "you" of 1:13 is the Gentiles. They too trusted in Christ once they heard the gospel preached and believed. In John 3:36, the A.S.V. has, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." By this very accurate translation, we are able to clearly see the word believe suggests obedience. Once that obedience is completed, God places his mark of ownership, which Paul identifies as the "Holy Spirit of promise," on those who are in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is like a down payment or guarantee that the Christian will be allowed to enter heaven. In 1:14, Paul uses "our" because this guarantee is for all in Christ, both Jew and Gentile. The redemption Christians still look forward to is that of our bodies from the tomb. When we come forth, it will of course be to the glory of God.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Give a brief description of the author and intended recipients of this letter.
2. In what sense are Christians said to be in heavenly places?
3. What did God do before he laid down the foundation of the world?
4. What was the purpose of adoption under Roman law? Who is God said to have adopted?
5. What purpose did God have for his adopted children?
6. What is a redemption price? What did Christ give as a redemption price?
7. What is wisdom? Prudence? How did God make it possible for Christians to have these?

8. Explain the meaning of "mystery"? Of what mystery is Paul speaking in Ephesians 1:9?

9. What facts make you think the time was ripe for the coming of Christ?

10. Where has God made an inheritance available?

11. Who were those who "first trusted" in Christ? In what sense can it be said they trusted in Christ when they did not know who he was?

12. Who else trusted in Christ? How did they show their trust?

13. What does the gift of the Holy Spirit guarantee for the Christian?

### Lesson 3

# Thanking God for the Ephesians

Ephesians 1:15-23

## Reason For Thanksgiving

We have already seen that Paul worked among them and so knew of them firsthand. Perhaps he had not seen any of them since he saw the elders when he called them to Miletus (Acts 20:17ff). However, he was thankful that he had heard of their faith which was rooted in the Lord, just as it should have been. He had also heard of their love of all the brethren, whether of high or low social standing, rich or poor, etc. (1:15).

Hearing of their faith and love moved Paul to thankful prayer. Notice, he did not cease to pray in their behalf. All Christians should be constantly praying, especially for our brethren (1:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Also, we should remember to be thankful in prayer (Philippians 4:6-7).

## A Prayer For Further Understanding

The prayer Paul started in the previous two verses is continued in 1:17. Lipscomb notes God is often referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:6; 4:5; 1 Chronicles 29:18; Acts 3:13). However, Paul now calls him "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is also the Father who by his glory raised Jesus from the dead. Of that

Father, Paul requests for the Ephesian brethren the ability to apply the knowledge they have received and fully understand the revelation they have been given.

Paul further prays that wisdom and revelation will touch a sensitive cord in the inner most man of each Ephesian Christian (Acts 26:16-18). Instead of being blind to the truth (Matthew 13:13-15), Paul wanted them to realize the wonderful blessings that were theirs. They had the forgiveness of sins. They enjoyed fellowship with Christ on earth. Their hope was for an eternal home in glory with the Father and the Son (1:18; 1 Timothy 1:13-15; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 1:3; 1 Peter 1:10-11).

### **God's Greatness**

To show God's ability to accomplish his purpose, Paul uses six different Greek words in describing his power. The word "exceeding" and "greatness" come from the original *huper-balo* and *megethos* respectively. According to Thayer, they mean "to transcend, surpass, exceed, excel" and "greatness". The word "power" comes from the Greek *dunamis*, which Thayer says is a power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or inherent power. "Working" is from *energeia*, describing superhuman power at work. *Isxus* is the Greek word for ability, strength, and might and is translated "mighty". The next "power" is from the Greek *kratos* and is often translated dominion because it suggests a power that rules (1:19). All of this power is directed toward the salvation of those who believe.

There are three ways Paul says God's greatness is seen. It was seen in the sending of Christ. His resurrection



from the dead being the ultimate evidence during the time Christ spent on earth (Romans 1:4; Acts 2:23-24). Further, God seated Jesus on the throne of power (1:20; Acts 2:24-36; Hebrews 1:3). He then gave Jesus authority over all other authorities both in this present world and the one to come (1:21; Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18).

It might be said there is a fourth way God showed his power in Christ, or at least an extension of the third. Jesus was made the ruling head of the church, with all phases of it being under his direction and authority (1 Peter 5:4). That church is synonymous with Christ's body. Later in the letter, Paul states there is only one body which plainly establishes the fact that there is only one church (4:4). The church makes Christ full, because it was his ultimate purpose to establish the church (Matthew 16:13-20). Also, in his coming and establishing the church Jesus fulfilled all God's purpose in all that he did, especially the redeeming of man (1:22-23).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What caused Paul to rejoice in reference to the Ephesian brethren?
2. What was his response to his rejoicing?
3. What did he pray God would give them?
4. List some of the ways Paul describes God's greatness.
5. How is God's power used in the Christian's behalf?

6. In what three ways is God's power seen in Christ?

7. What fourth thing might be another evidence of God's power as seen in Christ?

8. To what does Paul liken the church at the end of chapter 1?

9. What is Christ's relationship to the church? How should we respond to him in that relationship?

## Lesson 4

# Alive In Christ

Ephesians 2:1-10

### **The Condition of the Lost**

At the close of chapter 1, Paul told at least three ways God's power could be seen in Jesus. Through the same power he has made alive those who were spiritually dead, or separated from God, in trespasses and sins (Isaiah 59:1-2). That making alive is accomplished through the gospel by our being buried with Christ by baptism and raised up to walk in a new life (Romans 1:16; 6:3-4). All those who have been regenerated once lived as the worldly do, controlled by the devil, who is the ruler over all the evil forces that surround the earth like a dark mist. Satan works his evil through those who allow worldly thinking to control them (2:1-2; compare 2 Corinthians 4:4; John 14:30; 16:11).

Prior to yielding to Christ, all men lived according to their fleshly desires and thoughts. Wicked ways were followed until they became second nature. Such living for self makes one a child of the devil, because he takes on his characteristics, and calls for God's wrath (Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23, 1:18-32). Sinful man, then, faces inevitable destruction if his position is not altered (2:3).

### **In Christ Jesus**

Just as God's justice and righteousness called for wrath upon sinful man, his abundant mercy flowing out of

his multi-faceted love caused him to make provision for lost mankind. He made that provision while Jew and Gentile were dead in sin, or spiritually separated from God. Those made alive through baptism have had God's unmerited favor bestowed upon them and been saved through one action which was completed in the watery grave (2:4-5). Scripturally speaking, salvation can be in the future, based upon one's obedience to the Lord's will; in the present because of an act recently completed; or in heaven, the final home of the redeemed (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47; 1 Thessalonians 5:8-10; Hebrews 9:28). Thus, one can be spoken of as being a part of those who have been saved from their past sins yet still needing to act in a manner necessary to their ultimate salvation in heaven (1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Acts 8:18-24).

Everyone who has been buried with Christ and come up out of the waters of baptism has been raised from spiritual death (Colossians 1:12-13). Remember, the church is God's heavenly kingdom on earth (1:3). When one is raised from the waters of baptism, he is placed in Christ Jesus, or in heavenly places, which is the church. God's ultimate design for those "in Christ Jesus" is to show them clearly the great wealth of his grace in heaven. The "ages to come" appear to this writer to refer to the eons we will spend in heaven. Throughout that unending span of time we will be constantly reminded of God's great unmerited favor for us by the joys which will surround us (2:6-7).

### **Saved By Grace**

Notice salvation is not by grace nor faith alone.

There is no way man could earn his salvation, so it is said here to be by the unmerited favor of God. God's grace is extended to all men who will accept that which is offered (Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 22:17). Man's acceptance comes through faith. Coffman suggests this actually may be "the faith". Since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we conclude that faith is God's gift to man whether it is the sum of all that is believed or it is the response to what God has said (Romans 10:17).

Therefore, it is not by works of merit that we are saved and we have no reason for a feeling of personal accomplishment in our salvation. Our salvation was procured by the death of God's Son on Calvary and we must do God's will to receive it. God outlined the works we are to perform to receive his great gift. Clearly, we do not act so as to save ourselves but to satisfy the Father's requirements (2:8-9).

It is through God's working that we become Christians. We are made new creatures in Christ to perform the good works he has designed for us to do. He prepared works for Christians to do even before the first Christian was created in Christ. If we want to be what God intended for us to be, we must do his bidding. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). A living faith is a faith that works (2:10; Galatians 5:6; James 2:17-18).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is the condition of those living in sin?
2. Who is the "prince of the power of the air"?
3. How does man live prior to yielding to Christ?
4. What makes one a child of the devil?
5. What should those who live only for self expect to receive?
6. Describe the means God uses to make a man be "alive."

7. In what senses does scripture use the word "saved"?  
Give an example of each.

8. Is it possible to be saved in one sense and yet still be in jeopardy of being lost? Explain.

9. Where does God place those who he has made alive?

10. How is man saved?

11. Does your previous answer suggest works are unnecessary for one to be pleasing to God? Use the verses of our study along with other supporting scripture to support your answer.



## Lesson 5

# One Body In Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22

### **The Gentiles' Condition Without Christ**

Anyone who has been converted as an adult, especially if he lived a very wicked life, would do well from time to time to think back to the life he led prior to becoming a Christian. Such will give great cause for thankfulness for all God has done for us. The Gentiles of Ephesus naturally did not bear the physical mark of the covenant made with the Jews. Because of this, they were called the uncircumcision by those who bore the physical mark. Of course, the cutting away of the physical flesh was accomplished with human hands (2:11).

A thought provoking description of the Gentiles' condition prior to Christ's coming is presented in 2:12. As Paul has already shown, all spiritual blessings are in Christ (1:3), so to be separated from him is to live in spiritual deprivation. In the commonwealth of Israel, God was the ruler and the Jews were his subjects. Certain privileges were theirs as God's people.

An alien is a stranger or foreigner who has no right to the privileges of citizenship. God made great promises to Abraham of which the Gentiles did not know, much less enjoy (Genesis 12:1-3). How sad to face this life's suffering, pain, sorrow, sickness and eventual death with nothing more to look forward to, yet such was the state of the Gentiles outside of Christ. The world, of course, cannot

exist without God (Colossians 1:16-17). However, it can so spurn him as to be without all the rich blessings he provides (2:12).

### **Made Nigh By the Blood of Christ**

Like stepping into the light of midday from a room with no windows, the Gentiles who obeyed the gospel drew nigh to God. This also brought near all the blessings they once so greatly lacked. This could only be accomplished through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ (2:13; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Christ made peace between man and the God against whom he had rebelled. This was accomplished through the blood of Christ that cleansed man from sin and allowed him once more to draw nigh to God. Thereby, peace was also achieved between man (Jew) and man (Gentile). The wall that once stood between them was circumcision and the ordinances for which it stood. They were taken out of the way in Christ's death on the cross (2:14; Colossians 2:8-15; Hebrews 9:14-17).

### **Unity In Christ**

Jesus became a man so that the law of Moses with all its commands and ordinances could be put out of the way. This was done by causing it to cease being a law in force. Thus, where there had been two bodies of people, Jew and Gentile, there would now be only one. The two were able to be at peace (2:15).

Man's sin stood between him and God, actually

making him an enemy of the Father (Isaiah 59:1-2). Jesus came to make an offering for sin so that Jew and Gentile would have a way to again be friends with God, or reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:19). This reconciliation takes place in the one body, which Paul has already identified as the church, by Christ's death and blood shed on the cross (Acts 20:28). Christ's resurrection was the means of destroying the reason for man's being an enemy, sin, and ridding him of its consequences, death (2:16; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

### **Peace Proclaimed By Christ**

Christ proclaimed his fervent desire for peace in his death on the cross. Then, he sent the apostles into all the world with the message of peace (Luke 24:45-48). Just as the Holy Spirit was to speak the message he heard instead of words of his own, so the apostles proclaimed the message of Christ (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). We might well say Jesus preached the message of peace through the apostles (2:17; Hebrews 2:3-4.)

Our means of approach, or access, to the Father is through the Son. The Holy Spirit directs us in that approach through the words of the Bible. The same approach is open to Jew and Gentile, which shows there is no more division (2:18; Acts 10:34-35; 15:7-9; Galatians 3:28-29; Romans 1:14-17).

Foreigners who are just passing through do not have the same privileges as citizens. This was especially true during Rome's dominance of the world. Paul says in Christ Jew and Gentile are fellow citizens. All of the sanctified

therefore enjoy the attendant blessings of citizenship in heaven's kingdom, the church. The church is also here called God's family, which brings forth a number of beautiful images of loving relationships (2:19).

### **God's Temple**

The church is a building with individual Christians laid as its stones on the foundation of Christ (1 Peter 2:5). The apostles and prophets of the first century were the ones who proclaimed Jesus as the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:13-20). There are two different thoughts on the cornerstone. Lipscomb describes it as a massive stone off of which two lines of the building are formed. It being perfectly square would be imperative to a well-formed structure. However, others believed it to refer to the stone which holds together the roof or a supporting arch. In any case, this stone is a key part of the structure without which the building could not take form. Such a stone perfectly represents Christ (2:20).

Christians must be united to form a dwelling place for God. Also, they must be united "in the Lord" to be acceptable for God to inhabit. In Christ, Christians are built together to form a suitable dwelling place for God. Evidently, God occupies this dwelling in the form of the Holy Spirit. Knowing we are God's dwelling place should make us very careful to have proper associations and keep ourselves free from sin's defilement (2:21-22; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. To continue to fully appreciate the blessings we have in Christ, what would you suggest Christians do?

2. What five negative things does Paul use to describe Gentiles prior to the coming of Christ?

3. Where and by what means was this changed?

4. Why did Jesus become a man?

5. Why was reconciliation between God and man necessary?

6. How and where does reconciliation take place?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. In what ways did Christ proclaim the gospel of peace?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How can all men now approach God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Compare 2:12 and 19. What blessings are available to citizens of the kingdom of heaven which do not belong to those outside Christ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Discuss Paul's description of the church as a building. What lessons can we learn from such a description?

## Lesson 6

# Paul Proclaimed the Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-13

### A Prisoner in Christ's Service

Paul begins a prayer in 3:1, but immediately digresses. He does not return to his prayer until verse 14. Because Jew and Gentile were built together on the one foundation, Paul was ready to give thanks to the Father. He identifies himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" because it was in His service that he was taken captive. Further, that captivity was being used by God to advance the cause of Christ, particularly in the Gentile world (6:20; Philemon 13; Acts 20:22-24; 21:13; 28:20).

The word "if" in 3:2 would be better rendered "since" or "seeing that." The Ephesians knew Paul's commission from Christ particularly pertained to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:7-9). He was God's ambassador to tell of the wondrous grace available to all in Christ.

### God Made Known the Mystery

Christ revealed both the plan of salvation and his plan for Paul to tell others about it (Galatians 1:11-17; Acts 26:15-18). Paul says he wrote a few words before about the mystery. He may be referring to his earlier mention of the mystery in this book (1:9), or another letter we do not have.

Paul's purpose in telling them about the plan of salvation, which once was covered but now had been revealed, was that they might understand the ultimate meaning of the inspired writings when they studied them (3:3-4).

God uncovered his plan part by part. The inspired men who received God's messages longed to know their full meaning. However, that was reserved for those of the Christian age (1 Peter 1:10-12). The apostles and prophets of the New Testament were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They knew of God's plan to save all men, both Jew and Gentile, through Jesus Christ (3:5).

The Jews had long considered themselves God's people. Now that the mystery was made known, Paul could also tell the Gentiles who obeyed that they were God's people in Christ Jesus. In fact, this was a great part of the mystery revealed to the inspired apostles and prophets. "Fellow heirs" means the Gentiles were now considered part of God's family. Of course, the body is the church, as was observed in 1:22-23. The great promise in Christ is a new life because of his shed blood which purchased the remission of our sin (3:6; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38).

### **Paul's Mission**

Paul considered his mission to the Gentiles a special favor bestowed upon him by God. This came about by the working of God's power both in saving Paul and in giving him the needed strength to carry out his work (3:7). The apostle felt unworthy of his great mission especially because he had persecuted the church (1 Corinthians 15:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:12-17). The riches of salvation in



Christ are so vast they cannot be mapped out or fully explored (3:8).

Paul also wanted the Gentiles to see the gospel is truly for all men without respect to race, color or sex (Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 16:15; Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28; Romans 1:14-16). Each man's share, or fellowship, of the mystery may have to do with the salvation each is offered in Christ. Or, it may refer to the partnership we all, Jew and Gentile, have in the church. God's greatness is certainly seen in his creation of all we see and know by Jesus. It was such a great God who lovingly planned for our redemption and kept that plan ready until the time was right to unveil it (3:9).

### **God's Wisdom As Seen in the Mystery**

God's wisdom is many sided and can only be understood as he reveals it. This is true for angels as well as men. At the time of Paul's writing, God's great plan for the redemption of man had been made known to men and angels in the church (3:10). God's eternal intent was at last taken to completion in Christ Jesus the master of the church. No last minute revision is found in Paul's thinking. Instead, God's plan unfolds just as he intended before the worlds were formed (3:11).

In the margin of the A.S.V., we have "through the faith of him." Jesus faithfully followed the will of the Father when he gave up his life on the cross of Calvary (Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 10:5-10; 9:11-14, 22-28). His faithful sacrifice gives us boldness, which Summers says means "freedom to speak," and "access," which he

says, "may also be translated 'introduction.' The Greek term expresses the idea of one's being led into the presence of another. It was used in Paul's day of one who was introduced into the presence of royalty." Jesus' sacrifice gives us freedom to speak in the very presence of God through prayer (3:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

### **Thoughts On the Apostle's Bondage**

Paul was willing to suffer the hardships of Roman imprisonment if the gospel could be furthered by his chains. (Philippians 1:12-14.) He did not want the Ephesian brethren to give up because of his suffering in bonds. This was especially true since more Gentiles were being given an opportunity to learn of God's great plan. Also, as the last verse would indicate, though he was chained, Paul was still free to approach God's throne (3:13).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think Paul describes himself as "the prisoner of Jesus Christ?"
2. What commission did Christ give Paul? List supporting verses.
3. What is the "mystery" Paul speaks of?
4. How did God choose to uncover his plan?
5. How can Gentiles become a part of God's people?  
What good results from being in God's family?

6. Why do you think Paul felt unworthy of his mission?

7. Where can one find the ultimate elimination of discrimination?

8. How does Paul describe God's wisdom? How can men understand it?

9. What does the faith of Christ have to do with our approach to God?

10. Why was Paul willing to suffer hardships in bondage?

## Lesson 7

# Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21

### An Introduction to Paul's Prayer

In 3:14, Paul resumes the approach to God's throne which he had begun in verse 1. The things that caused him to bow in prayer are primarily found in chapter 2. Some of those are: the grace of God toward lost men, reconciliation between Jew and Gentile, making both friends again with God and the great privileges the Gentiles now have under Christ's law.

The bending of ones' knees is a sign of reverence, or respect. One of the words for worship in the New Testament is *proskuneo* and suggests making obeisance, or bowing, or even to kiss the ground toward one. Others knelt in prayer to show their respect for God (Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40; 20:35; 21:5). However, such is not the only position for prayer which is mentioned in scripture (1 Timothy 2:8; Luke 18:13; Acts 16:24-25). Paul's prayer was directed to the Father in heaven, in accord with Jesus' model (Matthew 6:9). The whole family of God would seem to include angels, faithful men of the past and the faithful on earth. They are sons of God (3:15).

### Paul's Request

The outward man is the body everyone can see

which gradually grows old. The inward man is the soul that will live eternally (2 Corinthians 4:16). All of us are made new through the washing of the new birth, or baptism, which the Holy Spirit caused to be written about in the Bible (Titus 3:5). The Spirit can further strengthen us as we feed on the milk and meat of the word (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14). Paul prayed they would be granted the latter strength (3:16).

Hendren says the "verb 'dwelling' is intensive, meaning 'settle down.' Christ needs to settle down and take up permanent residence in our hearts." If we grow in strength because of feeding on the word, as the previous verse suggested, Christ will reside in our hearts because of the faith that comes by hearing the word of God.

Paul's prayer was also that they would become well-rooted and stabilized. Hendren suggests these participles are written so as to suggest a rooting and grounding had already taken place and needed to continue taking place. The love here must be that of God and Christ which opened the way of salvation (3:17).

### **The Desired Results**

Further, Paul wanted them to completely understand, in all its measures, something, or some things. It may be the love spoken of in the previous verse, or the mystery spoken of earlier, or the church he is showing to be supreme in this letter. Perhaps it is all we have cited plus the many other things making up the complete revelation of God's great will. However, since love is the focus of the verse preceding and the verse following this one, this writer

thinks it is love Paul wanted the Ephesians to fully know (3:18).

He really wanted his readers to come into an intimate, or personal, relationship in the arms of Christ's love. Christ's love goes beyond man's understanding because it was extended at Calvary to rebels against his Father's throne. It involved the sacrifice of the Lord's life. Paul prayed for them to also be full of the love of the Father. A Christian grows up in love, which is the one identifying characteristic Christ gave for his disciples (3:19; John 13:34-35).

### **Praise for God**

Some may have thought Paul asked for too much in his prayer. His requests were directed to the omnipotent one. God can greatly exceed what man thinks of or would request. He accomplishes his working through the gospel and the Christ of the gospel (3:20; Romans 1:16; Philippians 4:13).

The Christian's purpose is to glorify God, which is done through bearing fruit (John 15:8). To bear fruit to God's glory, we must be in Christ or in the church, which is the same thing (John 15:5). God deserves to be glorified in every generation on the earth and will continue to deserve such when this life is over (3:21; Psalm 45:17; 72:17; Revelation 5:13.)

### **Discussion Questions**

1. For what things does Paul appear to have been especially thankful?
2. What physical act portrays a part of the meaning of worship?
3. Where can one find the family of God? Explain.
4. What part of man do you suppose it was which Paul wanted God to strengthen?
5. What did Paul want to happen to the hearts of the Ephesians?



6. What did Paul want them to understand in all its measures?

7. In what ways do you feel the love of Christ "passes knowledge?"

8. To whom did Paul address his prayers? What does his description suggest about him?

9. What is the Christian's purpose? How is it accomplished?

## Lesson 8

# Walking Worthily

Ephesians 4:1-16

### Walking Worthily Means Walking In Unity

Because God had given such great blessings to those in the church and could provide even above what we might ask or think, Paul pleaded with the brethren at Ephesus to live a life that is suited to our great calling. Our calling came from the gospel and is directed to the glory of Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14). This verse begins Paul's call for unity and suggests to us the need for Christian people to have such (4:1).

The call for unity continues with the call for the proper attitude. For division to truly end, we must have a self-emptying mind. Those who are lowly minded are like minded. That is, putting the needs of others in the forefront of our thinking where we usually put the needs of self (Philippians 2:2-8). Of course, Christ is the perfect example of one who put aside self and sacrificed all for the good of others (Matthew 20:28).

Summers says the word meekness was used in Paul's day to describe a wild horse that had been tamed. "The horse still had all of its old power and fire and determination, but these were yielded to the controlling hand of his master who held the reins. He was a 'meek' horse. Meekness then meant surrendered power, obedient power." God suffered long with the sins of men (Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Peter 3:15). If it were not for

this characteristic of God, none of us could hope to be saved. We, in turn, need to be patient with one another's weaknesses and failings. Of the word "forbearing," Coffman says, "In a word, this means that a Christian should accept his place with other Christians, having an attitude that grants to them the same 'right to belong' which he claims for himself" (4:2).

Proper authority is also needed to have unity. The Bible is a Holy Spirit given book that is God's only basis for unity. The bond the Bible forms between believers who yield to its instructions does not merely lead to peace, but is peace. We must do our best to submit to the Spirit's direction so we can achieve unity and have peace (4:3).

### **God's Plan For Unity**

To have unity, we also must have a plan. The Spirit's message will cause us to realize there is only one body, or church (1:22-23). There is only one Holy Spirit to give us life and peace through his message. Our hope is eternal life in heaven with God and it serves as an anchor during life's troubling storms to sustain our lives (4:4; Hebrews 6:19).

If there is to be unity, there can only be one master. For the church, that master is the Lord Jesus Christ (1:22-23; Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:36; 10:36, 43; Romans 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22). It seems to this writer, the one faith is the sum of all that is believed. However, it should also be noted there is only one faith that saves and that is an active faith (James 2:17-18). Only an active, obedient faith would cause one to be in the one body and under the one Lord

(Galatians 5:6). Only baptism in the name of Jesus, for the remission of sins is able to put off the old man of sin and bring us into a new life (4:5; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4).

There is but one God, the great creator, who is over all things. There is nothing that exists without him or is outside of his authority. He rules, even now, in all the universe and we are sustained through his power (Colossians 1:15-17; Acts 17:24-28). All of the statements of this verse may have special reference to the Christian and his relationship to the Father. If not, it appears this last does because God can only be said to dwell in the lives of his purchased people (4:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

### **Gifts Christ Gave to the Church**

In a few verses Paul is going to deal with special miraculous abilities given to some in the early church to sustain it until God's word could be set down in inspired writings. This verse may refer to those gifts. However, it could safely be said each Christian has been given ability by the Father and should put it to work in a particular area of the church. All tasks in the church are equally important (4:7; compare 1 Corinthians 12:12-26).

Christ ascended up to heaven from the earth as a conqueror. Men had lived in bondage to, or fear of, sin and death prior to Christ's coming because there was no means of escape. When Jesus was raised from the dead, man's freedom was purchased and those righteous of the past, who had submitted to God's will, and those of Christ's own time, who would submit, gladly followed him out of captivity (4:8).

For God to ascend from the earth, he would logically have had to first descend to the earth (John 3:13). The earth would be the lower parts in reference to heaven where Jesus had been abiding. However, it also could be that Paul here has in mind Christ's burial in the heart of the earth. Either thought is certainly true and both remind us of Christ's great sacrifice (4:9).

Jesus ascended as King of kings and Lord of lords to rule over all from his throne, thus fulfilling God's great plan (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:29-36). He is above the heaven the birds fly in, the heaven the stars and planets are in and is over the heaven in which God resides as a ruler (4:10).

### **Offices Christ Established**

As ruler over all, particularly in the church, Jesus set apostles and prophets in the church to reveal his will to man. They were able to do this because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the miracles he empowered them to work (Acts 1:6-8; John 16:13-14; Hebrews 2:1-4). Evangelists are men who carry the good news to a lost and dying world. Coffman says, "The omission of 'some' before 'teachers' indicates that the meaning is teaching-pastors, or pastor-teachers." Their job would be to shepherd the flock by feeding them on God's word and confronting false teachers (1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:9). Evangelists and pastor-teachers may have been strictly a reference to miraculous offices in this passage, but we should remember these are both non-miraculous offices today. In either case, they would be obligated to proclaim and defend the inspired Word of God (4:11).

### **Getting Ready for Service**

The word for "equipping" here comes from a word which suggests setting a bone that has been broken or mending a fishing net. The thought is of getting ready for service. One means of getting Christians ready for use is getting them ready to serve, or perform even the most lowly physical task. Further, there is the work of building up the body through teaching. Our goal as individual Christians is to practice the things of the preceding verse until we become perfect like God (Matthew 5:48). To have any hope of reaching such perfection, we must be united in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Perfection is not measured by comparing our selves with others but by stretching to become like Christ (4:12-13).

### **Growing In Love**

Again, to be perfect, we have to quit being childish (1 Corinthians 14:20). Children are gullible and will often believe whatever was last told them. Like a cork on the waves, such would be unstable, drifting wherever the wind is blowing at the time. Unfortunately, there are those false teachers who will take advantage of every possible means to mislead such childish ones. They use such to ambush the young or weak in God's flock (4:14; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Peter 2:9-22).

Paul wanted the Ephesian brethren to be closely joined like a body and united, or knitted together, like the rejoining of a broken bone (1 Corinthians 12:13, 20). Each member has a work to do, thus supplying the body with some essential (1 Corinthians 12:21-26; Romans 12:5-8).

gives all he is capable of giving. All of this will promote the growth of the whole body which will be strengthened by love. The Ephesian church evidently failed to heed Paul's instructions here because Christ was prepared, in Revelation 2:4-5, to remove their candlestick for leaving their first love. The church can only grow unto perfection if it grows in love (4:15-16).

1. What characteristics must one exhibit who would walk worthy of the Christian calling?

2. What seven point plan did God make for unity?

3. Discuss ways in which each of these points has been distorted by men.

4. What has the Father given each Christian? What illustration brings out this important point?

5. What is meant by the expression "He led captivity captive"?

6. In what sense, or senses, do you believe Christ "descended into the lower parts of the earth"?

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7. Where is Jesus now? What hope does that give you?



8. What was Christ's reason for putting apostles and prophets in the early church?

9. What role did evangelists and teaching-pastors play?

10. What two things do Christians need to do to reach full maturity?

11. What characteristics of children do Christians need to avoid?

12. In what way can each member supply the body with some essential element to growth?

# Walking Like a New Man

Ephesians 4:17-32

## The Old Man Walked in Sin

If the church would grow to the perfection of Christ, it must turn from walking in the ways of the world. Particularly, Christians would not pursue selfish ways (4:17). When man follows his own desires, he fails to understand the ways of righteousness. God's ways become foreign to him. He is ignorant, not because God failed to make knowledge available through inspiration's pen, but because of his own willfulness. Ultimately, God gives such a man ample opportunity to harden his heart and turn completely away from good (4:18; Romans 1:18-32; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12).

When one ignores righteousness long enough, his conscience quits hurting and he runs wild in sin (1 Timothy 4:1-2). He involves himself in lustful activities. His only purpose becomes the filling of his own desires and without any shame whatsoever (4:19). Paul knew they had been taught the truth and would know such a lifestyle was not Christ-like (4:20; Acts 20:17-21, 25-27).

## The New Life of Those Taught By Christ

Paul did not have any doubt about the teaching they had received. Instead, he is preparing to remind them of Christ's teachings and the life they should live after accepting them (4:21). The old Gentile way of living

should be cast aside like a worn out garment. This old man

was sin dominated as described above (4:22).

The mind should then be Spirit directed through the truth (4:23; Romans 12:1-2). In place of the cast away lifestyle, the Christian will put on the new man. To put on the new man, one must be in Christ, which can only be accomplished in baptism (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26-27). In place of pursuing lusts, the new man lives in accord with God's will and strives to keep himself pure (4:24).

### **Changes in the New Man**

The old man would not hesitate to lie if it would help him fill one of his uncontrolled desires. The new man always tells the truth, especially to his brethren because we are all members of the same body (4:25; Colossians 3:9-11). The old man would allow anger to run wild and the devil to gain control of him. The new man gets angry but keeps it under control so that he does not involve himself in sin. A means of doing that is not allowing anger to remain in us past the end of one day. Resentments tend to build and fester into a putrefying sore. The devil is an enemy to every Christian. He must not be allowed to have a toe-hold in our lives through anger harbored in the heart (4:26-27; Colossians 3:8).

The old man would steal to acquire wealth and the things his heart desired. The new man would work to earn money to purchase the things necessary to provide for his own needs. Additionally, he would use what God gave him to help those in need. In other words, a Christian will work

so others can benefit from his prosperity (4:28).

The old man would tell suggestive stories and allow foul language to be an integral part of his vocabulary. The new man uses his speech to teach saint and sinner alike the ways of the Lord. Those who will heed his instructions will thus have access to God's glorious grace (4:29; Colossians 3:8; 4:6; Matthew 12:36-37).

### **Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit**

Any involvement of Christians in the activities of the "old man" would grieve the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10). Whenever we reject the teachings of the Bible, we are rejecting the Holy Spirit, thereby giving him great sorrow (Psalm 78:40; 95:10-11). Remember, the Holy Spirit is the seal, or guarantee, of our ultimate salvation in heaven (1:13). None would want to risk giving him cause for sorrow since that would lead to our eternal sorrow (4:30).

Paul lists a series of actions the old man might have been involved in that the new man must avoid. A bitter man has resentment built up in him that causes him to see only mud and no stars. The anger here is uncontrolled, explosive in nature and leads to rash actions such as murder. Wrath is another description of such anger. If you have ever seen two, or more, people in a shouting match, you have seen clamor. The word for evil speaking could also be translated blasphemy and suggests speaking against God or man. Our word sadistic, which describes one who enjoys inflicting pain on others, could be used in place of the word malice (4:31).

Paul would encourage the Ephesian brethren to show others kindness. Also, they were urged to be tenderhearted, or have compassion, and a forgiving spirit toward others. Christians are forgiven because of Christ's loving sacrifice (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35). Clearly, all who have been forgiven of sin ought to be prepared by that forgiveness to forgive others (4:32; Romans 6:23).

1. What ways can a Christian not pursue? Why?
  
2. What is the impact of ignoring righteousness?
  
3. Describe the contrast between the Gentile's previous lifestyle and the existence of one who has yielded to Christ's teachings.
  
4. How does one put on a new man and whose will does he follow?
  
5. What characteristics did the old man of sin exhibit?
  
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6. What does the new man do instead?

7. In what way can a Christian bring sorrow to the Holy Spirit?

8. List types of actions that the old man would participate in which the new man should avoid.

9. What types of attitudes should a Christian exhibit and why?

# **Walking In Love, Light and Wisdom**

**Ephesians 5:1-18**

## **Walking In Love Like God**

God extended his forgiveness to all men through the loving gift of his Son on Calvary. Paul's reference in 4:32 to Christians forgiving as God forgives led him to encourage them to imitate, or mimic, God in all they did. Just as children like to do what mom and dad do, Christians should strive to do what their Father in heaven does (5:1; Matthew 5:44-48).

All that the Father and Son have done for the redeemed is motivated by love. Therefore, Christians should let their lives be directed by love (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:7-10). Christ's great sacrifice, which was made out of love, went up before the Father as a sweet smelling sacrifice. In fact, all sacrifices motivated by a proper spirit and offered in accord with his will are pleasing to God (Genesis 8:20-22). Jesus' sacrifice was all the more pleasing because it was sufficient to pay the price for sin (5:2; Hebrews 10:1-10).

## **Things Love Will Not Let One Do**

Those whose lives are directed by love will not indulge in any uncontrolled lusts, whether sexual or monetary in nature. Paul says even talking about such

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thoughts tends to stimulate actions (5:3; Proverbs 23:7).



Immoral actions and words have no place in a Christian's life. He should beware of suggestive stories and jokes that may use double meanings and innuendo to get a laugh. These usually center in the areas of conduct already forbidden by Paul in verse 3. Instead, a Christian should use his mouth to give thanks to the Father for all his great blessings (5:3; Philippians 4:6; Luke 17:11-19).

Those involved in unlawful sexual acts, unclean thoughts and actions or greedy, selfish desire for more will not have a part in heaven. Paul was convinced the Ephesian brethren were fully aware of the wrongfulness of such acts and the resulting loss of heaven as an inheritance. Notice, Paul said covetousness is idolatry, thus indicating anything that is more important in our lives than God is an idol we worship (5:5).

The things just listed brought God's wrath on people down through the ages. They were conquered by their enemies and will incur his wrath in judgement. Some tried, and are trying, to persuade the brethren they could practice such things and still go to heaven, but their words were empty. Those who disobey God will be punished (5:6). As Lipscomb says, "If they partook of their sins, they would necessarily partake of their punishments." Therefore, Paul says to avoid the practices of such false teachers (5:7).

### **Walking As Children of Light**

The Ephesian brethren had been involved in the wicked ways of darkness before they obeyed the truth. In Christ, they were light because sin had been put away. So,

Paul admonished them to live like the children of light they

had become (5:8; Matthew 5:14-16; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6). Light is a necessary ingredient of plant growth and fruit bearing. It is also important for a Christian to stay in the light so he can bear the fruits of goodness, righteousness and truth (5:9).

Walking in the light will cause a Christian to be living proof of what is "well-pleasing" (A.S.V.) to the Lord. Such proof will result from careful prayer, study of God's word and the transformation of mind that comes from such (5:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:1-2). Nothing good, in the spiritual realm, is grown in darkness, thus no good fruit is produced there. Those in Christ cannot be in partnership, or have anything in common, with such works but must expose them (John 16:8-11). This can be done through preaching and living as God would have one live (5:11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 2:11-12).

### **Attitudes of Those In the Light**

In the worship of pagan gods, there were many immoral acts committed in secret places under the cover of darkness. God's children would blush even to talk about them (5:12). When the light of the gospel falls on things in darkness, they become enlightened. This had already happened to the saints of Ephesus who once lived in sin but now served God in the light. This good result should challenge us to spread the gospel light wherever we can (5:13).

In 5:14, Paul gives us the words of God, either the

Father or Son, just as Old Testament prophets quoted him.

The gospel light will bring back to life those who have been dead in sin (2:1). God appeals for those dead in sin to arise and let the light of the Son make them light.

### **Walking In Wisdom**

Fools hear the sound of Jesus' voice but do not do the things he says (Matthew 7:24-27). Even Christians must live carefully, or accurately, so as to obey the Lord's commandments and be considered wise (5:15). Therefore, Paul urged members of the church to make the most of the time they had, especially since the time in which he wrote was so full of wickedness (5:16).

The unwise, as noted previously, hear the Lord but do not obey. In contrast, Paul pleaded for the brethren to be understanding ones who hear the Lord and try to incorporate what he says into their lives (5:17; Matthew 13:18-23, especially 19 and 23; Job 28:28; Proverbs 9:10). Because Paul uses a linear verb, it would be more accurate to translate, "be not being drunk," or, "do not find yourself in the process of being intoxicated." Drunkenness leads to excess, or riot, which is translated "dissipation" and means a complete lack of control. Instead of being filled with intoxicating liquids, Paul would have the saints be filled with the Spirit. While alcohol is merely a temporary escape, the Spirit shows one the means of overcoming through the word (5:18).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think Paul urged Christians to do as the Father would do?

2. What does Paul say was the motivation for all the Father and Son did?

3. Give some instances that show such motivation.

4. What types of things will one avoid who is similarly motivated?

5. What actions will result in one losing heaven?

6. What brought God's wrath and judgment on people in

the past? Give some examples to support your answer.

7. How does one become a child of light? What does such a child do?

8. What appeal does God make to those dead in sin?

9. What separates between foolish people and wise?

10. Discuss the meaning of 5:18. What do you think it means to "not find yourself in the process of being intoxicated"?

# Serving One Another

Ephesians 5:19-33

## Teaching One Another In Song

Paul directed individual Christians to teach each other through spiritual, vocal music (Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25). Hendren says, "The participle 'speaking' is plural, suggesting all sing." The word for "making melody" is psallo. It describes a plucking like one might do in playing an instrument. But no instrument inheres in the word, so one must go to the context to discover the strings to be plucked. Paul instructs them to pluck the heart strings while they sing. Every Christian must sing truthful songs from the heart to satisfy the demands of this verse (compare John 4:24). To use any other instrument to accompany our spiritual singing would violate God's command (5:19; Colossians 3:16).

A part of Christian singing should be dedicated to thanksgiving for all the wonderful blessings enjoyed. This thanks should be directed to the Father by the authority of Jesus Christ our master (5:20).

## Submitting To One Another

Each follower of Christ is to place himself under the control of fellow followers. This service is to be performed for others out of reverent respect for God who caused his Son to submit to death in our behalf (5:21). In yielding to her Lord, a Christian wife will place herself under the

control of her husband. This is just one application of verse

21 and is limited to service that can be performed while maintaining a proper respect for the Lord (5:22).

In every organization of two or more people, someone must be the head. God's arrangement for the family was that man should be the head (Genesis 3:16). This arrangement in the family foreshadowed the relationship of Christ to the church. Christ is the head of the church and she must place herself under his control. Christ came to give his life for the church, just as the husband should provide for, protect and defend his wife. Notice, church and body are used interchangeably here as 1:22-23 would tell us they should be (5:23).

The church readily falls in line behind Christ like soldiers behind their commander because he has done so much for her. His great love, as shown in Calvary's sacrifice, makes him worthy of being followed. Husbands should be followed in the same way (5:24).

### **The Love of Husbands for Their Wives**

If the husband exhibits the love talked about in 5:25, most wives would readily submit to him. The love a husband is to have is not erotic or passionate, but intellectual commitment to the best interests of his wife. Christ is the perfect example of such love in his sacrificial death on the cross for the church. Husbands are urged to imitate Christ's self-sacrificing nature in their relationship with their wives.

Christ gave his life to set the church apart from the

20:28). The means of the church reaching that blood is through the baptism of each who would be a part of that sanctified body. There is a cleansing which takes place when one is lowered into the watery grave in obedience to the word (5:26; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Having purchased the church with his own blood, Jesus is ever working toward its perfection (4:15-16). His desire is also for her purity that she may be ready to be taken home by her bridegroom in the great day of judgement (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). The perfection of the church can only be attained through constant and faithful teaching of the truth (Colossians 1:28; 1 Peter 2:2). The church will not be fully ready for presentation to Christ until her members have put on immortality and stand purified before him because of having completed their walk in the light where Christ's blood kept them pure (Revelation 19:6-8; 21:2; 1 Corinthians 15:5-57; 1 John 1:7). Christ's bride will be pure and without the spot of sin (5:27).

### **Reasons a Man Should Love His Wife**

Christ actually put the love of the church above the love of his own body when he died on Calvary. In marriage, man and woman become one, thus when the husband loves his wife, he loves himself (2:28; Genesis 2:24). Men generally try to take the best possible care of their own bodies and keep them from injury. They pamper themselves and should do likewise to their wives, just as the Lord bestowed tender love on the church (5:29).



flesh of his flesh, Christ can say individual Christians are part of his body, flesh and bone (5:30). Husband and wife are to be faithful to one another until death separates them. The church must remain faithful unto Christ so that it can have the ultimate union with him in heaven (5:31).

The importance of the marriage relationship is highlighted by its being a foreshadow of Christ's relationship with the church. God's great concern for the salvation of man is likewise seen in the fact that it was planned so long ago and was being foreshadowed in the beginning of time (5:32). Based upon all that has now been said about the marriage union, Paul again calls for husbands to love their own wives and wives to respect their own husbands (5:33).



7. Discuss the love a husband should have for his wife. Would such love make submission to him easier or harder? Why?

8. What did Christ do for the church? How can an individual take advantage of what he did?

9. Why did Christ want the church to be perfect? What must happen for such perfection to be achieved?

10. Discuss reasons you feel a husband should love his wife.

11. Why did Paul say he discussed the relationship between husband and wife?

# Christian Duty

Ephesians 6:1-9

## Duties of Children

Literally, Paul says children are to keep on obeying their parents. This is restricted by the expression "in the Lord" which means a child may refuse to obey his parents if they ask him to do something that is wrong in God's sight. Obedience is not only a good thing, it is right in God's sight (6:1). Exodus 20:5 reads, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." This is the fifth commandment written on tables of stone at Mount Sinai. It is the first, or primary, commandment for children and, if obeyed, carries with it the promise of the next verse (6:2).

Obeying and honoring one's parents helps to develop a character well suited for a long life on earth. Such takes self-control, a teachable spirit, self-discipline and recognition of authority, which are necessary ingredients for living on this earth (6:3; Deuteronomy 5:16).

## Duties of Fathers

To facilitate the child's obedience, Paul commands fathers not to provoke their children to wrath. Discipline is an important part of the parent-child relationship (Hebrews 12:5-11). Yet, harsh discipline can cause a child to want to strike back. Also, being inconsistent in discipline, by

tomorrow, can lead to outbursts of anger.

A child is not a piece of property or tool but a young man or woman needing molding and training (Proverbs 22:6). The word "training" is from the Greek *paideia* which includes the whole training and education of children," according to Thayer. "Admonition" is from *nouthesia* which would mean to admonish or exhort. Notice it is the "admonition of the Lord," which is a loving reproof or encouragement to do what is right. As in the verses in Hebrews listed above, God's correction is always given out of love for the one corrected with the purpose of yielding righteousness as its fruit. Our motivation needs to be the same as his.

### **Duties of Slaves**

Christ and his apostles did not violently oppose slavery, but set in motion the principles that would destroy it. Paul told Christian slaves to have proper respect for their master's authority. He said they should serve their masters sincerely, with no hidden motives. All of a Christian's acts are preformed in service to Christ as the true master of our lives (6:5; Galatians 2:20).

Some would perform their tasks to be visually pleasing. Their work would not meet the test of a thorough inspection. Others only worked when someone in authority could see them. Either of these two actions is wrong because it is eyeservice designed only to please men. Christ's servant will put his heart into his labors because he is working for God first (6:6; compare Matthew 5:14-16).

the Christian slave to serve with kindness, again because he is ultimately Christ's slave (6:7). Though the earthly master may be impossible to please, Christ sees every good work done in his service. He will reward good labors in the day of judgment. Christ's rewards extend to all men equally. There is no class or distinction in Christ (6:8; Galatians 3:28-29).

### **Duties of Masters**

Masters were to act toward their slaves with the same respect for God slaves were commanded to have. Christ does not threaten his followers. Neither should they threaten those who work in their service if they would truly be like him (1 Peter 2:21-24). Christian masters were commanded to remember that they were slaves to righteousness in Christ (Romans 6:16-18). The Master has no respect of persons and his followers must not either (Acts 10:34-35). It is such a change of heart and actions that would bring slavery to its knees (6:9).

1. How are children to treat their parents? Is this instruction unrestricted?

2. What did Paul mean when he said this "is the first commandment with promise? Where is this command found?

3. How does obeying this command prepare a child for the rest of life?

4. What command did Paul give for fathers? What do you think he meant by the words he used? How can fathers do this?

5. What was the reaction of Christ and his apostles to slavery?

6. Why do you suppose they did not encourage open

revolt?

7. How should a Christian perform all his tasks? Discuss how this will apply to the Christian worker today.

8. What encouragement did Paul give Christian slaves? How should this effect the thinking of Christian workers today.

9. What instructions did Paul give Christians who were slave owners?

10. How should the Christian employer act toward his employees?



# The Lord's Army

Ephesians 6:10-24

## The Christian's Battle

At the conclusion of this letter, Paul wanted to remind the brethren of the battle they were fighting. He also stressed the importance of being prepared for it. A Christian's true strength is in the Lord. His power comes from the Lord's great might (6:10; Philippians 4:13). Again, to win this battle, Christians are told by Paul to put on the Lord's armor, not some of our own making. The devil, like any enemy commander, has a strategy for victory. He seeks out areas of weakness and tries to exploit them to the destruction of the Lord's followers (6:11; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 11-15).

Of the term translated "wrestle," Summers says it, "was the word for 'hand-to-hand encounter.' It might be used of two wrestlers in hand-to-hand struggle or of two soldiers who in the midst of battle faced off one against the other for a very personal hand-to-hand combat." In either case, Paul is stressing the very personal nature of this battle for every Christian. The gravity of the battle should be seen in the nature of the opponent, who is not a man. Christians are fighting the devil and his whole organization of darkness (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Wickedness is organized in its fight to overthrow Christ's army. The "heavenly places" would describe things beyond the ordinary or natural battlegrounds of which we might think.

heaven because they have been cast down but they will fight in every other place including the church (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Acts 20:29-31). It is vital that Christians take all of this personally since it is hand-to-hand combat. The devil is trying to capture anyone he can, including the individual Christian (6:12; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Timothy 2:23-26, 16-18; 2 Peter 2:17-22).

### **The Christian's Armor**

Christians were urged by Paul to put on God's armor. He said they should stand their ground because the forces of evil were going to attack (1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13). The "evil day" is a day of crises when the fight is on. One must prepare for a battle before it comes, not during the attack (6:13).

Soldiers in Paul's day girded their loins with a belt to hold things in place and allow freer movement. The truth is God's word and will make us free (John 17:17; 8:32). The breastplate protected the vital organs of the chest region. Righteousness is the word of God, specifically his commandments (6:14; Psalm 119:172). To hold his ground in even the worst conditions, the Roman soldier wore hobnailed sandals. The Christian is prepared, or ready, for the battle when he has on his gospel shoes. Actually, we can take the fight to the enemy with the good news that Jesus died to make men free (6:15; Romans 1:14-16; Mark 16:15-16). Lipscomb says the shield was two and one-half feet wide and four feet high. It was made of wood covered with thick leather on the outside. When the enemy fired flaming arrows, they bounced off the tough

leather and dropped harmlessly to the ground. Faith, which

is our shield, is produced by hearing God's word (6:16; Romans 10:17).

Lipscomb describes the Roman helmet as "a cap made of thick leather or brass, fitted to the head. It was used to guard the head from a blow by a sword, a war club, or a battle-ax." To learn the ways of salvation, the Christian must study the God-breathed, or spoken, word which is only found in scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The sword was a defensive and an offensive weapon. It was used to deflect blows and pierce the opponent. God's word, as delivered by the Spirit, is the Christian's sword (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus knew its value and used it to turn aside Satan's assault in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Only through study can the Christian soldier learn how to properly handle this important weapon (6:17; 2 Timothy 2:15).

### **The Prayer Supply Line**

To be completely prepared, the Christian soldier must pray in addition to putting on his armor. Prayer should be more than occasional (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). We need to endure in it during good times and bad. It should be used in behalf of all we know in the Lord because they fight the same battles and face the same dreaded foe (6:18).

Paul felt the same need for the prayers of the saints that any other Christian feels. Particularly, he felt the need for courage in preaching that he might fully proclaim God's message. It is only through complete preaching of the truth that one can be free from the blood of his hearers (6:19;

messages of the leader of their nation. Paul was the Lord Jesus Christ's messenger to the Gentile world (Acts 9:15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20). At the time of this writing, Paul was in bonds, apparently on his way to Rome. God's intent was to use those bonds to the furtherance of his gospel, but it would only work to that end if Paul fully proclaimed the truth with courage (6:20).

### **Concluding Remarks**

Tychius was a Christian from Asia (Acts 20:4), who carried this letter as well as the one to Colosse (Colossians 4:7). He may also have born the letter to Titus as well as doing some further work in Ephesus (Titus 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:12). Paul's love for him and reference to his faithfulness as a Christian servant would certainly commend him to any church (6:21). Since Tychicus would be the one bringing the letter to them, Paul could tell the Ephesian brethren he had sent him (6:22).

Paul's desire for them was the peace that passed understanding (Philippians 4:7). He wanted them to have the love of the gospel which would keep them in the obedient path (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). He also prayed they would have the faith that is so necessary to please God and sustain us in service (Hebrews 11:6). All of these things come from the Father and his beloved Son (6:23). Paul prayed further that God would bestow upon them his favor, which was unmerited by them. Further, he desired this grace for those who had an incorruptible love for the Lord Jesus Christ (6:24).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the nature of the Christians' enemy.
  
2. In what type of combat will the Christian be involved?
  
3. What are the "heavenly places" Paul talks about?
  
4. Use the following list to explain what each piece of armor represents.
  - A. Gird--
  
  - B. Breastplate--
  
  - C. Shoes--
  
  - D. Shield--

E. Helmet--

F. Sword--

5. What forms the basis of the Christian's supply line?

6. Discuss various reasons Paul, or other Christians, might want the prayers of their brethren.

7. In what sense was Paul an ambassador?

8. What was Paul's desire for the Ephesians?

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