

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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A SPECIAL EDITION

"CHRIST AND THE CHURCH"

(A Study Of The Book Of Ephesians)

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

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In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul drew an analogy between the relationship of husband and wife and that of Christ and the church. He summarized it all by saying "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (verse 32). "Concerning Christ and the church" — that is what the book of Ephesians is all about. And that is what this special edition of this paper is all about. In fourteen articles those who write regular columns in this periodical have summarized the divine syllabus on Christ and the church.

Why This Special Edition?

For many years, denominationalists of every kind have so distorted the image of religion in the minds of the masses (both friends and foes of religion) that the beauty

and simplicity of divine truth on the church of the Lord as presented in scripture has been all but lost. Modern religion is in shambles. From the cold, sterile formalism of dead ritual performed in imposing sanctuaries of the traditional churches, to the more exuberant exercises of charismatic sects, people of religious inclination would have a hard time discovering the simple facts about the body of the saved which is presented in the New Testament.

An honest seeker for truth about the church revealed in the Bible would never learn it from listening to the popular media preachers of the day. Even aside from the scandals which have rocked the world of media religion, one would not learn what to do to be saved, nor what the New Testament church is, nor how it is structured, nor what is its work. These "ministries" involve organizations which are without precept or precedent in the word of God.

It has been preached up and down the land that the church is not essential. We should just "preach Christ" and say nothing about the church. Those who say this do not know what "church" is in the Bible. Dispensationalists reduce the church to nothing more than an afterthought, or an interim arrangement to offer a sop to man until such time as their speculative millennium kingdom can be set in motion. Even among those who profess to be nothing more than simple Christians, there is often either a nebulous notion about Christ and the church, or

an outright denominational concept. To preach that one who is "in Christ" is in the body of Christ, the church, is offensive to many. Their limited understanding of what the church is and its true relationship to Christ, causes them to view such preaching as too narrow and restrictive. Second and third generations of church members, who did not have to struggle their way out of denominational creeds and loyalties, have become what they are, many times, more out of tradition than clear understanding and deep conviction.

The book of Ephesians is good medicine for all such ills. In this grand treatise, the apostle Paul transports us to the inner chambers of the divine purpose and planning of the Almighty "before the foundation of the world," thence to the earthly scene of blood sacrifice, then to the elevation of the Son of God to the right hand of Majesty and the possession of authority over things visible and invisible and headship over all things to the church, which is his body. From that vantage point, his reign of grace in the hearts of men is presented as it blends the previously discordant elements of Jew and Gentile into one body by the cross and rears the majestic holy temple in the Lord for the habitation of God through the Spirit. Such wondrous prospects for alienated humanity explains the urgency of gospel preaching as presented in chapter three. All men must have opportunity to be "partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." This work must be done so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith and that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. We are then shown how God made every provision necessary for this body to exist and function according to divine wisdom to the end that the saved might be edified and developed to their maximum potential in Christ. Such a noble calling is not without price. We must reject the vanity of human wisdom and order life and its pursuits according to God's purpose for us. There is a continuing walk before him. Even the varied relationships of social life must be ordered according to his will. In all of this, Satan will oppose us and we must arm ourselves with the whole panoply of god in order to "withstand in the evil day."

I do not believe that one can hold to the common notions about the church which are so pervasive in denominational circles, and even among the irreligious, when the book of Ephesians is clearly understood. And it is mandatory that those within the church maintain sharp and clear understanding on this vital theme.

Concerning Christ

The coming of Jesus Christ into the world in the "dispensation of the fulness of times" summed up the divine and human. The "Word" which was "with" God and which "was" God (Jno. 1:1), "became flesh" and dwelt "among us" (Jno. 1:14). This enabled mankind to "behold his glory." All the attributes of Deity were in him and he demonstrated them in the world before witnesses who testified as to what they saw and heard (1 Jno. 1:1-3). He was not only "the Word," he was the Messiah of Old Testament expectation. He was the seed of Abraham, the root of Jesse, the son of David, the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings. He is the central figure of all human history. The world cannot ignore him. To those who believe, he is precious, while to the unbeliev-

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ing he is a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." His life, death and resurrection summed up the divine plan of the ages and brought earthly fulfillment to heavenly purpose. There is no salvation apart from him.

In Ephesians, Christ is the location of spiritual blessings, the object of God's choice in salvation, the means of our adoption into the family of God, our redemption from sin, the means of our inheritance, the head over all things to the church, our means of peace with God, the chief corner stone of our spiritual edifice, the provider of every necessary function for the church and its work, and the motive power for us to walk in love. He is our everything.

Concerning the Church

But Ephesians inseparably connects Christ and the church. The church is "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (1:23). The fulness of the Godhead was in Christ (Col. 2:9). Even so, the fulness of Christ is the church. Whatever spiritual blessings are offered to the

human race through Christ (and they are all in him), are obtained in the church, the body of Christ. The church is the body of the saved. Whatever it takes to save one, makes him a member of the church. There is no salvation apart from the Lordship of Christ, but he is "head over all things to the church." He is the "saviour of the body." He is neither the head nor saviour of those outside the body. There is one head and one body (4:4). That is the usual arrangement, is it not. One body with two heads is a freak. One head with multiple bodies is impossible. Yet that is the popular notion among many. The church is presented in Ephesians as "an holy temple." This is the place of spiritual service. The church is said to be the family of God (3:15). It is the explanation to "principalities and powers in heavenly places" of "the manifold wisdom of God" (3:10). Through its existence and function according to divine wisdom, it glorifies God by Christ Jesus.

The church is God's calling (4:1). The word "church" is translated from EKKLESIA. The first part of this word, EK means "from," or "out of." The last part, from KLESIS means "a calling." The verb form, KALEO means "to call." Hence, the church means those called out. In its universal import, it indicates a people called by the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14), out of the darkness of sin (1 Pet. 2:9), and into marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). We are called out of alienation into citizenship, out of despair into hope, out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ. This is the church in the aggregate. This is the picture of the church in Ephesians. Other passages present the local EKKLESIA, a body of saved people at a given place. It has form or structure and function as to worship and work. Those who comprised local churches were all saved the same way and added to the great body of the redeemed presented in Ephesians. They all believed and practiced the same things. They were all subjects of the one Lord, the one head over the one body, the church.

We must not lose the Biblical image of Christ and his church. It is our hope and prayer as we send forth this edition of *SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES* that the material offered here will sharpen your focus on these grand and fundamental truths about Christ and the church — Ephesians. We are indebted to these good men who have given of their time, knowledge and talent to express their thoughts for our learning and edification.

An Explanation and an Apology

Due to a mixup at the printing plant the article by P. J. Casebolt on "Christ, The Savior of the Body" was not set in type along with the others. Waiting for it would unduly delay this issue. Brother Casebolt has been consulted about this and has agreed for us to run that article in a later issue. We regret this and apologize to him and to you. (Editor)

WHAT IT MEANS TO PREACH CHRIST

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WHAT IT MEANS TO PREACH CHRIST

The following points constitute the outline of the subject of this writing: (1) What is the meaning of the word preach as here used; (2) Significance of the word Christ as here used; (3) Reactions where "Christ" was "preached" in apostolic days; and (4) What happened and happens when "Christ" was and is preached.

What Does "Preach" Mean?

In his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words W. E. Vine declares that the Greek verb euangelizo, translated "preach," "is almost always used of the good news concerning the Son of God as proclaimed in the Gospel." Kerusso, the word used more than fifty times in the Greek text, signifies (1) to be a herald, or, in general, to proclaim...; (b) to preach the Gospel as a herald...; or (c) to preach the word, 2 Tim. 4:2 (of the ministry of the Scriptures, with special reference to the Gospel)", (Vol. III, p. 201). Vine suggests "proclaim" and "publish" as additional word studies in connection with "preach."

What Does "Christ" Mean?

The Greek word Christos means "anointed." In the Old Testament prophets, priests and kings were identified by "anointment" authorized by God. (Psm. 105:15; Lev. 4:3, 5,16; 1 Sam. 2:10, 35; Psm. 2:2). Three times Jesus accepted this identification: (1) when Peter declared him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:17,18); (2) when he responded "I am" to the high priest's question, "Art thou the Christ the Son of the Blessed?" (Mk. 14:61, 62); and (3) when responding to the Samaritan woman's statement, "I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things." Jesus replied, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25, 26).

It is interesting to remember that in Old Testament times three classes — prophets, priests and kings — were "anointed" out of divine consideration for their identity and function in the service of God. (Ex. 29:7; 30:30; Lev. 4:3; 8:12; 1 Kgs. 19:16; 1 Sam. 12:3,5; 2 Sam. 1:14; Psm. 20:6). It was no accident that Jesus is thus described (Acts 4:27, 10:38; Heb. 1:5, 9). "I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): he will declare unto us all things," said the Samaritan woman to him. This prompted our Lord's reply, "I that speak unto thee am he." (Jno. 4:25,26). It should be no surprise to Bible readers that when Jesus had earlier read from Isaiah, chapter 61, in the Nazareth synagogue, that God "anointed" him "to preach good tidings to the poor" and perform other divine works, that the eyes of all present

were "fastened on him" (Lk. 4:16-21). Again, in Acts 4:23-31 Jerusalem saints quoted Psalm 2 and spoke to the heavenly Father about "thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint." Likewise, Peter reminded the first Gentile converts that Jesus of Nazareth God had anointed ... with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:37, 38).

In Acts 8 five kindred statements occur regarding "preaching." The scattered disciples "went about preaching the word," v. 4; to the Samaritans Philip "preached (proclaimed — ASV) Christ," v. 5; they "believed Philip preaching," v. 12; he "preached Jesus" to the Ethiopian eunuch, v. 35; and Peter and John "preached the gospel" among Samaritans, v. 25. Repeatedly in the New Testament "preaching the gospel," and "preaching the word," are used synonymously with "teaching." Some persons think that "preaching" connotes more of a public conveyance of thought than "teaching," but this may be questioned — at least, in some instances. Maybe such a distinction was intended in the Acts 5:42 text yet Philip's "preaching" Jesus to the Ethiopian, apparently a private encounter, and the same Philip's "preaching Christ" to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5) with a ready response in both instances, would seem to negate any major distinctions between the two words. The same situation exists with "teaching" as evidenced by Paul's statements to the Ephesian elders, i.e., "teaching you publicly and from house to house" and "I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more" (Acts 20:20,25). The point in each instance is the proclamation, the declaration, i.e., **making known or declaring** — the "good news" about Jesus!

Reactions When Christ was Preached

The Book of Acts is our basic source of information on reactions of persons who heard the apostles and earliest evangelists preach Christ. He was the center and circumference of their proclamations.

One need not leave the Book of Acts to understand what was involved in apostolic days in "preaching Christ." Old Testament history projects the person of the "anointed one" to come to fulfillment of God's purpose to redeem Eve's descendants from sin when he said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between ... thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). This was the gospel of Christ **in purpose**. This **purpose** took the form of **promise** when God told Abraham to leave his native land and father's house and said to him, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3). This **purpose** and **promise** were expressed in **prophecy** through various Old Testament persons. Illustrative is Abraham's grandson Jacob who, in blessing Judah, said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Isaiah foresaw the seed of the Abrahamic promise when he forecast the peaceful nature of his reign. Said he of the Messiah: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn

war any more" (Isa. 2:4). John the Baptist broke the silence of four hundred years when he announced "The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Mt. 3:1,2). This was the same kingdom of which Daniel had spoken some six centuries previous when he referred to the Roman Caesar's and said, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ... and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

Jesus of Nazareth came in fulfillment of numerous prophecies, was baptized by John the Baptist to fulfill all righteousness, and taught more than three years about the peaceful, spiritual kingdom purposed, promised and forecast for centuries. At the instigation of jealous Jewish religious leaders Jesus died on a Roman cross for those who manipulated his death but, in keeping with his promise, He conquered death through his resurrection. Forty days later he ascended to the Father's right hand in heaven where he was crowned and proclaimed King and Lord in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Believing, sorrowful sinners, who fifty days earlier clamored for his crucifixion, now cried for his pardon. Apostle Peter, the Kings' spokesman, gave the King's answer of mercy to their "What-shall-we-do?" when he said, "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:37,38). Three thousand Jews who fifty days previously had demanded His death now found their forgiveness in the very blood he applied to them in baptism, and "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The number of converts rapidly grew until the men alone numbered "about 5000," "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Stephen, an eloquent convert, was murdered by stoning when he accused the high Jewish officials of crucifying the now resurrected Savior, in whose name he prayed for their forgiveness, even as he was dying by their cruel hands. This death of the first martyr sparked a persecution against the disciples which scattered them over the Roman Empire; but wherever they went, their preaching of Jesus was their preeminent commitment. One of them, Philip, "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" with the result that "when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

These simple statements of Acts 8:5,12,13 summarize "What It means to Preach Christ." Philip's preaching and the Samaritans' response tell the story. When Philip preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God" he was establishing the identity of God's rule over the hearts of all men. When he proclaimed "the name of Jesus Christ" he thereby inferred the authority behind that kingly function, and when he preached baptism, he was telling them they must obey God to be saved. (None could or would have known the role of baptism regarding entrance into the kingdom if inspired men had not preached it). All of this tells us that since salvation is "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17) sinners must be baptized in order to

have sins remitted. They must believe and obey this command of the King (Acts 2:33). Results of such faith are forgiveness of sins by the King's authority, promise of the King's presence in His faithful subject's life, and eternity with the King's Father. This is but a brief analysis of "What It Means To Preach Christ." It is to preach his God-given authority, and man's obedience to his commands. It is to preach the realm of his rule—his kingdom which involves his right to make and enforce his Father's law and to exclude unwilling subjects to these laws. It is to preach baptism as the act of obedience which demonstrates the willingness of the sinner's heart to obey the King, to be "born again," i.e., newly "born of water and the Spirit" (Jno. 3:5). This, in principle, is what it means to preach Christ, viz. his realm of rule, conditions of citizenship, and obedience to the King in thought, word and deed.

"God's Eternal Purpose in Christ"

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AN OVERVIEW OF EPHESIANS

I find it increasingly difficult to carry out my plans for the future. All sorts of physical circumstances make impossible what I want to do. Unexpected health conditions or accidents change my plans, sometimes against my will. The plans and activities of other people (including my own children) interfere with mine. More often than not my own activities inadvertently bring changes in my other plans. There is so much I do not know and cannot predict that I sometimes wonder why I make plans at all. Practically, however, life cannot go on if I do not project myself at least into the immediate future. And yet, I must do so cautiously and with the realization that all my plans may be changed in a moment without prior notification (James 4:13-17).

Is it not wonderful that God can plan and it all comes to pass without change. His decision is as good as action. He speaks and it is done. He planned before the creation and none of his plans have failed. Thousands of years have passed. Millions of human beings have been free to act and interact at their own choice. Yet all of God's unconditional plans have come to pass. We are heirs of the greatest of these: THE "PLAN" OF SALVATION. What wonderful evidence of His divinity, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence the plan of salvation provides! The book of Ephesians is designed to help us to appreciate GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE IN CHRIST.

God's Plan in Christ

The first chapter of Ephesians is dedicated to explaining two great truths: a) that God's planning centers in providing **spiritual** blessings; and b) that all spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus.

Whatever else we may think or hear preached from today's pulpits, God is most interested in our spiritual well-being, not in our physical or social happiness. Just look at the list of blessings attributed to the "riches" of his grace (1:7; 2:4, 7; 3:8, 16): He chose us (1:4); He adopted us (1:5); He redeemed us (1:7); He forgave us (1:7); He revealed the mystery of His will to us (1:9); He gathered us together in one body (1:10); He provided an inheritance for us (1:11); etc. etc. etc.! Nothing is said here about material prosperity or physical welfare and yet we are "rich." We really must come up higher in our thinking and set our minds on the things of God (Phil. 4:8). He has planned wonderful blessings for us but we will miss them if we place our affections on this earth (Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:13-21).

God's plans find fulfillment in Christ and those who

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receive them must be in Christ. Election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, the gathering together, and the inheritance are all **in Christ** (see 1:3-14). "Predestination," "foreordination," and "election" are sound Biblical concepts when they are understood within the framework of faith in Christ. Before the world was created God chose (He "predestined," "foreordained," or "elected") to save those who faithfully serve Him in Christ. Since being in Christ is conditional (Gal. 3:26-27), the reception of spiritual blessings in Christ is conditional. God first chose Christ (1 Pet. 1:20; 2:4, 6) and then he foreordained that He would save all who are truly in Christ. Being "in Christ" is being in His "body," "the church" (1:22-23). Christ is Head over all things to the church. God "raised him from the dead," "seated Him at His right hand," and "put all things under His feet" (1:20-21). God tied all His planning to Christ!

The Objective of God's Plan

The great goal of God's planning is man's salvation. We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that means we were all dead in sin (Rom. 6:23). Ephesians chapter two explains that God is so full of love that although we were dead in sin He raised us up to sit with him in the spiritual realm. We are saved by grace. We all deserve to die eternally. Nothing we could possibly do can merit our salvation. Only God can save us and that is what He planned to do on condition that we respond through faith and become His workmanship (Eph. 2:4-10).

The nature of God's plan provides for the breaking down of former barriers (such as that between Jews and Gentiles) and the building together of all men into a great spiritual temple. No one in the Lord's house is a stranger or foreigner (Eph. 2:14-22). We are one! How different is God's plan from the denominational ways of men.

The Revelation of God's Plan

Ephesians chapter three explains how and why God has revealed his plan to man.

God did not fully reveal his plan until it was enacted in Christ. In earlier times, He did not completely make known "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (3:6). Now it is written in such a way that when we read we can understand it as fully as did Paul (3:3-4). This revelation was made not only so that we would know God's will but also: a) that through its resulting effects upon our lives the marvelous wisdom of God would be known to all in the spiritual realm (3:10); and b) that God would be given the glory which He so richly deserves (3:21).

Gifts Provided in God's Plan

God's plan calls for men to mature spiritually after having been forgiven of sin and to be united in the Truth with all others who are the children of God. We are responsible to provide: a) a proper attitude toward our fellow Christians making an honest effort to be united with them (4:1-3); and b) an unconditional commitment to uphold the truths upon which God's plan is based (4:4-6). God, on the other hand, gave gifts to help us to grow. These gifts are functionaries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) designed to equip saints

for the work of ministering and building up the body of Christ until we all come to full maturity. God's plan is that each Christian should do his part to cause the whole body to grow in love (4:7-16). we must not let him down.

The New Man Created According to God's Plan

God's plan provides for a complete spiritual re-creation of those in Christ. God not only purposed to forgive but he wants us to be changed from the worldly, materialistic persons we were before we were created in righteousness and holiness. The last half of chapter four and the first half of Ephesians chapter five tell us how to live before the Lord. We are not to grieve the Spirit by corrupt thoughts, speech, and activities (4:25-32); but rather we are to walk in love (5:2), walk in light (5:8), and walk in wisdom (5:15) always giving thanks to God for all things in the name of Christ (5:20).

God's Plan Explained and Illustrated

To illustrate His plan, God chose to explain the order and arrangement He has ordained for the domestic relationships of life (5:22-6:9). Wives are to submit to their own husbands as the church submits to Christ. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Children and servants are to be obedient while parents and masters are to fully provide the needs of those in their charge as the Lord provides for His own. These passages instruct us in human relationships, but they are really designed to teach us about God's purposes in Christ and the church (5:32).

Persevering in God's Plan

Finally, Paul encouraged the Ephesians to take up the armor of God so that we may withstand the enemy and receive those eternal blessings God has planned to provide (Eph. 6:10-24). God has certainly done His part. He has even given the means by which we can do our part. We must, however, apply it. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. We are not fighting other people. We are not fighting physical circumstances. **We are fighting the devil!** We must be armed! We must apply the Truth to our lives and wage the battle against sin. If we do not, insofar as we are concerned, God's plans and purposes will not be applied. Won't it be sad at the judgment, after God has so wonderfully planned for our salvation and worked out His purposes in Christ through the centuries, for us to fall short because of our shortsighted selfish worldliness?

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The thrilling responsibility of this assignment entails analysis of the lengthy context, Ephesians 1:3-14, as it complements the thesis in verse three. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (1:3). The extent, nature, and relationship where God has, before the fact, decided to bestow every blessing will, hopefully, stand out more clearly. Proper perception will surely generate within each Christian a thankfulness of heart and fulness of spirit which will cause a rising up to cry out, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God is the author of "all" or "every" blessing; their nature and sphere is spiritual; the medium through whom we have them is Jesus Christ. Thus we must immediately conclude that this text addresses not the natural blessings of God, but the fruit of the redemptive work of Christ. "Every" blessing includes all the Father intended and can bestow; all the Son can provide; all the Spirit can apply. The conspiring of Deity is here embraced in the blessings to those in Christ.

"Heavenly places," or, in the heavenlies, in the very nature of the expression is the idea of an exalted spiritual relationship, the highest of the high. A relationship into which God had brought these of the Ephesian church, into which all in Christ are brought. This is the church as perceived within the eternal purpose of God and revealed in the New Testament. Indeed, it is in Christ that all spiritual blessings are received. To be in Christ is to be in the church which is a reserved and peculiar relationship to God through Christ where, and only where, the redeemed obtain all spiritual blessings. "In Christ" produces an overriding idea of fellowship. Every spiritual blessing we have received, the exalted spiritual relationship in which they are received, is all contingent upon our relationship with Christ. The keynote of the whole epistle is unity of all in Christ. Things in heavens and in earth, Jew and Gentile, all are one in him. It is then, by reason of this "in Christ," that we attain to the highest of the high where all spiritual blessings are. In this section of the text these words seem to express the very heartbeat of the apostle. The sentence beginning in verse three runs continuously through fourteen and is marked all the way by many rich and happy turns of expression. The bottom line, however, is redemption, this epitomizes the work of Christ and the ultimate provision of the grace of God.

What God purposed and decided in respect to man's

redemption, the choice made, was in deference to those in Christ, (verse four). While nothing is said as to whether those chosen are chosen conditionally or unconditionally, verse five makes the choice "according to the good pleasure of his will." God foreordained the provisions of salvation and decided before the fact of salvation what it would take on his part as well as man's. He decreed the conditions which man had to meet if he was to be saved and enjoy all spiritual blessings. Every man is free to choose, whether to reject or accept the conditions of God for salvation. The chosen ones are distinct in character, "holy and without blame." The intimation is not that God makes one so by his direct power. Rather, God has chosen the class as object of his abiding love and leaves it to every man to decide whether he will be in that class or group. Further, the only way to be "holy and without blame" is to be "in him," in Christ, the idea of fellowship again.

Verse five introduces the idea of adoption by God through Jesus Christ. Adoption is a term of relationship, sonship in respect to standing. It is the taking of a child not one's own by birth to be a son, a legal heir, with all rights and obligations to that relationship. Sonship in Christ, here argued by Paul, is a new relationship founded upon the "good pleasure of his will." Through Jesus Christ the will of the Father is executed, the conditions of which not only provide for sonship but every blessing of sonship, every spiritual blessing.

What are **some** of those **spiritual blessings** which are reserved for a holy and blameless class, those in Christ, in fellowship with him and all involved? While our list will not be exhaustive, gleanings from this context will stir appreciation and provoke a more extensive consideration. **Redemption** is certainly to be of primary consideration, the forgiveness of sins, which is the consummate expression of God's rich grace (verse seven). Actually, all spiritual blessings revolve within the fact of forgiveness. It is in Christ, through his death that redemption is made possible. Redemption involves the idea of rescue from bondage. Man is in bondage to sin, Jesus died to redeem from that bondage, by his death made release possible. Let us not lose sight of the fact, however, that redemption is only to those who accept it on the terms offered. Redemption accordingly to the riches of God's grace, while available to all, must be appropriated.

Jesus shed his blood, this was the ultimate price he willingly paid to redeem sin-cursed man. "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26:28). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season; that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that had faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26). Redemption was provided in Christ and only in the death of God's own son, was God able to be just and at the same time justify the guilty. In so doing he showed abhorrence for sin and love for the guilty of sin,

justice satisfied, death for sin. Justification at the same time was made available through faith and obedience for all choosing to be in Christ. "In whom" (verse 7) looks to verse three, the antecedent of the pronoun "whom" is Christ.

Forgiveness by grace is a proposition frequently abused. The grace of God is not negated by faith and obedience on the part of man but rather appropriated. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace embraces all God has done in salvation, faith is man's part and the two, grace and faith, are brought together in obedience. Without faith and obedience on the part of man the grace of God cannot be appropriated. God makes available, man chooses to accept or ignore the gift.

The revelation of God's will and purpose is a complement to redemption. Our attention in this consideration is arrested by two expressions in verse nine, "made known" and "mystery." Since mystery suggests something unknown, hidden if you will, here it is declared that the "mystery of his will" is "made known." Everything in connection with redemption God has clearly revealed. Grace and revelation are united to enable man to know what God had in store for him and to become knowledgeable of the conditions essential to receiving it. Significantly, every passage in the Bible speaking of mystery, within context punctuates revelation. We confidently conclude, the mind of God has been clearly revealed to man, all can know the way of salvation. All this is in the "dispensation of the fulness of time." The divine plan, formulated in eternity, giving expression to the miraculous as well as the providential, reaches through the ages to become reality in the coming of Christ. At last, the coming of the Messiah into the world establishes the pivot on which God's plan and purpose revolves. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the publication of the facts, conditions and promises contingent upon this, the very essence of the gospel, ushered in the age of fulness looked for. All things essential to the good pleasure and purpose of God had come into place.

The age which saw the coming of Christ was ripe for that event. God's time had come, it was, "the time appointed of the father" (Gal. 4:2). The Roman Government had opened a system of highways for the gospel into every nation by conquest and toleration. Greece had given the world a universal language which would provide the richness for New Testament revelation. Idolatry was in process of erosion, superstitions were in decay and the skepticism for these things was common. "In the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21). Every aspect of man and his world identifies with readiness for the dispensation of fulness.

A dispensation for the gathering of all things in Christ. Here is established the keynote of the epistle, the unity of all in Christ. This is the sum, here is achieved the goal of the ages, the realization of God's eternal purpose. Jew and Gentile, all things, gathered as one in Christ. What had previously been one but had suffered separation is united again. Sin's separation and

alienation, through Christ reconciled and made friends. No improvement can be made on the inspired comment and explanation of another passage, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:16-20).

Let our study jell in the idea of verse 11, "we have obtained an **inheritance.**" The reward of sonship now presents itself, the aim and ambition of our loving Father, an inheritance described as "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). We then have an inheritance now, it is a present possession, we can be confident because of the guarantee. By trust in Christ produced through hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance, (cf. vs. 11-14).

Here **is assurance**, heaven is ours as an inheritance and we can be confident because of our trust in Christ, the faith of the gospel and the guarantee of the Spirit which has given the basis of our faith, the word of God. Every word, phrase and verse of the New Testament which the Spirit has revealed is earnest, pledge, that it will one day be the inheritance of those in Christ.

"All spiritual blessings in Christ" embraces a richness from God epitomized in redemption but comprehending all that heaven planned and that God could provide for those who would choose to follow Christ.

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Ephesians 1:19b-23. (Go ahead and read the passage...) Is there a more majestic message in all of Scripture than Paul's great Ephesian affirmation of the unique supremacy and absolute sovereign rule of Jesus Christ? I think not. It is the mountain top of holy writ; the pinnacle point of New Testament preaching. It awakens our hearts to a hymn of praise for the unmerited mercies of God and inspires us to a more joyful confidence in the inexhaustible riches found in Him who occupies the Throne. Thank God for Jesus! — and for Paul's description of His exalted glory.

A Capsule Commentary

In verse 19 the apostle prays that we might come to know what is the *"exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe."* Just how great is that power? How much strength is available for the Christian? How much divine energy has God already poured forth on our behalf? **The resurrection and exaltation of Christ are set forth as the answers to these questions** (vs. 20-21). Paul urges us to open our eyes and see the inexhaustible power of God — a source of strength so great that it took a crucified Christ and raised Him in radiant glory to heaven's throne. That is *the act* above all others that shows the unlimited power of God to do all that He has promised for His children. And Paul is affirming that that same power works TODAY on our behalf if we belong to His body, the church. Is it possible, then, to overstate the worth of the church of Jesus Christ and the spiritual strength which comes as a result of being a member of it?

The exaltation of Jesus Christ is then depicted in terms of two relationships (vs. 22-23). First, His relationship toward the created universe and second, His relationship toward the new creation, His church.

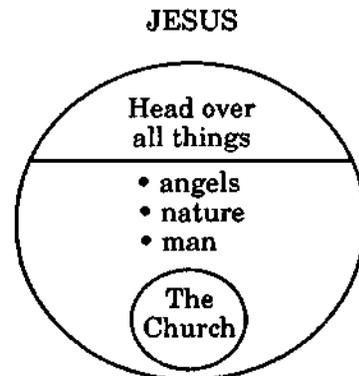
"And He put all things in subjection under His feet." Jesus Christ has complete universal rule and authority. It is a dominion from which absolutely nothing that exists is excluded. *"And gave Him as head over all things to the church."* The headship of Christ over the church is a result of His headship over all things and is included in the thought. He is head of the church i.e., it is Christ who brought it into being; it is Christ who serves as its source of life; it is Christ who supplies its strength; it is Christ who directs its activities and authorizes it to act as His agent in the performance of His purpose and work.

Paul here glorifies and elevates the church of Christ in a way that staggers the imagination. **He affirms that**

Jesus Christ governs the universe in the interest of His church! *"He is head over all things TO THE CHURCH..."* (emphasis mine — dwa). His love for the church is so great that He causes the entire universe to cooperate on behalf of His people. *"Which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all."* The very one who governs the universe and supplies its every need also governs the church and fills the need of every believer (3:14-21). Thus, we receive our fulness and completion in Christ (Col. 2:10).

A Kingdom Within A Kingdom

The headship of Jesus Christ is universal. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and there is no one on earth who is not subject to His reign and rule (whether they want to admit it or not is beside the point). *"JESUS IS HEAD OVER ALL THINGS..."* There is no passage that says it any clearer than this one. (See also Matt. 28:18; Col. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:22.) However, there are some on earth who are not just subjects of Christ but willing subjects of Christ. They have submitted willingly and lovingly to the dictates of the King and have been ushered into a special relationship with Him. This special relationship is the church. Let's illustrate it this way —



Yes, He who rules the world ALSO rules a select group of blood-bought people called the church. These have been chosen out of the world for the express purpose of proclaiming the excellencies of Him who serves as their sovereign Ruler, Lord and King (1 Pet. 2:9). These enjoy a special spiritual relationship that invites fellowship with the King. *A kingdom within a kingdom...* (I don't know how else to explain it, do you?) What a thrill to be in Jesus and to be a part of the kingdom, a believer in the body and a willing subject of Christ's headship.

Organized According To Divine Wisdom

Organization is the key ingredient for the accomplishment of anything worthwhile — including the things of God. (Isn't there a passage somewhere that says that God is not the author of confusion...) The term "organization" means *"an arrangement to help prepare for action."* Where there is no organization there will be no action; chaos reigns and objectives fail.

The church of Jesus Christ is organized by the divine directive. God could have chosen any number of ways to rule and govern His church. For example:

(1) **Monarchy** — This is where all powers are invested in one man. He is the lawgiver, judge and execu-

tor of law. Henceforth, his subjects have only to submit and enjoy the blessings of his reign or rebel and suffer the consequences.

(2) **Communism** — This is a totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party rules for all.

(3) **Democracy** — This is government where all powers are divided equally among the peoples.

(4) **Republic** — This is rule in which the powers are invested in the elected representatives of the people. The elected delegates have the authority of making, judging and executing laws for the people. Our country is an example of this form of governing procedure.

God chose the form of government He wanted for His church — it is a MONARCHY. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and He is the only head. Jesus Christ has all authority over the church. Jesus Christ rules in the legislative, judicial and executive levels of church organization. He is the supreme head and single source of authority for God's people. That is why the headquarters for the church of Christ is in heaven — because Jesus is in heaven and headquarters is where the head is! Every religious group which seeks to depart from this monarchical form of government and turn the church into any other kind of organizational structure is operating in strict violation of New Testament teaching and has rejected Jesus as the absolute ruler and king.

Please understand this one thing... The fundamental reason why denominationalism is wrong is because they have rejected the headship of the very One they propose to serve. To denominationalists Jesus Christ is no more than a puppet king to be pacified rather than an absolute monarch to be glorified.

But... Jesus as head of the church had the right to delegate authority to the church and He did so. (In fact, there are two types of authority: (1) inherent authority, and (2) delegated authority. See Rom. 13:1). Jesus Christ delegated authority to the apostles. To these He gave the power to bind and loose what heaven had already bound and loosed (Matt. 18:18). The apostles spoke and wrote with divine approval and delegated authority. To fail in hearing and heeding them is to reject Jesus (1 Cor. 14:37).

Furthermore, in the local church Jesus Christ exercises His headship through the eldership. The elders are to rule, lead and oversee (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Pet. 5:3) having received delegated authority to do so from heaven (Acts 20:28). Hence, to resist God-approved elders (men who have met the scriptural requirements of the office and are so recognized and appointed by the local church) is the same as resisting Jesus Christ! That is not to argue at all that elders have the right to make laws, change commands or set aside divine precepts. They do not. They are authorized to rule in the realm of GENERAL authority and are delegated by Jesus to make judgment decisions in the best interest of the flock. Thus, when one rises up in opposition to God-approved men when they operate in the area of authority delegated to them by Jesus Christ — it is the same as rejecting Christ! Let's make this perfectly clear: *To reject those who have delegated authority is the same as reject-*

ing Him who delegated it! It is a serious offense. It is a crime of treason against the King!

We must respect the authority and headship of Jesus. We must take our stand upon Scripture and speak as the oracles of God in order to meet divine approval. Not everyone has always done that. Some have espoused LIBERALISM and *loosed where God has bound*. Others have embraced LEGALISM and *bound where God has loosed*. Both extremes are wrong for both violate the authoritative headship of Jesus.

The Glorious Body

In seeking to describe the unity, concern and cohesiveness in the church, Paul used a unique illustration in which there could be no misunderstanding — the human body. Over thirty times in his writings he makes this comparison. In so doing he emphasizes three vital points:

(1) *No individual Christian can function effectively by himself* (Eph. 4:15-16). (What do you think that does to the "Christian at large" concept that some advance?)

(2) *No member of the body has the right to feel he/she is more important than any other member of the body* (Rom. 12:3-4; 1 Cor. 14:12-14).

(3) *There is only one head of the body* (Eph. 1:22-23).

Usually when we emphasize this last point we think first of our Lord's authority, and rightly so. But another point needs to be made and that is the closeness of the bond between body and head. It is the unfathomable quality of LOVE between Christ and His church that is stressed in the head-body symbolism. *"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"* (5:25). Jesus Christ stands today as the head of the church because He willingly gave Himself to save the body. It therefore behooves me to bow in His presence and dedicate my life to glorifying Him who is head.

Christ, The Head of the Church. Is there a greater joy in all the world than to grasp the hand of a new-born child of God and say with exuberant enthusiasm — *"Welcome to the body of Jesus Christ!"*? Yes, to be a member of the church of Christ and submit willingly and lovingly to the precious headship of Jesus is the greatest thrill of all!

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Ephesians 2:1-10

These verses set before us one of the most beautiful and thrilling experiences possible for the soul of man. It focuses attention upon the power and the grace of God by which a transition is wrought that involves the greatest possible contrast. It involves a resurrection from death in sin with all its consequences to life in Christ with all its exceeding great and precious rewards. The efficacy and magnificence of the power is clearly seen in that it lifts a soul from the deepest and darkest dive of sin to heights that are brilliantly bright with righteousness. It is the same power by which Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead and seated at the right hand of the heavenly Father (Eph. 1:19,20). The beauty of the whole transition is seen in the grace of God which is the underlying and motivating force throughout the whole experience.

Our text very naturally divides itself threefold: 1) A State of Spiritual Death, 2) A Spiritual Resurrection, and 3) A Spiritual Objective.

A State of Spiritual Death

The spiritual resurrection, which is the heart of this theme, is prefaced with a clear cut view of those involved prior to their resurrection. They were "quickened" ("Made alive" — W. E. Vine) from being "dead in trespasses and sins" (v. 1). They were in a state of spiritual death which involves separation from God (Cf. Gen. 2:17; Isa. 59:1,2; Jno. 5:24,25; 1 Tim. 5:6; Lk. 15:32). The pronouns "you" (v. 1) and "we" (v. 3) show conclusively that both Jew and Gentile were equally guilty before their spiritual resurrection. The expression "trespasses and sins" simply refers to specific transgressions and those more general — it covers the whole realm of sin and shows that any sin — all sin — (whether by commission or omission) separates from God and leaves one in a state of spiritual death.

The gravity and depth of their sin is clearly set forth in the following expressions:

1) They "walked according to the course of this world" (v. 2). While the word "world" is used in different senses in the Scriptures, I think it refers in this instance to people in general who are alienated from God (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 6,12; 3:18,19). Their manner of life was in harmony with their present environment — a people without knowledge of God.

2) "According to the prince of the power of the air" (v. 2). This obviously refers to the devil. Elsewhere he is called "the prince of the devils" (Matt. 9: 34,12:24; Mk.

3:22); "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). These people were formerly under the control of Satan.

3) "According to ... the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (v. 2). This spirit is without respect for duly constituted authority. Such is sometimes seen in a child who ignores and rebels against the rules of parents. This spirit of disobedience has wrought havoc in many homes—resulting in sorrow, shame, and untold suffering. If not corrected early in the home, it will magnify itself in rebellion to civil authority, and, certainly, it will show no reverence for divine authority. Jews and Gentiles of the Ephesian church were guilty of this spirit in their former life. Unfortunately, that spirit is too much in evidence today.

4) "The lust of our flesh" is that in which they had their "conversation" or manner of life in times past (v.3). While the word from which "lust" is translated is sometimes used to indicate a strong desire for that which is good, it most often denotes an "inordinate desire" for that which is evil. The word "inordinate" is defined by Webster to mean: "Not ordered or kept within bounds; unregulated; unrestrained."

God intends for man to be the master of his physical desires (1 Cor. 9:27). He has provided for the legitimate fulfillment of every desire in man. However, when these desires become so strong that God's order is ignored and fulfillment is sought otherwise, lust becomes the master and leads one into sin (Jas. 1:14,15). Peter refers to such as having become "servants ("in bondage"—W. E. Vine) of corruption"(2Pet. 2:19). Such was the way of life of the Ephesians in the past.

5) "By nature the children of wrath." Unfortunately, this expression has been misunderstood and misused so as to teach false doctrine. Calvinists use it to teach "Hereditary Total Depravity" — that sin is inherent in one's nature — that one is born in sin. However, the Greek word translated "nature" is sometimes used to describe that which has become a **habit** with an individual — something that has developed over a period of time. We sometimes refer to such as a person's "second nature." It is the nature of some to curse, but they were not born that way. Such developed through practice until it became a habit, and that is how it came to be a part of their nature. So it was with those of our text. They were by nature (habit) the children of wrath — the objects of God's wrath. Since Paul has already described a series of evil practices on their part, the context and all else revealed demand that this meaning be given to the word "nature" in this instance.

A Spiritual Resurrection

This part of our text begins with the contrasting conjunction "But" (v. 4). This reverses the former picture of the Ephesians and gives us a view of them in the highest position possible for one to occupy during his journey through time. It is called "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (v. 6). While the word "places" or "things" (marginal reading) is elliptical in the original text, such is well supplied by our translators. The meaning is that these souls have been "raised up" to a position that relates them to heaven (Cf. Eph. 1:3, 20; 3:10). It is a spiritual relationship that identifies them with Christ

and all things that pertain to heaven. They even share in the reign of Christ who **sits** and **reigns** at God's right hand, and will till the last enemy, which is death, is destroyed (1 Cor. 15:25, 26; Heb. 1:13). Christians also sit and reign with Christ "in life" and "on earth" (Eph. 2:6; Rom, 5:17; Rev. 5:9,10). What a privilege — to sit and reign with Christ in heavenly places! What a contrast to their former state!

Three things are identified as the means by which this spiritual resurrection was wrought:

First, there is the **power of God**, mentioned first in relation to our Lord's physical resurrection and exaltation (1:19-23), and then in relation to our spiritual resurrection and exaltation (2:1, 5, 6). The same power accounts for both resurrections.

Second, there is the **grace of God** (vs. 5, 7, 8), used inclusively of His "rich mercy" and "great love" (v. 4), without which one's salvation would be impossible. The word "grace" basically means "unmerited favor." More explicitly, it means doing something that needs to be done for an individual which thing the individual cannot do for himself. This is the grace that accounts for the spiritual resurrection of our text — even our salvation. Man needs to be raised from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life in Christ, but cannot, of himself, accomplish it. What God does to make possible this resurrection is the grace by which we are saved. This includes the sacrifice of His Son, His atoning blood, the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the word — even the gospel of our Lord. Remember, Paul said, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us ..." (Titus 2:11). It includes the church which our Lord purchased with His blood, the providential care of a loving heavenly Father, etc. **Grace** identifies God's part in man's salvation.

Third, faith is necessary to our salvation. Paul says we are saved "by grace... through faith" (v. 8). This faith is not a "gift of the Spirit" as per Calvinism, but rather a condition to be met by man in the saving of the soul. It is something we "**do**" — a "**work**" we perform. Note the following:

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28, 29).

Thus, the faith that saves is an obedient faith — a working faith.

Because of some popular religious errors, some **NEGATIVE OBSERVATIONS** are in order concerning verses eight and nine: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The fact that salvation is by an obedient faith does not invalidate its being a gift. Gifts are often conditional. The Israelites received Jericho as a "gift" (Josh. 6:2), but not without meeting the conditions of faith given in verses three through five. Without this obedient faith — marching according to the instructions given — the walls of Jericho would not have fallen.

It should be obvious by now that while we are saved by grace, we are not saved by grace alone, as per Calvin-

ian theology. Calvinism teaches that there is nothing for one to do in saving the soul—no commands to be obeyed, no laws to be observed, no conditions to be met — that salvation is wholly a matter of grace. Such contradicts verse eight of our text, which names faith in addition to grace as a means to our salvation.

It should also be obvious that the faith that saves is not faith alone (Cf. Gal. 5:6; Jas. 2:17-24). Notice especially verse twenty-four "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The Greek lexicographer, Thayer, shows that every time the word faith (Gr. "pisteuo") is used in an acceptable sense, it is "conjoined with obedience: "Pisteuo —... used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e., a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah — the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 511).

This helps us to understand why the Jews, the chief rulers, and even the devils (John 8:30, 44; 12:42; Jas. 2:19) were not saved even though they believed. Their faith was not "conjoined with obedience."

Furthermore, the expression "Not of works lest any man should boast" (v. 9) does not contradict our being justified by an obedient faith. The works of which one may boast are works of merit, which have nothing on earth to do with works of faith. He who fails to distinguish between the two, simply misses the truth. When Paul teaches here and elsewhere (e.g., Titus 3:5; Rom. 3:20) that we are saved not by works, the context will always show that reference is to works of merit. Our salvation is not by such works, but rather by works of faith. One of the greatest problems in the realm of religion today is a failure to understand and recognize the difference between the two.

A work of merit is that by which one earns what he receives. The reward is a matter of debt — not of grace (Rom. 4:4)—because the giver owes the worker. He has earned it! In relation to salvation such works demand perfect obedience or perfect law keeping. Once the law is transgressed, one becomes a sinner (1 Jno. 3:4). After this all the "deeds of law" will not take away his guilt (Rom. 3:19, 20) — something else is necessary. This is where the atoning blood of Christ comes into view. However, it applies only to those who meet conditions of faith.

A work of faith is a work by which one shows his faith. Even though he has not earned what he receives, it comes to him as a gift because he has made his faith manifest. Works of faith are within reach of every man, though he comes short of perfection. Only Christ kept the law perfectly (1 Pet. 2:22). Thus, our salvation is "by grace... through faith."

Those dead in trespasses and sins (aliens, as were the Ephesians) must meet the following conditions of faith: believe (Mk. 16:16) — repent (Acts 17:30) — confess (Rom. 10:10) — and be baptized (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2: 38). Such have their past sins remitted — they are raised to spiritual life — they are raised up to sit in heavenly places with Christ.

As a Christian, they must continue to "walk by faith"

(2 Cor. 5:7), "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (v. 10). Thus, our faith continues to manifest itself.

A Spiritual Objective

The ultimate objective of God's majestic power and marvelous grace being manifested in raising up souls from the depth of spiritual destruction to heights of heavenly bliss was then and is now that such souls may forever stand as a monument to "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ" (v. 7). This thought is extended by Paul in the next chapter when these souls are pictured as the church, which, in all of its glory, stands as a monument to and is a manifestation of the "manifold wisdom of God" (3:10).

Blessed, indeed, are those who are raised up from spiritual death to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

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The unity of Jews and Gentiles (and all men) in Christ Jesus is one of the major themes of Paul's writings. No passage is more complete or compelling in this regard than Ephesians 2:11-18.

Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on this letter: **Be Rich**, entitles Eph. 2:11-22, "The Great Peace Mission." He says that from 1500 B.C. to A.D. 850, there were 7,500 "eternal covenants" which were agreed upon by various nations with hope of bringing lasting peace. No covenant lasted longer than two years. But here we truly have an eternal covenant in Christ Jesus.

The apostle speaks here of separation (v. 11,12); and of reconciliation (v. 13-18).

When They Were Without

Paul calls upon these saints (and us) to remember some things. Verse 11 begins with the meaningful word, "wherefore." This always points back to what has been said. In view of the tremendous truths revealed in v. 8-10, we are to remember our former condition. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are totally unworthy of the unsearchable riches of God's grace which has been so abundantly bestowed upon us.

In time past these Gentile Christians had been called "Uncircumcision" by those who were called the "Circumcision." Paul was distinguishing between the false concepts of men and the truth of God. Those who were Jews in the flesh, but were not Christians, were only called the circumcision. They were not the true circumcision

(Romans 2:25-29; Col. 2:11,12; Phil. 3:2, 3).

The significance of this epithet was that the Gentiles were unclean. They were held in utter contempt. They were called dogs.

Such was a superficial distinction, but in v. 12, Paul expounds upon the true spiritual condition of the Gentiles prior to their conversion. They were spiritually bankrupt. Observe what they were without:

They were without Christ: The Jews were also without Christ but at least they were expecting a Messiah. To them, history was heading somewhere. To the Gentiles, it was going nowhere.

They were without citizenship: They were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." Israel was God's chosen nation. He gave her His laws and He was her King. The Gentiles were not so blessed (Deut. 32:10-14; Ezekiel 16:1-14f).

They were without the covenants of promise: God made no covenants with the Gentiles as He had with the fathers of the Jews. Still, His purpose in so blessing the Jews was that all nations should be blessed.

They were without hope: Almost any situation is bearable if one has hope. But these had no basis for hope. Their philosophies were empty and futile. Their religion was powerless, for their gods were lifeless. They were groping in darkness. Our age is much like theirs. Modern existentialism has rendered the universe and our brief existence in it but one vast joke. People without Christ have no hope.

They were without God: This is the bottom line. They were not atheists, but the true God was unknown to them (Acts 17:16-23; 1 Cor. 8:5). See Psalm 115 for an interesting description of their gods.

But Now

Paul now moves from the past to the present. The past of their lives, when they were without, spelled a pathetic spiritual poverty. But now the keyword is **reconciliation**. First, there is a reconciliation to one another to be considered; then the reconciliation to God.

God had put a difference between Jews and Gentiles. But now He no longer makes a difference between them. This was a hard lesson for the early church to learn. Jews and Gentiles were different in diet, customs, religious background and many other things. But now God says there is to be unity between them.

But, we may ask, what caused the enmity in the first place? Verse 15 gives the answer. It was the law of commandments. The middle wall of partition was the Old Testament law. It required a separation between Jews and Gentiles. There could be no possibility of unity until it was abolished.

In 1871 an inscription was found which came from the temple of Jerusalem. It reads: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."

Witness those Jews who thought Paul had defiled the temple by bringing a Gentile into it (Acts 21:28-31).

It should be noted that the Greeks promoted divisions also. Racial pride is seen in all cultures and societies. To the Greeks, others were barbarians.

Such hostilities soon affected one of the cruelest wars ever fought which brought to an end, in A.D. 70, the Jewish state and economy.

This "law of commandments" was abolished or nullified. The Old Testament law was no longer binding upon them. It was abolished "in His flesh," or while He was in the flesh.

This was in order to make of two, Jew and Gentile, one new man in Christ. This new man is the body of Christ, His church (1:22, 23; 4:4). There were two Greek words for "new." One denoted that which was new in point of time, as a new suit or a new pen. It might be just like others but it was new. The other word was used of something that was new in quality, as a new invention. This is the word here. The church is not a new model of an old idea. It is a brand new development. Nothing like it has existed before.

Reconciled to God

Not only did Gentiles and Jews need to be reconciled to each other; more importantly they needed to both be reconciled to God. And not only do folks today who are estranged need to be brought together. They all need to be brought together with God.

Many Jews did not recognize this need. They felt that Gentiles needed to become Jews (be circumcised and keep the law) to be saved. Paul, however, taught that it was necessary for the Jews to realize they were sinners just like the Gentiles. Such is the major thrust of Romans 1-3. Peter declared: "(God) put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith... but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they: (Acts 15:9,11).

Jesus is our peace (v. 14); Jesus made peace (v. 15); Jesus preached peace (v. 17). This is not speaking of His personal ministry. The gospel of reconciliation was delivered to the Gentiles through His chosen ones (Matt. 10:40). It was not enough that peace was provided. It had to be proclaimed.

"For by Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The words "reconcile," "slay the enmity," "peace," "access," and "one," all convey the same basic message. There are many in this world to whom we have no access. It would be practically impossible for most of us to be granted an audience with the President. It would likely prove difficult to obtain access to the governor of our state. Yet through Christ we have access to the Creator and Sovereign God of the universe.

Wayne A. Detzler in his **New Testament Words in Today's Language** comments on "peace": "The world seeks peace in many places. When Neville Chamberlain returned from meeting with the Germans at Munich in 1938, he blithely said: 'I believe it is peace for our time ... peace with honor.'... What a difference marked the attitude of Winston Churchill, Chamberlain's successor. Of the same conflict Churchill insisted: 'In war: resolution. In defeat: defiance. In victory: magnanimity. In peace: goodwill.'"

As there was no possibility of peace to those who capitulated to Hitler, so "... the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace," says my God, 'for the

wicked.'"

It has been truthfully observed that there can be no peace so long as God remains unseated at the conference table.

James P. Miller wrote: "No man can be saved without being reconciled, and the body is where this takes place. Men are not reconciled to God in the fraternity order, social clubs, and churches of men. It takes place in the body, the church. The religious leaders of our time would have to say that reconciliation is not necessary, if church membership is not necessary." ("The Glorious Bride")

THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD

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Ephesians 2:19-22

"So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, growth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

What a marvelous passage! These verses draw several inferences from the preceding verses. They all have to do with the new fellowship and relationship into which believing Jews and Gentiles have been brought. There is, however, great emphasis on the elevating of the Gentiles to a position of equal privilege and benefit. This is illustrated with: a city (or nation), a family, a building.

"No More Strangers And Sojourners"

The Ephesians had just been reminded to look back at what they were so as to get the full effect in contrast of what they had become. They had been as "strangers and sojourners." This was a comprehensive expression which included all who for various reasons did not enjoy the full privileges of citizenship in a city or nation. This was once the status of the Gentiles in regard to God's nation, Israel. "Strangers" refers to foreigners, as opposed to citizens. "Sojourners" were guests in a private family, as opposed to members of the family. Adam Clarke points out that in Athens strangers were permitted to reside in the city and pursue their business, but could perform no public duty; they had no voice in the public deliberations, and they had no part in the management of the state. They could only look on as spectators without interfering in any way in the affairs of the government. They were bound to humbly submit to all

the enactments of the citizens and observe all the laws. They could not transact business in their own name but had to choose from among the citizens one to whose care they committed themselves as a patron.

In Judaism, even proselytes were regarded as "strangers" as were all foreigners, and Jews only were supposed to have near access to God. They had no rights, nor as mere heathens could they settle among them.

"But Fellow-citizens"

As a result of the cross of Christ, the Gentiles are no longer strangers who have no home, no property, no privileges, no interest in common with its inhabitants. They have now become naturalized citizens living on perfect equality with all other members with the same privileges, protection, and government — and all rights of citizenship. Peace had been brought to those "afar off and those that were nigh" (v. 17). Here the glorious, blood-purchased church is depicted as a city. Abraham "became a sojourner ... as in a land not his own ... He looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:9, 10). This is the new standing of the Gentiles which corresponds to their low estate of verse 12, when they were "separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world." This is what the gospel can do!

"The Household Of God"

First a city, now a family is used to illustrate the church. When they were sojourners they were guests without domestic rights. Now they are members of the family! This took place through adoption (Gal. 4:5). God is their Father, Christ their older brother. This is a more intimate relationship than that of a citizen under a civil ruler. It is a closer and more tender thought. What closer kin is there than being in the same family? This includes "the whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph. 3:15). This speaks of the warmest and most intimate relationship which all Christians sustain to God. They are his family and may address him as Father. Where is this? It is in the church He loved.

A Building

It is interesting how Paul (by the Holy Spirit) uses these three examples (a city, a family, a building) to illustrate different aspects in the nature of the church. This building rests upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. How are we to understand this? Are the apostles and prophets themselves in the foundation? Or does it mean that the foundation is laid by them? In I Corinthians 3:11, Paul had said "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ." However, since the relation of Christ to the building is in the context expressed by another figure (chief corner stone), it is probably correct to think of the foundation as consisting of the apostles and prophets (No doubt this refers to the new testament prophets, Eph. 3:5; 4:11).

Christ is the chief corner stone; the apostles and prophets are the foundation; all believers are the "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:4,5) which make up the superstructure. Lenski well observes that the cornerstone was the great stone put in the angle of the substructure where the

walls met. It, also being joined to the foundation, was the stone on which the stability of the whole building depended. It actually formed a part of the two walls and gave this edifice its unity and strength. Jesus Christ is the connecting medium by which both Jews and Gentiles were united in the same building. It is interesting to note that both Jews and Gentiles are mentioned in the ancestry of Jesus (Matthew 1).

The Temple

In verse 21 Paul shows that "each several building" grows into a holy temple that is fitly framed together. It is as though the temple was begun in several distinct centers, and as the building progressed, these approached one another till they met and combined in one vast harmonious structure. The fitting together of the various parts of an elaborate structure constitutes the highest unity. This is what Jesus did for all men in cementing Jew and Gentile together in this building. In chapter four Paul gives instruction as to how this unity is maintained.

The temple of Diana at Ephesus might have in some way been used to illustrate what Paul was talking about. The pride of Ephesus was her world-famed temple in which the religion, the art and even the commerce of the city centered and flourished. It was a visible symbol of pomp and power, while the church has a higher splendor and a wider influence. The temple of Diana was reputed as one of the wonders of the world. However, though commentators are divided, it is this writer's opinion that Paul did not have in mind just any sanctuary, including those of pagans but that he had in mind the sanctuary at Jerusalem which was a type and a symbol of Christ (John 2:18-22) and also of the church.

The comparison of the church with a building is common in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 3:9,10). The comparison was probably taken from the temple since it was an edifice of great beauty, expense, and sacredness, it was natural to compare the church with it. The temple was the sacred place where God dwelt and the church (not a physical building, but people) is the place where he delights now to abide. The temple in Jerusalem is the only one that could be referred to as "a habitation of God." In the temple as well as in the tabernacle God dwelt between the cherubim. There was the symbol of his presence and there was the worship performed which He prescribed. After the model is the spiritual temple, the church, likened. God dwelt in the one, and he now dwells in the other. To have used the temple of Diana to illustrate the church would have been a disgrace, not only because of the idolatry but because of what happened to Paul and his companions when he preached against the Ephesian idolatry and the worship of Diana (Acts 19:23f).

The Cornerstone

The church is not a collection of loose stones and timbers. The materials are accurately and carefully united so that the building will be firm. Different materials may be used but one part is worked into another so as to constitute a durable and beautiful structure. The different materials are Jews and Gentiles throughout the world who have been touched with the gospel of a

Savior who loved them more than words can express.

Christ is the corner stone of this beautiful temple, the church. The corner stone is the most important in the building. First, because the edifice rests mainly on the corner stone. It holds the building together. It is the binding stone holding the two walls (Jew and Gentile) and built into both. Second, because it occupies a conspicuous and honorable place.

Because of its foundation, corner stone, and living stones that are "fitly framed together," it is an indestructible temple, unlike the physical temple in Jerusalem which was destroyed just as Jesus prophesied (Matthew 24:1, 2). It is unshakable. It cannot be moved. He "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). Think of the safety and glory in the church!

Paul did not say the church was founded on Peter. The foundation is not in Rome, but in heaven. The stones which make it up cross national, international, and racial boundaries.

Conclusion

There are many precious figures by which the church is depicted. Christ is the head, the church is the body; Christ is the bridegroom, the church is the bride; God is the Father, the church is His family; Christ is the husbandman, the church is his vineyard; Christ is the King, the church is His kingdom; Christ is the captain, the church is His army; Christ is the chief Shepherd, the church is His flock.

In this study we have examined Christ as the chief corner stone, and the church as a building, a temple. Each figure expresses the glory, the beauty, the strength, and the close relationship of Christ to the church.

*Some build their hopes on ever-drifting sand,
Some on their fame or their treasure or their land;
Mine's on the Rock that forever shall stand,
Jesus, the "ROCK OF AGES."*

(S.S. Journal)

THE GOSPEL PLAN OF SALVATION

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"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

This verse is what is called a doxology. It shows that the church is to continuously glorify God by Jesus Christ. The 19th Psalm tells us that "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." The church is another thing that glorifies God, as the heavens and firmament.

Eph. 3:21 is thought by some to teach that every good work of Christians must be done in and through the local church in order that the church might get the glory. This concept has caused some to object to schools, where the Bible is taught, papers, publishing houses, or any institution (organization) that does a good (Biblical) work, on the basis that they rob the church of glory. This shows a misunderstanding of what this passage says. In the first place, this text refers to the church universal and not to a local congregation. Furthermore, the passage does not speak of glory that COMES to the church, but the glory that the church GIVES to God.

To see how God is glorified in the church by Christ Jesus, we need to answer two questions. (1) What is the church? and (2) How does it glorify God?

What Is The Church?

The church is glorious in itself because of its origin, purpose, and destiny. The whole of Ephesians 3 shows this.

THE CHURCH IS GLORIOUS BECAUSE IT WAS DIVINELY PURPOSED AND PLANNED. We are told in verse 11 that it is "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus." Paul speaks of this eternal purpose as a mystery (v. 3-4, 9) which was divinely revealed unto him, the other apostles, and prophets (v. 3-5; 1 Cor. 2:7-13). It is called the "manifold wisdom of God" made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places (v. 10).

THE CHURCH IS GLORIOUS BECAUSE OF ITS MESSAGE OF SALVATION AND HOPE. It is called "the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4) and said to be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16) for both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 3:6). It involved the death of Christ for our sins, his burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It was preached to both Jews and Gentiles that "they might be fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of his promise" (Eph. 3:6). Boldness and access with confidence is through faith in Him" (v. 12). Those who hear, believe, and obey the gospel that Paul, other

apostles, and prophets had revealed unto them, and preached, have by faith in Him enjoyed the promise of salvation (sins remitted) and entered the one body which is said to be a family, bearing the name of Christ (v. 15). This family (church) is to be spiritually strong (v. 16), with Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, rooted and grounded in love (v. 17), understanding the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ and filled with all the fulness of God (v. 19).

Summarily, the church is glorious because it was divinely conceived and purposed, divinely revealed, has a glorious message (gospel) for all nations, brings salvation from sin and makes one an heir of all the promises of God.

These purposes and plans came to fruition on Pentecost (Acts 2). At that time, the previously chosen, prepared, and charged apostles (Mk. 3:13-19; Acts 1:3; Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:44-53), who were waiting for the promised power-Holy Spirit-kingdom (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:6-8), received it and began their preaching. Those convicted by the preaching asked what to do, and were told to "Repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Many did this and were "added to the church" (Acts 2:47).

For awhile, the church was only in Jerusalem, where it "continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The number had increased to five thousand men in just a few days (Acts 4:4), and "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). Acts 6:7 says "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

It was the Lord's will that the gospel be preached first in Jerusalem; spread through Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8; Lk. 24:47).

Persecution led to the dispersion of saints from Jerusalem and the evangelization of other places (Acts 8:1-4). Churches, therefore, came to exist in Samaria, Antioch, and other places, in Asia, Europe, even the whole world, as the gospel was preached and believers became obedient to the faith.

These churches were local congregations, composed of saved people through their obedience to the faith, who looked to Christ and his word as their only head (seat of authority) (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:20-23). Each church was independent, overseen by a plurality of elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3), with deacons performing the things authorized by the Lord and assigned by the elders (1 Tim. 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-4), and other members (saints) who worshipped and functioned as a part of that congregation (Phil. 1:1).

Each church had a common treasury into which members contributed (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and out of which money was used to support preachers (Phil. 4:15-16; 2 Cor. 11:8), relieve needy saints (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), and things expedient to doing the Lord's work, worship and edification (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:16).

How The Church Glorifies God

This church (body or family) of special people, continually glorifies God as each member maintains the faith and does not desecrate in any way what God purposed, planned, revealed, and brought to fruition through Christ and the preaching of the gospel.

GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST AND HIS WORD IS NOT USURPED by men, Counsels, Conventions, Boards or any man. This assures the will of God being done. Otherwise, human wisdom and traditions are glorified instead of God.

GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (TRUTH) THAT SAVES (MAKES FREE) IS FAITHFULLY PROCLAIMED ... without perverting, diluting, or mixing in any way (Gal. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:1,6,16). False teaching glorifies only the teacher, fills his hearers with false hope, and makes for vain worship. Such reflects no glory to God.

GOD IS GLORIFIED IN THE CHURCH WHEN MEMBERS ARE ZEALOUS ABOUT SERVING THE LORD AND ARE READY UNTO EVERY GOOD WORK. Fruitless branches, unprofitable servants, and lukewarmness rob the church of its ability to glorify God and bring forth condemnation (Rev. 3:16; Matt. 25:30).

GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH (BODY-FAMILY) SHOW THEMSELVES TO BE A "CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE ... OFFERING UP SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES" AND CONSTANTLY SHOW FORTH "THE PRAISE OF HIM WHO CALLED THEM OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT (1 Pet. 2:5,9). Glorifying God is impossible when members love the world, are conformed to the world, and walk after the flesh (1 Jno. 2:15; Rom. 12:2; 8:1,12-13).

GOD IS GLORIFIED IN THE CHURCH WHEN EACH MEMBER GIVES PROOF OF LOVE FOR GOD AND ONE ANOTHER. Jesus said "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jno. 13:35). Envy, jealousy, suspicion, strife, and working ill to one's neighbor are the antithesis of love and a destroyer of glory (Rom. 13:10; 1 Cor. 13:1-7).

Conclusion

The Lord's desire is that the church be "presented a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). If the church is not this, it is because members failed to do and be what the Lord enabled them to be and do, thus placing spots and blemishes on the Lord's creation, created to glorify Him.

In order for one to glorify God in the church, he must first be in it (a part of it). One can never glorify God apart from his purpose and plan, or have hope of entering the glory land at the judgment (Matt. 7:21).

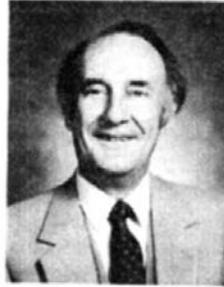
One may enter the glorious body and still, by unfaithfulness, not glorify God, resulting in the loss of the soul. These are those who "receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1); who were once enlightened (Heb. 6:4) ... "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" but became "again entangled therein, and overcome" (2 Pet. 2:20).

Entering this glorious body (family), faithfully "walking in the truth" (2 Jno. 1:4), "by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7), "in the light" (1 Jno. 1:7) and serving diligently (1 Cor. 15:58) is how to glorify God in the church.

**GROWING UP
IN CHRIST ...
Eph. 4: 1-16**

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Christians are to grow to maturity. Babes in Christ are to become spiritual adults, striving to attain the likeness of Christ. We read, "... we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (4:15-16, NASB).

As a result of the relation to Christ the entire church (God's people) is fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies. Each individual Christian (part; joint) harmoniously working in his proper station and function, causes the growth of the body (church) for the building up (wisdom, piety, holiness, peace) of itself in love.

In reference to verse 16, MacKnight stated: The apostle's meaning is, that as the human body is formed by the union of all the members to each other under the head, and by the fitness of each member for its own office and place in the body, so the church is formed by the union of its members under Christ the head. Further, as the human body increases, till it arrives at maturity, by the energy of every part in performing its proper function, and by the sympathy of every part with the whole; so the body, or church of Christ, grows to maturity, by the proper exercise of the gifts and graces of individuals for the benefits of the whole" (*Apostolical Epistles*, p. 336).

Hendriksen commented: "There is a work to be done, as verse 12 clearly shows. And in order to accomplish the tasks assigned, believers should cooperate, each contributing his share to the inner growth of the church" (*Ephesians*, p. 182). Obviously, there cannot be growth to the body of Christ without unity and harmony among those who compose the body, viz., individual Christians. To make this a reality, there must be the following:

A Unifying Attitude (4:1-3)

1. Walk worthy of the vocation. God says in essence in chapters 1-3, "I have made you a saint," and in chapters 4-6, "Now, live a saintly life." The apostle begins this section with an exhortation to "walk worthy" or "conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling." We have been called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14) to be saints (1 Cor. 1:2). Let's live accordingly. Practice what

we preach!

2. With all lowliness. Attending or accompanying the Christian's behavior is *lowliness* or *humility*. Expositors says: "the lowliness of mind which springs from a true estimate of ourselves ... a deep sense of our moral smallness and demerit" (Vol. 3, p. 320). We must be humble enough to confess, "I have sinned," both to God and our brethren when we have trespassed against them. Also, we must "in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

3. Meekness. A meek man is one who has equanimity of spirit, an inner-control of the mind that reacts properly under all circumstances. In relationship to God, it is a temper that accepts His dealings with us as good, and, therefore, without disputing (cf Jas. 1:21). In regard to man, it is an inward virtue that shows no resentment when wronged, nor seeks revenge when threatened. It is the opposite of bitterness, violence and vehemence.

4. Longsuffering. W. E. Vine describes this word well when he wrote: "Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy..." We must preach the gospel with longsuffering (2 Tim. 4:2). Some preachers do not always keep their "cool," and I have seen a few of the members "blow their fuse" at the slightest provocation.

5. Forbearing one another in love. Although we have different personalities, come from different backgrounds, have different educational and social levels, we are to "hold up, sustain, bear with, endure" one another. Love provides this. When misunderstandings, cutting words are spoken or unkind deeds done, love restrains us and leads us to forgive.

6. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The "unity of the Spirit" is the same as the "unity of the faith" in v. 13. "Unity" is "unanimity, agreement" of what the Spirit reveals through the faith (gospel). "Endeavoring" means "to take care, do one's best, being diligent." "Keep" is to "guard by exercising watchful care." The binding factor which will preserve the unity that the Spirit produces is peace. Peace is the bond by which we walk together.

The emergent need of the hour is a cultivation of an unifying spirit and disposition among us. Churches are dividing, brethren are alienated and the Cause of Christ is thwarted. It seems the favorite past-time of some cantankerous, irascible brethren is to tear up churches that required years of sacrifice to build up. How sad!

Unifying Facts (4:4-6)

Following in orderly sequence is the basis or ground for unity. Expositors states: "It is a positive statement—giving the objective ground or basis in fact on which the walk in lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and loving forbearance is urged, and of which it should be the result" (Vol. 3, p. 321).

1. One body. Here is unity of relationship to the Head, Christ, and to each other as brethren. There is not a church for the Jew and another one for the Gentile. There is not a church for the rich and one for the poor, one for this race and another church for a different race. We

are all one in Christ. "For us the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body: so also is Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

2. **One Spirit.** This suggests unity of revelation. Only the Bible came from God through the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us. Jesus said to the apostles, "How be it when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). The Bible is a product of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 3:3-5; 2 Pet. 1:3). The Lord does not lead us by dreams, visions, intuition, conscience or disciplines of men, but by His unalterable, infallible and inspired word, the Bible.

3. **One hope.** This is unity of aspiration. Our hope is a hope that goes beyond anything and everything that is mortal. It is the blessed hope of the appearing and glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Tit. 2:13). It is a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3), sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:18-19), of the resurrection (Acts 23:6), and of eternal life (Tit. 1:2). The hope of a seven-year rapture, and a hope of a millennial reign of Christ on earth are false hopes. May we "hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope (one hope) firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

4. **One Lord.** This is unity of authority. There are gods many and Lords many (1 Cor. 8:5), but to us there is "one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things ..." (1 Cor. 8:6). Jesus as Lord is our Owner and our Ruler (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Acts 2:36). All authority has been given Him (Matt. 28:18). We are to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

We recognize a standard of authority in the various transactions of life. We have scales to weigh, yardsticks to measure and clocks to keep time. We accept these with uniformity. Only in religion do we use different measuring sticks for doctrine and practice. Consequently, we are divided. Let's turn back to Jesus and confess Him as Lord (Jn. 20:28).

5. **One faith.** We are to have unity of message. The one faith is "the faith," that is, the gospel. There is an objective faith (that which is believed) as well as a subjective faith (the act of believing). The "one faith" is objective faith. It is the faith that the priests were obedient to (Acts 6:7) and the faith for which we are to contend (Jude 3).

There are different gospels (Gal. 1:6-9, 2 Cor. 11:4), but only one genuine, certified gospel. If we preach the gospel of Christ, we will be united in our message and proclamation. The "social gospel" that is so widely embraced and enthusiastically espoused is nothing more than a perverted gospel, a corruption of the pure gospel that is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

6. **One baptism.** Here is unity of access into Christ and the one body. There is not a variety of ways to get into a spiritual relationship with Christ. All gain access to the blessings in Christ by baptism, preceded, of course, by faith and repentance (cf. Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13).

The one baptism of Eph. 4:5 is the same as the "washing of water" in Eph. 5:26. It is the baptism in water of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16) and the baptism Peter preached on Pentecost (Acts

2:38). It is immersion (Acts 8:38; Jn. 3:23; Matt. 3:16) and not sprinkling or pouring.

7. **One God and Father.** This is unity of homage and worship. "For though there be that are called gods... as there are gods many... But to us there is but one God, the Father ... (1 Cor. 8:5-6). Our heavenly Father, the only true and living God, is the object of our worship (Matt. 4:10), and we must worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). Worship based on the doctrines of men is vain and worthless (Matt. 15:9), and such is responsible for a great deal of the division that has come about in the church of the Lord through the years.

All of these seven facts work together to provide heaven's "one-derful" plan for unity among the people of God. May all of us have the resolve to stand upon them.

Unifying Gifts (4:8-14)

As a result of Jesus' obedience and suffering, he conquered sin and death, redeemed His people, and obtained the right to bestow gifts upon them (vv. 8-10). These gifts are not miraculous in nature, but they are functions or works that Jesus gave to different men. Verse 11 informs us what the gifts are — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

The purpose of these offices or gifts was toward perfecting or equipping the saints (v. 12), unto the work of ministry, unto the edifying (building up by conversion of lost souls) of the body of Christ. Hendriksen discerned, "The important lesson taught here is not only apostles, prophets, evangelists, and those who are called 'pastors and teachers,' but the entire church should be engaged in spiritual labor" (*Ephesians*, p. 198). Apostles and prophets *revealed* the truth, evangelists *proclaim* the truth, and pastors (elders) *oversee* the flock and as teachers, *teach* the truth. All work together for the unity, growth and maturity of the church.

Expositors says: "The statement of the great object of Christ's gifts and provision made by Him for its fulfillment is now followed by a statement of the *time* the provision and the consequent service are to last, or the point at which the great end in view is to be realized. It is when the members of the Church have all come to their proper unity and maturity in their Head" (Vol. 3, p. 332). The provision and service through the gifts are to last "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (v. 13). Here is an ongoing process as new converts are constantly being added to the body and must be brought to an agreement of what the faith teaches, to a knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (mature) person, unto a measure of the stature of Christ (His qualities are to be imaged through us).

With growth and stability, we no longer will be as children, vacillating in conviction, easily persuaded by the deceit and craftiness of false teachers (v. 14). Charles Erdman wrote: "Unity, moreover, is a condition of maturity. A divided Church is an immature Church ... Individual Christians who are factious and contentious show themselves to be in a state of spiritual infancy" (*Ephesians*, pp. 82-83).

Threatened by the danger of being misled by false

achers, the apostle urges, "But speaking the truth in love ..." (v. 15). We must have a loyal adherence to truth for our spiritual security and protection from those who lie in wait to deceive. The motivation for speaking the truth is love.

May we grow up in Christ, doing our very best to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

CHRIST AND THE RENEWED MIND

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The underlying theme in Ephesians 1-3 is the meaning of the church. That in Ephesians 4-6 is the meaning of church membership. The latter shows that doctrine is not an end within itself, but is the basis of the worthy walk that adorns the church's spiritual blessings (Eph. 4:1-6). Knowledge of the church is worthless to one who does not translate it into practice. Ephesians 4:17—5:21 portrays the church as the living expression of Christ. Paul anchors each facet of the believer's life in divine truth and centers the whole in a new attitude of mind (Eph. 4:23). Some important features of the renewed mind are given.

1. It is Not Filled with Futility (Eph. 4:17-19). Christians must not behave like those in the world who walk "in the futility of their mind." The phrase captures the essence of man without God. The pagans from whom the Ephesians were converted were exceedingly corrupt because they lived without true purpose governed by a morally bankrupt mind. Their understanding was darkened and they were separated from the spiritual life that comes from God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart (see Rom. 1:21).

In its futility of mind, the world lost its shame and stifled its conscience. This led to unblushing immorality in which people abandoned themselves to licentiousness. The word here may represent the range of immoral practices common to the pagan world. In lawless folly, they gave themselves over to every form of impurity that insatiable lusts could conceive. The person who abandons himself to licentiousness "does not care how much he shocks public opinion, how much he defies and insults all decency, so long as he can gratify his desires" (William Barclay).

Paul described the pagan world of ancient times, but he also describes the world that is alienated from God in any age. With all its collective intellect, wisdom, and achievement, the world's mind functions morally and spiritually in refined illusion and haughty deception. The present quality of enlightenment and entertainment in the mass media testifies to the agelessness of Paul's words. Every form of evil is condoned or excused,

if not advocated and practiced, by people of influence in all realms of society. But God's message is plain: "you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind." Church membership demands a radical separation from the world that begins with putting away the world's vain reasoning.

2. It is Renewed in the Image of God (Eph. 4:20-24). The Ephesians had experienced the wicked life Paul describes. But he states emphatically that none of this foolishness was learned from Christ. The efforts of false teachers to justify ungodly habits by the Bible is blasphemous, yet some attempt to defend fornication, homosexuality, and every other kind of immorality with pious perversions of the truth. The teaching we received from Christ forbids us to mess around philosophically with sin, either as promoter or practitioners. We are taught to put sin away altogether. Christ lays equal stress on knowing and doing what he says.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" is the key to the life "which is created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." But the renewed mind does not come by merely changing what is known. The renewal is of "the spirit" of the mind, the faculty that directs the mind's powers and energies toward doing God's will. "The mind is to be renovated; not only in its general complexion, but the very spirit of it; all its faculties and powers must be thoroughly, completely, and universally renewed" (Adam Clarke). The truth operates freely only in the mind that is fully surrendered to Christ. The renewed mind leads to the new life that blends perfectly with the will of God and that manifests itself in the right relationship with Christ and the church.

The mind is not renewed all at once, but renewal is a maturing process. It begins at baptism (Rom. 6:4-6) and continues "until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). The renewal progresses daily (2 Cor. 4:16) "in knowledge according to the image" of God (Col. 3:9,10). It puts off "the old man" that leads to destruction and puts on "the new man" that leads to everlasting life. In contrast with the spiritual wickedness and moral impurity of the world, we must strive each day to renew our mind by giving the truth unrestrained reign over its faculties and powers.

3. It Banishes Sinful Practices (Eph. 4:25-32). Paul's general command to put off the old life and to put on the new gives way here to specific features of the two ways. These exhortations concern Christians as "members of one another." The duties named are in view of this relationship. The writer shows in some detail what it means to put away the old man and to put on the new. Positive and negative qualities are placed in striking contrast: put away falsehood, speak truth; control anger, do not let it simmer till evil erupts; do not steal, work to make an honest living and to help the needy; avoid corrupt speech, use words that benefit others.

The right use of the tongue is especially important to the renewed mind for it is the most immediate index of the mind's true condition (Prov. 23:7). Corrupt speech is not just the use of filthy words, but embraces all foolish talking. Christians should shun any unprofitable speech and make their words always a channel of blessing. "And

do not grieve the Holy Spirit" seems to be tied here especially to the use of the tongue. Immoral speech not only injures our brethren, but it offends the Holy spirit by whom we are sealed "for the day of redemption." It is the Spirit's teaching that directs the renewal of the mind. To grieve him is to act contrary to his teaching, and whatever grieves him will cause God to remove from us the seal of redemption (see Eph. 5:6).

The sins named in verse 31 arise in the heart but are closely associated with the tongue: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (loud quarreling), and evil speaking. These things must be put away, together with malice, which is their root. In place of these evil attitudes and acts, the Christian's heart, words, and life must be filled with the fruits of the Spirit. We are to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving, as forgiving of others as Christ is of us.

That early Christians, emerging from centuries of pagan darkness, needed warnings against immoral practices is not surprising. But that we still need some of the same is perhaps the saddest commentary one could write on the church today. Too many members are jealous of, and antagonistic toward one another, and all too often there is an aura of unconcern for the feelings and the needs of our brethren. The mind that is renewed in truth will make each of us "one heart and one soul" with other faithful members of the church. Many congregational problems would fade like a summer mist, if the members truly loved one another as they should.

4. It Gives True Light to Life (Eph. 5:1-14). The renewed mind is moved by love instead of malice. In every place where the church is pictured as the body of Christ emphasis is given to love among the members. If God is love (1 John 4:7, 8), how could we be his children without imitating his love? Christ is also our example. Love made him give himself for us and his gift was pleasing to God. If we are to please him, our service must be kindled by love.

There must be no twilight to those who are in Christ for his body is as distinct from the world as light from darkness. We cannot rest until any lingering shades of sin are expelled by truth. The sins of the world are too shameful to be discussed among things that befit the saints. Yet some of these sins are tolerated and even defended in the church. Is there a congregation where all members are free of adultery, covetousness, shameless conduct, buffoonery, or filthy talk? Paul is not condemning humor, but words that disgrace speech and exceed moral limits.

In contrast with things "not fitting," Paul says, "but rather giving of thanks." He implies that worship is a remedy for immorality. This should encourage us to praise God regularly, both privately and in the assemblies of the church. We are to walk in the light of the Lord and in so doing we become light in him. As children of light, we can have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but neither can we ignore them. We cannot adopt the philosophy of "live and let live." The works of darkness must be shunned, but they also must be condemned (2 Tim. 4:1, 2).

The children of God are set apart from the world.

However, their service to God is not performed in monastic isolation, but in the midst of society that is alien to him. Living as we do in this kind of environment, there is a constant need for us to guard our spiritual health from the sinful viruses that fill the air. Paul warns, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." The very sins the deceivers excuse are those that bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

5. It Walks in Wisdom (Eph. 5:15-21). Like one raised to life from the sleep of death, the child of God is raised from darkness to light. As a child of light, he walks wisely, weighing his days by the scale of his life in the light of God's will. Enlightened in the value and purpose of time, he uses it, not wastefully in pursuing things that perish, but wisely in sowing for eternity. He applies himself to learning the truth that he might be filled with the Spirit (see Col. 3:16,17). It is as much his duty to fill his heart with truth as it is to maintain self-control.

Wine, or anything else, that lifts the gate of moral restraint must be renounced. Being filled with wine demonstrates the pagan folly of those in darkness for it shows the futility of the mind that guided them. Being filled with the Spirit explains how the Christian's mind is continually renewed and why he finds joy in serving God and his children. An absence of these virtues indicates a lack of the Spirit's teaching as the controlling force of the heart. One who loses his love for God and the church is spiritually destitute.

The various exhortations in Ephesians 4:17—5:21 find their unity in Christian character. They bear directly on "righteousness and true holiness" in the community of believers. Our life must conform to divine truth, strengthened by a constantly renewed mind. But this makes us neither ascetics nor fanatics. Rather the tenor of the text is the humble walk of God's children in an evil society. They are surrounded by a world of darkness, but they live as light in the Lord. It is in this that they become and are the living expression of Christ.

**ARMED IN
CHRIST
TO STAND**

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(Eph. 6:10-20)

When one becomes a member of the church he is then a part of the Lord's army. He is a soldier; a Christian soldier. No, not a soldier in a carnal battle, but one who can "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). It is a spiritual warfare. The apostle continues, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (v. 12). The same writer wrote in another book,

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, **but** mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). Though not a carnal battle that would receive attention on the evening news, our battle is just as real as any other.

This fight is not just for preachers to wage from the pulpit and on the printed page. This battle is for elders too. But, again, it is not just for the leaders in the church of our Lord. This is a war to be fought by every child of God. Our text will bear this out. Thus, we as soldiers must put our armour on and prepare to do battle for we can be sure that Satan will do all that he can to destroy the Christian and the church.

Eph. 6:10-20 reveals that those "in Christ" are armed to stand against the forces of Satan. To be effective we must focus our attention upon our adversary, our armour and our aim.

Our Adversary

Our adversary is the devil. Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). The church and Satan are on a collision course. One writer has said that the church has an enemy that is hell-bent on its destruction. However, we sometimes forget that there is a fight, that Satan is real and that he is seeking our destruction.

Our enemy is not the Lord. If we are not careful we can find ourselves contending with the Lord himself. There may be times that we want to argue with him over his requirements and commands. We may resist his guidance and correction thinking every restriction is too much or is some kind of punishment. We can easily forget that his commands (however pleasant, difficult or restrictive) are for our good (Deut. 6:24).

Our foe is not ourselves. Here again, we forget our real enemy and thus turn and fight with our own brethren. Sometimes it is nothing more than a personality clash or contention for the sake of just getting our way. I wonder if some brethren start a quarrel over some insignificant matter just to have a fight since no one else will fight with them. When such is the case we have obviously lost sight of our adversary. When unnecessary strife broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot, Abram said, "Let there be no strife ... for we be brethren" (Gen. 13:8). Brethren shouldn't be enemies. Yet, when they are they will destroy one another (Gal. 5:15).

We have a common adversary. The Lord's enemy and the church's enemy and mine and yours are all the same. So, let's not fight in different directions. The Devil is wise enough to know that if we have some weakness, cowards or gaps in the front line, he is winning the battle. Let us fight together. Let us present a fortified and united front and make our attack.

We must fight against any and all of his wiles. Satan uses many schemes and cunning devices. He will use anybody and anything he can to accomplish his purpose. He may use some of our own brethren or friends. If so, we must fight against them as they are being used of Satan. If what they practice or teach didn't originate with God, then it is of the Devil and we must oppose it. We can't sacrifice truth because they are

brethren or friends. Paul rebuked Peter as he had been influenced of Satan (Gal. 2:11-14). The prophets of old were found contending with the people of God. In the New Testament men of God fought every threat to the children of God. For Paul "it had been ... a fight between Satan-inspired Jewish and pagan vice and violence; against Judaism among the Galatians and others; against fanaticism among the Thessalonians; against contention, fornication, and litigation among the Corinthians; against incipient Gnosticism among the Ephesians and far more among the Colossians; against fightings without and fears within; and last but not least, against the law of sin and death operating within his own heart" (William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary, Exposition of Ephesians, p. 274**).

Our Armour

In our text Paul alludes to the armour of the ancient soldier which was necessary to defend himself and make his attack. More than once Paul says we must put on the "whole armour" (panoply) of God. We are not prepared until we are completely armed. Should we be lacking just one piece of the armour the Devil is sure to win at least over that soldier.

Paul's picture in Eph. 6:10-20 of the Christian's life is not that of mere enjoyment or ease. It is one of work and hard conflict. Let's consider the pieces of the armour.

1. **"Stand therefore, having your lions girt about with truth"** (v. 14). The soldier wore a girdle (sash or belt) that served to tie up his garment or long flowing robe so he could travel and run. It was also used to carry his sword, money, pipe and writing instrument. Thus in parallel, the truth holds all things in place and preserves the soldier.

2. **"... and having on the breastplate of righteousness"** (v. 14). The breastplate was a coat made of metal rings, plates or scales that covered the soldier, front and back from neck to the thighs. Obviously, it was a protective piece of armour. Our breastplate is "righteousness" or right living. When we are moral, holy, devout and pure we have on our breastplate. "Words are no defence against accusations, but a good life is" (William Barclay, **The Letters To The Galatians And Ephesians, p. 217**).

3. **"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"** (v. 15). To be ready for battle the soldier must have his sandals on and greaves strapped below the knee to protect his legs from danger. A soldier whose feet were not shod was not ready at any time for battle. This I take to refer to our readiness to carry the gospel to others. Paul himself was ready to preach the gospel (Rom. 1:15). In Rom. 10:14-15 attention was focused upon the feet of those that preach the gospel indicating that they are messengers who are eager and ready to take the gospel message to others. With his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace the soldier is borne safely through the obstacles in his way.

4. **"Above all, taking the shield of faith..."** (v. 16). The shield was a must for the ancient soldier. He would strap a shield (about 2 1/2 feet wide by 4 feet long) to his left arm to protect himself from the spears and darts that were hurled at him. Some of the darts were dipped in tar and set on fire and then thrown at the enemy. Without

the shield the soldier was sure to suffer. Our faith serves as our shield to protect us **from** the "fiery darts of the wicked" (v. 16). When we lose our faith or it becomes weak, we are like the soldier who becomes a coward and throws down his shield and runs back (Heb. 10:35).

5. "**And take the helmet of salvation ...**" (v. 17). The helmet was a defensive part of the armour worn to protect the head of the soldier. The hope of eternal salvation protects and preserves us through all the battles of life. Were it not for that assurance we would have no reason to endure the hardships of the soldier (2 Tim. 2:3).

6. "... **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**" (v. 17). The soldier carried a short sword much like a dagger. It was an offensive part of his armour. He used it to make his attack on his enemy. The word of God is our sword. The Bible is not compared to a soft feather that is to be used to tickle the ears of men. It is **a sword!** Its purpose is to prick the hearts of men. It must be used to destroy error and slice sin to pieces. We must bring the sword out of its sheath and put it to use cutting away at the efforts of Satan. To be strong is our duty, to be weak is our sin" (**Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 20, p. 258**).

7. "**Praying always with all prayers and supplication ...**" (v. 18). Many commentators and other writers only list six parts of the armour from our text. However, prayer is very much a part of the armour of those in Christ. While Paul does not continue his use of the metaphors in v. 18, it is still **a** very important part of the armour. Without prayer we have not put on the panoply of God. Prayer strengthens our faith and calls for the help of God. We have access to the greatest power of all through prayer.

The bottom line of the armour of God is faithful adherence to the plan of God. Those who are diligent in their efforts to serve the Lord are armed in Christ to stand.

Our Aim

1. **To abide** ("to stand"). Our text says that we are to put on the whole armour of God in order "to stand against the wiles of the devil" (v. 11). Two verses later the writer says "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (v. 13). To stand means to hold your ground. In battle the army tries to hold its ground and not lose any territory. In our war with Satan we must not allow him to make any advances. So, we stand our ground. But, we can't stand and compromise at all. We cannot compromise on morals, sin, innovations or the doctrines and sounds of men. We can't be indifferent toward the Lord's work and still hold our ground. The apathetic army always loses ground.

2. **To attack** ("to speak"). In the last verse of our text Paul asked that brethren pray for him that he may "speak... as I ought to speak" (v. 20). We cannot sit idle. We must attack. It is impossible that "not only in this or that particular battle but the entire war will be lost unless we exert ourselves" (William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary Exposition of Ephesians, p. 271**). As we use our sword to make our attack we must remember to speak as we ought to speak. We must speak

(a) **as the oracles of God** (1 Pet. 4:11). First and foremost our message must be true. We must speak "according as it is written" (2 Cor. 4:13). (b) **The whole counsel of God** (Acts 20:27). No part of God's revelation should be held back, (c) **Using great plainness of speech** (2 Cor. 3:12). Hints and vague generalities will not do. If something needs to be said, we need to say it plainly. John the Baptist was such a spokesman (Mark 6:14-18). Neither should the gospel be clouded by our feeble efforts to make it sound deeper or more impressive. May our listeners be impressed, not with the messenger, but with the simplicity of the message, (d) **Boldly** (Eph. 6:20). We must present God's message without apology or great concern about how it will be received. Amos was just that kind of messenger in the Old Testament (Amos. 7:10-17). He refused to bow to the pressures of the people. His intent was to preach God's message whether Amaziah, the king or anyone else liked it or not. Paul and the other apostles had the same attitude (1 Thess. 2:2). When we shy away from some area of the gospel because we think it will not be well received we are unfit for the Lord's army (Gal. 1:10). (e) **Fearfully** (Jas. 3:1). We should realize the tremendous responsibility we have to handle the word properly and those we teach (2 Tim. 2:15; Eph. 4:15).

Only those "in Christ" are so armed to stand and speak. "Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armour on..."

THE UNBLEMISHED BRIDE — EPH. 5: 27

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The Holy Spirit presents an analogous relationship of Christ and the church with the husband—wife relationship in Ephesians 5. The comparison is strong and beautiful. The church stands in the analogy as a bride and Christ as the husband. Christ died to purchase the church and purify it for his own possession. I want to embellish the figure of a beautiful bride, presented to the loving bridegroom. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

What Is The Church?

The word "church" refers to PEOPLE, "a called out" people, "an holy nation" (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). It also refers to a functional unit of the "called out" people in a local sense (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1). These individuals are called out of darkness into light (1 Pet. 2:9; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13-14). They are called by the gospel (2

Thess. 2:13-14); an holy calling (1 Thess. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:9, 1 Pet. 1:15-16); the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1); called to be saints (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7). The church is the "house" of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6). It is the "body" of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24); and only ONE body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:20). It is called the "temple" of God (1 Cor. 3:9-11, 16-17; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5, 6, 9-10). It is also the "kingdom" of God (Col. 1:13-14; Acts 8:12; Matt. 16:18-19). The church is pictured as the "bride" of Christ (Eph. 5:23-33; Rev. 21:2, 9). These figures signify God's PEOPLE as they are related to Him through Christ.

In order for Christ to present a glorious church to himself as an unblemished bride, he sanctified and cleansed it. The merit cause in sanctification is the cross of Christ: he "gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Christ died to reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body (Eph. 2:16). We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). The death of Christ is the power to obtain forgiveness of sins.

But the conditional cause is "with the washing of water by the word." Simply stated, this is baptism for remission of sins by faith in Christ and his word. Almost all commentaries concede that this expression refers to baptism in water. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Ananias told Paul to "... arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). All these passages refer to the same conditions for the remission of sins. In harmony with all these is Ephesians 5:26: "... that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

The ultimate purpose for which Christ sanctified and cleansed the church is to make her a suitable bride for himself. In the figure this illustrious "wife hath made herself ready" for her husband. She is arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white:" which is the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:7-8). This indicates an effort on the part of each saved person to maintain the purity and righteousness which he obtained when he obeyed the gospel of Christ.

The baptized believer is described in the figure of marriage to Christ (Rom. 7:4). Paul said, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). "Espoused" means, "To join, to fit together ... or betrothed, to give one in marriage to any one." (Thayer). That describes the union of a baptized believer to Christ. When one is baptized into Christ, he becomes married to Christ.

The Glorious Church

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

The church is glorious because Christ built it (Matt. 16:18-20), purchased it (Acts 20:28), died for it (Eph. 5:25), is the head of it (Eph. 1:22-23), and God is glorified in it (Eph. 3:21). Christ paid the ultimate price for it: he "gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). "Who gave himself for our sins ..." (Gal. 1:4). "... who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify

unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

The Unblemished Bride Prepared

By the cross Christ sanctified and cleansed the church that it might be a glorious church. Keep in mind that we are talking about PEOPLE who have been redeemed from their sins and added to this body of saved (Acts 2:47).

A glorious church must be sanctified. "Sanctify" means to set apart for sacred use, to anoint. The church is composed of saved people (Acts 2:47), who are sanctified. They are called saints (Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2). The saints at Philippi constituted a local church with the bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1). Jesus said people are sanctified through the truth (John 17:17; John 17:19). Jesus sanctified the people with his own blood (Heb. 13:12). He accomplished this "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). Concerning sinners, Paul said to the Corinthians: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Sanctification produces holiness, which describes a devout, saintly, righteous person. The opposite of holiness is profane, sinful. Holiness is essential to see the Lord: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

The glorious church must be holy (Eph. 5:27). "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblemishable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:22). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling..." (2 Tim. 1:9). "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"; "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). The church is "an holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5), and "an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9).

A glorious church must be cleansed. "Cleanse" is to bathe, wash, absolve, purify. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:11). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Christ cleansed the church so that it must be without SPOT. Each Christian must "keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (1 Tim. 6:14). "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

"Wrinkle" means to fold, corrugate, pleat, crease, crumple, crinkle. It is the opposite of what is ironed:

smooth and straight. It signifies a flaw, that which is marred. The attire of the bride of the Lamb is to be brilliant: smooth, beautiful and clean. Every spot and flaw is to be removed. Cloth that has been washed and cleaned is often wrinkled before it is ironed or pressed. The church has been cleansed by Christ to be presented to himself, and it must be without spot or wrinkle.

"... or any such thing, i.e. any thing akin to being spotted or wrinkled. To be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, is to be free from any and all defects of beauty and morality.

Christ died to sanctify the church, thus to make it holy; and he cleansed it to make it free of every blemish. "Blemish" means a defect, flaw, imperfection, to disfigure. The church must be like Christ: "But with the

precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19).

The glorious church that Christ sanctified and cleansed must maintain its holiness and purity. It must be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14); be of one accord, have the same love, unity (Acts 2:46; 4:32; Phil. 2:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:10); follow peace with holiness (Heb.12:14). It must be the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:14-15); submissive to Christ (Eph. 5:24); and glorify God by Christ (Eph. 3:21). Each member must be "a new creature" with all that it implies (2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:1-25). I admonish each of you to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" to inherit "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

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