

EPHESIANS

THE
of the *Gloriette* CHURCH
CHRIST



13th Annual
West Virginia
School of Preaching
Victory Lectures

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Ephesians:
The Glorious Church
of the
Glorious Christ

13th Annual
West Virginia School of Preaching
Victory Lectures

Hosted by:
Hillview Terrace
Church of Christ
Moundsville, West Virginia

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Foreword

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Solomon wrote, “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccl. 12:12, ESV). So, why another book? First, *the message announced* in the twenty-nine lectures that compose this book is one that *is worthy of publication*. I recall hearing my friend, and friend of West Virginia School of Preaching, the late Johnny Ramsey, say that the theme of Colossians is the Christ of the church, and the theme of Ephesians is the church of the Christ. He was right. The most inexhaustible and inspiring subject to ever occupy the mind of men is the person and work of Jesus Christ made known by the church according to the eternal purpose of God. Alexander Whyte once reminded some university students that it was not their calling to write Ephesians, but to do the next best thing which was to master the masterpiece of Ephesians, live it, and feed it to others as the finest of wheat and honey out of a rock.

A second reason for this book of lectures is that *the means is available to* wonderfully *preserve such a message*. Books are valuable. It has been said that man builds no structure which outlives a book. Although he was near the end of his life on Earth, Paul still wanted his books. “Bring the books” he wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:13). Our people today need challenged to acquire good books. Members of the church need to be challenged to read more and study more. The elders who oversee the work of WVSOP should be commended for utilizing the means of the printed page in order to preserve the message of these lectures. This book, packaged in such a durable, attractive, high-quality way, will likely be studied, if the Lord wills, by generations yet unborn.

Finally, this book is published because of *the men assigned to participate* in the lectureship. All of the contributors to this book love the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. Each one is loyal to the inspiration, authority, inerrancy, and all sufficiency of the Bible. Each speaker believes the church of Christ is essential and sufficient for the purpose for which it was intended. When collectively considered, the results from the study done by these lectureship speakers represents countless hours of digging

treasures from the inspired text, even over a period of years. One should not think that the preparation of these speakers is limited to the immediate preparation done since receiving their respective assignments. In most cases, years of study have preceded the contribution made to these lectures.

A book like this is the result of a lot of work done by a lot of people, by the grace of God. The Lectureship Committee, so ably chaired by Denver E. Cooper, has spent numerous hours in developing the lectureship theme, lecture titles, speaker selection, and other related details. Over the course of an entire year, it likely is the case that no one works harder on behalf of the WVSOP Lectureship than brother Cooper. We appreciate him, the Hillview Terrace elders, and the Committee for their contribution to this book. Once again, Shirley West has worked so diligently as a primary proof reader. Thanks, Shirley, for all the great work you have done and the contribution you have made in so doing. In addition to using her knowledge of the MLA writing style to assure we have consistently followed this style as closely as possible, Lyn Miller also has created all of the layout of the book in the form which is now before you. Because of her work, the Printers received this material in book form ready for immediate printing. Lyn also designed the attractive 2007 Lectureship brochure. Thanks, Lyn, for the amount and quality of work you have done. Finally, I wish to express deep appreciation to my fellow co-editor, D. Gene West, for the many hours of labor he has contributed to this book. Thanks, Gene, for your great contribution in editing this book and all you do for WVSOP. I am grateful that I have been blessed to serve with Gene in this book project.

And now, to God “be glory in the church by [in] Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end. Amen.” (Eph. 3:21).

Charles C. Pugh III
August 9, 2007

Dedication

It has been the tradition of the West Virginia School of Preaching to dedicate the lectureship book each year to a preacher who has spent many years in the service of Christ. This year the book is dedicated to brother Charles J. Aebi.

Brother Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the Gospel in 1949 and began his preaching career in 1952. He holds a B. S. degree from Penn State, an M. A. from Abilene Christian College and the PhD from Ohio University. He worked his way through college, at first as a babysitter, a house cleaner, and doing odd jobs, then later as a house painter working for painting companies in State College, PA, Abilene, TX, and Marianna, PA.

Charles has served as minister for churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Texas, and has preached and held workshops on leadership, Bible class teaching, and marriage and family. He preached full-time for nine years and has preached regularly part-time for five congregations for forty-six years. During his full-time ministry, the church at Coraopolis, PA, grew from thirty to ninety members in six years and also built a church building. At Sistersville, WV, the church grew from ninety to over two-hundred in three years. He has served as an elder for several years each in three congregations. He currently serves as a minister and an elder for the Barlow-Vincent Church of Christ in Vincent, OH, which he helped to start in February, 2003. This congregation erected a new meetinghouse in 2006 and now has an attendance in the '70s.

He taught Bible for thirty-four years at Ohio Valley College (now University), serving fifteen years as academic dean and vice-president, six years as chairman of the Bible Department, and thirteen years as professor of Bible. Under his leadership as Dean, Ohio Valley College gained state and regional accreditation. During his tenure at Ohio Valley, Charles helped to accredit some forty colleges for the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, serving as a consultant-evaluator for fifteen years and as a commissioner for five years. He retired from the college in 1998

and since 1999 has taught at the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has authored several books and has written chapters in others. He writes for *West Virginia Christian*, *Gospel Advocate* and other brotherhood papers.

At the Lover Church of Christ in Lover, PA (Washington County), Charles met Imogene McDonough, the girl who later became his wife. Charles and Imogene have four children—Ruth, Joy, Mark and Mary—and twelve grandchildren. Their children include two school teachers (Ruth and Mary), a graduate nurse (Joy), and a medical doctor (Mark). Ruth's husband is also a medical doctor; Joy's husband is a teacher and preacher; Mark's wife and Mary's husband are both teachers. All the men in the family preach; all the men and women teach Bible classes; all grandchildren but the next to the youngest have obeyed the Gospel, and most of them have gone on mission trips to Central America, South America and Africa. The four who are college age are attending Christian colleges.

It is with a sense of gratitude and appreciation for a life well-lived and for work well-done that the Elders at Hillview Terrace and the administration and faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching dedicate this book to our beloved brother Charles J. Aebi.

Eldership Honored *Alkire Road Church of Christ*

The church of Christ at Alkire Road first began as the Sullivant Avenue congregation on the west side of Columbus in 1964. The church moved into a new meeting house in August of 1978 on Alkire Road. The eldership, made up of Gary Carter, Jim Hatfield, and Bill Phillis and the present writer (until he moved in 1989), were appointed in September of 1981. These three men have faithfully served the church of Christ on Alkire Road for the past 26 years.

Gary Carter is married to Rita Love, his faithful and loving companion of 51 years. Gary has shown his leadership in his family of three children. Randy with his wife Karen, and Denise with her husband Ned Herald, and their families are members of the Alkire Road congregation. James, with his wife and family, lives in North Carolina. Gary is retired from Battelle Research Industries and made his living as a draftsman. Brother Carter is a fine Bible class teacher and gives wise, thoughtful counsel.

Jim Hatfield has been married to Sue Brown for the past 44 years. They are the parents of two children and six grandchildren. His son, Tim, is a faithful Gospel preacher at the New Philadelphia Church of Christ. Their daughter Kitty is married to Mike Cross and they serve the Lord as members of the church at Alkire Road. Jim was a machinist and is retired from Worthington Steel Corporation. Brother Hatfield has proved himself a Bible class teacher sound in the faith and is especially gifted as a personal worker leading many souls to Christ through the years.

Bill Phillis has been married to Betty Reeder for 50 years and they have three children. Kim, with her husband Bill Eagle and family serve at Alkire Road. Tammy and her family live in Atlanta and serve Christ there. Bill Jr. with his wife Jill, and family faithfully serve at Alkire Road. Brother Phillis is a retired school teacher and principal, superintendent of schools, and last served as the Assistant Superintendent of Public Schools for the State of

Ohio. Bill has put his capable talents to work in the class rooms of the church and is very effective in teaching the Bible.

These men when appointed began immediately to manifest good sound leadership, planning for church development and growth by setting goals for the congregation from year to year. They have kept the church faithful to God's Word insisting on sound doctrine from the pulpit and classroom. They have provided loving care and consideration for all the church under their oversight. Under their wise leadership the church has continued to grow numerically and spiritually. Two major classroom additions have been made to their facilities since they began serving. These shepherds of the flock see to the initiation and support of all good works—caring for the poor and needy, widows and orphans. They have been involved in mission work both at home and abroad. In the '80s they saw to the financing and building of a congregation of the Lord's church in Peebles, OH. Their minister, Mark Bass, has made mission trips to India, Russia and Ukraine. Also Jim Hatfield and several members of the Alkire church make an annual mission trip to Costa Rica, Central America. From it's beginning, the Alkire congregation has been constant and liberal supporters of the West Virginia School of Preaching, at times supporting both students and the faculty. Their generous financial support has served as a practical benefit and is, as well, an encouragement to the Director and faculty.

Because of their faithful service through the years it is fitting that they are the recipients of the honors that West Virginia School of Preaching wishes to bestow upon them. Their support of the school, like their lives and work, has been constant, consistent and commendable. It is our prayer that they continue in providing good leadership to the church where they serve showing love and compassion, soundness and faith, with hope and encouragement to all.

May God's good blessings be richly bestowed upon them, with many more years of healthy, precious service in the kingdom.

Emanuel B. Daugherty

Introduction

It is no simple chore to introduce a book as magnificent as the inspired Book of Ephesians. Those who study and know such things tell us that the Greek language in which it was originally written is the most elegant Greek in the ancient manuscripts with the possible exception of the marvelous Book of Hebrews. However, that being as it may, there is no doubt that translated into English, it is a magnificent work worthy of a place among the greatest literary works. In its six chapters and one hundred fifty-five verses, Paul set forth the *Glorious Church* as the spiritual body of Christ. Furthermore, he pointed out that to garner any of the blessings that Christ has reserved for people they must be in that body—the glorious church. One cannot read the Book of Ephesians and come to the conclusion that Christ is everything and the church is unimportant as some are wont to theologially declare today. If it is possible to be saved from sin and for all eternity without being added by Christ to His church, Paul did not know it!

Paul declared in the first chapter no less than nine separate spiritual blessings found “in Christ.” This must be understood as being bound to Christ in a spiritual relationship in that body known as the church. Paul gave thanks for the Ephesian church due to their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints. Later in the Revelation our Lord will upbraid this church for their lack of love and urge them to return to it. Christ took those who were dead in sin, both Jews and Gentiles and made them all alive spiritually. They needed to show much gratitude for that, and so do we if we have experienced what they did. He taught how Christ, by His atoning death on the cross, broke down the barrier that separated Jew from Gentile, leaving them united in His body—the church.

The author explained that though he was a prisoner for serving Christ, he had never forgotten he had been chosen by the Lord Himself to reveal the mystery hidden in the previous ages that God intended that all—Jew and Gentile alike—be saved through Christ in His body—the church. He emphasized what part “the grace” of God played in this salvation, as well as “the faith” revealed through the

holy Apostles and Prophets. Furthermore, he called on them to live lives worthy of the sacrifice God made through Christ for their redemption. He urged them to unity based on the sacrifice of Jesus. He also pointed out how God had provided everything needed for the equipping of the saints, both in that time and as long as the world should stand through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Until the age of inspiration ceased, God left nothing to chance in developing His children by giving the gifts of the Spirit to lead and guide them. Once the New Testament was completed, these gifts were no longer needed.

Paul insisted they be followers of God as dear children, to walk in the same kind of love Christ had for us and demonstrated so perfectly by His death on the tree. He taught them to avoid the sins of their former lives and to live on a much higher plain due to the fact that they were partakers in the kingdom of Christ. He urged them to worship, not as some of them once had in heathen dissipation, but to be filled with the Spirit by letting the Word of God dwell in them richly, raising anthems of praise to God in song. Then, he spoke so beautifully of the Christ–church relationship as that of a true husband and wife. No one can read these simple, yet radiant words and not be impressed with the fact that this Book was written by no ordinary man, without God’s inspiration. We truly hope that you enjoy these printed lectures and that they will be a blessing to your life. In all matters, to God be the glory!

*D. Gene West
July 17, 2007*

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Establishment Of The Church

Winford Claiborne

Introduction

There was a time when denominational preachers and preachers among the churches of Christ conducted formal debates on the time of the church's establishment. I remember hearing one of those debates when I was very young. The propositions in the



Winford Claiborne presently preaches for the West Fayetteville Church of Christ, West Fayetteville, TN. He also serves as the voice for *International Gospel Hour* which is heard across the United States, in Mexico and Canada.

debates read somewhat as follows: “Resolved: The Scriptures teach that the church of Christ is scriptural in origin, doctrine and practice.” Faithful Gospel preachers showed from the Scriptures that the church of our Lord—the kingdom of the Old Testament—was established on the day of Pentecost. So far as I know, there is not a preacher of any standing within his denomination who would try to prove that the church was established at any other time than the day of Pentecost. The influence of scholars like Merrill C. Tenney have made it difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to argue that the church was established in the days of John the Baptist or earlier. In his very scholarly book, *The New Testament: A Survey*, Dr. Tenney affirms without equivocation: “The birthday of the church was Pentecost” (251).

Relationship of the Church to the Kingdom

Let us now briefly examine the relationship of the church to the kingdom. We know that the word “kingdom” does not always refer to the church of Jesus Christ. Paul asked the Corinthians: “Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor. 6:9). The apostle Peter urged his

readers to add the Christian graces to their lives. He then commanded them: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-7, 10-11). N. B. Hardeman recognized the different uses of the word kingdom. In one of the volumes of *Hardeman Tabernacle Sermons*, Hardeman affirms: “Sometimes that expression—kingdom of heaven—refers to the ultimate state in the glory land” (164).

The word “kingdom” also has a more temporal use. It refers to the church of the living God. Paul thanked God that He had delivered (literally, rescued) both the Colossians and Paul “from the power of darkness, and has translated” (or transferred) them “into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:12-14). How could God transfer Paul and the Colossians into the kingdom of His dear Son if that kingdom were at least 2,000 years in the future? The verbs, “translated” and “delivered” are both aorist (past tense) verbs. The verbs, “shall deliver” (1 Cor. 6:9) and “shall be ministered” (2 Peter 1:11), are both future tense verbs. On the one hand, faithful Christians have been rescued from the power of darkness and transferred in the kingdom of God. It is an accomplished fact. On the other hand, we shall be given an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God.

The book of Revelation records the message God delivered to the seven churches and to the world. John, the human author of Revelation, acknowledges his indebtedness to our Lord for the challenging words of this powerful book. “I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the isle of Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:9). In his commentary on Revelation, *Avenging His Holy Saints, Apostles and Prophets*, D. Gene West appropriately comments: “The Kingdom was established in the time God predicted through his holy prophets. Because it was, John and the Christians in the seven churches were partners in the kingdom” (101). John and other first-century Christians were not eagerly waiting for the

coming of the kingdom. It was already present and they were in it.

According to prophecy, where was the place of the kingdom’s establishment? It is almost universally agreed among students of the Word, even by Dispensational Premillennialists, that the Old Testament prophets by divine inspiration looked down into the future and predicted the coming of the kingdom of God. Isaiah and Micah provide wonderful insight into the place of the kingdom’s establishment and into the nature of that kingdom.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he shall teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3)

Micah’s prophecy is almost word for word like that of Isaiah (Mic. 4:1-2).

Both Isaiah and Micah stress a number of significant ideas. Their prophecies would be fulfilled “in the last days.” Neither was speaking of the “last days of the last days,” in other words, they were not speaking of the end of the Christian era. The apostle Peter explained the significance of the expression, “the last days.” He quoted the words of Joel 2:28-32 and then commented: “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days” (Acts 2:16-17). The events on Pentecost were the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, Joel 2, Micah 4 and many other passages. I remember being asked on one occasion: “Do you believe we are living in the last days?” I answered in the affirmative, but the man who asked walked away before I had the opportunity to explain the Bible’s teaching on that topic.

The expression, “the mountain of the Lord’s house,” refers to a government or the seat of a government. Fortunately, the prophet

Zechariah helps us to understand the meaning of the “mountain of the Lord’s house.” “Thus says the Lord of hosts; I am returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain” (Zech. 8:3). In his commentary on *The Minor Prophets*, Homer Hailey says Zechariah’s prophecy had an immediate application, but it also pointed to a “fuller and more glorious fulfillment in the present Messianic period” (360).

The prophecies of Isaiah and Micah looked forward to the day when all people (not just Jews) would flow into the kingdom of God. Many people would invite others to come to the mountain of the Lord. God would teach men His ways and they would walk in His paths. The new covenant provides that universal call for men and women to obey the Gospel. Christ told some of His disciples: “Thus it was written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47).

The “mountain of the Lord’s house” (the kingdom) would be established in the city of Jerusalem. “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2). In his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Homer Hailey affirms: “The word *Zion* came to be used in prophecy to refer to spiritual Zion to come....Zion, as the mountain of God’s house, was the place from which the law would go forth and from which the people of God would be ruled by his word” (47). The author of Hebrews informed his readers: “You are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [literally, firstborn ones], who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men make perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23). The Israelite kingdom was temporary. The kingdom of the new covenant cannot be moved (Heb. 12:28). It will stand forever.

According to the Old Testament prophets, when was the kingdom of God to be established? Tragically, many Jewish believers and most Premillennialists are still looking for the

Messiah to come to establish the kingdom the Old Testament prophets had in mind. There is a scene in the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof*, where Russian revolutionaries are driving the Jews from their homes. One young man asked the rabbi, “Would this not be a good time for the Messiah to come?” The rabbi responded: “We will have to wait for him some place else.” Tragically, the Jewish people have failed to recognize their Messiah and have persecuted those who have accepted Him.

The Old Testament Prophets–The Messiah and the Kingdom

The Old Testament prophets provide many features of the coming Messiah and His kingdom. He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Matthew quotes Isaiah’s prediction of the virgin birth of the Messiah: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Luke tells of the angel’s message concerning the Messiah: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The word “Christ” (*christos* in the Greek) is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word transliterated “Messiah.” Both words mean “anointed.”

Isaiah also predicted: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6-7). There would be no end to His government. He would sit on the throne of David and upon the throne of His kingdom. There are literally hundreds of other prophecies that provide information on the coming Messiah and on the establishment of His kingdom. All of those prophecies were literally fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the church He established.

Neither Isaiah, Micah nor Joel provide a date for the coming of the kingdom of Christ, but Daniel does. Daniel 2 tells of a dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king. The king asked his counselors–astrologers, magicians and Chaldeans–to tell him the dream and the interpretation. The counselors asked the king to tell them the dream and they would provide the

interpretation. The king was smart enough to know that if the counselors had the supernatural power to give the correct interpretation of the dream, they should also know the dream. The Chaldeans told the king that no man on Earth could show the king's matters. No king or lord or ruler had ever asked such things of his magicians, astrologers and other advisors. The king was very angry and intended to kill all the wise men of Babylon (Dan. 2:1-13).

Daniel heard of the king's intention to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. He approached Nebuchadnezzar and asked for time so he could show the king the answer he had sought from his counselors. Daniel and his three Hebrew companions prayed to God to save them and the rest of the wise men of Babylon. God revealed both the dream and the interpretation to Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a great and frightening image. The head of the image was of fine gold, the breast and arms were of silver, the belly and the thighs were of brass, the legs were of iron, and the feet were of iron mixed with clay. Daniel saw a stone that had been cut out without hands. The stone smote the image and broke it in pieces. The stone then became a great mountain and filled the whole Earth (Dan. 2:31-35).

Daniel explained to king Nebuchadnezzar: "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and makes known to king Nebuchadnezzar what shall come to pass in the latter days" (Dan. 2:28). God not only told Daniel the king's dream; he also provided the interpretation of the dream. The head of gold represented king Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire. The breast and arms of silver represented the Medo-Persian kingdom. The belly and thighs of brass depicted the Alexandrian or Macedonian empire. The feet of iron mixed with clay provided a picture of the mighty Roman Empire (Dan. 2:36-43).

Daniel explains: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set a kingdom" (Dan. 2:44). In his commentary on *Daniel: A Prophet of God*, Dr. Rex Turner says the term, "these kings," means "in the days of the Roman kings, when the Caesars were emperors of Rome" (56). Edward Young insists that the term cannot refer to the kings of the fourth empire since the toes of the

great image are nowhere identified as kings (77). Young quotes Oswald T. Allis as saying that the term "would refer most naturally to the four kingdoms or kings represented by the image" (78). Young affirms: "It is while the colossus is standing that God will set up His kingdom" (78).

Premillennialism and Christ's Kingdom

Classical Premillennialists and Dispensational Premillennialists deny that the kingdom of God was established in the days of the kings Daniel had in mind. They argue: Since the Jews rejected their king (John 1:11), God had to postpone the establishment of the kingdom. Edward Young believed the fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire. Dr. Young affirms: "The traditional interpretation, which is also adopted in this commentary, is to refer the fourth kingdom to the Roman Empire" (75). Young writes of another interpretation known as Dispensationalism. Dispensationalists believe that the fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire, but also means a *revived* Roman empire (75). There is nothing in the text that allows for a revived empire.

I must ask some questions regarding Dispensationalism. Was the Jews' rejection of the king a surprise to God? Is anything ever a surprise to God? How can a time prophecy be postponed? If the Jews' rejection of the kingdom postponed its establishment when Jesus came the first time, how do we know they will accept Him when He comes, according to Premillennialism, to establish His thousand-year reign? I shall answer these questions in the order I listed them.

The Apostle John reports: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own [neuter plural, his own things] and his own [that is, his own home, his own people received him not]" (John 1:10-11). Did God expect Christ's own people to reject him? A careful reading of Isaiah 53 should convince any honest person that God knew the Jews would reject their own Messiah. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him

not” (Isa. 53:3). Even some members of Christ’s earthly family did not receive Him (John 7:5).

If the prophecy of Daniel 2:44 (“in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set a kingdom”) were postponed, that would prove conclusively that Daniel was a false prophet. Deuteronomy 18 announces the establishment of the prophetic office. The Israelite people had every right to question whether a prophet was actually speaking for God. Moses knew the Jews would ask, “How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?” Just because a man claims to be a prophet does not mean he is. False prophets have arisen in every age of the world’s existence. The apostle Peter assured his readers: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). Moses gave the Israelites the standard a true prophet had to meet. “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, not come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: you shall not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:21-22). Time prophecies cannot be postponed.

I need to mention one New Testament prophecy concerning the time of the establishment of the kingdom. Jesus informed some of His disciples: “Verily, I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). Can you explain why virtually all Premillennialists ignore this verse? If the kingdom has not been established, as the Premillennialists insist, there are some really old people around somewhere. Compared to those people, Methuselah at 969 years of age would just be a boy. In view of the Premillennialists’ denial of this passage, how can they claim to believe we can trust the prophets? In fact, John Hagee asks in one of his books, *Beginning of the End: The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Coming Antichrist*, “Can You Trust Prophecy?” (cf. 44-83). If Daniel missed the time of the establishment of the kingdom, you cannot trust prophecy.

If the Jews’ rejection of Christ the first time He came prevented Him from establishing His kingdom, how do we know it could not happen again and again and again? Prophecies are always fulfilled, unless their fulfillment is conditioned on men’s response to the Lord’s commands. Moses outlined the curses or blessings the Israelites would experience as they entered the land of promise. If they were obedient, God would bless them beyond their ability to comprehend. If they rebelled against His will, the curses Moses mentioned would come on them. The fulfillment of the prophecies in Deuteronomy 28-30 was contingent on the behavior of the Jewish people. Moses told the Israelites: “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. . . . Therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live” (Deut. 30:15, 19).

We know the place and the time of the establishment of the Lord’s kingdom, but who was to be the one who would establish it? We are not left in the dark on this question. The prophet Isaiah predicted the coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice” (Isa. 9:7). Most conservative scholars believe that Jesus came into the world to sit on David’s throne. Was He supposed to sit on David’s throne the first time He came or must He wait until the millennium? If Christ did not establish the kingdom when He came the first time, He cannot now be sitting on the throne.

John Hagee denies that Christ is now sitting on the throne of David. In his very latest book, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War*, Hagee writes concerning the “deliverer out of Zion” (Rom. 11:26). That deliverer “is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. I believe my generation will live to see Him sitting on the throne of David on the Temple Mount in the city of Jerusalem” (228). If Christ is not now sitting on His throne, the prophets were wrong and the Apostle Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost was also wrong.

In the first Gospel sermon ever recorded, the Apostle Peter spoke of the fact that God Almighty had approved of Jesus of

Nazareth by miracles and signs and wonders. He told the people on Pentecost that the Jews had taken and by wicked hands had slain Christ. But death could not hold him. Peter quotes David as saying: "I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is at my right hand, that I should not be moved" (Acts 2:22-25). King David was a prophet and knew that God would raise up Jesus to sit on his throne. "Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." Was the time of Christ's sitting on David's throne at least 2,000 years from Pentecost? By divine inspiration, Peter declared: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made this same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:30, 36). Hagee says he believes he will live to see Christ sitting on David's throne. He is already sitting on His throne.

All serious Bible students are familiar with Christ's conversation with His apostles at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked His apostles: "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" They responded: "Some say you are John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Our Lord's main concern was what the apostles believed about Him. He asked: "Who do you say I am?" The apostle Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but my Father who is in heaven." Now please listen carefully. "And I say unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:13-19). Do you believe Christ was establishing one institution (the church) and giving the apostles the keys to another institution—the kingdom?

Conclusion

In concluding our study of the establishment of the church, I must ask you two questions: Must one be in the church or the kingdom to be saved? How does one get into the kingdom or the

church? I shall provide a scriptural answer to both questions. The Gentiles in Ephesus had lived without a Savior, without citizenship in the kingdom of God, without God and without hope in the world. But when they obeyed their Lord in baptism, they were forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God. Can one be reconciled to God without being in the church of the living God? The apostle Paul provides God's answer to that question. "But now in Christ Jesus you who were sometimes afar off and made near by the blood of Christ....And that he might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles) unto God *in one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them who were near" (Eph. 2:11, 13, 16, emp. added). If it is necessary that we be reconciled to God, we must be in the body of Christ, the church of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23).

We know we must be in the body of Christ to be saved (Eph. 5:23), but how does one get into the church? Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again or from above to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5). How did the apostles interpret the new birth? They did not instruct men to be born again. Instead, they commanded them to believe on Christ, to repent of their sins, to confess Jesus Christ before men and to be baptized into the name of Christ for the remission of their sins. When they were baptized, did that mean they were in the church or the kingdom and that they had been born again? The Corinthians believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). Please listen to what Paul told the Corinthians: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

But does it really matter when, where, and by whom a church was established? If a church were established at any other time than the day of Pentecost, at any other place than Jerusalem, and by any other person than Jesus Christ, it is not the church of the New Testament.

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Biographical Sketch

Winford Claiborne was born in Portland, Sumner County, TN, and educated in the public schools of that county. He graduated Freed-Hardeman University with his Junior College Diploma and later attended Andrews University in Berrien Springs, MI. Later he attended Murray State University where he received his B. A. in English and M. A. in Education. He later attended the University of Georgia and Harding Graduate School of Religion. Winford has been a teacher all his life, having taught in Benton High School, Benton, KY, Georgia Christian School, Valdosta, GA, where he served as President from 1954-1957. He also taught in Florida College, Alabama Christian School of Religion, Freed-Hardeman University, where he also served as lectureship director for eleven years.

His preaching experiences of sixty-four years have been many and varied. He presently preaches for the West Fayetteville Church of Christ where he also serves as the voice of the International Gospel Hour, which covers all the USA, a great deal of Mexico and Canada.

His experience as a business man is varied. He served as Field Representative for the Tran South Life Insurance Company as well as President of that company. He also engaged in a private sporting goods business.

In 1949 he was married to the former Mary Lou Doran (Molly) who passed away October 12, 2002. To this union was born two sons, Doran who is Vice President of Farmers Brothers Insurance and Daniel who is Chairman of the Department of Industry and Technology at Murray State University, Murray, KY. He is grandfather to three, Wesley Claiborne, age 20, Hannah Claiborne, aged 15, and Mark Claiborne age 12.

In his spare time he holds Gospel meetings, speaks on lectureships, reads an average of 120+ books a year and has authored six books. These are: *Restoring God's Pattern for the Home*, *Divine Relationships*, *Silence Can Be Sinful*, *Prophet, Priest and King*, *Preaching Christ Crucified* and *Books, Books and More Books*.

Overview Of Ephesians

Bruce Daugherty

We live in a day in which there is a decline regarding appreciation for the church which Jesus promised and built. Denominationalism and its resultant confusion has long contributed to this decline. Teachings associated with dispensational premillennialism have also served to undermine the



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value of the church for many people. The development of a culture that is called postmodern and post-Christian has continued this decline. Recently, 81% of Americans surveyed described themselves as “spiritual” but not “religious.” The preaching of an individualistic, self-oriented message about salvation has resulted in a great number of Americans desiring Jesus, but not His church.

Attitudes like this are not surprising in the world, but when comparison is made to certain voices within churches of Christ, a low view of the church is evident there as well. In the past one has heard pleas like, “Give me Christianity, not Churchianity” or “Give me the Man, not the Plan.” The resurfacing of these appeals from time to time demonstrates the attractiveness of the Savior over those who claim Him. But “Jesus *or* the Church” is a false dichotomy (Ferguson, *Church* xix-xx).

It is important to understand that a low view of the church was *not* the attitude of the apostle Paul.

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the

beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. (Eph. 3:8-12)

A focus on the book of Ephesians will help call men back to this biblical view of Christ and His church. As one commentator has stated about the epistle: “. . . [T]he entailments challenge much that is superficial, worldly, self-centered, and individualistic within our contemporary churches” (O’Brien 3). As part of this task, this lecture will provide an overview of the epistle to the Ephesians. The purpose is to introduce the reader to the text and some of its important themes. It will also point out some of the methods Paul uses for his purpose.

Affinity to Colossians

Before examining Ephesians, a few introductory matters are worthy of notice. A number of commentators have observed the affinity that the epistle of Ephesians has to the epistle of Colossians. Vocabulary, themes, and even sequence of order of themes are observed to be in common (Lincoln xlix; 9-10). Because of this similarity between the epistles, a consensus of recent scholarship has developed which denies Paul as the author of Ephesians (Perkins 351). Lincoln defends this interpretation: “It is one thing for a writer to reproduce the same ideas in the same words or even in different words, but is quite another for a writer within a short period of time to reproduce the same words and phrases to express different ideas” (lxvii). This argument, coupled with the enigmatic lack of personal details and a lack of specifics about the readers, leads Lincoln and others to posit a follower of Paul as the author.

But does the similarity exclude Paul from being the author? “The similarities in the overall structure and thematic sequence of

the two letters are not surprising, especially if both epistles were written at approximately the same time to Christians in somewhat similar circumstances, (e.g., in Asia Minor)” (O’Brien 15). The argument against Paul based on similarity of vocabulary and themes may be overdrawn. It accounts for similarities, but not for differences. A pseudonymous author would want to imitate Paul as much as possible. How does this account for places in which the author departs from Paul?

By inserting an introductory thanksgiving after the opening *berakah* the author has made this letter different not only from Colossians but also from *any other letter* in the Pauline corpus. Would an imitator have taken such a risk? In our judgement, the person most likely to have done this is Paul. (15)

Additionally, it must be recognized that pseudonymity creates more problems for the letter than it solves. Besides the ethical question of some Christian writing in name when he knew he was not Paul, if the fact of pseudonymity had been known, the epistle would have never found a place in the canon (40-41). Tertullian spoke of a second century elder who was deposed by his fellow elders for writing in name, even when he justified it for “*amore Pauli*” (qtd. in Ferguson, “Acts” 12-13). The exclusion of this pseudonymous work, *The Acts of Paul*, from the canon, stands as strong testimony to the negative way Christians looked at anyone who would write in the name of an apostle. This negative view toward pseudonymous writings was expressed as a principle by Serapion, a bishop of Antioch. “We, dear brothers, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but writings falsely attributed to them we reject, knowing that such were not handed down to us” (qtd. in Maier 216).

Use of the same vocabulary with a different meaning does not have to signify that another author copied Paul. The emphasis of the epistles is really two sides of the same coin. In the epistle to the Colossians Paul emphasizes the pre-eminence of Christ (Col. 1:15-18). In Ephesians, the emphasis now falls on the people who

must grow up to their head, Christ (Eph. 4:15). Whether one is looking from the head to the body or the body to the head, the perspective will be different but the subject will be the same. The rich imagery for the church in Ephesians (Perkins 358-59) still emphasizes the relationship to the Godhead: body *of* Christ, household *of* God, temple *of* the Lord, bride *of* Christ. “In general terms, the high ecclesiology of Ephesians, which cannot ultimately be separated from its high Christology, is intimately bound up with the place of God’s people within his saving purposes” (O’Brien 29). The church is glorious because of its relationship to the glorious Christ! The best solution for the affinity of Ephesians to Colossians is to recognize that Paul is the author of both epistles.

An Outline of the Book

I.	Greeting	1:1-2
II.	Know Your Calling	1:3-3:21
III.	Walk Worthy of Your Calling	4:1-6:20
IV.	Concluding Thoughts	6:21-24

Applied Doctrine

“Like all of Paul’s letters, Ephesians is a combination of doctrine and practical instructions” (Oster, *Overview* 32). The doctrinal discussion is not just a collection of unrelated truths but it specifically serves as a foundation and support for the practical instructions. In other words, the letter is “applied doctrine.”

Despite the lack of personal details in the letter and a lack of information about the situation of the church in Ephesus, the occasion of the letter is seen in the “hinge” verse linking the doctrinal and practical sections of the epistle. Often, writers in the ancient world would reveal their purpose in writing by their use of the Greek verb παρακαλέω—“I beg, urge; request, ask” (Oster, *Ephesus* 373). This construction is a common feature in Paul’s letters (Lincoln 226).

In Ephesians 4:1 Paul reveals his purpose of writing: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” This connecting verse emphasizes the importance of living a life that appropriately

reflects the calling received from God! As is evident in Paul’s instructions (Eph. 4:25-31), the Ephesian Christians were having moral and ethical problems (Oster, *Overview* 32). “Walk worthy of your calling” was to remind the Ephesians of their covenant relationship with Christ and its consequent responsibilities.

Paul’s strategy for accomplishing the life change he seeks is to remind the Ephesians in chapters 1-3 of their blessings in Christ. In these chapters Paul indicates what God has done for the Ephesians. To walk worthy of their calling, the Ephesians must *know* their calling!

Chapters four through six contain the responsibilities that flow to the recipients of God’s grace. These responsibilities are given in the imperatives or commands to the Ephesian Christians. Of the 41 imperatives in the book, 40 occur in chapters 4-6 (Oster, *Studies*).

It is important to hold both indicatives and imperatives the way Paul did; that is blessings *then* responsibilities. If this order is reversed, a legalistic type of Christianity is the result. It is important that we do not reverse these indicatives and imperatives. But another danger is also inherent in this discussion. Failure to teach the responsibilities of grace results in cheap grace. Protestant fears of a works oriented religion have led to extremes, as witnessed in church history. Grace and works; blessings and responsibilities; indicatives and imperatives must all be held in a correct relationship to one another.

Paul’s thanksgiving prayer (Eph. 1:15-23) reflects the strategy he utilizes for the Ephesian situation. His prayer serves to introduce his readers to the truths he wants them to grasp and also as an encouragement to the life he wants them to lead. The prayer has a relation to the letter’s purpose: “Here in Ephesians also, the thanksgiving not only continues the announcement of the central themes, but makes clear . . . why these themes have been introduced” (Lincoln 53). Request for his readers is that they might have maturity and understanding in what God has done for them (Oster, *Studies*). He prayed that they might have a spirit of wisdom, and revelation in knowledge; that their eyes of understanding might be illuminated. This insight into the hope

and riches of their identity in Christ and of the power available to them would then be seen in transformed living. “The Church will be what it ought to be when it becomes more aware of and appropriates the privileges and power God gives his people and the benefits of its relation to the Christ who rules the cosmos” (Lincoln 82). Doctrinal discussion is not an ivory-tower enterprise concerning trivial pursuits. Instead, it vitally connects identity in Christ to life transformation.

Affirmation of an Old Testament Inheritance

The epistle is written to Gentile believers (Eph. 2:11-12). But the epistle makes an affirmation that the spiritual heritage of the Jews is for the Gentiles as well (Eph. 1:18). Gentile reluctance to take up the “Jewishness” of their heritage was based on a number of factors. The Greco-Roman culture of Asia Minor was saturated with anti-Semitism and several centuries of Jew-Gentile ethnic clashes. The Gentiles were “pagans” to the Jews and characterized by a lifestyle that was extreme in its lawlessness, especially sexual sins (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). In addition, Gentiles who had become believers, faced a chronic problem of Judaizers who sought to bind on them circumcision and other aspects of the Mosaic Law (Acts 15; Gal. 2). Gentile readers in Ephesus may have wondered if they would always be second class citizens of the kingdom (Oster, *Overview* 34).

But Gentiles had always been in the plan of God for His people. The call of Abraham had one plan for the world. “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). When Solomon dedicated the temple, he made mention of it as a place of prayer, not only for Israel, but also for the Gentiles.

Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel,

and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by your name. (1 Kings 8:41-43)

The Jews did not always understand this inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s plan. The case of Jonah demonstrates a typical prejudiced attitude toward the Gentiles (Jon. 4:2). Even the early church did not comprehend Gentiles as included in the one people of God. Though Peter had proclaimed the promise of Abraham in his second sermon (Acts 3:26), it took several miracles from God (Acts 10) to make Peter aware of necessity of preaching Christ to the Gentiles. (Oster, *Studies*).

Paul’s message to the Gentile believers at Ephesus was that they could get into the one people of the promise to Abraham without having to become Jews. Christ’s death on the cross made peace between Jew and Gentile as they are now made one in a new humanity (Eph. 2:14-18). The “mystery” that Paul proclaimed affirmed that Gentiles were fellow heirs (Eph. 3:6). Paul’s apostolic mission was for the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1, 8-9).

This theme in Ephesians has a lot of relevance today. Because of the fact that we are under the new covenant and not the law of Moses (Heb. 8:6-8), many Christians have found little use for the Old Testament or see little value in study of the Old Testament. But the calling of Abraham, the commonwealth of Israel, the covenants of promise, the oracles of God are all part of the Christian’s heritage. Jesus spoke of kingdom people as being able to bring out old treasure and new (Matt. 13:52). The Hebrew Scriptures were the “scriptures given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:14-17). The things written before were written for “our learning” (Rom. 15:4). The example of the Hebrew fathers is pertinent because they are “our” fathers as well (1 Cor. 10:1, 11). The message of the Spirit of Christ that the prophets of old desired to look into was a message to “us” (1 Peter 1:10-12). The Old Testament was the Bible for the early church. And it is an important part of the Bible for Christians today as well. When piety and personal devotion are in short supply, the Christian can turn to the Psalms or the Prophets and feed his soul on their truths. When faith is lacking and growing tired, the Christian can turn

back to the stories of Old Testament heroes of faith and find the inspiration and encouragement to persevere in faith (Heb. 12:1). May Christians never sell their birthright of their Old Testament heritage (Heb. 12:16-17).

Avoiding Abstract Concepts of the Church

If the church has become unimportant or irrelevant to some people, it may be because they think of the church in the abstract rather than in the concrete. Ferguson states, “Perhaps the problem for many has been in taking the church too much in an institutional sense and not sufficiently in terms of a people, a redeemed community” (*Church* xx). While the book of Ephesians uses the word *church* in a collective, universal sense, it grounds its emphasis in the church as people, people in relationship to God and to one another.

Notice how many times in the letter that these Christians are reminded of their relationship as the people of God. They have received adoption as sons (Eph. 1:5). They have been chosen (Eph. 1:4). They have been called (Eph. 1:18; 4). They are fellow citizens and members of the household (family) of God (Eph. 2:19). They are a new humanity in Christ (Eph. 2:15). “Christ through his death has created a new humanity, *one new humanity*, and they have become members of this new community which transcends the division of Jew and Gentile” (O’Brien 28). But this new humanity must be united if they are going to have a credible testimony to the outside world. Paul stresses attitudes and truths which promote unity in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1-6). “If Christian morality and ethics will not work within the body of Christ, the church will have nothing to say in attempting to witness to an unbelieving world. Thus, Paul calls for meekness, forgiveness, and harmony among the believers in Ephesus” (Oster, *Overview* 35).

Less explicit, but still powerful in its reminder of the church as family, are the norms laid out for the Christians in the various social relationships of the first century. “In Paul’s day the household consisted of three main relationships; husband-wife; master-slaves (slaves were part of the household); parents-

children” (37). These instructions regarding how to relate to family underscore the people aspect of the church. Two key ingredients of how to treat family are love and mutual submission (Eph. 5:2, 22).

Even though masters, husbands, and parents would have more authority than wives, slaves, and children, Paul wanted the masters, husband, and parents to know that their position of authority did not free them from obligations in these relationships. They too, each in his own role, had to be submissive in his respective relationship. Whether a believer was a master, or a slave, or a husband, or a wife, or a parent, or a child (and many of the Christians would be more than one of these), God expected them to fulfill his or her own role “out of reverence for Christ.” (37)

Paul’s basis for these instructions is not social codes of the first century, though Hellenistic Judaism as well as Greek philosophers knew the importance of the home to society. (Lincoln 356-60; O’Brien 405-09). Instead, Paul’s admonitions are based in divine revelation. For husbands and wives Paul appealed to God’s revelation in Christ. For parents and children Paul made his appeal on God’s revelation in Scripture. And for his instructions to masters and slaves Paul appealed to the future revelation of God at the Second coming (Oster, *Overview* 37). If Christians treat family properly, it will strengthen evangelistic outreach to the world and will ground the concept of the church in concrete people relationships.

Already and Not Yet

An underlying tension in the book lies between the realization of Christian blessings and the continuing pursuit of those blessings. Scholars locate this tension in the eschatology of Paul (O’Brien 29-33; Perkins 360-61). Spiritual blessings are part of the *present* reality of Christians (Eph. 1:3). But these blessings also look to a *future* fulfillment (Eph. 1:14). This tension between the present and the future can be expressed in terms of “already and not yet.” Several passages in Ephesians incorporate this “already and not

yet” understanding. Briefly, two of these passages will be examined here.

The unity of believers is an “already and not yet” proposition. On the one hand, unity is to be maintained (Eph. 4:3). Believers do not have to create unity or have to make compromises to achieve unity. Unity is a given, a part of what God does for us in Christ. On the other hand, unity is also something that must be attained (Eph. 4:13). “The verb employed here is used figuratively and means to ‘attain or arrive at a particular state,’ with the focus on the end point” (O’Brien 305). An illustration of this “already and not yet” aspect of unity can be seen in a marriage covenant. On the day of a wedding, the bride and groom are pronounced man and wife. By law and before God they are united, it is a given of their marriage ceremony. But the achievement of this unity will be worked out in a lifetime of love and commitment. In a similar way, Christians of all backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities are united in Christ at their baptism but unity will be a goal they will always be pursuing.

The final “already and not yet” is seen in the exhortation to take up the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20). The imagery of spiritual warfare serves as an appropriate summation to the entire letter. Christ has already gained victory at the cross (Eph. 1:21). The believer who is “in Christ” shares in this victory already. “The fruits of Christ’s victory have ‘not yet’ been fully realized. However, those in him possess all the resources needed to resist the influence and attacks of the devil and his hosts” (33). The armor of God is part of the power available to the Christian (Eph. 1:19). Ferguson illustrates why warfare is part of the believer’s life when Christ has already gained the victory at the cross. “I remember that after the defeat of Japan in World War II, there remained islands in the Pacific where word of the surrender did not reach until years later. Pockets of resistance, where in effect the war was still going on, remained for a long time” (*Demonology* 158). Because of this “not yet” aspect of spiritual warfare the Christian must take up the whole armor of God. This armor is necessary because spiritual forces arrayed against the Christian. “The normal life of the Christian will always be one of combat and

warfare” (Oster, *Overview* 38). And this will last until the great final day. May all of God’s people realize the blessings and power available to them now and persevere in faith and love until Jesus comes again.

Conclusion

Study of the book of Ephesians will help all readers to better appreciate the Savior and his church. May every Christian be aware of his identity in Christ and what God has done for him. And may every Christian walk worthy of his calling.

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Biographical Sketch

Bruce Daugherty was born at Warren, OH, on April 19, 1959, the son of Emanuel B. and Judy Daugherty. In 1981 he married the former Gayle Gleaton of Stockbridge, GA, and they are the parents of two sons, Mike age 20, and Vince age 17. He received his B.A. in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University in 1981 and his M.A. in Church History from Harding University Graduate School of Religion in 2006. He worked as associate minister of the Graham Road church in Reynoldsburg, OH, from 1981 to 1983. The Daugherty's served as missionaries to Cervignano, Italy from 1983 to 1990. From 1990 to 2000, he served as minister for the Beville Road Church in Daytona Beach, FL, and from 2000 to the present he has served as minister of the 10th & Clairmont Sts. Church of Christ, Cambridge, OH. He has engaged in several missionary campaigns in the United States, namely in Virginia and Ohio as well as foreign campaigns in Italy, Zambia and Botswana, Africa. He served as instructor in Florida School of Preaching from 1995 to 2000 and presently is with the West Virginia School of Preaching where he has served since 2001.

Alive In Christ

Ephesians 2:4-10

Steve Stevens

I am grateful for the invitation to be part of this series of lectures at West Virginia School of Preaching for 2007. It is a timely theme considering all of the present day assaults on both our Lord and His body. It is my prayer that God will use these



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lessons in both their oral and written forms to His glory. The assigned text for this hour of study is Ephesians 2: 4-10:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The second chapter of Ephesians continues with the theme of the glorious blessings of the saved in Christ as contrasted with their former state of being without any hope. Those once “dead in sins” are now made “alive in Christ” (vs. 1-10), and those who

were “aliens and strangers” who were in the past separated from God are now members of God’s family (11-22).

Our subject deals with the great spiritual blessing of being made “alive in Christ.” Verses 1-10 constitute one long, complex, and continuous sentence in the Greek text (the text used in this study is the *Textus Receptus* particularly Stephens 1550). The subject of this sentence is found in verse 4, God. The verb is a compound construction found in verses 5 and 6, “hath quickened us together,” “raised us up together,” and “made us sit together.”

Paul instructs the Christians at Ephesus concerning the great things that God has done for them through Christ and His purpose for having done them.

Paul begins by describing **THE PREDICAMENT** in which all men find themselves who are not “in Christ.” In verse 5 he writes about “when we were dead in sins.” He reminds us of how hopeless any sinner is on his own. This is a difficult realization to come to for those who are lost in sin. Part of the challenge of convincing people they need to be saved is convicting them first of the fact they are lost in sin. The “dead-in-sins” crowd does not believe their situation is as bleak as Paul paints it in these verses. Within these words abides a stark reality check.

In verses 1-3 of this chapter he writes about the conditions men live in before obeying the Gospel. In verse 1 he writes concerning the Ephesians—“you” as being dead in trespasses and sins, while in verse 5 he includes himself—“we were dead in sins.” Most of us would consider Paul a good man. He described himself as a “Hebrew of Hebrews,” a Pharisee, a keeper of the Law of Moses, and as a zealous man for doing what he conscientiously thought was right. Yet, he states here that before he became a Christian he was “dead in sins.”

In what way did he mean this? Paul also wrote, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Death in its basic meaning refers to separation. Spiritual death is being separated from God (Isa. 59:1, 2). The very essence of this is illustrated when God puts Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. Physically, life went on. However, spiritually the relationship and fellowship enjoyed with God in the Garden ended. The cause of this spiritual death as

stated by Paul is the state of being in trespasses and sins. Trespasses refer to “deviations from the strait and narrow path” while sins refer to “inclinations, thoughts, and deeds which ‘miss the mark’ of glorifying God” (Hendriksen 111). Verse 2 makes it clear that these are sins we committed when Paul states “wherein in time past ye walked.” The word walk is used figuratively of “the walk of life, live, *conduct oneself*” (Arndt and Gingrich 655). These are not the sins of our forefathers. They are our own sins!

Being “dead in sins” does not mean that we are devoid of any good desires or depraved to the point that we cannot have any godly inclinations either. Consider the majority of the conversion examples recorded in the book of Acts. These people were God-fearing, Scripture reading, praying, devout, and worshipful people. The Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8 was returning from worshipping in Jerusalem and reading Isaiah 53 when Phillip met up with him and preached unto him Jesus. In Acts 10, Cornelius was an unsaved Gentile, who feared God, prayed, and gave alms, yet Peter had to come and tell him words whereby he and all his house would be saved. In Acts 16, Lydia is referred to as a woman who worshipped God (v. 14). Furthermore, where did Paul and Silas meet her? At the river where prayer was customarily made. From Acts 2 add the 3,000 who obeyed on the day of Pentecost. What were these “devout” people (v. 5) doing in Jerusalem?

One does not have to be an immoral reprobate to be “dead in sins.” All who are accountable to God have sinned (Rom. 3:23). All who have sinned are “dead in sins.” Spiritual deadness is a derivative of one’s own sins, and not of one’s birth.

As if being “dead in sins” were not bad enough, Paul continues by stating that we lived according to the ways of the world and under the leadership of the ruler of this world (which he finally names in Eph. 6:11). We allowed the spirit of disobedience to work in us (Paul includes himself in verse 3, “we all”). We lived “in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” We did what pleased and satisfied ourselves and we did not care what pleased God. This is one reason we can be religious and be “dead in sins.” If our primary aim in service, worship, and daily living is to please and satisfy self instead of

God's will then we are spiritually dead. When Paul mentions "nature" in verse 3 he is not referring to the false doctrine of original sin, but he speaks of that which we bring forth or produce of ourselves. God is in no way responsible for the sin in the world. Sin is the product of mankind. Sin is a state in which men exist. The only existence in the state of sin is death. There is no life in sin.

The apostle now reveals that these worldly pursuits which produce spiritual death result in our becoming objects of wrath. Whose wrath? God's wrath! (Rom. 1:18). Herein lies our predicament. We are "dead in sins" and therefore facing the wrath of the Almighty God. What can we do on our part to appease His wrath and create a right relationship with God? NOTHING!

Paul now sets forth **THE PROVISION** that God lovingly offers to save us from our self-induced predicament. In verses 4-9 we learn what riches and greatness are involved "in the gift of God." These verses detail what God has done for us and why He has done these things for all of mankind.

What has God done for the writer of this epistle and for the Ephesian Christians? He has "even when we were dead in sins" quickened us! The word 'quicken' means to "make alive with" (Vine, Unger and White 503). Actually, there are three aorist active indicative verbs used by Paul to fully reveal what God has done. God has done more than just "quickened us." He has also "raised us up" and "seated us." "The aorist tense denotes instantaneousness. No evolution, no development is ever conceivable" (Lenski 417). Furthermore, all three actions are done "together with" Christ.

Paul does not deal with the "how" and "when" we were made alive in Christ in this text. He does address it in Colossians 2:11-13; Romans 6; Acts 22:6-16. The reader is encouraged to study these passages.

The writer now makes a connection between Ephesians 1:19, 20 where he speaks of the divine power of God which raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to the right hand of the heavenly throne and the power of God which makes a sinner "dead in sins" alive, and raises him up to walk in a newness of life, and seats him

in "the heavenlies" in Christ. The heavenlies refer to the spiritual realm where all of these blessings occur. In this spiritual realm we are living, walking, and maintaining fellowship with Christ "in whom" we access all spiritual blessings (1:3). It takes divine power to raise the physically dead back to physical life. It takes divine power to "make alive" those "dead in sins" and "raise them up together with Christ" and "have them seated in the heavenly places in Christ." "God and what he has done stand out in the whole paragraph" (Lenski 428).

Why did God do these things for mankind? In verse 4 we are told that it is because God is "rich in mercy." Sinners are worthy of death. They have no merit on which to appeal to God, and as previously revealed they occupy a state of much misery facing the wrath of God. Seeing man's need and having the resources to respond to it, God acts to remove the distress rather than exacting due punishment. And what would prompt such mercy? God's great love! God is love (1 John 4:18). The purest and highest of motives were behind His gift of salvation. He first loved us (1 John 4:19) even when we were not loving toward Him. He commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). He "so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

By what instrument did God extend His mercy to those who were "dead in sins?" GRACE! We use the word 'grace' in many ways. Before meals we say 'grace.' We describe a person who moves with coordination and style as one who moves with 'grace.' Some parents even name their daughters 'Grace.' None of these uses capture the true meaning of grace. It is a word that is hard to fathom. Sometimes the best we can do is look at it in awe and reverence.

My simplistic grasp sees grace as an act of giving all the help that is needed to completely resolve a problem and keep it resolved forever for someone who will never be able to resolve it for himself and who would never deserve in any manner that measure of help. Humanity rejected God and virtually His every act to help them. Yet, God seeks to reconcile mankind to Himself. He

provides everything “in Christ” to make salvation a possibility and a reality.

How does God reveal this amazing grace to man? Through “the faith.” Both nouns grace and faith have the article in verse 8. The majority of the Greek manuscripts are in its favor (Eadie 150). There are two prevalent schools of thought on faith in this verse. One contends that it is man’s personal faith, his subjective faith which he personally possesses concerning God’s Will.

The second claims that this is the objective, absolute faith as in “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). This would encompass the whole system of the teaching of the Christian system, the Gospel of Christ, and the entire New Testament. There are many contenders from both sides, and some “fence straddlers” who attempt to put one foot in each camp. Contextually, everything that is referred to in verses 4-8 pertaining to our salvation is something that God has done for us or some quality in God’s nature that has moved Him to do these things. Verse 9 makes it clear that what Paul writes about here is not of man’s doing. Even verse 10 when speaking of the good works that we are to walk in claims that God has before ordained them. Without “the faith” to teach us what God wants us to know we would not know what to believe or practice in Christian living. God uses the means of His holy Word to make known the instrument of salvation for all sinners, namely, His grace. The provision of salvation for those “dead in sins” is truly and solely the gift of God by grace revealed in His Word.

Paul declares **THE PURPOSES** for which God saves us in verses 7, 9, and 10. Verse 7 reads, “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace....” Two schools of thought prevail concerning the meaning of “in the ages to come.” One considers it to refer to the eternal ages which follow the judgment. The other takes the view that it means the succeeding generations of Christians until the end of time. Eadie writes:

Why should the greatness of the grace that quickened and elevated such sinners as these Ephesians, not be displayed till the realms of glory be reached? Or might not God

intend in their salvation at that early age to show to coming ages, as vicious as they, what were the riches of his grace? . . . Still the language of the verse suggests the idea of sample or specimen. Paul, who classes himself with the Ephesians in the [*hemas*] makes this use of his own conversion 1 Tim.i.16. (147)

Paul adds a tender note to the “exceeding riches of his grace” when he writes of the manner in which God’s grace operates for sinners. It is in “kindness.” The term means primarily “fit for use, able to be used..., hence, ‘good, virtuous, mild, pleasant,’ (in contrast to what is hard, harsh, sharp, bitter)” (Vine, Unger and White 192). God wants to exhibit the riches of His grace which He offers in a most appealing way through Jesus. The exhibit is the Christians at Ephesus and Paul. If God’s grace is effective in saving them, then why should it not be effective in saving our generation? “And all the grace in this kindness shown in the first century is a lesson even to the [twenty-first] century. What God did then, He can do and will do now; and one reason why He did it then was, to teach men of the present age His ability and desire to repeat in them the same blessed process of salvation and life” (Eadie 149).

In the ninth verse Paul clearly sets forth that our salvation and life in Christ is not “out of” our own works. Therefore, no man can boast or glory that it is of his own doing. Every spiritual blessing we enjoy is given to us. Boasting would imply “fancied merit, independence of God, and that self-deification which is the very essence of sin” (155).

The final purpose which is addressed is found in verse 10. We are God’s workmanship. The term refers to “that which is made” (Vine, Unger and White 385). We derive our English word ‘poem’ from this noun. Those “alive in Christ” are the product of God’s efforts. Christians are “created in Christ Jesus.” For what purpose? “that we should walk in them” [good works]. The word ‘walk’ here is the same used in verse 2 and Vine writes it is “signifying the whole round of activities of the individual life” (664). God has made us “alive in Christ” and He has prescribed, defined, and

adapted the works which will let us best serve His purposes. We are now set free from walking the course of this world (v. 2) and are to walk in the good works that God has ordained.

The world about us should be able to read the “poetry of God” in our lives. In Acts 11:23 Luke writes about Barnabas when he went to Antioch: “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Barnabas could see the “grace of God” in the lives of the Christians in Antioch.

God has made it possible for those “dead in sins” to be made alive “in Christ.” Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). God sent His Son that we should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Having become “alive in Christ” may we now LIVE FOR JESUS!

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Biographical Sketch

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The Ephesians Before And After

Ephesians 2:11-22

W. Terry Varner

The problem of sin has plagued man since the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3). What can man do about his sins and the horrible consequences of eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23; Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)? It is clear from Ephesians of the



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importance of God's *grace* and *mercy* in order that we might be reconciled to Him. "Without the grace and mercy of God they could do nothing. No man can save himself by any sort of meritorious works. No man could (or can) undo his wrong. But God can forgive him. God can forgive him through the blood of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7)" (Warren, *Ephesians* 40-41). Ephesians 2:11-22 sets forth "the faith" (Eph. 2:8); i.e. Christianity as God's *only* way of redemption for mankind, both Jew and Gentile. The text shows that spiritual life is through, and sustained by, Christ. Consider the inspired text which reads as follows:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh

the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself one new man so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:11-22)

Consider the above text outlined as follows:

- ❖ *A Christless Past* (2:11-12).
- ❖ *Christ's Present Blessings* (2:13-18).
- ❖ *Christ Our Cornerstone* (2:19-22).

A Christless Past (2:11-12)

Ephesians 2:11-12 ought to assist the Gentile Christians at Ephesus to appreciate the wonderful gift of God's grace they now enjoy "in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:13). The Bible divides the human race into two "nations": the Jews (circumcised), and the Gentiles (uncircumcised).

To redeem man God prepared the nation Israel (Jews), through His promise to the patriarch Abraham, to bring His Son into the world. God raised up Israel to bring about man's redemption and Redeemer (Gen. 12:1-3). The Gentiles embraced paganism and were lost from God. The Redeemer would "reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16).

Paul reminds the Gentile world to "remember" their "past" (v. 11) lost condition and to contemplate their present condition as God's children and to be thankful for their forgiveness and reconciliation.

The word "wherefore" (v. 11) links what follows to what Paul had already stated in Ephesians 2:1-10. "Remember" is present, active imperative and carries the force of "keep on remembering" i.e. they (we) were (are) never to forget what they (we) were before their (our) conversion.

Ephesians 2:11 sets forth the graphic picture of contempt of the Jews toward the Gentiles. The text deals with both Jew and Gentile "in the flesh." The Jews referred to the "Gentiles in the flesh" by the nickname "uncircumcision" but not always in a spiritual sense. The Jews were Jews outwardly, not inwardly. The matter of "circumcision in the flesh" refers to Genesis 17:9-14 to God's covenant of circumcision. It is said of the Jews' attitude toward their circumcision: "The esteem and honor which the Jews had for this ritual was a part of their very exclusiveness by which they shut themselves off from other people . . . they came to use [it] as an expression of contempt for the Gentiles" (Summers 41-42).

In Ephesians 2:12 Paul goes beyond the "circumcision and uncircumcision in the flesh" to describe the pre-Christian Gentiles. He uses five points to describe the Gentiles horrible spiritual condition:

First, they had been "**without Christ.**" The phrase literally means "separated" from Christ being "far off" (2:13, 17) but now "in Christ Jesus" (2:13) they, as the Jews, were both reconciled "unto God in one body" (2:16). They had no knowledge of Him and therefore no blessings from Him. This is the very opposite of their present spiritual condition "in Christ Jesus" (2:13).

Second, they had been "**alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.**" The word "commonwealth" means "citizenship or state" (Rogers 437) and refers to the Jewish nation. In the nation of Israel, God was their King and ruled the Jews with His Law. The Jews were amenable subjects to God. Consequently, the Jews enjoyed those heavenly privileges and blessings not shared by those not in the nation (Gentiles).

Third, they had been "**strangers from the covenants of promises.**" "Strangers" means "foreigners" and in this context the Gentiles were "strangers (foreigners) from the covenants of promise." God made "covenants" with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3;

15:8, 21; 17:1-21) and with Israel under Moses' leadership and sealed it with blood (Ex. 24:8; Heb. 9:20; 13:20). Because the Gentiles were not part of these "covenants," they were "strangers" in that they did not participate in the blessings promised to Israel. Later, God promised a "new covenant" (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13) and was inclusive of both Jew and Gentile in which God promised He would "forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12-13).

Fourth, they had "**no hope.**" The Gentiles lacked the "hope" of the future that Israel enjoyed in the present life of the promises and prophecies of the Messiah. Also, the Jew had a realistic concept, not as full as what is revealed in the New Testament, of life beyond death. The idea of "having no hope" in this life as contrasted with what the Gentiles "now" have "in Christ" (2:13) is sad!

Fifth, they had been "**without God in the world.**" While it was possible for the Gentiles to have known God (Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 17:16-31), they were "without God;" i.e. knowledge of Him. They worshipped and served gods or idols but "now in Christ Jesus" (2:13) they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:6). Summers writes: "[E]ven the purest systems of religion known to the Gentiles were so far removed from the religion of the true God that Paul could truthfully say that the Gentiles were 'without God' altogether" (44).

Ephesians 2:11-12 emphasize the need of gratitude to God, by Jew and Gentile, as well as all Christians through all ages, for the tremendous privilege of being a Christian. At the same time a Christian should remember the horrible situation he was in *before* he obeyed the Gospel (cf. Eph. 2:1-3)!

Christ's Present Blessings (2:13-18)

It is the case that the Jews had several advantages over the Gentiles (Rom. 3:1-8); however, Ephesians 2:13-18 makes it clear both Jew and Gentile needed salvation. God who is "rich in mercy" (2:4), demonstrated His "great love" (2:4), poured out His wonderful "grace" (Eph. 2:8-10), and blessed humanity with the great gift of "the faith;" i.e. Christianity. Ephesians 2:8-10 enables lost mankind, Jew and Gentile, to be forgiven and reconciled unto God.

The words "But now in Christ Jesus" (2:13) point to a spiritual condition that was the very opposite of all described in Ephesians 2:11-12. Once "far off" they are now "nigh" (near) because of "the blood of Christ" (2:13). Ephesians 2:13-18 emphasizes six great "Present Blessings" of the Christian:

First, The Atonement (2:13, 15-16). The great blessing of the atonement includes both the ideas of the blood of Jesus and the cross of Jesus. *They are inseparable!* Because of "the blood [cross] of Christ" shed at Calvary (2:13), the Gentiles, who were "far off" (separated from God), have been "made nigh" (2:13) to God. "Nigh" means "to take place, happen" (Abbott-Smith 92); i.e. the Gentiles are now drawn close to God in their obedience to the Gospel. The phrase "in his flesh" (2:15) is a reference to Jesus being crucified on "the cross" (2:16).

"*The blood of Christ*" on Calvary (2:13) results in "peace" (2:14-15), "reconciliation . . . unto God" (2:16; Rom. 5:10). Peter declares man's redemption was "with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). Sin makes men "dead" (Eph. 2:1-3), "far off" (2:13), and terminal (Rom. 6:23). C. C. Crawford wrote, "Moreover, life is a heavenly gift and an offering of life becomes therefore a divine offering. When an atonement for sin became necessary, it had to be an offering of life. But an offering of life necessitated a death and the shedding of blood" (143).

God's offended holiness demanded justice, that is, the shedding of innocent blood. The New Testament evidences that baptism is the meeting place of the sinner and the blood of Jesus for the remission of our sins (Rom. 6:3-4; Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16); therefore, Jesus in instituting the Lord's Supper said of the cup, ". . . [T]his is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). The blood of Christ is able (has the power) to cleanse both man's past sins and man's sins that he may commit as he lives the Christian life (1 John 1:7-9; 2:1-2; Rom. 7:23-24).

Summers gives an excellent summary of the meaning of the phrase "the blood of Christ" and man's redemption:

[T]o be understood as a comprehensive reference to all that was involved in the experience of Jesus' incarnation, death, resurrection, and glorification. It is by means of this redemptive work which God has wrought in Christ and which he offers to sinful men on the basis of faith that the Gentiles have come to their present status. God provided complete and sufficient redemption in Christ. It had to follow that both Jews and Gentiles had equal access to that redemption. (45)

"The cross" of Jesus brings about "reconciliation. . . unto God" (2:16). Paul preached that "the cross of Christ" was "the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18) and "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). To the Jews "the cross of Jesus" was "a stumblingblock" (1 Cor. 1:23). "Stumblingblock" (*skandalon*) was "the arm or stick on which the bait was fixed. . . a 'snare,' a 'bait,' an 'allurement'" (Barclay, *Wordbook* 111-14). Lenski defines the term as a "death trap" (*Corinthians* 66). To the Gentiles "the cross of Jesus" was "foolishness" (1:23) or nonsense. The Greek concept of God was, according to Barclay, "*the total inability to feel*" (*Corinthians* 20).

The importance of "the cross" to the Christian may be briefly described in the following. I am indebted to John R. W. Stott (63-67) for these thoughts. *First*, the cross is the place where *Christ died for us* (Luke 22:19; John 10:11, 15; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:10; Tit. 2:14). *Second*, the cross is the place that *Christ died for us that He might bring us to God* (Eph. 2:13-14, 16; 1 Peter 3:18; Rom. 3:23-26). *Third*, the cross is the place where *Christ died for our sins* (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Peter 3:18; Heb. 9:12, 28; 1 John 1:7; 2:1-2; Rev. 1:5-6). *Fourth*, the cross is the place where *Christ died our death* (Rom. 5:12-14; Heb. 2:9).

Thomas B. Warren summarizes this point on "the cross and blood of Jesus" in the following descriptive terms.

It is not that Jesus merely died; He died for a *certain purpose*. He came to give His life that *sinners* might be *saved* from what they *deserve* (eternal punishment, Rom. 6:23). . . . Thus, it is seen that Christ offered a *particular*

sacrifice (Himself) for a *specific purpose* (Heb. 9:7, 12; 7:18-25; 9:22; 10:4; 11:28; 13:11; cf. John 3:16; Lev. 11). (*Ephesians* 44-45)

Second, Our Peace (2:14-15, 17). Christ who is "the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) becomes "our peace" (2:14), makes "peace" (2:15), and His Gospel message is a "preached peace" (2:17).

The word "peace" is from *e eirene*; literally, "the peace." In the New Testament there are various *sources* of "peace." "Our peace" suggests that *only* in Christ—and in no other—can man find and sustain peace. Peace comes *from believing* (Rom. 15:13).

Peace results when accepting as true, which it is, that which Jesus revealed about God (John 1:18). Peace comes *from belief which has been turned into action*, everyone who does good or right (Rom. 2:10); i.e. obedience to His will (Matt. 7:21).

Peace comes *from God*. God gives the obedient the "peace which passeth all understanding" (Philip. 4:7). Peace is the *result of the gift of Jesus Christ*. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27; 20:19, 20, 26).

The *peace* of Christianity involves and demands "right relationships in any given sphere of life" (Barclay, *Flesh* 87).

Peace insists on *right relationships in the home* (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Peace insists and describes *the new relationship between mankind* (Eph. 2:14-17); i.e. Jew, Gentile, bond, free, male, female, etc. (Gal. 3:28). Sadly, the old distinctions of the world (nationalism, racism, caste systems, status, privilege, etc.) still stand, but *they are not to stand in the church*. John Wesley wrote: "By these marks, by these fruits of a living faith, do we labor to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world, from all those whose minds or lives are not according to the Gospel of Christ" (346). The Christian is to strive for "peace with all men" (Heb. 12:14; Rom. 14:19).

Peace describes *the relationship within the church* (Eph. 4:3). "The peace of God" is to "rule in your [our] hearts" (Col. 3:15). The church can manifest internal peace *only* when Christians are guided by "the wisdom that is from above" (James 4:17-18), and

not the earthly, devilish, and carnal wisdom of the world (James 4:14-16). The peace of God is to be with “all that are in Christ” (1 Peter 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:2).

Peace describes *the new relationship between God and man*. Christ is “our peace” (Eph. 2:14) *only* as we obey the message of “peace” preached to us in the pristine Gospel (Eph. 2:17). We are “justified by [the] faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Our “peace” results from the work of Jesus “through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20).

Barclay writes that “Peace is this completely new relationship which Jesus Christ made possible between man and God” (*Flesh* 90). No wonder Barclay defines “peace” (*eirene*) as “Life at its Best” (83). If I have peace with God and inner peace, we ask can life be any better? Our “peace” was *planned* by God before the creation of the world. It is always through the cross of Christ that peace is possible to man.

Third, the church (2:15-16). The reconciliation of men unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19) “by the cross” (Eph. 2:16) is accomplished in the church which is the body of Christ and of which Christ is the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). With the removal of the various and many distinctions between men (Gal. 3:28), the fellowship of God’s people (Christians) are described as “one new man” (2:15) and “one body” (2:16).

The church of Christ, for which our Lord died and purchased with His blood, is unique and essential. The “one new man” (2:15) and “one body” (2:16) emphasizes the *oneness* or *unity* of the church (Eph. 4:4-6). The message of “peace” (2:17), i.e. the Gospel, must be “preached” and obeyed implies a normativeness (pattern) of doctrine based on the word of “truth” (John 8:32; Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:51; 2 John 9-11), as well as implying the *oneness* or *unity* for which Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21. There is *only* “one body” (Eph. 4:4). “One new man in the place of two! The church member was no longer a Jew, or a Greek, or a Roman. He was not even a Jewish Christian, or a Greek Christian, or a Roman Christian. Each was *just* a Christian. Glory be to God!” (Cleland 154).

The “one new man” and “one body” show the divine importance of the church to God and the urgent need for men everywhere to recognize and accept God’s plan of redemption. Thomas B. Warren writes:

In the New Testament, every person who was baptized in the name of Christ entered one and the same church (the one body of Christ, Eph. 4:4-6). The Bible thus teaches that there are NO Christians outside of that one church. All Christians are members of that one church. The New Testament plainly so teaches. (*Bible Only* 165)

Fourth, The Law of Moses (2:14-16). Christianity (the faith) demands *all* who are justified before God are justified by the blood of Jesus. Neither the Patriarchal law, to which the Gentile was amenable, nor the Law of Moses, to which the Jew was amenable, could justify man before God. However, justification can be and is accomplished *only* by the Gospel (Christianity) and is empowered through the blood of Jesus (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 1:7; 2:16; Col. 1:20).

The Law of Moses served God by bringing the Redeemer promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and served the Jew as a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by [the] faith” (Gal. 3:24). Once “the faith” (Christianity) came the Jew was no longer amenable to the Law of Moses (Gal. 3:25). Paul writes that, “**all**” (Jew and Gentile) of those who are “the children of God” are so “by [the] faith [*tes pisteos*]” (Gal. 3:26).

Since the Law of Moses was a national law binding only on Israel (Deut. 5:1ff.) and the Gentile was amenable to the Patriarchal Law, the removal of these laws was essential, as neither law could justify man. Likewise, no man could be subject to two laws at the same time and serve God faithfully. God removed man’s amenability to both the Patriarchal law and the Law of Moses at Pentecost (Acts 2). God in Acts 2 gave the *new law*, which He had earlier promised, “written in their hearts” (Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-2)—the New Testament, the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:10; Rom. 5:1-2).

Ephesians 2:14-16 involves the removal of the Law of Moses when Jesus “abolished in his flesh [cross] the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in the ordinances” (2:15). The Law of Moses separated the Jews and Gentiles and served as the “wall of partition between us [Jew and Gentile]” (2:14). Thomas B. Warren states that the Law of Moses, “in a sense, separated Jews from Christ” (*Ephesians* 46). Colossians 2:14 pin points the *time* and *place* of the removal of the Law of Moses as Calvary (cross), when Jesus, “**took it [the Law] out of the way, nailing it to his cross**” (emp. added). The Patriarchal law, by implication, ended for the Gentiles at the *same time* and *place*, Calvary! The removal of the Law of Moses fulfills the Old Testament teaching in Amos 8:1-10 and Zechariah 11:1-14.

Ephesians 2:16 implies the importance of the removal of the Laws (Patriarchal and Mosaical), “and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” For “both” (Gentile and Jew) to be “reconciled” implies both were separated from God. The separation came about by the cross. Reconciliation resulted for “both” (Gentile and Jew) when they obeyed the Gospel and God added them to the “one new man” (2:15) and the “one body” (2:16), the church (Acts 2:47). It is only and always through the cross of Christ that man can be in the “one body,” the church.

Fifth, Reconciliation (2:13, 16-18). The verb “reconcile” is from *apokatallaxe* and means “to turn from hostility to friendship” (Rogers 438). Men are separated from God by their sins (Isa. 59:1-2). Men can be reconciled to God because of the voluntary self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (John 10:17-18; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20). The very fact that Jesus had to die to reconcile men to God is a witness in itself to God’s hostility to sin (Hab. 1:13) and His great mercy and love (Eph. 2:4).

Paul describes reconciliation as “having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself” (Col. 1:20). Consequently, men once estranged, foreigners, and separated from God are now able, by their obedience to the Gospel, to be “in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:3). They are reconciled “unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:16) and are “nigh;”

i.e. in fellowship with God (Eph. 2:16). Barclay writes, “This has always been the simplest and the most human way of expressing what Jesus has done for us. To put it at its simplest, through him it has become possible for us to become friends” (*All-Sufficient* 74). This is why Morris defines reconciliation as “to exchange for friendship” (187).

In reconciliation, God is never said to be reconciled to man. God is the subject of the verb and He reconciles men to Himself. Paul states it as, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). When Paul says, “be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20), his “point is that it is the divine initiative and the divine effort that is in view” (Morris 206). The means of reconciliation is always by the death and blood of Jesus on the cross.

Sixth, Enjoying the Blessings (2:18). The above blessings briefly examined enable “both (Gentile and Jew) to have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (2:18). The word “access” is from *prosagoge* and means “entrance, access. The word was used of a solemn, unhindered approach to a deity and access to a king’s presence” (Rogers 438). The idea is that by the work of Christ on the cross man has an entrance or access into fellowship with God.

The *access* into this new relationship with God as our Father is by the instrumentality of the “one Spirit” in conjunction with the Word, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The *access* into fellowship with “God as Father through Christ and in the Spirit is the ground of our peace” (Lincoln 150) is for “both” (Gentile and Jew, thus all men).

For men to enter into fellowship with God they must *all* be called by the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). The Gospel must be received as “it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). The hearts of *all* men must be cleansed by *the faith* (Acts 15:7-9). The faith calls for men to believe (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6), repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 8:37), confess Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized into Christ for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It is in baptism that we appropriate the blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). No one can be saved without the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22) and the church of Christ was purchased by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28). The

means of access into fellowship with God is always by the death and blood of Jesus on the cross.

Christ Our Cornerstone (2:19-22).

The way of reconciliation of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, is now complete. The *state* and *position* of the Gentiles is, by their being “now in Christ Jesus” (2:13), changed to where they “are no more strangers and foreigners” (2:19; cf. 2:12), but now in “fellowship with the saints, and of the household of God” (2:19).

As “fellowcitizens” they are now under the norm or pattern of New Testament law (Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Their names, and ours, are engraved in “the book of life” (Philip. 4:3; Rev. 20:12; 21:27). These are they “the Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people” (Ps. 87:6). They are now cleansed by the blood of Jesus and are “saints.” They have been added to the church or “the household of God” (2:19; cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). “Household” (*oikeios*) means family and “refers to all members regardless of social or personal position” (Rogers 438); i.e. the family of God. They (we) have Jesus as their (our) Elder Brother (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11) and as “children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17).

The “one new man” (2:15) and the “one body” (2:16) is now described as being “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:20-22). The “building” or “temple” or “church” is built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (2:2); i.e. upon the doctrine or teaching of the apostles and prophets (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:11-12; Matt. 18:18). This is a clear statement that the New Testament is the authority, norm, and pattern for the Christian’s life and worship.

The authority, norm, and pattern emanate from “Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (2:20). A purpose of the “cornerstone” of a building is that it “finalizes its shape, for, being placed at the corner formed by the junction of two primary walls, it determines the lay of the walls and crosswalls throughout. All other stones must adjust themselves to this cornerstone” (Hendriksen 143). Hendriksen makes application as, “It is Christ who gives the house its needed *direction*. Believers, as ‘living

stones’ (1 Peter 2:5), must regulate their lives in accordance with the wall of the cornerstone, Christ” (143). This harmonizes with the statement, “in whom all the building fitly formed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (2:21).

How does this work? How do Christians regulate their lives in accordance to Christ, the cornerstone? The answer is found in the words of Jesus to His apostles, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18; 16:19). Christ as the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23) speaks “with the double seal of divine verity and divine authority” (Lenski, *Ephesians* 703). The apostles of Christ exercised this authority with the New Testament as “the instrument by which that binding and loosing are effected” (Coffman 248). The doctrine of the apostles and prophets (Acts 2:32; Eph. 2:20) was and is the doctrine of God (John 7:16-17), the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1; 2 John 9; Matt. 7:28; 22:33; John 18:19), and serves as a perpetual norm and pattern for Christians.

The church is described as growing into “an holy temple in the Lord” (2:21) for the purpose of the “habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:22). The Old Testament temple served as the dwelling place of God. The New Testament temple serves as the dwelling place of God “through the Spirit.” However, there is a distinct difference. The new “temple” (church) was not a physical building located in one place, but rather is a spiritual building, “the household of God” (2:19); i.e. holy people, Christians.

It is our understanding of the phrase the “habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:22) refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word. Why? We offer the following explanation from three passages in Ephesians.

First, the Christian is “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” functioning as “the earnest of our inheritance” (1:13-14). “Sealed” is from *esphragisthete* and indicates “not only ownership, but also . . . a guarantee of the correctness of the contents” (Rogers 435). Salmond comments on this word and verse as:

“[I]n whom, on hearing and believing, ye were sealed;” it being *in Christ*, in virtue of our union with Him, that we

receive the gift of the Spirit. . . . In the narratives of the cases of reception into the Christian Church in the Book of Acts we discover this order of grace: hearing, believing, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost (ii.37, 38), or hearing, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost (viii.6, 12, 17). (267)

Vine stresses that *esphragisthete* translated “sealed,” which is an aorist passive participle, occurs “at the time of their regeneration, not after a lapse of time in their spiritual life. . .the aorist-participle marks the definiteness and completeness of the act of faith” (331). The Christian is “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13) and is warned by Paul to “grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30), which can be done by unholy living!

Second, Paul states that the Holy Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance” (1:14). “Earnest” is from *arrabon* meaning “earnest-money, caution-money, deposited in case of purchase, gen. a pledge. . .2 Cor i.22, v.5, Eph. i.14” (Bullinger 241). The word is found only in 2 Corinthians 1:12, 5:5, and Ephesians 1:14.

McClintock and Strong state that 2 Corinthians 1:22 applies to the gifts of the Spirit which God bestowed upon the apostles. Second Corinthians 5:5 and Ephesians 1:14 is applied “to the *gifts* bestowed on Christians generally upon whom, after baptism, the apostles laid their hands” (3: 6). They state that the phrase “the earnest of the Spirit” implies, “beyond the idea of security, the identity in kind, though not in degree, and the *continuity of the Christian’s privileges in this world* and in the next” (6, emp. added).

In other words, McClintock and Strong apply “the earnest of the Spirit” as *continuing* with Christians *after* the death of the apostles and therefore could not and does not demand the phrase limited to the miraculous gifts from the laying on of the apostles hands. The reading of the text declares *all* and *every* Christian to be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance. This is the emphasis in the letter to the Ephesians. Surely, the apostles did not lay their hands on all Christians and

impart miraculous gifts to each and every one. McClintock and Strong realize that supernatural “gifts” were “temporary” in nature and the gift of the Holy Spirit “continues” in the life of the church; i.e. Christians (859-61). This makes the “earnest of the Spirit” or *arrabon* to be understood as non-miraculous in the life of *all* Christians throughout time.

Third, Christians are “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). Eadie gives the meaning of this verse with great clarity:

[T]he design of a temple is that its god may inhabit it, so Christ dwells in the heart. This habitation is not to be explained away as a mere reception of Christian doctrine [i.e Word only], nor is it to be regarded as a mystical exaggeration [i.e. Pentecostalism]. . .His abode is in no outer vestibule, but—“in your hearts.” (247)

We elaborate upon the word “Pentecostalism” which we added following Eadie’s phrase “mystical exaggeration.” We argue that this is one of the things he had in mind when he used the phrase.

Eadie (1810-1876) was a Presbyterian minister in Glasgow, Scotland. The phrase “mystical exaggeration” refers, in part, to his rejection and opposition to the false, abusive teaching in reference to the Holy Spirit by the Pentecostals. Walvoord speaks of “The false mysticism which swept away some led to excess of spiritual and emotional experience unsteadied and undirected by the teaching of the Scriptures” (249). Edward Irving (1792-1834) began to emphasize “Pentecostal” extremes of “spiritual giftings, including prophesy, healings, glossolalia, and interpretation of tongues” (Burgess 1231). Pentecostalism is at times referred to in various scholarly works as a form of “mysticism” (McClintock and Strong 6: 794-95; Fee 217-221, 799-801; Walvoord 249). Of course, one can see this by reading the definitive work by Burgess. Eadie’s comment is in his opposition to the extremes of both the cold, formal worship of many churches and the spreading of “exaggerated mysticism” i.e. Pentecostalism, in the British Isles.

With this developed, we return to the phrase “the habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). We argue that this phrase refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word in the life of the Christian. We are not arguing that the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian separate and apart from the Word. While the Scriptures teach that God the Father and God the Son dwell within the Christian representatively, we affirm that the Scriptures teach the Holy Spirit indwells each Christian. We are not speaking of sensory experiences, nudges, etc. We are affirming that the Holy Spirit indwells each Christian (Eph. 2:22) as (1.) One who is our “seal” (Eph. 1:13), (2.) One who is our “earnest” (Eph. 1:14), (3.) One who “strengthens” the Christian (Eph. 3:16), and (4.) One whom we must not grieve and with whom we are sealed until the judgment (Eph. 4:30). Someone may ask *how* does the Holy Spirit work in our life? I do not know other than He always works in conjunction with the Word. Someone may ask do you feel the Holy Spirit within you? No! But, I do not feel my personal spirit either! The question does not disprove the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Word in the life of the Christian or disprove that my spirit indwells me!

Conclusion

The church is “one body” (2:16) with Christ as its “head” (1:22-23). Membership within the church results in reconciliation to God (2:16) through Christ (2:18) and serves as the “habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:22). The members are to be characterized by growth and holiness (2:21) and owe everything to Christ who made our “access” (2:18) possible by the shedding of His “blood” (2:13) on Calvary’s “cross” (2:16). The consequence is “peace” (2:16) and being brother to my Elder Brother, Christ (Heb. 2:6).

Ephesians 2 prepares the reader for Ephesians 3 as seen in the phrase, “For this cause” (3:1). This is a reference to Paul’s great “prayer that believers may be empowered to fulfill their role in God’s purposes” (Lincoln 165).

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Biographical Sketch

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The Church - Purposed, Promised, And Prophesied

Ephesians 3:8-13

Randy Cook

A discussion of the Lord's church cannot be complete until one considers the aspect of pre-church history. Just what did God have in mind for the church? In the centuries before the church began, was there any indication that God had a plan for His church? Are



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there any indications that inspired writers knew that such a church would exist? And just how clear are the prophecies concerning such? This study will attempt to survey the scriptural evidence that, long before the church began, God had a purpose for the church, He had promised the church, and that numerous inspired prophecies clearly predict the Lord's church.

While researching American church history, one may discover that many writers describe the church of Christ as being indigenous to the United States. In fact, they lump three groups together—the Disciples of Christ, the Christian Church, and the church of Christ—as being the earliest of the American indigenous denominations. These records are often prejudicial, and, as such, are lacking in biblical understanding of the church. Such descriptions are not based on biblical facts.

The Lord's church, or the church of Christ, had its beginning in Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago. Even long before its beginning, the church was in the mind of God. The Apostle Paul stated, "to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in

the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11).

Many false teachers, who promote a false and dangerous doctrine called premillennialism, twist the Scripture, and have concocted a notion that Jesus will come back some day and set up His kingdom here on Earth. They claim that it will last a thousand years, and then eternity will commence. The premillennialists also claim that the church and the kingdom are two separate entities. And, yet, the Bible clearly states that the church of Christ and the kingdom of Christ are one and the same. Jesus, on several occasions, asserted that the kingdom was “at hand” (Matt. 4:17). He promised to build His church, and in the same conversation, told Peter He would give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:18-19). In fact, prior to the second chapter of Acts, every reference to Christ’s spiritual kingdom speaks of it as future. Then, every reference to the kingdom after Acts 2 refers to it as already being in existence (Col. 1:13).

This study will confine its thoughts to three basic points about the church in its pre-existent state. First, God’s purpose concerning the church will be considered. Then, the biblical promises about the establishment of the Lord’s church will be addressed. Finally, some key prophecies, which accurately predict numerous facts about the church, will be discussed.

The Church *PURPOSED*

The purpose of the church has been clearly stated in Scripture; yet, man often ignores it. Those who adhere to the premillennial concept of the future literal thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth have completely ignored the clear Bible teaching concerning the purpose of the church. The premillennial false teacher would suggest that the church is merely an afterthought of God. They claim that the church is a “plan B” because Jesus was killed and not allowed to begin His kingdom. Such teaching could not be further from the truth. Peter preached that the death of Christ was according to the “determined counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Paul wrote that the wisdom of God is manifested in the church (Eph. 3:10-11). The premillennial view would suggest

that God made a mistake. The apostle Paul also stated that the church was in God’s *eternal* purpose.

How interesting! The words “eternal” and “purpose” are connected, with eternal modifying purpose, thereby explaining the permanent nature of God’s purpose. The church was not a “plan B,” but in the purpose of God before time began. Not only was the church God’s purpose and plan, but also it was His *eternal* purpose. The church, that body of saved believers, was settled in the mind of God long before man, before creation, before sin, and before the need of a Savior. But God knew that man would sin, and that he would need a Savior. God also saw the wisdom in making provision for a body of believers, for those sinners who would come to the Savior. That provision is called the church, the called-out ones.

That the church and the kingdom are the same is evidenced throughout Scripture. When Paul told the Colossian brethren that they had been translated into the kingdom (Col. 1:13), he had already shown that he was writing to the church (Col. 1:2). Similarly, the angel Gabriel told Mary that her Son would be given the throne of David (Luke 1:32), thus implying Jesus would be a king. In Peter’s magnificent sermon on Pentecost, he affirmed that God had raised up Jesus to sit on David’s throne (Acts 2:29-33). As King over His kingdom, he also rules as head over His church (Eph. 1:22-23).

Jesus also promised that He would eat of the Lord’s Supper in His kingdom. His disciples partake of the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s day, also in that kingdom (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). If Jesus promised that His disciples would eat the Lord’s Supper in His kingdom, and they ate of it according to God’s command, then they were in the kingdom when they ate it. The kingdom and the church are one and the same. The church is *not* some last-minute, substitute, plan “B,” stopgap measure. God’s purpose was not foiled. His church was in His eternal purpose.

The Church *PROMISED*

The one definitive statement concerning the promise of the church is found in Matthew 16:18. “And I also say to you that you

are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Other promises concerning the coming of the church prove that it was a part of God’s eternal purpose. John said that it was “at hand” (Matt. 3:2). Jesus promised His disciples that they would soon see the kingdom. “And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power’” (Mark 9:1). Following His resurrection, Jesus was giving some last instructions to His Apostles before He ascended back to the Father.

Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:46-49)

When God called Abram to leave Haran, He made three promises to Abram. God promised a personal blessing on Abram to make his name great. The second blessing was a national one, promising to make a great nation from him. This was fulfilled in the nation of Israel. The third and most significant promise was a universal blessing that would come from his seed (Gen. 12:1-3). Paul’s claim is enlightening as to the fulfillment of that promise. “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Christ, and His church, fulfills that promise of a universal blessing through Abraham.

With these promises given, several pertinent facts are evident. First of all, Jesus promised to build His church. He also promised that even His death would not prevent His church from being built. By the kingdom, or church, being “at hand”, it can be ascertained that it was near. In fact, it was near enough to be witnessed by many of those who heard these sayings. They would still be living

and would see the beginning of the kingdom, or church. Within these promises is the news that the coming of the kingdom would be with power. In the early verses of the second chapter of the Book of Acts, that power is evident, and the people are amazed at the sights and sounds. It can be further stated that the Great Commission is given and that the Gospel would go to all nations. The promise stipulated that all of this would begin at Jerusalem, and that promise was kept in Acts 2. The apostles would be given the power at that time in Jerusalem. All of these promises were fulfilled completely. God’s exceedingly great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4) cannot fail, and it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18).

The Church *PROPHESIED*

As stated before, the church had been a part of God’s plan from before the foundation of the world. It had been God’s divine purpose for the church to be built by his Son, and for obedient believers to be in the church. A further indisputable proof that the church was in God’s eternal purpose and plan is clearly evidenced in the numerous Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment.

Isaiah, the great statesman prophet of Judah, pictured the church as a house, thus predicting that the church would be the family of God. Notice his prophecy:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3)

From this prophecy, several pertinent facts are recognized. The “latter days” began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:15-17). The Lord’s house is referring to His church (1 Tim. 3:15). It was

to be exalted above the hills, thus showing that the Lord's church was to be exalted above all other institutions. "All nations shall flow unto it" speaks of both Jew and Gentile being accepted into the church. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His apostles and told them to go to all nations, or to all the world (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16). "He will teach us His ways" refers to the giving of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was to be nailed to the cross, thereby signifying its death. A new law was to be given to replace the one that was abolished (Heb. 8:8-13; 10:9-10; 9:16-17). "Out of Zion [Jerusalem] shall go forth the law" prophesied where the church would begin. Just prior to His ascension, Jesus instructed His apostles where their work would commence (Luke 24:47-49). He further stated that Jerusalem would be the place of their initial work, then they would go on to Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the Earth (Acts 1:8).

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, clearly prophesied concerning a new covenant from God that would replace the Old Testament law.

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them," says the LORD. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the LORD: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer. 31:31-34)

Jeremiah was speaking of a future event which would be bringing about a new covenant with the people of God. In fact, the

writer of Hebrews quotes this passage from Jeremiah and makes certain that his readers know that the old law and its system was completely replaced by the new law and the new High Priest, Jesus Christ. This new law was not to be written on tablets of stone, as the Law of Moses was. This new law was to be written on the hearts. Under the old covenant, people were physically born into the family of God, then they had to be taught about God and His laws. Under the new covenant, people would be taught about God, then they would be born into the family of God by being baptized into Christ, or into His body (1 Cor. 12:13), which is His church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23).

The prophet, Ezekiel, foresaw the church as being like a sheepfold having one shepherd:

For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them-My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd." (Ezek. 34:11, 22-23)

Jesus made the claim concerning Himself, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:14-16). Jesus, being the Son of David, became the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophetic vision concerning the one shepherd and one sheepfold.

Another prominent Old Testament Prophet, Daniel, made several key prophecies concerning the kingdom, or church. Foremost among those prophecies is one that was an interpretation of a dream by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar.

You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood

before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands,

and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure. (Dan. 2:31-45)

Daniel's prophecy concerning the church spoke of the time period in which it would begin. "In the days of these kings" refers to the Roman Empire, represented in the dream by the "legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay" (Dan. 2:33). This was fulfilled in Luke 3:1-3. Daniel had spoken of the Babylonian kingdom, and each ensuing kingdom, leading up to the Romans. The two intervening kingdoms were the Medo-Persian and the Grecian empire. Most importantly from this prophecy is the kingdom which shall never be destroyed. This kingdom, represented by a stone, not made by men's hands, would grow and fill the Earth. Thus the spread of a divinely ordained kingdom was prophesied, and then fulfilled (Col. 1:23).

Another of Daniel's prophecies associated with the church is about the King receiving His kingdom. "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14). It will be noticed that He received the kingdom when He *came to* the Ancient of Days, not when He came back to Earth. When Jesus ascended to the Father (the Ancient of Days), He received His kingdom. "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). Jesus taught in a parable concerning the kingdom, "Therefore He said: 'A certain nobleman

went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return” (Luke 19:12). Jesus was seated at the right hand of God, thus receiving His kingdom. “Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:20-21).

In the second Psalm, David revealed more information about the kingdom. “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You” (Ps. 2:6-7). These verses clearly identify the King as the Son of God, sitting on David’s throne (Acts 2:25-28; Ps. 16:8-11).

Among the numerous evidences to prove the inspiration of the Bible, the fulfillment of specific prophecy is one of the most convincing. As has been demonstrated, plenty of fulfilled prophecies regarding the church exist. The church is not an afterthought, but it has been carefully and distinctly prophesied. Each and every prophecy concerning the establishment and founder of the church has been fulfilled.

Conclusion

When a football team has much confidence in its quarterback, it may allow him to “audible,” or call a play at the line of scrimmage, depending on how he sees the defense. This allows him to change his mind at the last second, if he sees his original play seems unlikely to succeed. Some false teachers claim that God may have done that—called an “audible,” or changed His mind, because His original plan did not work.

God’s original plan *did* work. The church was built completely according to plan as God had purposed before time began. The promises of Jesus, of John the Baptist, of God, and all inspired writers concur. The exact church that was promised was built. The astounding evidence of fulfilled prophecies pertaining to the church cannot be refuted. The Lord’s church exists today because God purposed it, Christ promised it, and the prophets, by inspiration, prophesied it.

Biographical Sketch

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Fullness Of Time

Ephesians 1:10

Emanuel Daugherty

I am deeply indebted to the lectureship committee of this excellent school of preaching in asking me to appear on this program. Over the years many fine and competent men have gone from its classrooms into the fields of labor to do the work of God



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and His Son. Having been with the school from its beginning it gives me a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment to have a small part in such a great and important work. My hearty commendation is extended to its Director and to the Overseers of the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ who are dearly loved for their works' sake.

Introduction

My task in this lecture series is to give an overview of what Paul describes as the dispensation of the fullness of times. I say an overview because the subject is as broad as the Bible itself in that it takes into consideration the entire scope of the Gospel plan of salvation.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:9 that God has "made known unto us the mystery of his will." What had been a mystery, told in bits and pieces, visions and dreams, types and shadows of the law "unto the fathers by the prophets" has now been declared fully by Jesus Christ, God's Son, who is the spokesman of the New Covenant and revealed to apostles by the revelation of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 1:1). All the work of God during the Dispensation of the Patriarchs and the Dispensation of Moses, was done "according

to his good pleasure,” that is in His own way and in His own time. The heavenly Father did not have to confer with angels, prophets, nor the wise of the ages; “he purposed it in himself” (v. 9; 1 Peter 1:10, 12; 1 Cor. 1:20-21).

All this was done “*that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him*” (10, emp. added).

Part One: The Administration and the Administrator (10)

What does the writer of Ephesians mean when he makes reference to “the dispensation of the fullness of times”? The Greek word for dispensation in this text is *oikonomia*, a word meaning “steward, manager [of the house of God], the law of the house” (Miller 57-58; Arndt-Gingrich 562). This word refers to the administration of God’s will through Jesus Christ the Lord. God has made known to mankind the mystery of His will which was brought into effect in the fullness of times by His Son. In Isaiah we have the account of a position of administration which is typical of Christ serving in the capacity of a steward or administrator over God’s house (cf. Isa. 22:15-25). A treasurer, Shebna, is being replaced with another man, Eliakim, who is more reliable and trustworthy for the office. Eliakim, the new treasurer, is a type of Christ. In verse 22 we have a statement showing that this is a prophecy of the officeholder who is to come, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open” (v. 22). In the book of Revelation chapter three and verse seven, this is applied to Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ is the Administrator, Overseer of God’s House, the house of David, the church. Yea, He is the Treasurer “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). “In Him the fullness of the Godhead dwells” (Col. 2:9), thus, He has all authority in Heaven and in Earth (Matt. 28:18), and is the “law of the house” (Miller 57-58). Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). He is the True Steward over the church, of whom the apostles, by virtue of

God’s will being revealed to them, are the under-stewards who are “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). When their work was finished the church had reached its maturity—fully established, with no need of signs, wonders, and miracles as the church needed in its infancy (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 13:8-13).

“The universe is indifferent. Who created it? Why are we here on this puny mud-heap spinning in infinite space? I have not the slightest idea, and I am quite convinced that no one has the least idea” (Barclay 98). Is it true, as modern skeptics believe, that there is no eternal plan for mankind, that man is just an accident of cruel nature with no reason for his existence? Ephesians 1:10 says this is not true, man is not an accident in endless time, but is the favored recipient of the grace of a loving God. In this text we see the infinite plan of the ages being brought to bear with the coming of God’s Son into the world. As Paul sees it, history from the very beginning of time has been moving to this point—to the dispensation, the administration, of the fullness of time! Those who fail to see the purpose of God being worked out are purposely, willfully ignorant of God’s Word. Truly, there is none as blind as he who is unwilling to see (Ps. 14:1)!

When one thinks of Christ as the Steward or Administrator of *the dispensation of the fullness of times* he will see the Christian Age as:

The Administration of Grace (John 1:18; Eph. 2:8-10). Our salvation is not accomplished with “works of righteousness which we have done” (Titus 3:5); nor by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16). In the dispensation of grace salvation is provided by Christ and appropriated by our obedience to His Will. “For by grace are you saved through [the] faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works [of our own making, nor of the works of the law], lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). The Gospel age is the age of the dispensation of grace, for those who are saved are those who are wholly dependent on God’s mercy as revealed in His Word. Salvation is of grace for: (1.) God devised the plan; (2.) Christ came in the flesh to accomplish the plan; (3.) The plan of salvation was revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles; (4.) It is a free gift to those who believe, trust and obey the plan; (5.)

We have nothing in which we can boast—it is of *grace through faith, lest any man should boast.*

The Christian Age is the Administration of Life and Light. John said, “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:4-5). Jesus Christ is “*the Light of the world*” (John 8:12, emp. added). When Jesus began His earthly ministry, Matthew cited Isaiah 9:1-2 as being fulfilled when he said of Jesus, “The people which sat in darkness saw a great light and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned” (4:16, NKJV). The Administration of Christ is the true age of Enlightenment! The world is dark and dreary with “*no hope and without God*” because of the blight of doubt, skepticism and unbelief. Men of the world are benighted because of sin rampant in their lives and covering their eyes to the truth. These are blind, but see no need of a physician (Matt. 9:12-13).

It is the Administration of Unity when “all things are gathered together in Christ, even in Him.” The prophets of old spoke of one called David who would unite all the people of God. “My servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in mine ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them” (Ezek. 37:24ff). This passage of Scripture is speaking of the Christ, the Great Shepherd, and the David of the New Testament (cf. Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16-18). Jesus, the Good Shepherd, spoke of the uniting of Jew and Gentile in one fold, the church of the New Testament (John 10:16). Jesus came to reconcile men to God, to be their Savior, to break down the barrier of sin between man and God and between man and man [Jew and Gentile] (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:14-16). The Son of God was the answer to the sin problem in man that drove him away from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Jesus came to unite us by taking away our sin.

It is the Administration of the Gospel Revealed. What had been a *mystery*, and hidden in ages past is now clearly revealed and described as the “good news” of the new covenant. (This will be more fully developed by other speakers).

The Administration of the fullness of times is the Reign of Christ the King, who is Steward and Administrator over the

kingdom of God announced by the prophets (Dan. 2:44-45; Isa. 2:2-4). It is now, during the Gospel age, when Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God reigning on the throne of David as the “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). The fullness of the times was laid out long before the apostle Paul wrote of them. The administration of Christ and the “mystery” (Eph. 1:9) of the Gospel wherein the Jews and Gentiles would be gathered into one body, the church, was in the mind of God from the beginning of the creation and hidden until the coming of the King.

It is the Administration of the Full Pardon of Sin. The Scriptures teach that it is the shedding of blood that is necessary for the forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). But not the blood of bulls and goats! (Heb. 10:4). The Administrator of the fullness of times is the answer to the problem of sin in the fullest way. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12). His blood alone was able to “purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14). His sacrifice was a one time, for all time offering! “*Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin*” (Heb. 10:18, emp. added). As Daniel prophesied of Him, “he will make an end of sins” (Dan. 9:24). His death on the cross was the satisfaction for sin. Obedience to His Will is the means by which sin is ended in the life of each man.

Why did it take so long? It is sometimes asked, “Why did God not reveal the plan of salvation many ages before He did?” Or, “Why did it take so long for Jesus to come to save man?” The delay in sending the Savior was not due to ambivalence (wanting to do so, but yet not wanting to), nor did He delay because His planning was incomplete and He was “working it out” as it was brought along in time. No, these are not accurate assessments, for His plan to redeem fallen man was “from the beginning of the world” (Eph. 3:9), and Christ, the supreme sacrifice for sin was in the plan of God “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). While not knowing all the reasons why God would unfold his scheme of redemption over a long period of time, with what seems to us at times to be quite complicated, let me offer this

suggestion: God needed to make man see his need for a Savior. This He did by the process of showing man his failures, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the terrible consequences of sin by giving to men guidance by the Law (Rom. 7:13). The Law showed man's weakness and propensity to sin (Rom. 7:7-11). It showed that sin brought death to every soul (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). Paul expressed the condemnation of man under law in these words:

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death? [The penalty for sin]. I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin. (Rom. 7:22-25)

Note: Paul is not describing himself as a Christian, but as representing those who were enslaved to the Law of Moses and under the penalty of death. Peter made clear the enslaving power of the law by saying of the converted Gentiles “Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples [Gentiles] which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10). The Law, Paul argues in Galatians, was a “schoolmaster [tutor] to bring us to Christ” (Gal. 3:19, 23, 24-25).

Thus through the ages God made the world ready for the Gospel (Mark 1:15, 38), and at the right time, “according to His good pleasure” the Son of God came “in the flesh” (John 1:14) to Administer the dispensation of the fullness of the times.

Part Two: Things Accomplished by God's Providence Preparatory to the Opening of the New Testament – “The Dispensation of the Fullness of Times”

❖ **The Nations of Daniel Two** contributed much to the fullness of times.

Babylon was the first world kingdom in Daniel's vision (2:36-45), Nebuchadnezzar took the Jews into Captivity for Seventy

Years (606-536 BC) as punishment for their sin. The **Synagogue** developed in captivity to keep their worship alive. Idolatry was abandoned by the Jews forever. **Medo-Persia** allowed the Jews to return to homeland under Cyrus the Great (536-333 BC). **Law and Order, and the Postal System** was Persia's contribution to the fullness of times. Herodotus, when he gives the ‘Postal Creed,’ is describing the Persian postal system— “These neither snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness of night prevent from accomplishing each one his appointed task, with the very utmost speed” (531). **Greece**, under Alexander the Great's influence, significantly changed the complexion of Judaism and the world (367-333 BC). Through their Hellenizing policies Greece gave to the world a **Universal Language**. The New Testament was written in the koine (common) Greek language. Koine Greek is a “dead language.” Thus the words of the New Testament do not change in meaning. It says to men today what it said to those of the first century. The Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek. **Rome** was the world kingdom in power when the Stone cut out of the mountain hit the image in the feet and the kingdom of God was established (67 BC–AD 476). Rome's contribution to the fullness of time was **Universal Peace (Pax Roma)**, though forced; it allowed the spread of the Gospel. Also, the **Roman Roads** built for quick dispersal of Roman Legions to trouble spots in the Empire allowed for quick travel of apostles and evangelists spreading the Gospel into all the world (Col. 1:23).

❖ **The “S” Words**

Scattering refers to the dispersal of the Jews among the nations by the various captivities of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks. In the New Testament a further “scattering” takes place as persecution came upon the church. These are some of the places referred to by New Testament writers who wrote to those who were “scattered abroad” (1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1; cf. Acts 2:5-11). **Samaritans** were a mixed race of people consisting of parts of the 10 Northern Tribes and Gentiles who were introduced to the land of Israel by the people moving policies of the Assyrians. The mixture of Jews and Gentiles brought about the race called “Samaritans.” The Samaritans became the enemies of the Jews

returning from Babylon and the enmity between them continued into the New Testament era. **Synagogues** were started as a place of worship and teaching after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. In the New Testament Jesus and the apostles attended and taught in the synagogues (Luke 4:16ff; Acts 13:14ff). The New Testament church is patterned after the worship of the synagogues. The **Septuagint** is the translation of Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (c. 280 BC). This was done by seventy priests in Alexandria, Egypt, and is often referred to by the Roman numerals LXX. **Sanhedrin** refers to the Supreme Court of the Jews, first mentioned specifically about 200 BC. It flourished under the Ptolemy's (Greek kings in Egypt), and wielded great power in the time of Christ. **Sects**, refers to the various religious/political parties which had developed by the time of Christ. Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, (Assassins *Sicarii*, Acts 21:38, ASV) made up the sects identified in the New Testament. The Pharisees were the most influential at the time of Christ, but the Sadducees were the wealthier and usually held the office of high priest. Other sects were the Essenes (oft times identified with the Dead Sea Scrolls) and Zadokites that arose in the period between the testaments.

❖ **Greek Philosophies and Philosophers**

These are included in this study to show that the wisdom of this world could not help the plight of fallen men, neither Jew nor Gentile, for “it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). **Epicureans** were a Greek sect who followed Epicurus (342-271 BC), who taught his followers to search for happiness through pleasure, not truth (1 Cor. 15:32); they were to pursue the experiential, not reason (Acts 17:18). **Stoics** derived their name from the *stoa* (porch) where Zeno taught (357 - 263 BC). These were severe and lofty Pantheists who reflected indifference in all circumstances (Acts 17:18). They were fatalists—what will be, will be. The **Greek Thinkers** were renowned for their wisdom. Their philosophies of life are still studied after more than 2,300 years. **Socrates** taught people to think for **themselves**. **Plato** taught people to think **beyond selves**, on a more spiritual level. He reasoned that man had an inner being, a soul, sent from “the world

soul” (place of souls). While very primitive in concept, it did get the Greek world conscious of such an idea, preparing them for full Bible revelation on the matter. **Aristotle** taught people **how** to think, **logically**. His rules of logic are still observed.

❖ **The Writings**

The Old Testament Canon closed (c. 400 BC), with Malachi being the last prophetic book written, and Nehemiah being the last historical book penned. But many, many books and writings were handed down by the Jews to guide the people. The **Apocrypha** (*apokruphos*), generally produced from second century BC to first century AD, was never a part of Old Testament canon, but some of its books are included in the Catholic Bible. It contains a wide variety of historical, geographical, moral, and chronological errors. However, the books of first and second Maccabees contain much reliable information of the period. The **Pseudepigrapha** (false writings) refer to a vast number of false and spurious writings, never considered as canonical, which represent the religious myths and lore during the inter-testament period. The **Midrash** contains doctrinal and homiletic expositions of the Old Testament written by the rabbis and brought together from the first century BC to AD 300. The **Talmud** (instruction) is the oral tradition of the Jews written approximately first century BC to fifth century AD consisting of two main divisions the **Mishnah** (repetition, teaching) and the **Gemara** (meaning to accomplish, complete, and learn). Many of these extra books became as authoritative as the law itself. “The tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3) were part of these writings that were considered even more binding than the Holy Scriptures. The **Dead Sea Scrolls** were found in AD 1947-48 in caves at Qumran, Israel by a shepherd boy. “Every book of the Old Testament is found either in manuscript, quotation, or allusion in the Qumran literature” (Pfeifer 112).

❖ **The Personalities of this Period**

Four of the World's Greatest Kings lived during this period three of which are mentioned by name in the Bible – Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus the Great, Darius the Mede, and Alexander the Great though not named is the “notable horn” of Daniel 8:5, 8. **Antiochus IV, Epiphanes** was a Grecian king who

wreaked havoc on the Jews which provoked the Maccabean uprising giving the Jews independence from Greece until the coming of the Romans who began their domination of the Jewish world in 67 BC. **The Maccabees** were a family of Jews who led a rebellion against Antiochus IV and gained independence for Jews (165-163 BC). The Feast of Dedication, (*Hanukkah*, Festival of Lights) was attended by Jesus (John 10:22). **Herod the Great**, an Idumean (descendant of the Edomites) was king of Judea when Jesus was born (37-4 BC). It was his instructions that led to the killing of the innocent babies of Bethlehem (Matt. 2). **Roman Caesars** were Augustus the emperor when Christ was born, and reigned from 23 BC-AD 14 and **Tiberias** who was Caesar when Jesus began his public ministry (Luke 3:1ff). It was in “The days of these kings” (Dan. 2:44; Luke 2:1), that God chose to establish the kingdom of God on Earth, signaling the fullness of the times.

The negative influences of Greek culture introduced to the Jews during the time of Antiochus IV turned many of the Jews away from God. The building of a gymnasium in Jerusalem where athletes performed in the nude drove a wedge between the youths and their parents and away from adherence to the Law of Moses. The priesthood became a position to be bought and sold. **Greek philosophy** had failed to give an adequate answer to life’s questions and problems. The thinking of the minds of the greatest philosophers of the Greek world could not deal with the problem of sin. **Idolatry** was the great curse of the Gentile world. The Gentiles had steeped themselves in the vilest of sins and crimes against God and humanity (Rom. 1). The Jews were equally corrupt and more to be condemned for they were God’s chosen people and had the advantage of the oracles of God (Rom 2-3). Truly, Judaism was a “dry ground” (Isa. 53:2) with little understanding of God’s kingdom or the Messiah.

Conclusion

A great many nations, kings, people, events, institutions, positives and negatives went into “the dispensation of the fullness of times.” God’s plan of redemption through the ages had been revealed little by little—“precept upon precept, precept upon

precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little there a little” (Isa. 28:10) over a course of about 4,000 years through patriarchs, prophets, priests, judges, kings, scribes, and wise men. Through visions and dreams, by types and shadows, by direct revelation of the oracles of God, the nation of Israel was taught their need of salvation and of a Savior. Both directly and providentially God had used men and nations to bring about His Divine will. He caused nations and men to rise and fall and to do His bidding (the Hebrews, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, etc.). Joseph, David, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and others were used to accomplish God’s will. All of these persons, places, things, and events combined to bring the world to the right time for the coming of the Messiah and their need for a Savior.

When Jesus came, the world had been prepared for His coming. Positively, God had revealed His coming by the prophets. The faithful remnant of the Old Testament looked for His coming. Anna and Simeon of the New Testament, along with many others were looking and longing for His coming. Negatively, the “exceeding sinfulness of sin” (Rom. 7:13) had shown the world the need for a Savior. No wise man or philosopher, Jew or Gentile, had the answer to sin and the problems it caused in the lives of men and women (Isa. 55:8-11; Jer. 10:23). The time was right for a Savior!

The world was prepared by God for the fullness of time and those who were knowledgeable of God’s will were ready and anxiously waiting His coming. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

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Biographical Sketch

Emanuel Daugherty was born at Philippi, WV, January 12, 1939. He was baptized into Christ by Miris Wright at Warren, OH, February 5, 1950. He and Judith R. Null were married July 16, 1958, and they have four children, Bruce (Gayle) who preaches at 10th & Clairmont Church of Christ in Cambridge, OH; Ramona (Stephan) Haynes, Fishinger & Kenny Church of Christ in Columbus, OH; Rachel (Maken) Cornel, Alkire Road, Grove City, OH, and Rebecca Poe, whose husband Brad preaches for the Rome Church of Christ in Proctorville, OH. Emanuel and Judy also have eight grandchildren, four boys and four girls.

Emanuel graduated the Memphis School of Preaching in 1968 and Alabama Christian School of Religion (Regions University) 1982. He has served as preacher for the Alkire Road Church of Christ in Grove City, OH (1968-1989) and the Dewey Avenue Church of Christ in St Marys, WV (1989-1994). He also served as a teacher in the Central Ohio School for Preachers and Teachers in Columbus, OH, from 1971-1980. He was the first Director of West Virginia School of Preaching and currently serves as an instructor. He has work with the school in these capacities from 1994 to the present. He holds numerous Gospel meetings and has preached in West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

Brother Daugherty recently authored, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. He currently preaches for the Salem Church of Christ in Glen Easton, WV.

Dead In Sin

Ephesians 2:1-3

Jeremy J. Main

Introduction:

The church of Christ is affectionately described by the apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians as the “glorious church” (Eph. 5:27). Perhaps the greatest appreciation for the “glorious church” of Christ may be enjoyed by those individuals who are her faithful



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members. As we examine ourselves, we remember with regret how we were once lost outside of Christ. However, it is with the greatest of thanksgiving that we praise God for life in Christ, His Son. Paul admonished the church at Ephesus to give “thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

It is no mystery to Christians that God has blessed us tremendously! As Christians, He has given us “every spiritual blessing . . . in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). He has “made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). It is in Christ that we have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). It is in Christ that we have “obtained an inheritance” (Eph. 1:11). It is no wonder that Paul praised God, saying, “to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

The Bible is clear as to the manner by which we are placed “into Christ.” Before ascending back to the Father in Heaven, Jesus left His disciples with the Great Commission. He said, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who

believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16). The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). In order to have access to every spiritual blessing, such as redemption, forgiveness, and inheritance from God, we must first be baptized into Christ.

The assigned topic for this particular lecture is titled, “Dead in Sin.” Abiding with the general theme, “The Glorious Church of the Glorious Christ,” we will examine the text:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Eph. 2:1-3)

Ephesians 2:1

Our text begins with the words, “*And you.*” Using this conjunction, Paul joined Ephesians 2:1-3 with the preceding text of Ephesians 1:22-23. He wrote concerning God the Father and His Son, “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). In his greeting and salutation to the church, Paul wrote, “To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:1). While this letter was specifically addressed to Christians at Ephesus, it is applicable to Christians everywhere.

It is important to remember that Jesus Christ is “the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18) and that there is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4). Recall that Jesus promised, “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). In the context of Matthew 18, Jesus used the singular terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably (cf. Matt. 16:18-19). Jesus fulfilled His promise on the Day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem (Matt. 16:28; Acts 2:47). Furthermore, it is

said of God, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and [conveyed] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14). Remember that the church and the kingdom are used here interchangeably. It is upon our obedience to the Gospel that the Lord adds us to the church, also described as the body and the kingdom, and washes away our sins (Acts 2:38, 47).

Our assigned text continues with the phrase, “*He made alive.*” The italic type in the text indicates that the words were not in the original manuscripts, but were supplied by the translators for the purpose of clarity. While these words are absent from the original manuscripts, they are nevertheless true, as affirmed by the Holy Scriptures. Paul later wrote that God “made us alive together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5). According to *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, this quickening refers to the “spiritual life with Christ, imparted to believers at their conversion” (503). How terribly sad it would be if the passage ended with our being left behind, dead in sin. However, we thank God that this was not the case. The conjunction “but” is very significant in the following passage:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:4-7)

Yes, we were dead in sin, but we were made alive! If it were not for the grace and mercy of God, we would be hopelessly dead in sin. However, the same God who raised Jesus from the dead has raised from spiritual those who have obeyed the Gospel (Eph. 1:20). Our focus in this particular lecture will be on our condition before God raised us up.

Before God made us alive together with Christ, we “were dead in trespasses and sins.” This vividly describes the past condition of

the Ephesians before being raised with Christ. It also describes the condition of all the faithful, prior to being baptized into Christ. While the term “dead” (Gk. *nekros*) most frequently is used of the death of the body, it may also, as used here, refer to the “actual spiritual condition of unsaved men” (Vine 148). We know that sin is the cause of spiritual death for the Scripture says, “For the wages of sin *is* death” (Rom. 6:23). The scope of sin in the lives of men is seen in the revelation, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). The severity of sin is seen in the great price of redemption. Silver or gold were not sufficient to redeem humanity from sin. The apostle Peter wrote that we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). John the Baptist would no doubt have agreed with Peter’s inspired assessment. Upon seeing Jesus, he exclaimed, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

A number of words are used in the Bible in reference to sin. In this particular text we read of two. Vine defined the first term “trespasses” (Gk. *paraptoma*) as “a deviation, from uprightness and truth” (642). Men who deviate or turn aside from the Word of God are guilty of trespasses. Isaiah prophetically wrote, “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). Jesus taught how that we ought to “forgive men their trespasses” (Matt. 6:14). He also taught that if we will not forgive men their trespasses, neither will our Father forgive our trespasses (Matt. 6:15). W. E. Vine wrote concerning the second term “sins” (Gk. *hamartia*), “It is the most comprehensive term for moral obliquity” (576). John wrote that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). Later in Ephesians 2:5, the word “trespasses” is used by itself to represent sins of all kinds. The terms “trespasses” and “sins” may be used interchangeably, as indicated by their use in the Model Prayer given by Jesus Christ (Matt. 6:14-15; Luke 11:4).

Ephesians 2:2

Verse two begins with the phrase, “*in which you once walked.*” The term “walked” (Gk. *peripateo*) is used figuratively, “signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life”

(Vine 664). It is used here to depict how the Ephesians conducted themselves in times past. Peter expressed a similar idea when he wrote concerning the lives wasted walking in sin.

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles; when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. (1 Peter 4:1-3)

How true it is even today that men spend their lifetimes living in sin. How did the saints at Ephesus, as well as saints everywhere, behave themselves before obeying the Gospel of Christ? They walked “in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). They were, in a sense, dead men walking. They were physically alive, but spiritually dead! Other such analogies exist in the Scriptures. For example, the man of John 9 was physically blind but spiritually saw Jesus as the Christ. However, the Pharisees could physically see yet they were spiritually blind (John 9:40)! Someone has rightfully said, “There are none as blind as those who will not see.” There is life in Christ. Paul admonished the church at Colosse, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6).

In times past, the Ephesians walked in trespasses and sins. They did so “according to the course of this world.” *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines the preposition, “according to” as “in conformity with” (8). The term “course” (Gk. *aion*) is here defined as “the cycle or present round of things” (Vine 134). They had chosen to walk in trespasses and sins, in conformity with the manners of the world. Paul warned the Romans, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2). In times past, the Ephesians chose to walk in sin, in conformity with the world. John also

warned, “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 John 2:15). The three basic principles of the sinful world are “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). These are the things which John warns us not to love. Sins of all kinds begin in these three principles.

The passage continues by giving us the person to whom the Ephesians conformed. They walked in sins “according to the prince of the power of the air.” It is obvious that the “prince” of this verse refers to Satan. The term “prince” (Gk. *archon*) denotes “a ruler” (Vine 487). Satan was called “the ruler of the demons” (Mark 3:22). Jesus described him as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul refers to him as “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). When Satan tempted Jesus, he claimed rule over the world (Matt. 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-7).

Literally, the word “air” (Gk. *aer*) is defined as “the atmosphere” (Vine 21). In this text, the term “air” refers to that “sphere in which the inhabitants of the world live and which, through the rebellious and godless condition of humanity, constitutes the seat of his authority” (487). For example, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter urged the Jews, “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40). Paul urged others to be “children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” (Philip. 2:15). Those who submitted to the Gospel, were forgiven of their sins and added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:38, 47). Paul wrote, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and [conveyed] *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13).

Paul finished the passage, “the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” Satan is described as “the spirit” and not as a depersonalized force. The word “works” (Gk. *energeo*) means “to be active, operative” (Vine 684). Notice how all of the following verses give examples of the working of the devil:

“Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve” (Luke 22:3).

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat’” (Luke 22:31).

“And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him” (John 13:2).

“Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly’” (John 13:27).

“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?’” (Acts 5:3).

The devil did not force Judas, Simon, or Ananias to sin against God. However, he did place before them the temptation to which they finally yielded. Of the three examples, only Peter chose to repent of his sins. Instead of repenting, the guilt stricken Judas “went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5). Rather than repenting of lying, Ananias and his wife chose to continue the lie (Acts 5:1ff). Peter later wrote concerning the active working of Satan today when he said, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). Peter urges his readers to be sober and vigilant because of the devil. He described him as one actively seeking victims to catch and consume! However, it is with a sense of relief that we also learn from the passage that we are capable of resisting him.

The workplace of Satan is said to be in the “sons of disobedience.” The word “sons” is used metaphorically to describe those who manifest a particular character. In this case, it is the character of disobedience. The word “disobedience” (Gk. *apeitheia*) literally refers to “the condition of being unpersuadable” and denotes “obstinate rejection of the will of God” (Vine 173). It

is from the Greek term “*apeitheia*” that we get our word “apathy.” While it is the case that honest hearts may be persuaded by the clear presentation of the Gospel, it is also the case that some will not be persuaded (e.g. Acts 17:2-5).

Paul used the phrase “sons of disobedience” two additional times, each time listing a number of sins. The first of these similar accounts is found later in the epistle to the Ephesians.

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Eph. 5:1-6)

Notice how Paul urges them to be “imitators” or followers of God as dear children. Rather than follow Satan, imitate God. He further urges them to “walk in love.” The second of these accounts is found in the epistle to the Colossians.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. (Col. 3:1-7)

In both accounts, Paul warns the brethren, “Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.” We must be careful not to permit the devil to rule in our lives.

Ephesians 2:3

Verse three begins with the words, “among whom also we all once conducted ourselves.” Notice that Paul changed the pronoun from “you” to “we.” By doing so, he no doubt included himself. Further, Paul included both the Jews and the Gentiles by writing, “we all.” The term “once conducted ourselves” (Gk. *anastrepho*) indicates “one’s manner of life and character” (Vine 58). Yes, it was true that Ephesians once conducted themselves among the “sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). However, the same may be said of “all” of us in times past.

Paul continued by writing that we all once conducted ourselves “in the lusts of our flesh.” As already mentioned, the “lust of the flesh” is one of three basic principles of the sinful world (1 John 2:16). In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak” (Matt. 26:41). The Greek term for “lusts” (Gk. *epithumia*) denotes “strong desire” of any kind (Vine 384). In this context, it is lust, the “desire for what is forbidden” (Thayer 238). Paul wrote to the Galatians, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). He then proceeded to list seventeen works of the flesh:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

Paul concluded the list with the words, “and the like” indicating that the list was not intended to be exhaustive. Notice that Paul

here also lists the consequence of a failed inheritance. John wrote, he who overcomes shall “inherit all things” (Rev. 21:7). However, he who is overcome himself will have part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

Paul continued by writing how we were all once guilty of “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” The word “desires” (Gk. *thelema*) denotes “a will, that which is willed” (Vine 161-62). These things occurred according to our own choosing and determination. The word “mind” (Gk. *dianoia*) literally means, “a thinking through, or over, a meditation, reflecting” (408). Here it is used “with an evil significance, a consciousness characterized by a perverted moral impulse” (408). We were guilty of making “provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14). Rather than doing the will of God, we took special thought as to how to fulfill the will of the flesh. Consider how Eve rationalized her disobedience (Gen. 3:6).

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, in that we all once carried out the will of the flesh, living according to our own fleshly appetites and desires. There are consequences to living in such a way. Paul applied a spiritual lesson to a natural law. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:7-8). Some incorrectly think that they can escape this law of sowing and reaping. Someone has said, “People sow to the flesh, all the while praying for crop failure.” We have already seen how Paul warned the Christians at Galatia, Colosse, and Ephesus regarding living for the will of the flesh.

Paul concluded our assigned text with the words, “*and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*” The term “nature” here refers to our condition before we were converted. We were “dead in trespasses and sins.” It was by our own volition that we gave in to temptation, practiced sin, and as a result died spiritually. “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives

birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:13-15). We thus have no excuse for yielding to sin. We were not “born in sin” as some wrongfully teach (cf. John 9:44). Sin is not a matter of inheritance. The Bible teaches that the son does not inherit the iniquity of the father. Ezekiel wrote, “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). Paul informed the saints at Ephesus that they were dead through their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). In addition, while Satan is working today in the hearts of men, he cannot force us to sin. However, he can place the temptation in front of us. Concerning Satan, Paul wrote, “for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). Again, we see that it is our own responsibility.

Conclusion

Prior to obeying the Gospel, we were spiritually dead in sin. Truly the wrath of God is against sin as it always has been. It is an abomination in His sight. However, His love toward us is most beautiful! “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10). There are tremendous blessings in Christ Jesus. Those who hear, believe, repent, confess, and are baptized into Christ, God raises from spiritual death.

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Biographical Sketch

Jeremy J. Main, son of Garry and Debora, was born August 4, 1978, in Morgantown, WV. He grew up in the village of Pine Bank, PA, and was later baptized into Christ on March 26, 1998, at New Freeport, PA. Sand Hill later became his home congregation.

He received his public education in southwestern Pennsylvania. He graduated from West Greene High School and later earned a B.S. from Waynesburg College in 2002. While at college, he had the honor of baptizing his future wife at Hundred, WV.

After college, he moved to Moundsville to enroll in the West Virginia School of Preaching. While in school, he preached for congregations located in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. Before graduating, he married Karen Montgomery, July 10, 2004.

Following graduation in January of 2005, the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ invited him and his wife to work with them. He continues to labor as the associate minister alongside Frank Higginbotham.

The Spirit's Plan For Unity

Ephesians 4:4-6

Winford Claiborne

Introduction

When I was a student at Harding Graduate School of Religion, one of the texts we used was George Eldon Ladd's book, *A Theology of the New Testament*. Dr. Ladd makes two statements that should challenge our thinking on Christian unity. "The idea of denominations would be abhorrent to Paul. The nearest thing to denominations" were the sectarian groups "in Corinth that Paul heartily condemned" (531). If Paul, an inspired apostle, would have found the idea of denominations abhorrent, what should be the attitude of Christians in every generation? If Paul condemned the nearest thing to denominations—the sectarian spirit at Corinth—how can we endorse denominationalism or be members of a denomination? In their book, *The Jesus Proposal: A Theological Framework for Maintaining the Unity of the Body of Christ*, Rubel Shelly and John O. York accuse writers among churches of Christ of failing to make a "distinction between denominationalism and sectarianism." They argue that "denominations are not sinful *per se*. More than that, they are surely inevitable and potentially valuable" (63).

Sectarianism may not involve denominationalism, but denominationalism *is* sectarianism. Many of the Christians at Corinth had a sectarian spirit. They were saying: "Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:10). This verse literally reads: "I belong to Paul; I belong to Apollos; I belong to Cephas; and I belong to Christ." The Corinthians were not members of a denomination, since no denomination existed back then, but they were sectarians. Were the divisions at Corinth "inevitable and potentially valuable?" The Holy Spirit guided Paul to write concerning the divisions that existed at Corinth: "For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and

divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men” (1 Cor. 3:3)? Did not Rubel Shelly and John York remember Paul’s statement to the Roman Christians: “For to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6)? If denominationalism is “inevitable and potentially valuable,” why did not the Lord make arrangements for denominationalism instead of praying for unity among his followers?

Christ’s Prayer for Unity

The apostle John records our Lord’s high priestly prayer. Christ prayed: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me” (John 17:20-21). Christ’s prayer for unity was not for a generic kind of unity, such as, “We will just agree to disagree, but we will still be brothers and sisters in Christ.” It was to be the unity that Jesus Christ and God the Father enjoyed. Jesus knew that “envying, strife and divisions” would serve as a barrier to men’s obeying the Gospel. He wanted His followers to be one so that the world might believe that God had sent Him.

The Spirit’s Plea for Unity

The divisions at Corinth led Paul to ask three questions: “Is Christ divided?” If Christ is not divided, how can His body be divided? “Was Paul crucified for you?” Do we not belong to the One who was crucified for us? “What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). “Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Should we not wear the name of the one in whose name we were baptized? We were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). We should wear Christ’s name and not the name of Martin Luther or of Alexander Campbell or of any other man. Incidentally, Martin Luther urged his followers to call themselves Christians, not Lutherans.

Paul begged the Corinthians “in the name of the Lord Jesus” to “speak the same things” (1 Cor. 1:10). If divisions are “inevitable and potentially valuable,” what difference does it make whether we speak the same things? If it is inevitable that divisions exist, is not the Holy Spirit’s advice about speaking the same things misplaced? But if we speak only as the oracles (or words) of God (1 Peter 4:11), can we not speak the same things? Paul specifically pled with the Corinthians that there would be no divisions among them. The very term, “denominationalism,” means division. How can divisions be “potentially valuable” when the Holy Spirit strongly condemns such divisions (1 Cor. 3:1-3)? Paul urges the Corinthians to “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same spirit.” It is not possible to find justification for sectarianism or denominationalism in this or in any other verse in the New Testament.

The Spirit’s Plan for Unity

We do not know the condition of the church in Ephesus at the time Paul wrote his letter to that church. Was it divided, like the church at Corinth, or was the Holy Spirit’s plan for unity simply a preventive measure? This we do know: Every church that would have God’s approval must pay close attention to the divinely revealed plan for unity. All Christians must endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). The word “endeavor” (*spoudazo*) means to labor, to give diligence, to be eager, to make maximum effort. We must pray for unity, just as Christ did (John 17:20-21), but prayer is not adequate. We must expend maximum energy to keep the unity the Spirit provides. The tense of the verb “endeavor” demands that we keep on making maximum effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. Let us now examine the seven “ones” of Ephesians 4.

There is one body. Every person who has made any effort to read and to understand the Scriptures experiences difficulties with some passages. There are words and phrases that have been the source of controversy for hundreds of years. Daniel 9:24-27 has almost as many interpretations as there are interpreters. But how can anyone have problems with the word “one?” The word

excludes three hundred or ten or even two bodies that claim to be the body of Christ. How many of the religious bodies that claim to belong to the Lord actually follow the divine pattern as revealed in the Bible? If two bodies are “inevitable and potentially valuable,” could the same be said for fifty or five hundred bodies? What would unity mean under these circumstances?

We know the word “body” refers to the church of the living God. Paul informed the Ephesians that God “had put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head of all things to the church, which is the body of Christ, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Paul emphasized the same truth in his letter to the church of our Lord at Colosse. “And he is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). But could not the word body of Christ include the various denominations in our land? It could not if Paul meant what he wrote to the church at Corinth. Paul compared the body of Christ to the human body. “For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). After speaking of the different organs in the human body (the foot, the hand, the ear and the eye) Paul concludes: “But now are there many members, but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20). And did Jesus promise to build His church or His churches (Matt. 16:18)?

There is one Spirit. There is great controversy regarding the work of the Holy Spirit, but very few people with whom I am acquainted believe there are many Holy Spirits. The Oneness Pentecostals deny the existence of the Trinity. According to Dr. Gregory Boyd’s book, *Oneness Pentecostals & the Trinity*, Oneness Pentecostals believe that the names: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit “are only different roles that one divine person temporarily assumes” (9). Dr. Boyd affirms: “Whereas other antitrinitarian groups (such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, members of the Armstrong sect and The Way International) reject the Trinity by denying that Jesus Christ is equal to the Father, Oneness Pentecostals reject the Trinity by denying that Jesus Christ is in any sense *distinct* from the Father” (11). Incidentally, Dr. Boyd was once a member of United Pentecostal Church International (12-13).

Immediately prior to our Lord’s ascension to the Father, He promised His apostles that He would send them another Comforter. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me: and you also shall bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27). Is it legitimate to argue: Christ, one person, promised He would send the Spirit, another person, from the Father, still another person? If that is not what John meant, his words are puzzling to say the least. These are not the only verses that stress the personhood of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Islam teaches that Mohammad is the Comforter Jesus promised. Obviously, there are some real problems with that view. Jesus called the Holy Spirit “another Comforter” (John 14:16). The word “another” comes from the Greek *allos* and means another of the same kind. Is anyone so naïve that he believes Jesus and Mohammad are of the same kind? For example, after speaking of the coming of another Comforter, Christ assured His disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:26-27). If the Comforter were Mohammad, he did not learn the lesson of peace. Mohammad was not only a violent and immoral man; he also taught his disciples to be violent. Islam has been responsible for the deaths of countless millions of people, including 3,000 innocent people on 9/11.

While many in the denominational world believe there is one Holy Spirit, they have warped views of His influence in the lives of human beings. Many denominational people believe they receive the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. If anyone doubts the truthfulness of that statement, he has not been listening to Benny Hinn or Kenneth Copeland and other television evangelists. Hinn tells of attending a meeting in Toronto during which “The Holy Spirit entered my room. He was as real to me that morning as the book you are holding in your hand is to you. . . . Tears of wonder and joy coursed down my cheeks and I opened the Scriptures and He gave me the answer to my questions” (1). If the Holy Spirit came into Benny Hinn’s room and gave him answers to

his questions, I have difficulty understanding the need for the Scriptures.

Others believe the Holy Spirit guides them separate and apart from the word of God. If the Holy Spirit gave us the Word, why does he need to speak outside His Word? Is not the Bible the Word of the Spirit? Paul writes about “the things of God.” He insists that God has revealed those things to us by His Spirit. “Which things we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:10, 13). Did not the Holy Spirit reveal what all men need to know to become Christians and to live as Christians? Paul teaches that the Scriptures can make a man “perfect” (or complete) and “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If the Scriptures make a man complete, what else could he possibly need to please God?

There is one hope of our calling. In this passage, Paul does not identify the “hope of our calling.” But there is absolutely no doubt about the Bible’s teaching on that topic. Paul assured the Romans: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). The same apostle told the Thessalonians: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thes. 4:16-18). If we did not have this hope, how could we face the heartaches and sorrows of this world? Since my Molly died in 2002, I have said: “If I did not believe I would see her again, I do not know how I could handle her death.” God Himself has given us this promise: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4). How unspeakably tragic to live without this hope!

There is one Lord. Paul knew the situation that prevailed in many of the ancient cities. He tells the Corinthians: “For though

there be who are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many and lords many), but there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him; and one Lord Jesus, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Cor. 8:5-6). The word *kurios* is translated “lord.” The word appears 749 times in the Greek New Testament, although the word does not always refer to Christ. For example, the word is translated “masters” in Ephesians 6:5 and in Colossians 4:1. In those verses, the word refers to men who own slaves.

The word “Lord” means one who is an absolute owner. Thayer defines the Greek: “he to whom a person or a thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding . . .” (365), then lists as synonyms: “. . . sovereign, prince, chief . . .” (365). The word almost always applies to Christ in the New Testament, but it was used many times of God in the Old Testament. In the book of Psalms, God Himself said concerning Jesus: “And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands” (Heb. 1:10). If God Himself calls Jesus “Lord,” how can finite and sinful people doubt his Lordship?

Have you ever noticed how many times the words “Lord” and “do” are connected? In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples: “Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). On another occasion, Christ asked his disciples: “Why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say unto you” (Luke 6:46)? Is there any possibility of harmonizing these words from the Sermon on the Mount and from the Sermon on the Plains with the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone? Calvinists must believe there is no possibility of doing so. In their books on salvation, conversion, grace and faith, they deliberately ignore virtually all passages that demand obedience. I shall take time to give you just one example. The late Dr. James Montgomery Boice was one of America’s most influential evangelical scholars. In his book, *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel*, Dr. Boice never even mentions Matthew 7:21, Luke 6:46, Romans 6:17-18, Hebrews 5:8-9 or any other passage that demands

obedience. The word “obedience” does not even appear in his general index. Is that an inadvertent oversight? I have serious doubts that it is.

When Christ met Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, he asked: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Saul responded: “Who art thou, Lord?” Christ responded: “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.” Saul asked: “Lord, what will you have me to do?” Christ instructed Saul: “Arise, and go into the city, and there it will be told you what you must do” (Acts 9:4-6). We must not overlook the two little words “must” and “do.” When Ananias, the heaven-sent preacher, approached Saul, he did not encourage him to believe or to repent. It is evident from the context that Saul was a penitent believer. Ananias commanded: “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Did Saul believe Jesus was Lord? Did he believe he had to do whatever the Lord commanded? What other conclusion can we reach by examining the biblical account?

There is one faith. The Bible uses the word “faith” in two different ways. It speaks of an individual’s faith in God and in His word. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Heb. 11:8). Over and over, the book of Hebrews uses the expression, “by faith” (*pistei*). The expression refers to the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others (Heb. 11:4-39). Incidentally, it is significant that all of these great heroes of faith obeyed the Lord’s commands. “By faith Abel offered” (Heb. 11:4). “By faith Noah...moved with fear, prepared an ark” (Heb. 11:7). “By faith Abraham...obeyed” (Heb. 11:8).

The New Testament often uses the term, “the faith.” The inspired writers were not speaking of anyone’s personal faith, but the system of faith as revealed in the Word of God. James pled with his readers: “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons” (James 2:1). In his letters to Timothy, Paul often used the expression, “the faith.” He called Timothy “my own son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2). He gave as one qualification of deacons men who hold “the mystery of

the faith in a pure conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9). He predicted that some would “depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). He accused men who failed to provide for their households of having denied the faith (1 Tim. 5:8). Jude urged his readers to “contend earnestly for the faith” (3).

The book of Galatians does not use the term, “the faith,” in the following passage, but there is no doubt the apostle Paul is speaking of the body of faith he calls the Gospel. “But though we or angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9). Modern pluralism cannot be harmonized with the one faith of Ephesians 4.

There is one baptism. If baptism is not essential to our salvation, what difference does it make whether there is one baptism or there are a dozen baptisms? The Pentecostals and others believe we must receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If that were true, baptism in water would not be a part of God’s plan for saving man. The apostle Peter asked at the house of Cornelius: “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:47-48). In addition, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized the eunuch (Acts 8:38). Holy Spirit baptism inaugurated both Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom of God, but it is no longer available to anyone.

The Word of God teaches very plainly that we are baptized to have the remission of alien sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism puts us in contact with the blood of Christ. “Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:3-5). Paul further

explains the significance of men's obedience to the Gospel. "But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18).

Acts 18 records Paul's visit to the Jewish synagogue at Corinth. "He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:4-5). What occurred in Corinth as a result of Paul's preaching? "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Were the Corinthians forgiven of their sins? They were if Jesus meant what He taught in the Great Commission (Mark 16:16). Did their baptism put them in the church of the living God? "For by one Spirit are we all [Paul included] baptized into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Atheists, agnostics, secular humanists and other unbelievers deny the existence of God. The humanist bible, *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, edited by Paul Kurtz, presents the following views about deity:

Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existent and not created. . . . We are convinced that time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of "new thought. . ." As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in a prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith. . . . But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. . . . No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. (8, 13, 16)

What could be more foolish than rejecting the existence of God? The Psalmist declared: "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). That probably is not what the Psalmist meant. The expression, "there is," does not appear in the original Hebrew. There probably were no atheists at the time Psalm 14 was written. The fool probably said: "I will have no God." The fools of the Psalmist's generation were probably like the ones Paul described in the Roman letter.

When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image make like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. (Rom. 1:21-23)

Paul further explains: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things that are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). Many people, like Aldous Huxley, choose not to believe in God because believing in Him would interfere with their sexual behavior.

Muslims believe in one god, but he is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle John affirms: "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). Allah does not love unbelievers or apostates. The god of Islam predetermines who will be saved and who will be lost, somewhat like the god of Calvinism. According to the Qur'an, Muslims are to fight against those who do not accept Islam. And the only people who can know for sure they are going to be saved are those who die in jihad.

Conclusion

What could possibly be more reassuring and comforting than these words from the very lips of the Son of God? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For

God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). If you are not a Christian, will you not confess your faith in Christ, repent of your alien sins and be baptized this very day for the remission of your sins?

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The History Of The Church At Ephesus

Charles J. Aebi

I appreciate very much the opportunity to work with the West Virginia School of Preaching. I am grateful for the invitation to have a part in the West Virginia School of Preaching lectures and to address the subject of “*The History of the Church at Ephesus*” in the New Testament.



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We learn how best to deal with church problems, to grow and work as a congregation, and other things about church activities by studying New Testament churches. We know more about the church at Ephesus than we do about many others because we have information concerning the Ephesian church from Acts 18-20, from Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and to Timothy, and from the letter Jesus dictated to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:1-7.

The City Itself

Ephesus was a very important city in Asia Minor (now Turkey): “This great city was one of the three major cities of the eastern Mediterranean (the other two were Syrian Antioch and Alexandria, Egypt). It had become an important commercial center, since caravan routes from the east converged there, while it was from there that shipping lanes to the west originated” (Rasmussen 184-85). It was a notable city commercially, politically, and religiously.

The commercial importance of Ephesus was as a seaport three-four miles inland from the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the Cayster River and as a city at the junction of three roads from the Euphrates River Valley, the Maeander River Valley, and from Galatia. Because of these roads and of “an artificial harbor accessible to the largest ships. . .Ephesus was the most easily accessible city in Asia, both by land and sea” (Banks 961). A channel was dug from the Cayster River to an artificial harbor built on the northwest side of the city (Liefeld 1789); the harbor and ship channel were maintained by aid from Rome and later silted up and were unusable.

Its political importance is seen in the fact that the Greeks and Persians fought over it until Alexander the Great finally made it a Greek city. In 133 BC it became a Roman city. Green says,

Ephesus continued to be the most important city [in the Roman province of Asia]. It occupied a vast area, and its population has been calculated at one-third of a million. The fine theatre built into Mt. Pion in the centre of the city is enormous. Estimates of its capacity vary between 25,000 and 50,000. (380)

Rasmussen (185), Gardner (195) and others say the theater held 24,000. Ephesus was a free city, a Roman judiciary center, and the site of the PanIonian Games that ranked with the Olympics. “The Roman governor resided there and for all practical purposes Ephesus became the capital of Asia, though it is a question whether the capital was officially transferred there in New Testament times” (Pfeiffer 229).

Its religious importance was considerable before Christ was preached there. “Besides being an important transportation hub, Ephesus contained the temple of the fertility goddess Artemis (called Diana by the Romans), which was so large and so magnificent that it was considered one of the wonders of the ancient world” (Rasmussen 185). The old temple of Artemis was burned in 356 BC, and “The rebuilt temple was the largest

structure in the Hellenistic world and the first of such monumental proportions to be built entirely of marble” (Yamauchi 102-03). Artemis-worship included shouting, wailing, flute playing, hysterical frenzy, incense-burning, mutilation, and even prostitution (a facet of idol worship in many places). The Temple of Diana (Gr: *Artemis*) also served as a bank of the East, the headquarters for the “Ephesian Letters” (healing & miracle charms), and as a refuge for criminals who were given asylum or sanctuary in the temple precincts. Roper believes the magic books burned by Christians at Ephesus had a connection with “the Ephesian Letters” (184-185). He says that “Artemis was worshiped as the mother goddess around the world (v. 27). Over thirty different locations that worshiped Artemis have been discovered. However, the center of devotion to her was Ephesus” (197).

In addition to Artemis, there may have been a cult dedicated to emperor worship. Of “the officials of Asia” in Acts 19:31, Thompson writes, “These Asiarchs, or high priests of Asia, were the heads of the provincial cult of ‘Rome and Emperor.’ Augustus permitted Ephesus, among others, to dedicate a sacred area to Rome and the Caesar” (402).

Of importance to the founding of the church at Ephesus was a Jewish synagogue that allowed Paul to preach there for three months (Acts 19:8), probably the same synagogue that earlier had welcomed the preaching of Apollos (Acts 18:26) and had wanted Paul to stay and teach them (Acts 18:19-21). Green says, citing Josephus, “There was a large colony of Jews at Ephesus, and they enjoyed a privileged position under the early empire (Jos., *Ant.* xiv. 10. 12, 25)” (381).

The character of Ephesians was bad; criminals had safety in the temple area; immorality was a part of their temple worship. They were superstitious: the “Ephesian Letters” involved their belief in spirits and in magic charms and incantations as religious devices. They were notoriously fickle. Heraclitus, the philosopher from Ephesus, is reported to have said that their morals were worse than those of stray dogs and they were fit only to be drowned. This probably could have been said of Corinth as well.

The Beginning of the Church at Ephesus

When was the church at Ephesus founded, and by whom? Some would answer this question by noting that Paul must have begun the church there when he baptized or had someone baptize into Christ (in the name of Christ) twelve men who had been baptized improperly with John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7). However, we must look at some earlier Scriptures and ask ourselves some questions. How many Christians does it take to make a church? Jesus had said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20, NKJV). True, this was said in the context of church discipline, but the principle must be true of the church in other situations as well, must it not? This being the case, when Paul left Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus (Acts 18:19), he left a nucleus who, until more converts could be won, made up a church or congregation. It makes sense to think that Paul, leaving but planning to return to the city, had his two fellow-workers in both teaching others and in tentmaking stay in this city and lay more groundwork for the Gospel to be spread when he returned. Paul was not jealous of others in the Gospel's progress; he would not care who was given credit for starting that new church, but only that it resulted in the Gospel being spread throughout Asia, as it was through the continued efforts of Paul and those with him (Acts 19:10). At Corinth he had turned the matter of baptizing penitent believers over to others (1 Cor. 1:14-16) who had baptized many Corinthians (Acts 18:8); he did not even remember for certain how many he himself had immersed. Therefore he brought two of his co-workers with him to Ephesus to begin the church, and they seemed to be still there and the church was meeting in their house when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 16:19: "Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." And Paul may have been able to persuade a few to obey the Gospel during his first episode of teaching on one Sabbath day at Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21).

The work of Aquila and Priscilla included their influence on another man who had a part in the early history of the church at

Ephesus. Acts 18:24-28 tells us that an eloquent Alexandrian Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus and preached for a time in the synagogue. He taught accurately about Jesus, but he did not know about the baptism commanded in the great commission and first practiced on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2. He baptized his converts with the only baptism he knew—the baptism of John—until Aquila and Priscilla, who had accompanied Paul to Ephesus and remained there, taught him the way of the Lord more accurately. They had heard him preach his incomplete version of the Gospel in the synagogue, to which they may have gone to find prospects for conversion, and they took him aside, perhaps to their home, and privately corrected his error. Apollos, though eloquent and evidently well educated in Scripture (mostly the Old Testament at that time), received their correction well. Their method of privately teaching him more accurately resulted in his complete conversion and avoided controversy that might have erupted had Aquila attempted to challenge his error publicly. Public debate has its place, but it is not always the best way.

Three questions arise which the text of Acts does not answer. One is when Apollos had learned of and accepted John's baptism—before or after Pentecost. Another question is whether Apollos upon learning the way of the Lord more accurately was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, as were the twelve men Paul taught in Acts 19. The answer may depend on whether any of those baptized before Pentecost needed to be baptized again, or rebaptized. My understanding of this issue is the same as that stated by David Roper (164), Bill Jackson (189-90), and J. W. McGarvey (*New* 152), which is that those who were baptized with John's baptism before the day of Pentecost did not need to be rebaptized. As Jackson says, "There is nothing to indicate that the disciples of the Lord throughout the ministries of John and Jesus, including the apostles of the Lord, had to be re-baptized in Acts 2. These were not those addressed in Acts 2:36 as being the sinful ones who crucified the Christ!" (190). In his 1863 commentary, McGarvey wrote of Apollos, "There is no evidence whatever that he was re-immersed" (232). Several reasons exist for this conclusion: (1.) the

apostles had submitted to John's baptism and had themselves baptized others by it, and neither they nor the 120 of Acts 1 were said to have been rebaptized; if they had been, some would have had to baptize each other! (2.) The 3,000 baptized in Acts 2 were added to the already-existing body of believers to make up the church; in the language of 1 Corinthians 12:18, 28, the Lord had "set them in the church" when He established it on Pentecost. (3.) The term "brethren" generally is used of Christians, and Paul names as "brethren" in 1 Corinthians 15:6 over 500 who had seen the resurrected Jesus; nothing is said of their having been rebaptized. Those who think they were re-baptized have to assume without evidence that it is so.

Not everyone agrees with this conclusion. Reese asks, ". . . [W]ho can doubt that Apollos was baptized into Christ, just as are the followers of the Baptist whom Paul teaches, as recorded in Acts 19:5?" (662). Coffman says, "Strong agreement is felt with Harrison who said, 'Quite likely, Apollos was now baptized by Aquila in the name of Christ'" (357). Yet on the rebaptism of the twelve in Acts 19 Coffman writes, "John's baptism lasted only until Pentecost; but the persons who had submitted to it while it was in force were not required to be rebaptized, hence the conclusion that the disciples here were baptized unto John's baptism at a time when it was no longer valid" (362).

A third question is whether Apollos remained in Ephesus long enough to correct the error he had made regarding baptism. Roper says, "He was probably back in the synagogue the next Sabbath, confessing that he had been wrong on several key points, then boldly proclaiming the new truths he had learned" (165). If so, we are not told; and if so, we wonder why the twelve men Paul found in Acts 19:1-7 did not hear him and accept baptism in the name of Jesus. Perhaps those twelve did not hear Apollos' new preaching if he did it.

The work of Aquila and Priscilla in getting the church started in Ephesus seems also to be confirmed by the statement that when Apollos desired to go to Corinth (in Achaia), ". . . the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him. . ." (Acts 18:27).

"The brethren" here is overlooked by many commentators, but it sounds like a reference to the church here as it does elsewhere (as in Acts 9:30; 10:23; 11:12, 29; 12:17; 14:2; 15:1, 32-33, 40; 16:2; and other places). Of course, it is true that Jews sometimes addressed other Jews as "brethren," but it does not seem likely that a letter would be sent by a synagogue or group of unconverted Jews commending Apollos to preach to the Corinthian church that was being persecuted by Jews (Acts 18:12-17). "The brethren" in Acts 18:27 sounds like the Lord's church at Ephesus. "The term 'brethren' indicates that a congregation had been established in Ephesus. 'The brethren' would have included Aquila and Priscilla, as well as any converted by them or by Paul on his brief visit" (Roper 165).

Paul's Preaching at Ephesus

The history of the church at Ephesus begins with Paul's preaching there in Acts 18:19-21 when he reasoned with Jews in a synagogue for a short time and was invited by them to stay longer, but refused and set sail for Caesarea, promising to return to them if God so willed. God did so will and Paul returned, but not before some other preaching had been done by Apollos and some teaching by Priscilla and Aquila. It is, of course, possible that Paul's initial teaching the first time he was in Ephesus had converted some to add together with Aquila and Priscilla, but this is not stated in the text of Acts.

While the church at Ephesus may have been started by Aquila and Priscilla and strengthened by Apollos, it was the preaching of Paul over a three-year period that made it a strong church. In Acts 19:1-7 we have a record of Paul beginning his work at Ephesus on his third missionary tour. He found there twelve disciples of John or of Apollos or of Jesus, but men who, like Apollos, knew only the baptism of John. McGarvey, in his 1863 commentary, argues that they were disciples of Jesus because "disciple" is so used throughout Acts and because they had "believed" (233). If Apollos had baptized them and later learned the Lord's way more accurately, he had not corrected the error he had made with them.

Paul quickly perceived a problem and diagnosed it just as quickly with two questions about their conversion. The gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism had been promised by Peter in Acts 2:38; Paul asks if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed (using believe as a synecdoche for obey the Gospel, one part for the whole—for faith, repentance, confession, and baptism). Their answer that they didn't know of the Spirit or of His being given prompted the next question, "Into what then were you baptized?" Their answer, "Into John's baptism" showed their status of partial obedience. They had believed in Jesus as the Christ and had repented of their sins, both of which were required by John's baptism of repentance, but they needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul was able to persuade them to be baptized as commanded by Jesus, after which he, being an apostle, gave them miraculous Holy Spirit power by laying his hands on them.

The difference between Christ's and John's baptisms was no greater than the difference between Christ's and most denominational baptisms. Christ's baptism is (1.) in His name or in the name of the Godhead; (2.) it is immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins; (3.) it is accompanied by faith in Christ, repentance of sins, and confession of faith in Christ; and (4.) it confers the gift of [the indwelling of] the Holy Spirit and leads to the Lord adding the baptized one to His church (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-41, 47; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21).

Most sectarian baptisms are not for (unto) the forgiveness of sins and are in the name of (by the authority of) some church leader or group of church leaders in a synod or assembly. Many are not immersion but sprinkling or pouring, often done on infants who cannot believe and have no sins of which to repent. These and other differences are each one enough to require those who have been thus "baptized" (but just got wet) to be baptized in the name of (by the authority of) Christ. With John's disciples we may say it was re-baptism because both baptisms were authorized by God, though for different time periods. With sectarian baptism it is not re-baptism that is needed so much as it is just the baptism

authorized by Christ, for, as Jackson says, "Technically, one having sectarian baptism has not been baptized, not according to the New Testament. The record in Acts 19 supports this truth: Those whose response to God has been defective in any way must make it right!" (190). Roper observes:

The Bible says nothing of "re-baptism." If one has been scripturally immersed, he has been baptized. He has received the forgiveness of his sins, has been added by the Lord to His church, and never needs to repeat that act. On the other hand, though one may have gone through a form *called* baptism, if the ritual did not conform to the New Testament pattern, *he has not been baptized*; he has simply gotten wet. That individual needs to be baptized—for the first and only time. (178)

This beginning of Paul's three years of preaching at Ephesus was in the synagogue, or in *a* synagogue if there were two or more in the city. He continued to preach in the synagogue for three months, converting people to the Way, until some disobedient or unbelieving Jews spoke evil of Christ's way (Acts 19:8-9). Then Paul took the disciples and went to the school of Tyrannus (location in Ephesus unknown), where he was able to teach daily for two years, with great results—"all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:9-10). Paul's life must have been hectic during those two years, for in Acts 20 he reminded the Ephesian elders that he had taught them both publicly and from house to house (20:20) during both day and night (20:31), and had worked with his own hands to support himself and his co-workers (20:34). Probably he worked at tent making with Priscilla and Aquila just as he had at Corinth.

How could all Asia have heard the Word in this three-year period? Paul was preaching and teaching publicly and privately, and he had helpers. He had brought Timothy and Titus with him, and Aquila and Priscilla were there. Erastus and Timothy helped Paul (Acts 19:22), and Sosthenes joined Paul in writing to Corinth

(1 Cor. 1:1). Gaius and Aristarchus were Paul's travel companions (Acts 19:29). No doubt others not named assisted in teaching and preaching. The seven churches in Asia named in Revelation 2-3 and other churches there (like Hierapolis and Colossae, Col. 4:13) probably were started during this period. Many think the letter to the Ephesians was a circular letter intended for several churches in the Ephesus area; if so, these churches likely were started then. Paul chose the main city of the area, Ephesus, as his base of operations. From there he could send out Timothy, Titus, Erastus, Gaius, Aristarchus, Sosthenes, and others to various places in the Roman province of Asia to preach, and they might arrange for Paul himself to go to some of those places for what we call "Gospel meetings." They could also arrange for some of the leaders in those churches to come to the school of Tyrannus on occasions for special workshops conducted by Paul and his associates, thereby training their converts to teach others. All of this activity so saturated the area with Gospel teaching that Paul could say only a few months after he left Ephesus "that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). Not all had obeyed the Gospel, but all Asia had heard it. We could do no better than make this a model for our preaching today.

Results of Paul's Work at Ephesus

The New Testament was still being written when Paul preached at Ephesus (in fact, he wrote 1 Corinthians while there), so he often could not cite a written "Thus saith the Lord" to substantiate his teaching. Therefore, it was necessary that God confirm Paul's word as God's Word by miracles, some of them unusual (Acts 19:11-12). Some traveling Jewish exorcists tried to imitate Paul's casting out of evil spirits, but with drastic results when the man in whom the evil spirit was attacked two of the seven sons of Sceva and sent them fleeing, naked and wounded. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you," the evil spirit demanded (Acts 19:15).

The Christians at Ephesus repented of their former ways, some of which involved the occult. Roper thinks the Ephesians were obsessed with incantations and mysticism; he quotes Bruce Metzger as saying, "Of all ancient Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus. . . was by far the most hospitable to magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans of all sorts" (184). Luke tells us that the Ephesian Christians brought and burned their formerly-used books of magic—worth 50,000 drachmas or pieces of silver, amounting to tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars today.

Some may wonder why the people did not sell their scrolls and give the money to the Lord's work. Those who cast their 'Ephesian Letters' on the fire were making a statement: They were through with the past, and they wanted all to know it (cf. Matt. 3:8). In addition, they did not want those ungodly documents to curse any more lives. (191)

McGarvey suggests that their confession of sins shows that they had obeyed the Gospel but had not until now ceased to practice their magic arts (*Commentary* 236).

We have already noted that the Word of God had sounded forth to all the Roman province of Asia, the western section of Asia Minor (Turkey today) and that this resulted in establishing churches such as those named in Revelation 1-3. How many were converted in those three years? Luke says only, "So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (Acts 19:20). Coffman guesses that "Churches sprang up everywhere. Countless thousands became Christians; and many public officials and leaders of the people became friendly to the apostolic preachers, as is clearly evidenced by the event Luke next reported (19:23ff)" (368). These were especially productive years for Paul's work, and he spoke of his opportunities as he wrote to the Corinthians from Ephesus: "But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:8-9).

Among the accomplishments of Paul's work in Ephesus are the development of an eldership there to whom he spoke in Acts 20; the writing of 1 Corinthians and perhaps of the prior letter referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9; and perhaps a quick visit across the Aegean Sea to Corinth and back to help them, as may be indicated by his reference to two former visits to Corinth in 2 Corinthians 13:1. Paul not only was able to build up the church at Ephesus, but also to help other congregations that he had worked with previously but who had troubles.

The reference to the many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:8-9) and to his having "fought with beasts at Ephesus" (1 Cor. 15:32) show that his work was not without opposition, and these two references evidently were to events before the riot of the silversmiths, which occurred after Timothy and Erastus were sent to Macedonia with the 1 Corinthian letter (Acts 19:22). The most serious opposition Luke tells us about is in Acts 19:23-41, the uproar of the silversmiths against Paul and the Way. Christians cannot be idolaters, and this was hurting the trade of the silversmiths who made silver shrines of Artemis or Diana. The leader of the riot was Demetrius, a silversmith who said to an assembly of silversmiths and similar craftsmen:

Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. (Acts 19:25-27)

The crowd was stirred up to chant, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" for two hours in the theater; they would not listen to a certain Alexander because he was a Jew, and they had seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travel companions. Paul wanted to go into

the theater but was prevented by the disciples and by some Asiarchs or Asian officials who were his friends. The city clerk, actually the important officer who answered to the Romans, quieted the assembly, told them they were in danger of Roman authorities demanding an accounting for this unlawful assembly and that they could sue Paul in the courts if they wished. Green claims that "Inscriptions show that the *grammateus* who gained control of the assembly on this occasion was no mere 'townclerk' (AV), but the leading civic official in the city, directly responsible to the Roman authorities for such breaches of the peace as illicit assembly (xix.40)" (381). David Roper agrees and cites Lewis Foster in the *NIV Study Bible* as drawing the same conclusion (203). Paul might have been killed in this riot had he gone into the theater, and one wonders whether this could have been one occasion on which Priscilla and Aquila "risked their own necks" for Paul's life (Rom. 16:3), but there easily could have been other instances, since Paul was often in danger.

Ephesus after Paul Left

Paul's parting instructions to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:17-38 speak to the issue of his hopes and fears for the church's future. On his return trip from his third journey Paul changed his travel plans at the last minute because of a plot to kill him on the way he originally intended, and this brought him to Miletus where he met the Ephesian elders and addressed them. He reminded them of his preaching at Ephesus (20:17-27) and urged them to imitate his example and to follow Jesus' instructions about working and giving (20:33-35). Of great importance is his warning in 20:28-32 to take heed to themselves and to the flock to shepherd them carefully, because men would come as grievous wolves to draw away disciples after them, and some of these men would come from among the elders. We need not be reminded that the first great organizational apostasy came when ambitious elders wanted to be elevated as bishops over several elderships, and then as archbishops over bishops. Paul ended up by commending them to God and to His Word which was able to build them up and give

them a place in heaven (20:32), then urging them to imitate his own example of teaching and work and giving (20:33-35).

Between the time Paul spoke to the elders at Ephesus and the time when he wrote 1 Timothy, Paul wrote a letter to Ephesus or to the Ephesus area churches from prison in Rome. Ephesians is called the "church letter," and in it he spends the first three chapters emphasizing the great blessings God has given us in the church, His eternal plan for our redemption. He reminds them of what they had been when they were alone and without God (*atheoi*, atheists), and how now they are united in one body, the church, whether Jews or Gentiles. In chapters 4-6 he speaks of each member's responsibility to promote unity in the church, to work to build up the church, to avoid fornication and other sins for which Gentiles were noted, and to fulfill family and job relationships as each uses the whole armor of God to fight against Satan and his helpers.

Paul seems to have been back at Ephesus yet another time, between his first and second Roman imprisonments, because he says he left Timothy at Ephesus so he could charge some to not teach false doctrine nor to listen to fables, endless genealogies, and Judaizers (1 Tim. 1:3-11). Paul's concerns about conduct of public worship (1 Tim. 2), about the qualifications and work of elders and others (1 Tim. 3, 5), and his warnings about apostasy in 1 Timothy 4 and 6 all seem to have to do with the future of the church at Ephesus.

Finally, we look at Jesus' last Word to Ephesus, giving us a picture of this church as it was years later when Jesus dictated to John Revelation 2:1-7. Jesus commended them for their labor and patience, for not tolerating evil men, for testing and rejecting false teachers, and for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans or libertines, a group that was tolerated at Pergamos, another Asian church. Most of their religion then was negative; where they fell down was in positive religion: they had left their first love, and Jesus commanded them to repent or have their candlestick removed. They had no positive works of which Jesus took specific note! This had been the church that had grown rapidly and spread the Word of

the Gospel throughout all the province of Asia. They had been energetic in teaching others; now they are mostly lethargic about positive efforts to spread the Word and seem to have been mainly emphasizing opposition to error and patience or perseverance in "holding the line." Does that sound like anyone you know? If so, please urge them to repent and do the first works—to regain the zeal they had when first converted. We all need to do that so as to overcome and eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God.

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Biographical Sketch

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the Gospel in 1949 and began preaching in 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University.

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Charles and his wife Imogene have four children and twelve grandchildren. All of the men in the family preach; all of the men and women teach Bible classes; and all the grandchildren but the next to the youngest have obeyed the Gospel. Four are now students at Christian colleges.

The Revelation Of The Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-7

Hal Smith

It is an honor to have this privilege of speaking on the West Virginia School of Preaching Lectureship. I sincerely want to thank brother Cooper, the elders and the lectureship committee for inviting me and giving me this opportunity.



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The text for our study together is Ephesians 3:1-7, and the particular topic assigned to me is “The Revelation of the Mystery.” Before discussing our topic, let us look carefully at the context in order that we may better understand. Our text begins with the statement, “For this cause” (Eph. 3:1). This refers to what has been discussed so clearly and plainly in the preceding verses—those things Paul said he wrote “afore in few words” (Eph. 3:3).

In times past the Gentiles “were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in this world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12-13). In Christ both Jew and Gentile are one spiritual nation, because all of the walls of separation between them have been abolished (Eph. 2:14-15).

Paul wrote to the Colossians concerning this matter and said that Jesus has “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). Because all of the barriers of separation have been abolished in Christ, the Gentiles “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of

the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:19-20). This is a fact that brought joy and thanksgiving to Paul. He considered it an honor, a manifestation of God’s grace, that he had been selected by the Lord to proclaim the unsearchable riches of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:2).

The mystery was revealed to Paul after his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. After Paul had seen the Lord and had heard his voice, he spent the next three days blind. He was fasting and praying. Finally the Lord instructed Ananias to go to him because the Lord told him “he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Paul was never ashamed of the ministry the Lord assigned him. In this Ephesian letter he writes, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:14).

The reason Paul gives for writing about the Jews and Gentiles being one in Christ is so that “when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:4-5). Of course there cannot be even the slightest doubt as to what this mystery is. Paul says it plainly, “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

The question is why does Paul refer to this as a mystery? The word “mystery” does not mean mysterious, rather, it has reference to some great truth of God that has not been immediately obvious. For some reason it has been hidden from man. When God reveals it, He is laying it bare before man. He is making it plain so that all can read and understand. So then, when God revealed the mystery that the Gentiles should be “fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6), He made this fact plain enough and simple enough for every open-minded person to understand. There is nothing difficult about this fact.

The message that the Gentiles would be saved has been in the Old Testament from the beginning (Gen. 3:15). Despite the fact that the Gentiles thumbed their noses at God, walked in the false and forbidden ways of sin, and turned their backs completely against Him, God did not forget them. The prophets of God foretold of their hope.

When God gave the promise to Abraham, He said, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). “All families” certainly includes the Gentiles as well as the Jews. When Isaiah foretold of the establishment of the church, he said, “all nations shall flow unto it” (Isa. 2:2). “All nations” has reference to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Hosea the prophet said, “And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God” (Hosea 1:10). Those who “are not my people” but who will become “the sons of the Living God” are Gentiles. Again in Hosea we read, “and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people and they shall say, Thou art my God” (Hosea 2:23). These prophecies teach us that there would come a time when the Gentiles would turn to God and would have hope.

Clearly when Jesus gave the Great Commission, He included both Jews and Gentiles. Matthew’s account says, “teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Mark removes all doubt when he says, “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Luke teaches that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:47). Jesus informed the apostles that they would “receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). All of these passages and others tell us of a day when the Gentiles would turn from their wicked ways and turn to the Lord.

Why then is it called a mystery? To some, the truth of God is hidden because they simply do not want to live for God. They want

to live sinful lives and continue in their evil ways. Paul says “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is in the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). It certainly is not God’s fault that the truth is hidden from them. It is hidden because of their refusal to believe the Gospel of Christ.

More often than not some great truths are hidden from man because of his stubborn prejudices and preconceived notions. This is the very charge that Jesus brought against the Jews. He said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Christ is revealed in the Old Testament, but because the Jews interpreted the passages which foretold His coming in the light of their prejudices and preconceived notions, they completely missed the truth. The truth was hidden not because God wanted it to be hidden but because of their preconceived interpretations.

Sometimes things are hidden because we are not strong enough spiritually to understand them. Jesus told His apostles, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). There were at least two things the apostles did not immediately grasp. One was the nature of the kingdom. Despite Jesus’ teaching concerning the nature of the kingdom and even saying plainly “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), they failed to understand that it was a spiritual kingdom. They continually looked for an earthly kingdom and even argued among themselves which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 22:24). On the very day that Jesus ascended into Heaven, they inquired of Him “wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). They would not fully understand the nature of the kingdom until after they were baptized with the Holy Ghost and received the power from on high.

The second truth the Apostles failed to grasp was that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, and the Gentiles would be “fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6). When

the Gospel of Christ was proclaimed for the very first time in the history of the world, on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, by the apostle Peter, he plainly foretold that this Gospel was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. He said, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). Those who are “afar off” refers to the Gentiles. Despite the inspired statement that the Gospel was for the Gentiles, several years passed without the apostles or the church making any effort to teach the Gentiles. There had to be miraculous intervention before they would go to the Gentiles.

Peter was waiting on the top of the house for lunch to be prepared. As he waited he fell into a trance and “saw a great sheet knit at the four corners let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air” (Acts 10:11-12). Then there was a voice from Heaven which said, “‘Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean’” (Acts 10:13-14). After this was repeated three times Peter learned that his mission was to go to the house of a Gentile by the name of Cornelius. It was there in the Gentile’s house that the truth was revealed, or laid bare to him. “Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). This is quite an admission from one who had for all of his life been reared in the Jewish religion and had been taught all of his life that good Jews do not associate with Gentiles. It is from Peter’s own words that we learn how the Jews felt toward the Gentiles, a feeling Peter shared until that very moment.

With this revelation, Peter understood what he foretold in Acts 2:39 that those who are afar off would have salvation. When he came into the Gentile’s house, “he said unto them, ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation” (Acts 10:28). The fact is that the Jews had absolutely no dealings whatsoever with

Gentiles. They felt and taught if a Gentile touched anything, it was then unclean. Their attitude was that the only reason God made Gentiles was to fuel the fires of hell. They taught that if a Gentile woman was having problems giving birth, a good Jew would not help her bring another Gentile into the world. But now, Peter is in the Gentile's house. The truth which was hidden was laid bare and he preached that Jesus "is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

Now, in Christ all of the barriers that separated the Jews from the Gentiles are abolished. Christ has "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:15-16). Once a person is baptized into Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus: and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

The Jews may not have had a big problem with the Gentiles having the Gospel preached to them. What really caused them severe problems was the mystery that was revealed that Gentiles were "fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6). When the apostles and elders assembled in Jerusalem to discuss whether or not one had to be circumcised in order to be a Christian, Peter stated an amazing truth when he declared that God "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).

The mystery that has been revealed in language simple enough for all to understand is that there are no superior brethren in God's family. There are no favored children. There are no stepchildren. There are no half brothers and sisters. Obedience to the Gospel makes all of us equal and endowed with all of the blessings and privileges of the family of God. This being the case, we will all share in the very same inheritance. Paul tell us that "we are all the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17). This was the great

mystery hidden by prejudice, preconceived notions and private interpretations.

We wag our heads and wonder how the Jews could be so blind and so prejudiced so as not to immediately grasp these precious and simple truths. Perhaps we shouldn't be too quick to pass judgment on them lest we condemn ourselves. Sadly prejudices, preconceived notions, private interpretations and even feelings of superiority among us with regards to other brothers and sisters still exist today.

For an example just a few years ago, some of us white folks considered ourselves to be superior to our black brethren. At the very least we considered them step brothers and sisters with whom we wanted very little interaction. We thought it was a good thing for them to hear the Gospel, believe it and be baptized into Christ, but we did not really consider them full-fledged members of Christ's body. We did not want them sitting next to us in the very same worship assembly and God forbid that we sit side by side as we ate the Lord's Supper. I recall seeing several old church buildings with balconies, one of which was at Mars Hill in Florence, Alabama, where T.B. Larimore preached, that could only be reached by stairs on the outside of the building. That balcony was for the black brethren. They were forbidden to sit in the audience with white folks. That was, in our minds, not the decent thing to do. Then we began to be rather generous in our thinking and we helped the black brethren purchase buildings in which to worship. In most instances they were inferior to the buildings in which we met. Does it not seem strange to you, and a waste of the Lord's money just to have a building for the black brethren to worship in when there are so many empty pews in our "white" church buildings? To be honest that sort of action was un-Christian and unscriptural. Nowhere in our Bibles can we read about a black church, a white church or a brown church.

We only read about one church. It is made up of every person who obeys the Gospel, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whether they are black, white or brown. The truth that God has laid bare is that all people who obey the Gospel "are fellow heirs, of the same

body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

Some in Texas continue to maintain similar un-Christian, unscriptural attitudes toward Mexican brethren. Some Anglos feel superior to Mexicans. They want little or nothing to do with them. It would appear that some consider them to be second-class citizens. One elder who was overseeing a congregation in the heart of a Mexican community said he did not want those dirty Mexicans messing up the auditorium. Recently a congregation in Amarillo decided to move from their present location because the neighborhood has changed. There are more people living there now than when they built the building there forty years ago. The problem is that the majority of the people who are now living in the neighborhood are Mexicans.

There are several other congregations in the Amarillo area who talk about their “Mexican works.” What this means is that they have a group of Mexican brethren meeting in another part of their building. Most of the Mexicans can speak English fairly well but are not comfortable with it. But even if they could not speak a single word of English, that does not justify treating the Mexicans as second-class citizens. How can elders oversee two congregations, even if they do meet in the same building? If the Mexicans cannot speak English and the elders cannot speak Spanish, how do the elders know if the Mexicans are teaching the truth?

The Northridge congregation with whom I work and worship is unique among churches of Christ in Amarillo. About half of our membership is Mexican and there are varying degrees of English speaking abilities. We refuse to have a “Mexican work” because it has been laid bare that there is only one body. There is no way we can obey our Lord and oversee two congregations that meet in the same building at the same time. We believe the Mexican brethren are as much our brethren as the Anglo brethren. We believe every member of the Northridge church is equal and one is not more important or less important than the other. We all meet and worship together. We have a Mexican song leader, and we sing in

both Spanish and English. There are Mexican men and Anglo men serving communion and all of the prayers are prayed in both English and Spanish. Even our church bulletin is in both English and Spanish. The sermons are usually preached in English but they are translated into Spanish, and if they are preached in Spanish they are translated into English. This is the mystery that has been revealed. We are Mexicans and Anglos but we are all “fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

We all must work diligently to overcome our prejudices and preconceived notions with respect to other races of people. We can never truly say that we have fully conquered our prejudices and preconceived notions. We must ever be vigilant lest those prejudices and preconceived notions rear their ugly heads. Peter, after the mystery was revealed to him, fell prey to his old Jewish prejudices while visiting with Paul, and Paul said he had to withstand him to his face because he was wrong in going back to his old prejudiced ways of dissociating himself from Gentiles. (Gal. 2:11)

The mystery that has been revealed is that there must not be any barriers between brethren. We all, regardless of nationality, race or color of skin are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). When as one body we all, regardless of race or color, work together in love, we are showing to the world the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10).

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Biographical Sketch

Hal Smith was born March, 1937, in Uvalde, TX, and grew up Baptist in La Pryor, TX. In April, 1955, he was converted to Christ by Roland Fry. He moved to Dallas in 1955 and attended school at Arlington State College. In February, 1956, he began preaching every Sunday. He has served congregations in Texas, Louisiana, Minnesota and Alabama. He has held meetings and spoken on lectureships in 22 different states, Canada, Granada, Germany and Italy. For the past eight years he has preached for the Northridge church in Amarillo, TX, and also serves as one of the elders. In 1958 he married Aletta Smith in Dallas and they have two daughters, Rhonda Fox and Deborah McClure. They also have two grandchildren, Jake Fox and Hallie McClure. They all attend and are involved in the work of the Northridge church and his son-in-law, Jeff Fox, serves as one of the deacons.

Paul's Prayer For The Family Of God

Ephesians 3:14-21

Charles C. Pugh III

In this study we are concerned with a powerful prayer offered by Paul the apostle. It is the specific prayer of Paul for his Ephesian brethren and, in principle, a prayer for all Christians (Eph. 3:14-21). It is his prayer for the family of God. It is generally seen as



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the second of Paul's prayers in Ephesians with the first being that expressed in 1:15ff. The prayer we consider is "a mountain-top scripture" (Olive 311). It is "one of the most reassuring passages for Christians in all the New Testament. . ." (Banister 20). It is ". . . a prayer of marvelous sweep and elevation" (Mullins 57). A. T. Robertson wrote, "Nowhere does Paul sound such depths of spiritual emotion or rise to such heights of spiritual passion as here" (532). Lloyd-Jones powerfully summed up the greatness of this prayer when he stated:

However long you may live in this world, whatever orator may arise, you will never hear anything equal to [it] for eloquence, for elevation of thought, for profundity of language and for conception. It is undoubtedly one of the great mountain peaks in the Scripture. Indeed, there are many who would say that this is the highest peak of all in the entire glorious range of Scripture truth and divine revelation. . . .

In the New Testament we have several recorded prayers of Paul, and they all are worthy of our most careful and

serious consideration, but there is surely no prayer of his which rises higher than this one. Here, he lifts us right into the heavens and prays for things which are almost incredible, rising to the climax “that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” (119-20)

The text which includes this great prayer of Paul for the family of God is as follows:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Eph. 3:14-21)

Paul was a man of prayer. He prayed for specific individuals and churches (Rom. 1:9-10). He prayed for the lost to be saved (Rom. 10:1). He believed the prayers of others affected the situations of his life for good (cf. 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-20). To the Philippians he wrote, “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Philip. 1:19). On this passage (Philip. 1:19), Wayne Jackson made the following observation: “Does this not teach that prayer is powerful, and that the Spirit works in conjunction with our prayers (cf. Romans 8:26)?” (54). Paul believed in the power of prayers made on his behalf. He also believed that his prayers could affect others for good. Thus, he prayed that the love of the Philippians

would abound (Philip. 1:9), and that the Thessalonians would be sanctified completely and preserved in spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23). Prayer was not a stranger to Paul’s life (Clark 70). Paul asked others to pray for him (cf. 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). It has been reported that during the last years of his life the greeting of Marshall Keeble was not hello, but it was “pray for me” (Olive 311). Keeble was like Paul. “Paul can be bolted in prison (3:1) but he cannot be denied access to the very throne of God. Declining health or physical limitations may slow us down, but nothing can separate us from the Father” (311). Consider the following pertinent observations concerning Paul and prayer:

. . . [P]rayer is always as necessary as is instruction. It would be a very great fallacy if we got the impression that the Apostle was praying for these Ephesians only because he could not preach to them. . . . Were he at liberty he would still be praying for them. . . . It is as essential that we should pray . . . as it is that we should instruct. . . . [W]e need instruction; we read our Bibles, we meditate upon them; we read books about the Bible, we read commentaries, we read books on Church History, we read books on doctrine. . . . [I]t is essential; we can never know too much. We need instruction. . . —that is why these epistles were written. The Apostle believes that doctrine is essential; instruction must have priority. But to impart knowledge is not enough. It is equally essential that we should pray. . . . Knowledge and instruction and prayer must always go together; they must never be separated. (Lloyd-Jones 109-10)

Just here I am reminded of the statement of Guy N. Woods who said:

Knowledge is obtained only through study; wisdom is a gift of God. . . . [O]ne who desires the divine wisdom must get down on his knees. Facts to be stored in the head are

obtained only through mental effort; the wisdom which has its home in the depths of the soul only God can bestow. (40-41)

We will now consider this great prayer of Paul for the Ephesians in light of the following:

- ❖ The **Placement** of This Prayer in the Ephesian Epistle.
- ❖ The **Posture** of Paul in This Prayer.
- ❖ The **Paternal** Direction of This Prayer.
- ❖ The **Petitions** in This Prayer.
- ❖ The **Power** Who Responds to Prayer.
- ❖ The **Praise** That Results from Prayer.

Placement of the Prayer

An awareness and understanding of the location of this prayer in the epistle will deepen one's appreciation for the scope and petitions of the prayer. Appropriately, the prayer is placed at the close of what is often termed the doctrinal section and immediately before the practical section of Ephesians. Pink says the prayer "turns the contents of the former [doctrinal] into supplication and prepares the heart for obedience to the precepts of the latter [practical]" (156). Doctrine properly apprehended affects devotional life, which affects practical living.

Paul wrote, "**For this reason** I bow my knees. . ." (v. 14, emp. added). This is a return to the thought of the opening words of chapter three where Paul wrote, "**For this reason** I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. . ." (v. 1, emp. added). This thought, interrupted by verses 2-13, is resumed in verse 14. The meaning of "for this cause [reason]" (3:14) is the same as that in 3:1. In other words, the motivation, reason, or rationale for this prayer of Paul is "because God has dealt so kindly with you, Ephesians, and with me, Paul" (Hendriksen 166). It is "because you Gentiles have now come nigh and have become fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God" (Stoekhardt 167) or "because you are so built in, have such a standing in God's

Church" (Alford 108) that Paul prayed for them. Paul was led to offer this great prayer as he contemplated (1) **the power of Christ** (2:1-10) that raised to life those dead in sin (2) **the place of unity** (2:11-22) in the one household, the church and (3) **the purpose of God** (3:1-12). John Eadie affirms that the connection of verse 14 with the closing paragraph of Chapter 2 is the key to the correct exegesis of Paul's prayer. He says, ". . .[W]e are carried back. . . to the magnificent imagery of a spiritual temple in the concluding section of the second chapter. The prayer must be regarded as . . . following that section, and its **architectural terms and allusions** will thus be more clearly understood" (240, emp. added).

Posture of Paul

Paul's prayer was accentuated with "boldness [free, unrestricted confidence, cf. Lenski 485] and access with confidence" (3:12). However, ". . .boldness does not mean brazenness . . . confidence does not mean an easy familiarity" (Lloyd-Jones 113). Paul says, ". . . **I bow my knees** to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (v. 14, emp. added). Literally, it is "bend my knees towards the Father" (Alford 108). We have access, but it is access into the presence of the living God in His glory and power. It was not with glib familiarity that Paul approached God in prayer but with "reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). Physical posture in prayer may be significant because it may reflect one's attitude of reverence, or lack thereof. "The bodily attitude during prayer . . . reflects the soul's attitude toward God. Kneeling expresses humiliation and lowly supplication" (Lenski 489).

Biblically, various postures were used by those engaged in prayer to God. They include (1) *Standing* – Gen. 18:22; 1 Sam. 1:26; Matt. 6:5; Luke 18:11, (2) *Hands spread out and/or lifted heavenward* – Ex. 9:29; 17:11-12; 1 Kings 8:22; Neh. 8:6; Hab. 3:10; Luke 24:40, (3) *Bowing the head* – Gen. 24:48; Ex. 12:27; 2 Chron. 29:30; Luke 24:5, (4) *The lifting up of the eyes heavenward* – Ps. 25:15; 121:1; 123:1; 141:8; John 11:41; 17:1, (5) *Kneeling* – 2 Chron.

6:13; Ps. 95:6; Isa. 45:23; Dan. 6:10; Matt. 17:14; Mark 1:40; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5; Eph. 3:14, (6) *Falling down with face upon the ground* – Gen. 17:3; 24:26; Num. 14:5, 13; 16:4, 22; Deut. 9:18, 25, 26; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35; Luke 17:16; Rev. 1:17; 11:16, and (7) *Other physical postures* such as bowing down with face between the knees (1 Kings 8:42) and standing afar off beating the breast with eyes not lifted toward heaven (Luke 18:13). (Pugh, *Doctrine* 46)

A great Gospel preacher by the name of Denver Cooper has shared with me that when he began his career of preaching almost seven decades ago most brethren would kneel when they prayed. Do we do much of it today? If not, one wonders why?

Paternal Direction of Prayer

Paul says he bends low before the Father. “. . . I bow my knees *to the Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (v. 14, emp. added). Paul’s sense of the Fatherhood of God is stressed here and throughout the Ephesian letter (1:2-3, 17; 2:18; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23). The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is one of the great comforting doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures. I once heard the late Wendell Winkler say, “If I were beginning my preaching ministry over there’s not many changes I would make, but one of the few is I would preach more on the Fatherhood of God.” Oliver Wendell Homes is reported to have said that the totality of religion is summed up in the words “Our Father” (Malone 48).

The word Father (*pater*) in the text before us is connected textually to the word family (*patria*) which Paul used in verse 15. He referred to “. . . [T]he Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom *the whole family in heaven and earth* is named” (emp. added). Although it is the case that the Scriptures imply a sense of the universal Fatherhood of God by virtue of His creatorship (cf. Acts 17:26; Heb. 12:9), and God as creator of all things is incidentally mentioned in 3:9, the thematic context of *Father* and *family* in 3:14-15 is Christological and soteriological (salvational).

The basic context of the Fatherhood of God and the family of God in Ephesians is 2:11-3:13 with special emphasis given to 2:18-19 as explanatory of the sense of divine Fatherhood and family in 3:14-15. Paul wrote, “For through Him, we both have access by one Spirit to the Father . . . members of the household of God” (2:18-19).

The household of God is the church (1 Tim. 3:14-15). Therefore, it is my conclusion that contextually “the whole family in heaven and earth” here refers to the church, the saved members of which have their names registered in heaven (cf. Heb. 12:23), and have God as their Father in a sense beyond that of the universal Fatherhood of God. Alford sums up the meaning here when he says, “. . . [I]t is not in virtue of God’s creative power that the Apostle here prays to Him [the Father], but in virtue of His adoptive love in Christ . . .” (109). Cf. Ephesians 1:3-6; Lenski 490-91.

Petitions in the Prayer

Verses 16-19 reveal the petitions of Paul in this prayer. There is a sense, as Hodge argues, that this prayer offers “one petition, viz. that [Paul’s] readers might be strengthened by the Holy [Spirit] in the inner man; or that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith” (178). As a result of this, they would be confirmed in love, enabled to comprehend the greatness of the church and, in some measure, know the love of Christ, which would enlarge their capacity unto the fullness of God. Miller’s comments are helpful:

Strictly speaking, there is but one petition, “to be made strong with power through His Spirit in the inward man,” followed by a series of purpose clauses, each containing the purpose of the preceding one. . . . This will be evident if we use “in order that” instead of “that”. . . . We are to be made strong with power by His Spirit **in order that** Christ might dwell; have Christ indwelling **in order that** we may be rooted and grounded; be rooted and grounded **in order that** we might be strong to comprehend and know the love of

Christ; be strong to comprehend and know **in order that** we might be filled with all the fullness of God. (120)

An analytical overview of Paul's petition looks like the following:

1. Paul prayed that God would grant to the Ephesians (according to the riches of God's glory) that--
 - a. They might be *strengthened*;
 - b. They might be strengthened *with power*;
 - c. They might be strengthened with power *through His Spirit*;
 - d. They might be strengthened with power through His Spirit *in the inner man*;
2. *In order that* . . . Christ might dwell in their hearts through the faith;
3. *In order that*, being rooted and grounded in love, they might comprehend the vastness (width, length, depth, and height) of the habitation of God (the holy temple-the church);
4. *In order that* . . . they might know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ;
5. *In order that* . . . they might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul's desire was "that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory . . ." (v. 16). The riches or wealth of His glory is "all its greatness or wonderfulness" (Lenski 492). This is the norm God follows in His giving. He does not give "grudgingly or in tiny portions, as if He were afraid to exhaust His riches . . . His bounty proclaims His . . . immeasurable resources" (Eadie 243). God's gifts are according to the infinite fullness He possesses

revealed in the Person and Work of His Son (cf. Philip. 4:19). The riches of His glory "suggests the divine abundance from which the Christian draws strength" (Malone 48).

Paul prayed, accordingly, that the Divine Benefactor would give them ". . .to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (v. 16). *Strengthened* (from *krataioo*) means "to fortify, to brace, to invigorate" (Rogers 439). Later, in the Ephesian epistle, Paul wrote, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power [*kratos*] of His might. Put on the whole armor of God. . ." (Eph. 6:10-11). The late J. Noel Meredith made the following insightful observations:

The apostle will give the Christian's armor, but it is essential that we have strength in the heart before the armor can profit. However effective the weapons of a soldier may be, unless he has the spiritual courage to use them, they are of no value. May the Lord grant that we "be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:17). (158)

Basil Overton concurred with this when he wrote: "Dear people of God, we need all the help we can get. We desperately need strength. We need spiritual energy! A soldier in the Roman army needed more than all the armor he had. He also needed energy! He needed to be strong! He needed courage and determination" (314).

The prayer is that they "be strengthened with *might*" (emp. added). *Might* here is from *dunamis* and is better rendered *power* (cf. v. 20). **The power here is not miraculous power.** There is no evidence contextually to cause me to conclude that this strengthening which is "through His spirit in the inner man" (v. 16) is miraculous. **Neither do I believe that this "infusion of power"** (Eadie 244), "infused strength" (Alford 109; Rogers 439; Salmond 313) **is separate and apart from the Word, but it is in conjunction with the Word** (cf. v. 17: "*the faith*"). In his superb volume, *The Timeless Trinity for the Ceaseless Centuries*, Roy H. Lanier, Sr., wrote: ". . .[H]e strengthens us with power in the

inward man (Eph. 3:16). . . We do not say the Holy Spirit does not strengthen us . . . through the use of the word of God. . . . But to say that the Spirit does these things ‘only and solely’ through the word of God is to say what is not true” (389). The details regarding how this occurs are not given in the Scriptures any more than the details of how one’s own spirit dwells in him are given. I do not know the details of how the blood of Christ is applied to a soul to wash away sins when one is baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11), but I know it happens because the Word of God says it does. I do not know the details of how “hearts [are] sprinkled [by the blood of Christ] from an evil conscience” as “our bodies [are] washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22), but I know it happens because the Word of God says it does. The highly respected, R. C. Bell, longtime professor of Bible in the early years of Abilene Christian College, wrote:

. . . [T]o be asking how God performs [H]is work is an indication of mistrust rather than of faith. It is a mistake to puzzle ourselves over the *how* till we lose sight of the *what*. This is the very thing Nicodemus did. Because he could not understand how he could be born again, he refused to admit the possibility of a new birth, and consequently lost the blessing of being a new creature in Christ. Oh! that Nicodemus and all men could believe. Is it necessary to know the psychology of God’s mind or the philosophy of [H]is ways to believe and enjoy Him? It is not. We may not know how God answers our prayers or forgives our sins or provides for us, but, when we believe Him, our ignorance does not prevent our enjoying His riches and goodness. Remember, too, that in fulfilling His promises, God need not resort to miracles or set aside law or despise human agency. He must not be so limited, for He is unlimited and almighty. Moreover, remember that it is not ours to seek *how* God keeps His promises and performs His works. It is ours to do our part and trust God for His. (214-15)

The language of the text is clear. Paul prayed that they would be strengthened by His Spirit (the Holy Spirit) “in the inner man.” The Spirit of God is the agent in this process, and the destination is “into the inner man” *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (as well as Alford, Ellicott, et al) argues that *in (eis)* here “has its full force of ‘into’ and is not to be reduced to ‘in’ (RV), or to ‘in regard of’ . . .” (Salmond 313). The inner man into which Paul prayed the power of the Holy Spirit would strengthen the Christian “is that portion of our nature which is not cognizable by the senses, and does not consist of nerve, muscle, and organic form, as does the outer man. . . [I]t is more connected with mind” (Eadie 245; cf. 2 Cor. 4:16). As elsewhere I have said, “It is non-sensory and non-miraculous. He gives no nudges, whispers, or revelations” (*Doctrine* 73). This is not Calvinism. This is not a Calvinistic direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Coffman says this prayer “is to the effect that the Spirit of God within them would be a source of power, more firmly establishing them in the faith” (176). Frank Pack wrote:

I am strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. God helps me, He aids and assists me in living the life that He calls me to follow. The apostle Paul breaks out into a great expression of gratitude in prayer as [h]e contemplates all that God provides for us. In Ephesians 3 we have one of the greatest prayers of the Bible. . . . This is what God gives His Spirit to me to accomplish. My small limited life is to be filled with all the fulness of God. (116)

Contextually, this petition in Paul’s prayer is closely connected to the indwelling measure of the Holy Spirit to which Paul had referred a few verses earlier when he wrote, “[I]n whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). Recognizing the vital contextual connection between 3:1, 14 and 2:22 one can see the logic of Foulkes’ observations: “It is the constant assumption, or specific emphasis, of the teaching of the New Testament, that strength for the Christian life comes by the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit” (102-03). Such, in my

judgment, has been the conclusion of most leading biblical scholars during the past 200 years. [NOTE: The historical and grammatical evidence in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is thoroughly documented by Goebel Music in his *A Resource and Reference Volume on the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit* (2000). This volume of over 1400 pages contains the most definitive work in print on this subject during at least the last 200 years. Its argument from the Greek text is unanswerable and should be given serious study, as opportunity is presented, by every able student, teacher, and preacher.] Moses Lard affirmed, “[O]ne chief mode in which the Holy Spirit helps the Christian is by strengthening his Spirit” (257). J. W. McGarvey, perhaps as great a scholar as the church of Christ has had during the last two centuries, wrote:

The Spirit leads both externally and internally. Externally, the Spirit supplies the gospel truth as set forth in the New Testament, and the rules and precepts therein found are for the instruction and guidance of God’s children. Internally, the Spirit aids by ministering strength and comfort to the disciple in his effort to conform to the revealed truth. (361)

Most of us in the churches of Christ, in principle, seem to practice the implications of Paul’s prayer. Roy Lanier, Jr. stated, “We pray: ‘Please give the preacher a ready recollection of the things he has studied.’ . . . Did anything happen? . . . I am not talking about a miracle. I am talking about something that happens in the providence of God that looks as natural as can be, but God has been involved in it” (qtd. in Music 325). Paul wrote, “. . . [W]ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philip. 2:12-13). Thomas B. Warren explained the practicality of this when he affirmed more than 40 years ago at Freed-Hardeman College (now University) the following:

The Holy Spirit is given to **strengthen** the spirit of the inward man. Paul prayed for that. . . . [W]hen men go into hospitals, where terminal cancer cases are, they pray for those people to be strengthened. . . and I believe the Bible authorizes us to tell a man who says, “I’m weak; I know what the Bible tells me to do; I can see here is the path down which I should walk; but I need some help from God!” And Paul prayed for the Ephesian brethren that they might have that help and the help he talked about was to be strengthened by his Spirit in the inward man. And that was **in conjunction with the word** of God. . . . There’s nobody here who says, “Brother, read the word some more.” Now that is not to discount the study of the word of God. Don’t you dare think for a moment that I’m chiding the study of the sacred will of God. If you love the Bible more than I, it’s just because you have more ability to love it. . . . **Now brethren, that’s not liberalism.** It may be in your mind, it may be what you’ve written in your bulletin, but it is not liberalism. With all of my heart, I’ve dedicated my life to the preaching of the truth of Almighty God, and if I know my heart, I am ready at any time to defend the truth of God, wherever it appears to be the wise thing to do . . . if we must turn our guns on one another, let us turn our guns on the thing that is the real issue before the church. (qtd. in Music 630, 635-36)

The result of this process of strengthening for which Paul prayed is realized in the next words of Paul, i.e. “. . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts though faith” (v. 17). The verb *dwell* (from *katoikeo*) is used in reference to the last clause of 2:22 where Paul says Christians are “a habitation of God in the Spirit.” The noun, *habitation* (2:22), is from *katoiketerion* which means a dwelling place (Goetzmann 247). The related verb (*katoikeo*) means dwell or inhabit (247). Remember that the two passages (2:19-22 and 3:14-21) are separated only by a parenthesis (3:2-13). In 2:19-22, the relationship of Christians with their Lord is described with

architectural allusions (i.e. built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Christ the chief cornerstone; a spiritual building growing into a temple). The prayer in the closely connected passage (3:14-21) is that the true design of this temple be realized and Christ, by His Spirit, dwell (inhabit) this habitation (their hearts). The eloquent expositor, Eadie, states:

. . .[A]s the design of a temple is that its god may inhabit it, so Christ dwells in the heart. This inhabitation is not to be explained away as a mere reception of Christian doctrine [i.e. Word only], nor is it to be regarded as a mystical exaggeration [i.e. Calvinism or Pentecostalism] . . . His abode is in no outer vestibule, but. . .“in your hearts” (247).

These verses are extremely helpful regarding how God and Christ dwell in us and work in our lives. Wayne Jackson explains, “It is contended that both God and Christ are said to dwell in us, though they do not actually inhabit our bodies, so, similarly, is the . . . Spirit. However **we are expressly told that God dwells in us by means of the Spirit.** Paul says the Ephesians were ‘a habitation of God in the Spirit’” (qtd. in Music 401, emp. added). The indwelling Christ, through the Spirit, is a powerful keynote in Paul’s writings (Rom. 8:9-10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 4:19). **Christ-centeredness**—Christ in the Christian—“becomes the dynamic of His demands. As He lives in the Christian, He empowers the Christian (Phil. 4:13)” (Malone 50).

Paul continued his prayer with the use of two participles that describe the result of the indwelling Christ, and provide the basis for another result of the Ephesians being strengthened in the inner man. The two participles are “rooted” and “grounded” (v. 17). Again, both of these participles appropriately connect with the context of 2:19-22. He says, “being rooted and grounded in love,” from the strength received by the Spirit in the inner man, they will be like a solidly rooted tree that is growing massive and strong, and like a solidly founded building that from its foundation rises high (Lenski 495). “Rooting and grounding are consequences of

the strengthening of the Spirit and of Christ’s indwelling” (Vincent 384). As Christ dwells in them, in conjunction with the Word (the faith), they are rooted and grounded in love and such will enable them to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height (v. 18). Note again the parallelism between 2:21 and 3:17-18. Both conjoin biological and architectural figures (i.e. *building, grows, rooted, and grounded*). Plants are rooted and buildings are founded (Bruce 68). Love is the root and foundation of Christian character, and it deepens in proportion to the intensity of one’s relationship with Jesus—the indwelling Christ.

Being strengthened, inhabited by Christ, and having been rooted and grounded in love, Paul prays that they would be fully enabled to comprehend or “grasp mentally” (Rogers 440) “the width and length and depth and height.” To what do these dimensions apply? Eadie (251-55) discusses ten interpretations that have been made in reference to these terms. The last three he discusses seem to be the most plausible. They are as follows: (1.) These four dimensions refer to the love of Christ (Calvin, Ellicott, Hodge, Meyer, et al), (2.) They refer to “every dimension . . . of all that God has revealed or done in and for us” (Alford 111), and (3.) The vastness and glory of the glorious spiritual edifice—the holy temple, the household of God, the church of Christ (Bengel, Burton, Eadie, et al). Contextually, a good case can be made for these dimensions having reference to the church since the conception of this glorious building (2:19-22) should stir the heart to consider the excellence of the domain of this spiritual edifice. A number of older commentators, as well as various modern exegetes, have pointed to the building of the church as being that of which Paul speaks here (Stoekhardt 173).

It was the infinite love of Christ which surpasses human understanding that moved Him to purpose, plan, and build the church and so Paul prayed that they might “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge” (v. 19). Finite hearts and minds can never fully grasp infinite love as this love ever surpasses knowledge. It ever exceeds all our knowing (Lenski 497). “Even in

the life hereafter God will never say . . . ‘Now I have told you all there is to be told about this love. . . .’ There will always be more and more and still more to tell” (Hendriksen 173). The connection between their grasping the dimensions of the glorious church of Christ and knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge is wonderfully explained in the following:

That temple of such glory and vastness which has Christ for its corner-stone, suggests the love of its illustrious Founder. While the apostle prayed that his converts in Ephesus might comprehend the stability and magnificence of the one, he could not but add that they might also know the intensity and tenderness of the other. . . . ***From what the church is, and is to be, you infer the love of Christ.*** (Eadie 258, emp. added)

Paul prayed all of this in order that “you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (v. 19). This is the climax of His prayer. Coffman calls it “the grand climax of a prayer which reaches the most exalted heights” (178). So impressed was A. T. Robertson that he said, “One hesitates to comment on this sublime climax in Paul’s prayer, the ultimate goal for followers of Christ in harmony with the injunction in Matt. 5:48 to be perfect (*teleion*) as our heavenly Father is perfect. There is nothing that any one can add to these words” (534).

The fullness of God is all that He is in character. In Jesus, all the fullness of God dwells in bodily form (Col. 2:9). He is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Jesus is “the brightness of His [God’s] glory and the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3). Later in Ephesians, Paul presents the goal for all in the church to “. . . come to . . . the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:13). The goal of the Christian while on Earth is summed up in Romans 8:29: “. . . to be conformed to the image of Christ.” To be like Jesus! “But we . . . beholding . . . the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the

Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). As we get closer to being like Jesus (i.e. the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ) we get closer to being like God (i.e. the fullness of God). And ultimately, Paul’s prayer for all the Ephesians connects with his passionate desire that one day He “transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” in the resurrection (Philip. 3:20-21; cf. Rom. 8:23).

Power Responding to Prayer

As great as his petitions were, Paul invoked a power able to do more than was asked or even more than his mind could conceive. He wrote, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think . . .” (v. 20). Not only does Paul say that God is able, but He is “able to do beyond all things, ***superabundantly*** beyond what we ask or think” (Salmond 317, emp. added). “Exceedingly abundantly” means “. . . quite beyond all measure, greatly exceeding all boundaries. . . . [T]he highest form of comparison imaginable” (Rogers 440). Paul’s petitions were beyond the reach of men but not beyond the ability of God, because His “ability to answer prayer transcends not only our spoken petitions, but far surpasses even such thoughts as are too big for words, and too deep for utterance” (Eadie 261; cf. Rom. 8:26). Additionally, Paul states that this is in harmony with, according to, “the power that works in us.” Coffman says, “Paul did not undervalue the divine nature of the power of God in human life, the same being the most remarkably powerful influence that men can know” (179). To deny the power of God works in the lives of Christians today is to espouse a kind of neo-deism that has a form of godliness but denies its power (2 Tim. 3:5). On the other hand, to make claims regarding unknown details of how the Holy Spirit works in the Christian, in conjunction with the Word of God, causes one to espouse a subjectivism rooted in irrationalism. Jimmy Jividen implied the extremes to avoid, and the balance to seek, when he stated:

[The Holy Spirit] does not work in a miraculous way today. . . . He does not work by human emotional experiences. Such emotional experiences are common to the human situation, especially in a religious context. There is no evidence in the New Testament that such experiences were a part of the work of the Holy Spirit. . . . Paul prayed for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the Christians at Ephesus. . . . This prayer is for all of the church, not just a few who had special powers from the Holy Spirit. Paul prayed that they might be strengthened with power through the Spirit. This power was within them. God can work through this power to do more than we can possibly ask or think.

This passage shows that God's work through His Spirit in the inner man is greater than our words can speak or our minds can think. . . . There are ways in which the Scriptures affirm that the Holy Spirit works in the world. These ways cannot be denied. There are also ways that He works beyond the realm of this material world and beyond the limitations of language. We can say nothing about these things because even God is silent about them. (137-38, emp. added)

Praise That Results from Prayer

In what is the third explicit reference to the church in Ephesians, Paul says, “[T]o Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (v. 21).

Bible teaching is clear that man's duty on Earth is to glorify God. Paul wrote, “therefore, whether you eat or drink, or *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31, emp. added). Earlier, Paul had discussed the duty Christians have with regard to the body when he wrote, “for you were bought with a price; therefore *glorify God in your body* and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:20, emp. added). There is a sense in which it is the duty

of all men (Christian and non-Christian) to glorify God, the Creator, with one's body (cf. Matt. 28:18; John 17:2). However, only Christians (those who are cleansed by the blood of Christ) truly can do this in acceptable fashion (cf. Heb. 10:19-22; Rev. 7:9-10, 14). (Pugh, *Acclamation* 52-53)

“In the church” and “by (in) Jesus Christ” is the language that defines the “sphere or spirit in which the glory is presented to God” (Eadie 263). This is not two places. It describes “the same theater of operations” (Coffman 179). To be in Christ is to be in the church, and to be in the church is to be in Christ. Those not in Christ are not in the church, and those not in the church are not in Christ. And just as the church is “according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11), even so this awesome scheme of redemption in which man was created to glorify God, and be glorified by God (cf. Heb. 2:10) in Christ and in the church, lasts through “all the generations of the ages of the ages.” This denotes eternity (Eadie 264). The meaning is “all the eternity of the future” (Mullins 60). It is age upon age upon age, for ever and ever, an infinite number of ages! What a beautiful and profound conclusion to this inexhaustible Bible chapter and to one of the most far-reaching prayers recorded in God's special revelation. So deeply impressed was Adam Clarke with this prayer that he wrote, “For the great importance of the *matter* contained in this chapter, and the sublimity of the *language* and *conceptions*, there is no portion of the New Testament equal to this. . . . This is most observable in the *prayer* and *doxology* which are contained in verses 14-21” (449).

The late Avon Malone, distinguished college professor, school of preaching instructor, and a great expositor of the Bible, eloquently and practically summed up *Paul's Prayer for the Family of God* as he cited R. C. Bell: “‘Paul prays that Christians may live Spirit-enabled, Christ-indwelt, and God-filled lives.’ This prayer is ‘not to be explained or argued intellectually; no elucidation is possible or necessary. ‘There's no other way . . . but to trust and obey’” (50-51). Amen!

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Biographical Sketch

Charles C. Pugh III is in his 41st year of preaching the Gospel of Christ. He is one of the founders of West Virginia School of Preaching where he serves as an instructor. He has studied and taught for more than 30 years in the field of Christian Apologetics and teaches three apologetics courses at WVSOP as well as other courses. He is in his 21st year of working with the Bridge Street Church of Christ where he did the pulpit work for 15 years. Since 1999, due to a vocal fold disease, much of his work has been concentrated in the areas of writing and publishing. He is the author of several books and tracts and owner of Threefold Publications. He preaches several Gospel meetings yearly and appears on various lectureships. He and his wife Sharon have two daughters, one son, a granddaughter and grandson.

Equipping The Saints

Ephesians 4:7-16

Terry Jones

Introduction

The theme that has been chosen for this series of studies is a grand one indeed. In Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians we find an exalted view of the church in God's scheme of redemption. While the world continues to "play down the church as being



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insignificant, ineffective, and unimportant," Ephesians repeatedly reminds us of the eternal blessings and bliss available only to those who are "in Christ" (1:3), "in the church" (1:22-23), and "members of the household of God" (2:19).

Ephesians chapter four, above all else, is a treatise on the unity that the Lord demands in His church. He begins with a *call for unity* (vv. 1-3) that involves one's conduct (v. 1), character (v. 2), and commitment to keep unity (v. 3). Secondly, He provides a *clarification of unity* (vv. 4-6) by listing those seven things of which there is just one. Thirdly, He declares the *continuation of unity* (vv. 7-16) made possible by the Lord's equipping the saints. Finally, He calls for *conduct that fosters unity* (vv. 17-32). Our assignment for this study focuses on verses 7-16 and the equipping of the saints in order that unity might forever continue.

The Provider of the Gifts (Eph. 4:7-10)

As Paul continues his discussion of unity, he introduces the fact that the church has received a variety of gifts from Christ to facilitate the continuation of that unity. "But to each one of us

grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (v. 7). This likely refers to particular gifts and abilities which Christ has given. They would include the various offices of work addressed in verse eleven, the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, as well as the different abilities of individual Christians.

It takes a lot of people to make up a football team. Each of those players is different. They have different qualities, abilities, and responsibilities. They each have a different job, but they work together to accomplish the same goal. Likewise, there are different abilities found among members of the church, but they all unite to work together for the accomplishing of the same goal.

The abilities were gifts from Christ, given when He ascended to heaven. Paul makes an application of Psalm 68:18, which depicts a victorious conqueror with his prisoners, receiving gifts from men. Paul pictures Christ as a victorious conqueror, having taken His enemies captive (possibly referring to sin and death – 1 Cor. 15:54-57), giving gifts to men. The giving of the gifts to men was dependent on the ascension of Christ. Jesus had made a promise to His disciples; "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit came on the apostles after the ascension. "Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1, 4). From that time, the apostles had the ability to impart spiritual gifts to others through the laying on of hands. (Acts 8:14-17). So, when Christ ascended back to heaven He gave Gifts to men.

The Particulars of the Gifts (Eph. 4:11)

Some of the gifts that Christ gave included apostles. They were with Jesus and were eyewitness of the resurrection. They played a foundational role in the establishment of the church. "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). Their work or role was only temporary.

He also gave prophets, who were inspired men and women used in the process of revelation. Paul said, "How by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets" (Eph. 3:3-5). As with the apostles, the role of the prophets was only temporary.

The third gift mentioned in this verse is evangelists. Evangelists are preachers of the good news of salvation. Paul instructed Timothy to "...be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). Unlike apostles and prophets, the work of evangelists does not involve "laying the foundation." Rather, it involves building upon that which has already been laid, which occurs every time a lost soul is led to Christ.

The fourth gift mentioned is pastors and teachers. This refers to those who shepherd the flock. Their role includes overseeing, feeding and teaching the Word of God. Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders by saying, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

The Purpose of the Gifts (Eph. 4:12-16)

Verse twelve clarifies a two-fold purpose for the gifts. First, they were for the "equipping of the saints for the work of ministry." In the early days of the church, these Holy Spirit endowed servants delivered the doctrine of Christ to the church to perfect and mature the saints for ministry.

Secondly, these gifts were "for the edifying of the body of Christ." This building up of the church would lead to four very important things. (1.) *Spiritual maturity*. "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v. 13); (2.) *Stability*. "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and

fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive” (v. 14); (3.) “*Speaking the truth in love*” (v. 15); and (4.) *Supplying and sharing*. “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by which every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does it share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (v.16).

The Lord has adequately provided for the equipping of the saints to be able to carry out the work of ministry. With God’s complete revelation having been delivered, we can now be adequately prepared for Christian service. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Biographical Sketch

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, WV, and was raised in Toll Gate, WV. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They now have two sons: Austin (age 20), and Quintin (age 17).

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God’s Music In Worship

Ephesians 5:18-21

David P. Stevens

Joy is the keynote of Christianity! Paul said, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philip. 4:4). The expression of this joy, produced by our participation in the great salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, is made in our worship



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assemblies by singing. James declares, “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). Paul puts sacred music in the worship assembly (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). On these special occasions, God is recognized, remembered, and revered. The church is united in song. The church is instructed in sacred subjects. Thus, the church glorifies God and edifies itself.

“Music wakes the soul, and lifts it high, and wings it with sublime desires, and fits it to bespeak the Deity” (Edwards 432). The joy of salvation, so keenly felt in the human heart, is aptly expressed in sacred song. Singing lifts the spirit. Singing renews the heart. Singing brings worshipper and Deity together in an affirmation of love and devotion. How could something so rich and powerful be corrupted by man? There is a continual war between the flesh and the spirit. When the flesh gains the advantage in our hearts, those things that are sacred suffer. When the Spirit rules the heart, the sacred is secured.

Ephesians 5:18-21 is a rich passage of Scripture! Paul captures the essence of sacred music in worship. Life in the Spirit is reflected by worship worthy of expression to Deity. When we give

God the worship He desires, we please Him! This is the aim of worship. God is the audience! He must be pleased, or the worship is vain!

Be Filled With the Spirit

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul captures the struggle between the flesh of man and the Spirit of God. He declares, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” The Greek phrase, *plērousthe en pneumati* (be filled with the Spirit-KJV), has been understood in different ways. Does Paul refer to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit? Does he use the preposition *en* to refer to instrumentality or sphere? In regards to the first question, Paul uses the phrase “in Spirit” in three other passages in Ephesians (2:22; 3:5; and 6:18). In each of these passages, the reference is to the Holy Spirit. Consistency would cause us to interpret Ephesians 5:18 in light of these other passages unless there is some compelling reason to do otherwise. There is none. In regards to the second question, the preposition *en* should be taken as an instrumental (it is in the dative case). The Holy Spirit is the means by which the filling takes place. This does not eliminate the personal involvement of the believer. “Be filled” is imperative in force and must be obeyed. It is also passive (the subject is being acted upon). The Christian is allowing (permissive passive) the Holy Spirit to rule in his heart and life rather than wine. The *fullness* is the result of permitting the Holy Spirit to lead or guide one’s life. This is life in the Spirit. The result is a life lived under the influence of the Holy Spirit rather than intoxicating drink. This is the first requirement in worship that God approves! The *filling* is moral and spiritual. The *filling* is not miraculous. A miraculous filling is accomplished by the power of God through an exercise of His will. This *filling* is the result of a Christian’s will to allow the Holy Spirit to guide his life and influence him in spiritual ways.

Paul may have had the Dionysian festivals in mind as he wrote these words. Cleon Rogers develops the religious aspects of drunkenness in his article on “The Dionysian Background of Ephesians 5:18” (cf. 249-57). Rogers suggests that the worship of

Dionysus may provide the background for this strong prohibition by Paul. After giving some of the characteristics of the festival of Dionysus, he states:

The purpose of the intoxication by wine and also the chewing of ivy, as well as the eating of raw animal flesh, was to have Dionysus enter the body of the worshiper and fill him with “enthusiasm” or the spirit of the god. Dionysus was to possess and control such ones so that they were united with him and partook of his strength, wisdom, and abilities. This resulted in the person doing the will of the deity (either willingly or unwillingly) and having the ability to speak inspired prophecy, and was often thought to be the source of artistic or poetic ability.

While we do not know for certain that Paul had these festivals in mind, the passage would certainly apply to these types of religious activities and any other practice that would bring a Christian under the control of something other than the will of God.

The word “excess” in this passage refers to one who is dissolute, debauched, or profligate in manner of life. It does not refer to the quantity of wine consumed. Some have attempted to defend social drinking based upon this misunderstanding of the passage. The imperative “be not drunk with wine” strongly forbids the *entire process* of becoming inebriated from the first drink to the last (see *Therefore Stand*, April 1999, for an article on the Greek word *methusko*).

There are seven notable contrasts in this passage of Scripture. First, there is a contrast in the commands themselves. The first is negative (be not drunk) and the second is positive (be filled with). The first is a prohibition that eliminates the process whereby a person becomes drunk. The second is a positive command to allow oneself to be controlled by the Spirit. One of the ways that we allow the Spirit to fill our life occurs when we participate in worship that is spiritual in nature rather than carnal, sensual and devilish (the Dionysian festivals).

A second contrast is the distinction between the flesh and the spirit. Alcoholic beverages can satisfy the flesh. They also destroy the flesh. However, the Spirit of God can rightly satisfy the spirit of men. The hunger of the soul must be satisfied by an adequate and appropriate source. Only God is such a source. Only God can satisfy the spiritual hunger of man in a way that guarantees the salvation of the soul.

A third contrast is the difference between wine and Spirit. Both phrases, “with wine” and “with the Spirit” are in the dative case. Instrumentality is indicated by this grammatical form. Intoxicating beverages such as wine are strongly condemned in Scripture (Prov. 23:29-35). Being filled spiritually with righteousness, joy, and peace is highly recommended (Matt. 5:6; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:1; Philip. 4:7).

A fourth contrast is between indulgence and self-control. The process whereby one becomes intoxicated is characterized by indulgence of fleshly appetites. This is clearly indicated in Luke 12:45 as well as Ephesians 5:18. Self-control is demanded by a Spirit-filled life. Our will is involved in doing God’s Will.

A fifth contrast is between debauchery and holiness. Inebriation produces an immoral life. The Spirit produces holiness. Without holiness, no one will see God (Heb. 12:14).

A sixth contrast is between condemnation and salvation. The result of debauchery is condemnation before God. The Greek word *asotia* is translated *excess* (KJV). The word denotes, “one who himself cannot save or spare, thus one who extravagantly squanders his means. Then it chiefly denoted a dissolute, debauched, profligate manner of living” (Rogers, *Exegetical Key* 444). On the other hand, being filled with the Spirit is the way of salvation. The former constitutes sin and leads to further sin. The latter promotes righteousness and leads near to God.

A seventh contrast is found in verse 17 of Ephesians 5 and relates to verse 18. It is the contrast between wisdom and folly. Foolish men seek to indulge the flesh with wine and cloud their judgment thereby. Wise men seek to understand and know the Will of God. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). Jesus

said, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man...” (Matt. 7:24).

Being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit are not compatible. Ephesians 5:18 involves two commands. If both are obeyed, strong drink will be eliminated as an influence in the life of a Christian, whereas the Spirit of God will exert a powerful influence!

Sacred Music in Worship

Twenty words (in the English text--KJV) are recorded by Paul in Ephesians 5:19. They are significant words. He writes, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.”

There are three present participles in this passage: speaking (*lalountes*); singing (*aidontes*); and making melody (*psallontes*). The present participle is a verbal adjective that denotes continuous action that is contemporaneous with the action of the main verb. These present participles partake of the imperative force of the main verb found in verse 18 (be filled). They modify the subject of the imperative and thus describe the condition of those who are filled with the Spirit (Lenski 619). These participles are essential, not optional. The first two involve verbal expression (speaking and singing). The third (making melody) is used figuratively in this passage. Delling states, “The literal sense ‘by or with the playing of strings,’ still found in the LXX, is now employed figuratively” (499). Westcott comments, “The outward music was to be accompanied by the inward music of the heart” (82). The word *psallo* does not authorize instrumental music in worship. The word is followed by a prepositional phrase, “in your heart” (*en tē kardia*) which is in the dative (instrumental) case in the Greek indicating the means by which the *psalloing* is done. The instrument is the heart! The Greek word *psallo* is applied among modern Greeks today exclusively to sacred music, which in the Eastern church has never been any other than vocal (McClintock and Strong 739).

“Yourselves” is translated from the Greek word *heautois*. This word is a reflexive pronoun that is used reciprocally. It indicates

mutual edification. Dana and Mantey, in *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, state: “When a plural subject is represented as affected by an interchange of the action signified in the verb, it is called a reciprocal construction...” The New Testament uses three methods for the expression of this idiom. The first is the reciprocal pronoun *allelous*. The second is the reflexive pronoun. The third is the middle voice (131, 132). Singing is for the purpose of praising God, but it is also for mutual edification, i.e. teaching and admonishing one another (Col. 3:16).

The next phrase of interest is “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Paul uses a similar phrase in Colossians 3:16. What is the meaning of each of these words? It is difficult to distinguish among them. *Psalms* is a reference to Old Testament Psalms (inspired) and perhaps even some New Testament psalms (1 Cor. 14:26; James 5:13). *Hymns* seem to indicate songs of praise, thanksgiving and devotion. The phrase *spiritual songs* is a general reference to religious poems that are set to music and sung in worship. All of these songs were vocal expressions. Some contend that *psalms* includes mechanical musical instruments. However, a brief study of this word shows that this is not the case. The only two writers of the New Testament to use this word are Luke and Paul. In every instance that Luke uses the word in the New Testament, he refers to the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. Paul uses the word as part of the musical vocabulary of the New Testament. The word *psalmos* occurs seven times in the Greek New Testament (Luke 10:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). *Psalmos* is a noun that describes the *content* of the songs sung in Christian worship. The word **does not** refer to the *means* by which the songs were *presented* in worship. The participles in Ephesians 5:19 do indicate the means, i.e. *speaking* and *singing* both of which are *verbal* expressions and *making melody* which is used figuratively of playing the strings of the heart! There is absolutely no proof for the use of mechanical instruments of music from the use of the word *psalmos* by Paul in any text of the New Testament. The voice expresses the psalms with the heart as the instrument. Remember, the Psalms could be

read as well as sung. When they were read, they did not have to be accompanied with instruments of music.

Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs refer to the content or lyrics vocally expressed. All were spiritual in nature. All could be sung using the heart as the instrument. Secular and profane songs should never be used in worship.

The last phrase to be considered in this passage is a prepositional phrase “to the Lord.” In this phrase we find the words *tōi kuriōi* (the Lord—the definite article used with *kurios*). Who is addressed here? Is it Christ or God? Nigel Turner remarks, “As a general rule it may be said that for Paul *ho kurios*=Christ, and *kurios*=Yahweh...” (174). Zerwick agrees, “For Paul *ho kurios* is Christ, *Kurios* Yahweh” (54). This is clear proof that Jesus can be addressed in song during Christian worship. The fact that *aidō* (singing, in Eph. 5:19) is used only of God (Vine 35) is another proof of the deity of Christ!

Ephesians 5:19 is clearly a reference to corporate worship. In this worship, the Godhead is praised and Christians are edified. Singing and making melody are essential aspects of worship. The songs may be directed to either God the Father, or Jesus Christ, but especially are they addressed to Jesus Christ. The voice and heart are the instruments whereby God is praised. The songs sung are to be scriptural and spiritual. They are not to be secular or profane. The songs sung may be inspired or uninspired (yet scriptural and spiritual). The sacred music of the church is designed to bring the soul closer to God and be an adequate means of expressing the faith of Christians in worship. It is designed to bring Christians closer together and is an expression of the unity of the church. In song, the spirit, voice and understanding are combined in a unified chorus of praise to God.

Always Giving Thanks

In Ephesians 5:20, Paul continues to add to the previous thoughts connecting them with another present participle, *giving thanks*. Paul says, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The participle, once again, derives its force from the main verb in verse

18, “be filled.” Giving thanks is an important concept and act of devotion for Paul. The phrase *giving thanks* is translated from the Greek word *eucharistountes* (from *eucharisteo*). *Eucharisteo* is found a total of thirty-nine times in the New Testament. Paul uses this term twenty-five times (159). *Eucharisteo* is used almost exclusively in the New Testament of thanksgiving to God. Paul freely recognizes that God is the ultimate source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). The rich blessings of God produce humility and gratefulness in the heart of a Christian. These blessings overwhelm the heart of those receiving them and create an opportunity for the recipient to become a channel of blessing to others. Pride slays gratitude. Beware of pride, one of the seven abominations recorded by Solomon (Prov. 6:16, 17). A humble heart acknowledges God’s graciousness and goodness.

The word *eucharisteo* is used in the absolute sense in Ephesians 5:20. How do we express thanksgiving? There are several ways. We can thank God in word, song, prayer or in our daily living. The Christian life is a *sacrifice to God* that should be a continual fountain of thanksgiving to God (Rom. 12:1, 2). Thanksgiving is an integral part of public worship and private devotion to God. Thanksgiving is a part of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:24). The Lord’s Supper connects thanksgiving with remembrance. The sacred memory of the redemptive acts of Christ upon the cross must live in the minds and hearts of the saints of God. The frequency of the Lord’s Supper is a constant reminder of our indebtedness to God. Thanksgiving provides motivation for deeper love and greater service in the kingdom of God. Thanksgiving was an integral part of the prayers offered in the public assembly (1 Cor. 14:16). Thanksgiving was also expressed in song (Eph. 5:19, 20). Thanksgiving should be a part of the private prayers of God’s people (1 Tim. 4:3, 4; 1 Tim. 2:1; 1 Thess. 5:18). As Paul instructs, give thanks always for all things.

Both God, the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ are mentioned. Paul referenced the Holy Spirit in verse 18. Thus, the Godhead is represented fully and adequately in Paul’s thoughts and words. Sacred worship is rendered by God’s saints to all three members that comprise the Godhead which expresses a unity of essence,

mind, intent, love and purpose in behalf of man’s redemption. Christianity is a monotheistic religion. Worship by the redeemed is homage paid to Deity as expressed in this monotheistic religion. When we worship, we worship one God in three distinct persons.

The phrase, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, captures the self-revelation of the second person of the Godhead. It expresses His Lordship, His Person, and His Messiahship. Through this person, man’s redemption has been secured. The greatest blessings are found in Him and through Him (Eph. 1:3). This spiritual sphere is captured by Paul’s words, “in Christ.”

The title, *Lord Jesus Christ*, is used by Paul sixty-seven times in the New Testament. Paul uses the phrase in every salutation in his epistles except 2 Timothy and Hebrews. In 2 Timothy, we have an alternate designation, “Christ Jesus our Lord.” The phrase does not occur in Hebrews. Paul uses the phrase, *Lord Jesus Christ*, in nearly all the closing statements in his epistles. Paul magnifies the name of Jesus and raises the level of understanding of who Jesus is by this tremendously important phrase in the New Testament. By this name alone, we can affirm that Jesus is worthy of our praise, adoration and worship!

Submitting Some to Others

Ephesians 5:21 is a transitional verse. Paul, by the Holy Spirit, declares, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” *Submitting* is the fifth participle to occur in the section under consideration (Eph. 5:18-21). This word is translated from the Greek word *hupotassomenoi* (from *hupotasso*). This is a unique word in the Greek New Testament. A debt is owed to Todd Deaver who wrote an excellent article on Ephesians 5:21 several years ago that appeared in *Biblical Notes Quarterly* (12-14). The article dealt with the force of *hupotasso* in the New Testament. This word always indicates *unilateral authority* in every occurrence in the New Testament. Thayer gives the following definition of the term in the middle voice, “to subject one’s self, to obey; to submit to one’s control; to yield to one’s admonition or advice” (645). *Hupotassomenoi* is a present middle participle (Wigram 419). The middle voice in Greek means that the subject

is participating in some way in the results of the action. The force of the middle in the term *hupotassomenoi* is that the subject is willingly and freely submitting to the other person. The meaning of *hupotasso* indicates that one person has more authority than the other. From Ephesians 5:22-6:9, there are three areas that are considered. Each of these areas touches on family life: husbands and wives; parents and children and masters and servants. Each of these relationships involves unilateral authority. The wife *hupotasso's* her husband but her husband does not *hupotasso* her! Likewise with parents and children and masters and servants. Note the order and flow of authority. The same holds true with Christ and the church. The church *hupotasso's* Christ, but Christ does not *hupotasso* the church! In none of these relationships is the submission reversed!

Ephesians 5:21, has the reciprocal pronoun *allelous*. Generally, this term indicates a reciprocal relationship, *one to another*. However, there are instances in the New Testament where this word means, “some to others.” Consider the following passages: Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 11:33 and Revelation 6:4. The word *hupotasso* with its distinctive meaning gives us a compelling reason to adopt a secondary meaning for *allelous* in this passage.

As a transition verse, Ephesians 5:21 goes with the preceding passages, while at the same time, introducing a new thought concerning submission that Paul continues to develop in the passages following and ending with Ephesians 6:9. The obvious meaning of “submitting to one another” is that some of the members must willingly submit to others who possess greater authority than they do. Eph. 5:21 does not teach mutual submission. However, the concept of mutual submission is taught in other passages in the New Testament (Philip. 2:3, 4).

The submission demanded by Eph. 5:21 is connected to the main verb of verse 18 (be filled). This means that the submission rendered is done under the influence of the Holy Spirit as He specifies in the directives given in God’s Word.

This submission is rendered in the fear of God. It originates in the proper attitude toward God. The utmost respect and reverence for God produces it. Lenski states, “This is not the dread of Christ,

our Judge, but the loving and devoted reverence of God, our Savior, which is ever seeking to do ‘what is well-pleasing to the Lord’” (624). The whole tenor of our worship to God must be guided by this holy reverence for His Name and a desire to do what the Will of God declares.

When man’s desire is to please himself rather than God, worship becomes vain! Both attitudes and actions on man’s part are corrupted and no longer acceptable to God. Why destroy the sacred worship of Jehovah with will worship? Don’t we fear God? Render to God that which God requires and all will be well with our worship and with our soul!

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Biographical Sketch

David was born April 19, 1956, at Barrackville, WV (Marion County). He is the son of Earl and Vonda Stevens of Fairmont, WV. He was baptized into Christ May 3, 1969, and began preaching at the age of 15

He graduated from St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV, in 1974. He furthered his training at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg Community College and Fairmont State College, Fairmont, WV. He has also completed a Masters in Science in Ministry from Southern Christian University, Montgomery, AL (1999).

On Jan. 7, 1978, he married Kathy Stewart of St. Marys, WV. They have two children: Rachel Lynn and Scott Andrew.

David began preaching in July of 1971 at Mooresville, WV, in a meeting held with his dad (Earl) and his brother (Steve). He has held full-time works at New Lexington, OH (1978-1991), and Groveport, OH (1991 to the present).

He writes a monthly article entitled "Gems from the Greek" for *Therefore Stand*, edited by Terry Varner. Also, January 1, 1997, he became the associate editor of *Therefore Stand*.

He published a book with his father and brother in 1995 entitled, *100 Years Preaching*.

When I See The Blood

Ephesians 1:7; 2:13

Dan Kessinger



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Christ our Redeemer, died on the cross,
Died for the sinner, paid all his due;
All who receive Him need never fear, yes,
He will pass, will pass over you.

Chiefest of sinners Jesus can save,
As He had promised, so will He do;
O sinner, hear Him, trust in His word,
Then He will pass, will pass over you.

Judgment is coming, All will be there,
Who have rejected, who have refused,
O sinner, hasten, let Jesus in,
Then God will pass, will pass over you.

O what compassion, O boundless love,
Jesus hath power, Jesus is true;
All who obey are safe from the storm,
O He will pass, will pass over you.

(Chorus) When I see the blood, When I see the blood,
When I see the blood, I will pass, I will pass over you.

-- John G Foote (1892)

There are probably more hymns on the topic of blood than the typical worshiper suspects, as can be verified by a quick perusal of a songbook's topical index. To one unfamiliar with the New Testament's doctrine of blood redemption, this might seem an oddity. Blood would usually signify death and heartache rather than joy and hope. But to the Christian, and indeed for the Old Testament Jew, blood was hope.

The lyricist, John G. Foote, had borrowed an Old Testament phrase full of power as he wrote of New Testament blood salvation. Many sing "I will pass over you," but are they fully aware of the impact and origin of that phrase? Is it possible that some do not know who first said "when I see the blood, I will pass over you"? God Himself was the author of that statement, and it was said in reference to sparing lives from His own destroying hand.

The tenth plague differed from the previous ones. The first nine had brought extreme discomfort and had destroyed livestock, and agriculture, but the tenth threatened to kill all the firstborn males in Egypt. These included the firstborn male of the livestock and the people. It also differed in that God gave instructions concerning how one might escape from its consequences. In previous plagues, God had protected the Hebrews by deliberately sparing Goshen, the land of their Egyptian residence. But to avoid the ravages of this plague, they were required to perform a definite act of obedience. This action would not only signal their faith in God's warnings and conditions, but would also preach a powerful sermon on God's grace in the coming hour of deliverance by blood. Exodus 12:13 reads "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." Note the use of "pass over," meaning that God would spare those who otherwise were destined for destruction. Thus to "pass over" means to graciously spare. Otherwise, God was poised as a weapon with a hair trigger, to destroy. Even among the Hebrews, to disobey God in this matter meant certain death for the firstborn.

As the Jews celebrated the Passover each year, they were actually commemorating how God spared them from this widespread death. Their Passover meal was eaten in a way that reminded the diners of the hasty last meal in Egypt; it reminded them that by this plague they were freed from bondage. But even its name was a reminder that through a lamb's blood, lives were spared. God passed over those who had applied the blood.

The New Testament connection to Jesus Christ and His sacrifice can scarcely be overstated. First Peter 1:18-19 reads, "[K]nowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Even more directly, Paul calls Christ "our Passover" in 1 Corinthians 5:7: "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." Through the Passover, the Jews unwittingly predicted the sacrifice of Jesus some 1,500 times.

As one contemplates the power of blood revealed in Ephesians 1:7; 2:13, he must surely agree with the lyrics of a hymn sung by generations. Indeed, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. This study will borrow un-apologetically from this hymn, as it expresses sentiments more skillfully and poetically than those of which this writer is capable.

Christ our Redeemer, Died on the Cross

In Ephesians 1:7-10 we learn the price of redemption—blood. It is not just any blood, and certainly not animal blood. The Old Testament sacrifices taught the worshiper that imperfect sacrifices were not acceptable sacrifices. Through Christ we learn that this requirement meant more than ever was suspected by any who offered lambs. As 1 Peter 1:18-19 dramatically states, we were not redeemed with earthly things, and not even of a perfect lamb, but of *THE* perfect lamb. His perfection was not physical, but moral and spiritual perfection.

As most any Bible student has been informed, to redeem is to buy back. Typically we think of secular redemption as having to

do with the buying back of things. However the redemption of investments or objects does not really picture nor illustrate how Christ's blood redeems. The Old Testament had many laws governing redemption of various things, including everything from real estate to livestock. But the kind of redemption of which we read in Ephesians 1:7 demanded a better illustration than these. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Redeemed property has neither moral value nor agency: no land ever sold itself nor pined because it had been sold. While the lamb of redemption also had no say in the procedure, its blood provides one facet of the picture of redemption, especially when one combines his contemplation of the lamb with the redemption of slaves.

What is the connection between the slave's redemption and that discussed here? Marvin Vincent wrote that the word "redemption" contains the word "ransom" (42-43). Thus even the wording of the text seems to demand a more sobering redemption than that pertaining to property. Even if the language did not conjure images of human redemption, the reality of first-century life would have done so. The readers of Paul's letter were quite familiar with slaves and redemption.

Many slaves, both those under Moses' covenant and those in the Roman empire, were slaves because of financial difficulties. In this respect it differed from the American slavery. It is difficult to imagine choosing slavery over freedom, but economic realities have wrought slavery throughout history. While slaves could be redeemed, it was unlikely that they could do so. After all, if the money were available, why would one choose slavery over freedom? And if resources were available from a loved one, why would the potential savior delay his generosity until one were enslaved? Despite the contrasts between these ancient forms of slavery and the kind that utterly de-humanizes the slave, it must be remembered that slavery is always a most pitiable condition.

Sinners are spiritual slaves, but not as livestock or real estate. They have sold themselves. Romans 7:14 reads, "For we know that

the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." Those slaves cannot buy their freedom; friends and relations are equally powerless to redeem because they too are slaves. They have no resources to share. What makes Jesus the great Redeemer is that He is both able and willing to pay the redemptive price. Had the price been money, Jesus would have paid it. Had it been time or honor, He also would have willingly paid. Jesus had focused His entire existence into doing whatever was demanded of Him by God. And His essence was redemption.

The rest of this section is devoted to the knowledge of the great plan of redemption. The Redeemer wants the redeemed to know how (by Jesus' blood) they were redeemed. The redeemed ought to know why (Divine grace and good pleasure) they were redeemed. The redeemed are even made aware of the vastness of the plan of the Father in making redemption a reality, how that the plan was conceived before creation (Eph. 1:4) and brought to fruition at a time deliberately selected in Heaven. The birth, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus was chosen with great precision by God. It has been stated that the theme of the Old Testament was "Someone is coming," of the Gospels, "Someone is here," and of the rest of the New Testament "Someone has come." More pointedly, the New Covenant demonstrates that the theme of both the Mosaic and Patriarchal dispensations was the coming of Jesus Christ. It was truly the fullness of times, the time of the gathering together of all things in the plan of God. Ephesians 1:7-10 is a sobering reminder that God had always intended to redeem by blood. The reader must reflect on the price of that redemption. When I see the blood, I remember the Redeemer.

Judgment Is Coming, All Will Be There

In the next section, verses 11-23, the reader finds the promise of hope for those who have seen the blood and reacted to it. The faithful, those who have applied the blood, have confidence in being "passed over" by the destroyer at the Judgment. In the text, their faithfulness is discussed in two ways, both connected with "inheritance." "Inheritance" is found explicitly in verses 11, 14,

and 18, while the theme runs throughout verses 11-19. A future inheritance awaits the Christian, but being an heir impacts one's life today. This is the power of hope for one who has been cleansed.

Judgment usually implies a threat; indeed it is retribution and punishment. But God's judgment is also a vindication, the time of inheritance for the faithful. This contrast is clearly set forth:

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:6-8)

Note the contrast between the repayment received by those currently troubled, and their troublemakers. The reader of Ephesians chapter one is likewise informed that his faithfulness will be rewarded; an inheritance awaits him. For the heir of God, judgment is no threat, but is a promise.

Though the heirs have not yet inherited, they are nonetheless heirs. Their future status, and their measure of trust in it, will determine their current choices in life. Perhaps this helps us to understand exactly how hope saves one (Rom. 8:24). To proclaim hope in a future inheritance no more saves one than does faith alone. Real hope saves people by affecting their view of themselves, and thus the decisions they make. Hope in Christ leads men to live, not as those who live for this life alone. Those who hope make godly commitments that they otherwise would forego.

In verses 13-14, the Holy Spirit is said to have been given in view of coming inheritance. He is the "guarantee" (NKJV et. al), "earnest" (KJV et. al), or "pledge." Vincent wrote, "It means caution money, deposited by a purchaser in pledge of full payment" (204). "Deposit" (NIV; ESV footnote) might be today's

closest parallel, since the use of "earnest" as a down-payment has fallen out of fashion.

In what sense is the Holy Spirit the guarantee of our inheritance? The conclusions one reaches probably depend to some degree on his view of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Many commentaries and dictionaries are quick to define the concept of the guarantee, but seem reluctant to specifically address *how* the Holy Spirit is such a down payment.

In the spiritual sense, as used in the passages above named, the reference is to the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts being a token and pledge of a perfect redemption and a heavenly inheritance. There is more than the idea of security in the word as used, for it clearly implies the continuity and identity of the blessing. (Schenk 886-87)

The Greek derivative, however, acquired a more technical sense as signifying the *deposit* paid by the purchaser on entering into an agreement for the purchase of anything. In the New Testament the word is used to signify the pledge or earnest of the superior blessings of the future life. (Smith 153).

Robertson also, while affirming that the Holy Spirit is a down payment to the Christian (already stated explicitly in the text), failed to address how this down payment is manifested (519-20). Gill, in *The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible*, at least attempted an answer, writing that this promise is fulfilled in the literal presence of the Holy Spirit within the Christian.

... [F]or this sealing work of his leaves a greater impress of holiness upon the soul, and engages more to acts of holiness; wherefore the doctrine of assurance is no licentious doctrine; no persons are so holy as those who are truly possessed of that grace; and as for such who pretend unto it, and live in sin, it is a certain thing that they in reality know nothing of it.

If the literal presence of the Holy Spirit is in fact the guarantee, than the inheritance must be the more complete Divine presence in Heaven. Gill realized this, and his conclusion is consistent with his previous proposition.

. . . [H]e is the firstfruits of eternal glory and happiness, and of the same kind with it; and as he is enjoyed in measure by the saints now, is lesser than the communion which they shall have with him, and with the Father, and the Son, hereafter, for the best things are reserved till last; and being once given into the heart as an earnest, he always continues, he never removes more, or is ever taken away. . .

But this view creates more problems. How can an unseen, unfelt presence be a guarantee of anything? Unless one is referring to first century miracles, we wonder exactly how the Holy Spirit's presence could be evidence of anything at all.

But another concept is being discussed here in Ephesians chapter one that does emanate from the Holy Spirit that is available for all converts, that was true and consistent for both Jew and Gentile, and that did not end at the first century. It is hope. This conclusion, that the hope of an inheritance is itself the beginning of the reward, seems at first glance to be awkward and contrived. Closer examination reveals that it satisfies the problems of other interpretations, and is most harmonious with the context. Can hope be considered both a condition of salvation and the beginning of the inheritance?

Concerning inheritance, the Holy Spirit Himself is the author of our knowledge of it. The Spirit has revealed the conditions whereby we may have hope. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16). It is a gift, in that the evidence of and reasons for hope have been revealed. It is a requirement in that the heir has decided to hope based on this evidence, and to live for that hoped for.

But it seems circular to think that hoping for a waiting inheritance guarantees that very inheritance. But the Hebrews

writer utilized a similar description of faith in Heb 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hope seen as substance is only a semi-circular thought. The believer's hope has already changed his life on this Earth. His view of his own existence has changed. Since his life and future are controlled by God, he has already begun to triumph, even in the worst of circumstances. He is able to face troubles and temptations because he is no pauper, but an heir of God. We maintain that hope is more real than is often recognized. To the believer, hope is the down-payment on the blessings of the future.

Hendriksen presented a similar view, though he specifically cited the fruits of the Spirit as the guarantee of our future inheritance. This view is also anti-intuitive, as it cites things originating in the heir as evidence of the inheritance. But as in the case of hope, closer examination reminds one of the true source of such things. One is also reminded of the true joy found in service. Hendriksen wrote of the gifts of the Spirit "They are a foretaste of future ineffable bliss" (92). There is very little difference between these views.

Adding weight to this conclusion is the fact that Paul's prayer for these Ephesians included his desire that they might find a stronger hope through "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints..." (Eph. 1:17b-18). The rest of the chapter is devoted to the importance of knowing Jesus as a triumphant Savior who is able to fulfill His promises. When I see the blood, I remember that it purchased an inheritance. I am an heir, and that Judgment Day is also a day of inheritance in which we hope today.

Chiefest of Sinners, Jesus Can Save

In Ephesians 2:1-7 we are confronted with the great triumph of the redeemed race. The text gives us an undeniable contrast between man's unredeemed state and that wrought by redeeming blood. We were dead (v. 1); we belonged to the Earth and thus to

the devil himself (v. 2); we lived according to our personal desires (v. 3). The case against the Gentiles was made even more stridently in verses 11-13. The heirs of hope in Christ are contrasted against a vast sea of humanity, utterly without hope.

After having painted a picture of utter despair in verses 1-3, Ephesians 2:4 changes the picture as quickly and completely as it could possibly be changed. With but two words, the despairing are given the gift of hope, the ostracized are granted fellowship, those in darkness see a glimmer of light, and the damned are offered blood-bought redemption. The text begins, “But God...”

The utter hopelessness of a world without God’s intervention is clearly seen in the text. How could one be more hopeless than dead? Those unredeemed by blood suffer from a corrupted nature. While “nature” (v. 3) may express an inborn or genetic condition, it fails to do so here. Instead it refers to “disposition,” “constitution,” “usage” (Strong 77). Man’s corrupt nature is no more evidence of being born in sin than a corrupt world is evidence that God created it so (v. 2). But it does emphasize how completely lost one is outside of Christ.

How does God accomplish redemption? He has already given the gift, and He also gives the order that the blood be applied. Just as in the case of the original Passover, the gift was given with both a price and a condition. In order to be passed over, one had to kill the lamb and apply the blood. “And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.” (Ex. 12:7). Under the auspices of the New Covenant, God has offered His lamb. Those who would be passed over must apply the blood. “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Rom. 3:24-25). In the text above, also drawing freely from the Passover concept, God is shown to freely justify by grace. While this grace is given freely, it costs God and His Son a great deal. It also is conditioned upon the faith of the redeemed.

Since the concept originated in the Passover, let us consult that evening in Egypt for clarification. As a Jewish father, how did one avoid the consequences of the tenth plague? Having received the orders for applying the blood, he simply applied it. Would a sane father proclaim his faith in the blood while failing to apply it? Would he call the applying of blood a work, thus negating God’s grace in the matter? Few if any would find such behavior anything other than evidence of faithlessness in the God who had given the condition of salvation.

Today, religious people piously announce that to obey the Gospel is quite different from being saved by faith. They say they believe, but they refuse to apply the blood. According to Romans 6:3, God has designated baptism as the means by which He applies the power of the death of Christ (and thus His blood) to the believer. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” Calvinists object to the doctrine of baptism as a necessity, because God saves by grace and not works. One wonders whether such theologians would have applied the blood, had they been in Egypt, or whether they would have prayed an ancient form of the Sinner’s Prayer instead!

The blood is sufficient to cleanse all sin, thus cleansing the vilest of sinners, thus cleansing even me. Our own powerlessness is made clear in God’s passing over condemned sinners, but only those who have applied the blood. Those who have applied the blood have been bought by blood, since Christ paid the price. The blood redeems each and every time it is applied. When I see the blood, I am reminded that it redeems even “chiefest of sinners...” like me.

O, What Compassion, O Boundless Love

In Ephesians 2:8-13, we are reminded of the love, compassion, and grace bestowed through blood. In the years following the Passover, Israel was reminded of the gift of God by their laws and rituals. One such law (closely connected with the Passover) served as a reminder that the firstborn of each family had all been

purchased by God. This was not just true of the generation of Egypt, but of all the firstborn of subsequent generations.

That you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD'S. "But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What is this? That you shall say to him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem." (Ex. 13:12-15)

Not coincidentally, the firstborn, both of livestock and people, were to be redeemed as a reminder that they had been spared. Though those new generations had not been under the specific threat of the tenth plague, their lives were to be redeemed nonetheless. Why was this to be continued? The night on which God "passed over," the faithful of Israel had created an unpayable debt. It held a lasting significance. God had not just saved the firstborn, but claimed ownership of them in perpetuity. But later in Numbers 3:40-51, God traded ownership of the firstborn for ownership of Levites who would be His special servants. "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the LORD" (Num. 3:45). Even the specificity of the trade emphasizes how important the law of the redemption of the firstborn was. Since there were 273 more firstborn than Levites, those remaining unredeemed firstborn had to be redeemed with money. Even one non-redeemed person

would be too many (Num. 3:40-51). God is quite specific about the debts owed to Him. Yet he devised a plan to redeem each individual by grace. All are accounted for in His plan.

Through the course of 1,500 years, faithful Jewish fathers were responsible for the sacrifice of a lamb each Passover. It was ostensibly an act of cruelty, given the details of the sacrifice. In Exodus 12:3, God gave the law governing the selection of the lamb for the Passover "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.'" Note that the lamb was selected for each family on the tenth day of the first month in the Jewish calendar. But the lamb was not sacrificed on the same day that it was selected and taken from among the flock. In Exodus 12:6 "Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight." This is not the Yom Kippur sacrifice, in which but one lamb was killed in a rite of atonement for the nation. Each family (except for the very poor who could share lamb) was responsible for its own Passover lamb.

What happens to a lamb in one's home for four days? Even if the children are warned against it, it inevitably becomes a pet of sorts. Even the adults learn to appreciate the appealing qualities of a lamb, qualities that no doubt were not coincidental in its Divine selection as a sacrifice. There is nothing quite as helpless and trusting as a lamb. Then on the fifth day, this helpless visitor is to be killed.

Why did God require this? The killing of lambs in general was a sobering reminder of the great Bible principle first suggested in Genesis 9:4, "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood." Life is blood, and God's symbol of life is blood. Since sin brings death (James 1:15), the reality of sin demanded death. The blood of the lamb was a sobering reminder of what sin really is. We take sin so lightly, joking about it, minimizing it in ourselves, capriciously excusing it in friends, while condemning it among our enemies. Only when sin offends or harms us personally do we seem to have a glimmer of understanding concerning its true

nature. God is not capricious, and He desires that we more closely emulate His attitude toward sin. The Christian must come to the realization that all sin is ultimately deadly; including his own. Our own indiscretions are not to be ignored or excused. Even repentance of sin fails to erase the great fact that sin begets death.

The Passover lamb's cruel death was a type and foreshadowing of Jesus. As the generations rolled, the faithful from Abel onward continued to kill innocent lambs. These lambs reminded them of their own guilt, but they also foretold a great and terrible event. Each lamb proclaimed to the world what finally was observed through the eyes of John. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29). The essence of God's grace in His willingness to "pass over" and spare those destined for death was never really captured in a lamb's death. Those deaths only illustrated the real sacrifice.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). In a way that the Jewish worshiper never could really grasp, our eyes have been turned toward an evening of unrelenting grace through cruelty. It was no bleating lamb that died, but the Lamb of God. Was it difficult to fulfill this responsibility? To sacrifice a lamb was nothing compared with what God was prepared to do. Like no other people, the child of God is encouraged to see the blood as God saw it in Egypt. He saw not the blood of a stupid lamb, but the blood of His son. When I see the blood, I remember that God will "pass over" those who have applied it. He will do so because of His boundless compassion and love.

I will pass, I will pass over you.

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Biographical Sketch

Dan is the son of Doris and the late Bob Kessinger, and was reared in Roane County, WV. He was educated in Roane County schools, receiving higher education at Ohio Valley College. He and his wife, the former Mary Amy West, have two boys, D. J., and Thomas.

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In addition to his local work (including a weekly radio program), Dan conducts Gospel meetings and appears on lecture programs each year. He is a frequent contributor to religious journals, and is the author of *A Cloak of Malice*. He has worked with West Virginia Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and with West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

The Glorious Head Of The Church

Ephesians 1:15-23

Winford Claiborne

Introduction

There are many different attitudes toward the church of the living God. Our premillennial friends believe the church is an afterthought, a contingency plan. They believe God originally planned to establish His kingdom, as many of the Old Testament prophets predicted. But because the Jews rejected their king, God could not establish His kingdom. Instead, He established the church. According to that view, we are living in the “church age”—not the kingdom age. Premillennialists are still waiting for the kingdom. Millions of Americans do not believe the church has anything to do with salvation. They argue that one does not have to be in any church to be saved. Others argue that one church is just as good as another. If they mean that one denomination is just as good as another, I would not disagree. Since Jesus Christ promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18), is any church as good as His church? Is it possible for the one true church to exist? If all denominations belong to Christ, we have a serious problem with the law of non-contradiction.

An Analysis of Our Text

The book of Ephesians has more to say about the church of our Lord than any other New Testament book. The apostle Paul uses the husband-wife relationship to teach us about Christ’s relationship to His bride, the church of the living God. He commands wives to be in subjection to their own husbands. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body.” Husbands must love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it. Our Lord’s death was intended to sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of water by the word, “that he might present it to

himself as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:22-27).

The word “present” (*paristemi*: literally, to place beside) is the kind of language we would use in speaking of presenting a bride to her husband. Paul uses the same word in his second letter to the Corinthians. “For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). Is it possible Paul could have been referring to the words of the prophet Hosea? “For I will betroth you unto me forever; yea, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will betroth you unto me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord” (Hos. 2:19-20).

The word “glorious” (*endoxon*) shows the value of the church to God almighty and to His faithful children. This Greek word appears only four times in the New Testament. Luke uses the word of men in king’s courts who are dressed *gorgeously* (Luke 7:25). Luke also uses the word of the attitude of the people toward our Lord’s mighty works. “Then when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him” (Luke 13:17). Paul explains what he means by “glorious”: “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Those who are not being continually cleansed by the blood of Christ will not gloriously be presented to God at the end of the age (1 John 1:7).

The Price Paid for the Church

How can serious Bible students think of the church as non-essential in view of the price Christ paid for the church? Paul affirms that Christ “gave himself for the church” (Eph. 5:25). The King James Version uses the word “gave,” but the Greek means to give up or to give over. The Greek *paradidomi* appears two other times in Ephesians. Paul spoke of those who were past feeling who had “given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all

uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19). Paul admonished the Ephesian Christians: “Be followers of God, as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Eph. 5:1-2).

In his powerful address to the elders of the Lord’s church in Ephesus, Paul commanded them: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The verb “has purchased” (*peripoiesin*) means to reserve or to preserve for oneself. It is the verb form of the word translated “peculiar” (1 Peter 2:9). The expression means a people for God’s own possession. If the church is not essential for our salvation, would that devalue the blood of Jesus Christ?

All Spiritual Blessings in the Church

If the Bible said nothing else about the importance of the church, the fact that all spiritual blessings are in the church should be sufficient to show how absolutely necessary the church is for our salvation. The church is glorious because in it are the blessings of “election” or being chosen (Eph. 1:4), adoption (Eph. 1:5), redemption through Christ’s blood and the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), inheritance (Eph. 1:11), reconciliation (Eph. 2:11-17) and salvation (Eph. 5:23). If all spiritual blessings are in Christ, that is, in His church, does it not follow that we must be in the church to enjoy those blessings? For example, reconciliation both between men, and men and between men and God, are in one body, the church of the living God (Eph. 2:16). If we are not in that one body, how can we be reconciled to God? Can men and women go to heaven if they are not reconciled to God?

The Faith and Love of the Ephesians

When Paul wrote his letter to the church at Ephesus (around AD 63), the church exhibited faith and love. “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the

saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Eph. 1:15-16). We do not know the exact day of the Ephesian church’s establishment, but we know they had continued to have faith in the Lord, love toward God and toward their brethren. Are these essential elements of a glorious church?

What did Paul mean by “faith?” In the late twentieth century, there was a very intense controversy between some professors at Dallas Theological Seminary and others within the Evangelical movement. Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges from Dallas argued that we must confess Jesus as Savior, but not as Lord. If we have to confess Jesus as Lord, we must do what He tells us to do. If we have to do what He tells us to do, we are not saved by grace alone through faith alone. Although John MacArthur is a staunch Calvinist (or thinks he is), he vigorously opposed the teaching of Ryrie and Hodges. He has written a number of books refuting the errors of Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges. MacArthur asks, “What does Jesus mean when he says, ‘Follow me?’” A few observations from John MacArthur’s book should be revealing. He quotes Lewis Sperry Chafer, founding president of Dallas Theological Seminary: “To impose a need to surrender the life to God as an added condition of salvation is most unreasonable. God’s call to the unsaved is never said to be unto the Lordship of Christ”(*Gospel* 15-16). MacArthur quotes these words from Hebrews: “By faith Abraham...obeyed” (Heb. 11:8). One final statement from John MacArthur: “Clearly, the biblical concept of faith is inseparable from obedience. ‘Believe’ is synonymous with ‘obey’ in John 3:36” (174). That verse in most versions reads: “Whosoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whosoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains in him.”

In one of his latest books, *The Truth War*, John MacArthur quotes Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of England’s most distinguished Baptist preachers: “The church on this earth has (the spirit of war), and until the second advent must be the church militant, the church warring, the church conquering....The spotless purity of truth must always be a war with the blackness of heresy and lies” (v). MacArthur affirms: “If we want to be faithful, we

are *required* to be warriors in defense of the truth” (99). I wholeheartedly agree with John MacArthur, but if we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, why would we be *required* to do anything?

We do not know how the Ephesians had shown their “love unto all saints.” But we do know what God expects of His children. Were there saints in Ephesus who were without food, clothing and shelter? The apostle John explains how Christians must help those in need. “But whoso has this world’s goods, and sees his brother have need, and shuts his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:17-18). The same apostle also wrote: “If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21).

Paul’s Prayer for the Ephesians

The apostle Paul often prayed for the people whom he had led to Christ and for others. He assured the Corinthians: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge” (1 Cor. 1:4-5). He told the Philippians: “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now” (Philip. 1:4-5). Paul would have agreed with James about the power of prayer. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

Paul’s prayers for the Ephesians and for others included thanksgiving. He said: I “cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Eph. 1:16). I remember attending a prayer service many years ago, although I have forgotten where. Those who led prayer did not ask for any petitions. They did not pray for anyone. They devoted their prayers entirely to giving of

thanks. In his prayer of thanksgiving, Paul made mention of his brothers and sisters at Ephesus and at other places. Did he have a prayer list of people in the different places where he had preached?

Paul prayed “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” might give unto the Ephesians “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph.1:17). The English Standard Version translates that verse: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” Many feminists object to the Bible’s use of the word “Father” of God almighty. *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* does not refer to God as Father, but as Father-Mother. For example, it reads: “Our Father-Mother in heaven” (Matt. 6:9).

Paul prayed that God would give the Ephesians “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” There is some disagreement whether the word “spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit or to our spirit, the attitude we must have in reading and in interpreting the Scriptures. This we know: God reveals in His inspired Word the wisdom we so desperately need. If we want to know God and His will, there is one way and only one way for us to do that: Studying and meditating on the Word of God. We must pray for knowledge, but prayer alone is not adequate. We must be diligent students of the Word.

All serious students of the Bible know there are difficult passages in the Bible. Parts of Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation are very hard to understand. Daniel 9:24-27 has almost as many interpretations as there are interpreters. And we may never fully understand those passages in this world. The apostle Peter admitted there were some things in Paul’s writing that are “hard to understand” (2 Peter 3:16). But we can know that God exists. We can know the plan of salvation, how God expects us to worship him and the moral values God demands that we honor. Jesus promised: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). The key is being willing to do the will of God. If our greatest desire is to know and to do God’s will, we can be assured

we shall be able to know it, although no human being can know all there is to know about the Bible.

Paul further prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians would have their understanding enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18). Paul knew how difficult it is for sinful human beings to understand the revelation of God’s will to man. He knew that all of us must depend on God’s guidance so we can understand. This does not harmonize with so much that one hears on television. Popular television evangelists claim to have the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in their study of the Bible. There are many serious problems with that view. For example, if the Holy Spirit directly and supernaturally enlightens men like Benny Hinn, Paul Crouch and Kenneth Copeland, why do they not preach the same ideas other televangelists proclaim? Is the Holy Spirit the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33)?

The Bible furnishes abundant evidence that we may know the hope of God’s calling. The word “know” (*eidēnai*) means to have sure knowledge and assurance of God’s call. Do not all of us need to know the hope of God’s calling? What would be the meaning of life if we believe this life is all there is? How could we handle the deaths of our loved ones if we did not believe we would see them again? Paul refers to hope as “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters in that within the veil; whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:19-20).

Dr. Corliss Lamont, a secular humanist philosopher, “rejects the idea of personal immortality and interprets death as the final end of the individual conscious personality.” When our loved ones die and “past relationships have been severed,” we establish a relationship of memory (8). Lamont further argued: “We accept as inevitable the eventual extinction of human individuals and the return of their bodies, indestructible in their ultimate elements to Nature that brought them forth. In death as in life we belong to Nature” (16). For some reason, I do not receive any great amount of comfort and encouragement from knowing that we are simply

going to become fertilizer. What a depressing and discouraging view of life and death!

Our Lord who came down from heaven promised: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3). The apostle Paul assured his readers: “For we know [*oidamen*: we have come to know and we still know] that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). Paul uses words like “confident” and “know” (2 Cor. 5:6-7, 11) and “am persuaded” (2 Tim. 2:12). Because of what Christ has done, we can know of the hope we can enjoy in Christ.

Paul wanted the Ephesians and all subsequent readers to know “what is the exceeding greatness of his strength to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he has wrought in Christ Jesus, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right in hand in heavenly places” (Eph. 1:19-20). In these verses, Paul uses a number of Greek words that suggest power and energy. Through the ages, there have been manifestations of God’s enormous power: His simply speaking the world into existence, His creation of human beings, His deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and His supernatural guidance through that “great and terrible wilderness.” But what could show God’s power more perfectly than raising Jesus from the dead?

The list of words describing God’s power is impressive. The Greek word translated “surpassing” (*huperballon*: immeasurable, surpassing) means that God’s power is so great men cannot really comprehend it. Most of us have some knowledge of powerful airplanes and machinery and atomic bombs, but none of this can be compared to the power of God. The word “greatness” comes from *megathos* and describes for us the wondrous power of our God. The word “power” comes from the Greek *dunamis* (Rom. 1:16) and shows that God is able to do whatever we need for our

salvation. Both Paul (Acts 20:32) and James (James 1:21) use the verb form of this word (*dunamai*) of the power of God’s Word to save fallen men. The word “working” is a translation of the Greek *energeia* from which we derive our word “energy.” The word “might” comes from the Greek *kratos* and means force and strength. The opposite of this word (*akrasia*: incontinence or lack of strength) is used of a person’s lack of strength in controlling his sexual appetite (1 Cor. 7:5). The final word in this list is *ischus*. This Greek word can be rendered ability, force and strength. The piling up of these words is intended to show how enormously powerful God is. There is never any need for us to be concerned about His strength. He can and always will do what He has promised. Paul “presses all the terms for power in his vocabulary into service in order to convey something of its all-surpassing character” (Bruce 41).

The power Paul has outlined so completely and beautifully is applied to man because of what God has wrought for us in raising Jesus from the dead. Dr. Bruce insists: “When inspired writers wanted to show the greatness of God’s love, they point to Christ’s death on the cross, but when they want to show the power of God, they point to our Lord’s resurrection” (41-42). Incidentally, the word “wrought” is from the same root word translated “working” (*energeo*). Atheists, agnostics and other unbelievers deny the possibility of raising dead people. They are right if they are speaking of man’s ability to raise the dead. But He who created the world and all that it is in it and who raised His Son from the dead should have no difficulty raising all men at the final judgment. God’s power is also manifested in His setting Jesus Christ at His own right hand in heavenly places.

Christ’s Exaltation

The New Testament writers provide wonderful insight into who Jesus is. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1, 3). Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every

creature....And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:15, 17). He is “the brightness of his (God’s) glory, and the express image of his person” and upholds “all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3). He is “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending....which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

In view of who Jesus Christ is and what He came to do for fallen men, should it surprise anyone that God has set Him “at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality [*arches*: literally rule], and power [*exousias*: authority], and might [*dunamis*: power], and dominion [*kuriotetas*: lordship], and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:21)? This was one of the reasons our Lord could tell His apostles: “All power [*exousias*: authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). If all authority pertaining to the church, to its worship and to the plan of salvation has been given to Christ, how much authority does that leave for the founders of other religions and of the various denominations? Christ’s name and authority are above all powers in this world (age) and in the age to come.

Christ the Head of the Church

God “has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). The verb “has put” (*hupotasso*) means to arrange or to array. The word is usually rendered “submit” or “be subject.” The word is used of our submission to God (James 4:7), of the wife’s submission to her husband (Eph. 5:22) and of a Christian’s duty to submit to civil government (Rom. 13:1). The word is almost the exact equivalent of the word “obey.” The King James Version sometimes translates the word “obedient” (Titus 2:5, 9).

Since God has given Christ to be the head of the church, does that not mean that the work and worship of the church must be in harmony with His will as revealed in the New Testament? The Emerging Church movement apparently pays little or no attention

to the authority of Christ. John MacArthur says the Emerging Church is “an informal affiliation of Christian communities worldwide who want to revamp the church, change the way Christians interact with their culture, and remodel the way we think about truth itself” (*Truth* ix). The movement is unquestionably embracing some elements of postmodernism. MacArthur quotes Tony Compolo: “I felt that evangelical Christianity had been hijacked. When did it become anti-feminist? When did evangelical Christianity become anti-gay? . . . When did it become so negative towards other religious groups” (139)?

If God has made Jesus Christ the head of the church, how can a preacher invent an approach to Christianity he calls “a generous orthodoxy?” Before I tell you about a book by that name, I must define the word “orthodoxy.” The word comes from two Greek words, *orthos*, meaning straight and *doxa*, meaning opinion or belief. The apostle Paul did not use the word “orthodoxy,” but there is no doubt he had that concept in mind when he used the term “sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). The expression, “sound doctrine,” is a translation of the Greek *hugiainouse didaskalia*, literally healthy teaching. How could anything other than the Word of God be healthy teaching?

Brian McClaren is the most influential leader in the Emerging Church movement. His book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, outlines what changes he believes the church must undergo to have a beneficial impact on modern culture. On the front cover of his book, he claims to be fundamentalist/Calvinist + Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist + Catholic + Green + Incarnational. Does McClaren believe he has found truth in all of these views or does he doubt there is absolute truth in any of them?

Conclusion

According to our text, there will be a great presentation of the Bride to Christ in the final day. If you want to be in that presentation, is it not absolutely essential that you be a part of the Bride—the church of the living God—while you sojourn on this Earth?

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Ephesus—The Model Church

Winford Claiborne

Introduction

If by the expression, “the model church,” we are thinking of perfect churches, either in the first century or in any century since, we are deceiving ourselves. There were no perfect churches then and there are no perfect churches now. The very first congregation—the church of our Lord in Jerusalem—experienced some conflict over the distribution of help for widows. The Grecian or Hellenistic Jews complained against the Hebrews or Hebraistic Jews that the Grecian widows were being neglected in the daily ministration of food and perhaps other supplies (Acts 6:1). We do not know how severe the disruption was, but we know it had to be handled wisely before it became a more serious problem.

The church at Corinth had more problems than anyone can discuss in a forty-minute sermon. The church was foolishly divided over preachers (1 Cor. 1:11). The confusion meant that many in the church were carnally minded (1 Cor. 3:1-3). The church permitted an incestuous brother to remain in good standing with the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 5). The members of the church were taking one another to courts of law before heathen judges (1 Cor. 6:1-8). There was confusion around the Lord’s Table (1 Cor. 11:17-30). There were also some in the church who denied the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12).

The Need for Models or Examples

The Scriptures recognize and human experience confirms the need for models or examples. The New Testament uses a number of words that are or can be translated “example.” *Tupos* is the most common word rendered “example.” It is also translated “print,” “fashion,” “manner,” “figure,” “form” and “pattern.” Paul charged a young preacher: “Let no man despise your youth; but be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation [or manner of

life], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). The Apostle Peter urged elders to be “examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3).

The New Testament uses three other words that are translated “example.” *Deigma* means something that is shown. It signifies a warning. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah “are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). *Hupodeigma* literally means that which is shown under. After Jesus had washed His disciples’ feet, He asked if they knew what He had done. He then informed them: “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you” (John 13:12-15). *Hupogrammos* is a combination of two Greek words: *hupo*, under, and *grammos*, writing. Peter said concerning Christ: “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Both the Old Testament and the New provide many examples, some good and some not so good. Abraham, Joseph, David and Daniel were great examples for God’s people in every age. Kings such as Ahab, Manasseh, Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II are examples of what leaders should not be. Hebrews eleven lists Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham as examples of faith. These and other faithful men and women “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. . . . And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:33, 39-40).

Paul reminded the Corinthians of God’s love and grace in delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. “But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things happened unto them for examples [*tupoi*], to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Cor. 10:5-6). Paul says the Israelites engaged in idolatry, committed fornication, tempted Christ and murmured against the Lord. “Now these things happened unto them for

examples [*tupoi*]; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:7-11).

Right Authority

When you watch religious programming on television, do you get the impression that any of the groups who conduct worship services care anything about authority? Do they not seem to do whatever pleases them, not what is authorized in the Scriptures? Where in the Bible do they find authority for breaking concrete blocks with their hands or heads? Where are the examples in the New Testament of churches whose members carried on like people at a rock ‘n roll concert? Do you ever hear preachers on television attempting to find scriptural justification for their worship activities? Most of them seem to be like the ancient Israelites: They do that which is pleasing in their own sight (Judges 17:6).

At the conclusion of our Lord’s great Sermon on the Mount, His Jewish listeners expressed astonishment because “he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matt. 7:29). Christ had been teaching in the Jewish temple when the chief priests and elders asked Him, “By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you that authority” (Matt. 21:23)? These are perfectly good questions, although Jesus did not answer them. He knew the Jewish leaders were not really interested in His answers.

When our Lord was preparing His apostles for His return to the Father, He gave them the Great Commission. “All power [*exousias*: authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I will be with you always [literally, all the way], even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:18-20). Christ’s enemies thought they could destroy His influence by crucifying him. Jesus assured His disciples: “No man takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power [authority] to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of the Father” (John 10:18).

Since Jesus Christ is no longer with us in the flesh, how do we obtain the authority we must have to serve God acceptably? Denominational groups have adopted different standards of authority: tradition, the beliefs of their founders, the will of the people, the creeds of men, and more recently, their comfort zones. An elder of one Texas church said at the now-defunct Jubilee in Nashville that churches might introduce instrumental music in their worship if it is within their comfort zone. Could that also include breaking concrete blocks, as the so-called “Power Team” does, holding wrestling matches, as one of America’s largest denominational churches did and interpretive dancing, as a number of Nashville churches have done? Since when do men’s and women’s comfort zones have anything to do with New Testament worship?

Authority for what we teach, how we live and how we worship must be rooted in divine revelation. Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in the great truths he had learned. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If the Scriptures furnish us unto all good works, what need is there for the creeds of men? The apostle Peter added: By His divine power, God has “given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

I hear television preachers say: “I believe the end of the age is near.” I do not mean to be unkind, but I could not care less what any man says he believes on that topic, or for that matter, on any other topic. I want to know (not what he believes) but what the Scriptures teach. I am reminded of the words of Robert Dick Wilson, probably the world’s greatest linguist. “When a man says to me, ‘I don’t believe the Old Testament,’ he makes no impression upon me....But if he comes to me and says, ‘I’ve got evidence here to show that the Old Testament is wrong on this point’—then that’s where my work begins” (10-11).

If we are really concerned about pleasing God in our work and worship, we must have divine authority for whatever we do. John

L. Girardeau, a prominent Presbyterian preacher and a professor at Columbia Theological Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, published the book, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship*, in response to his students’ questions about instrumental music. His opening statement is worth considering. “A divine warrant is necessary for every element of doctrine, government and worship in the church; that is, whatsoever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence from their statements, is forbidden” (15). If all churches were that careful about following scriptural authority in every phase of the work and worship of the church, unity in religious matters would be attainable.

Right Doctrine

The Greek New Testament uses two different words for “doctrine”: *didache* (30 times) and *didaskalia* (21 times). Both words mean teaching or instruction. There may be a technical difference between the two words, but I am not able to make the distinction. Both words appear primarily in Paul’s epistles, twenty-five out of fifty-one times. In his letters to Timothy and Titus, both preachers of the Gospel, Paul constantly stressed the absolute necessity of preaching sound doctrine. He commanded Timothy: “Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). He charged Titus: “But speak the things that become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). The apostle John warned: “Whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).

Paul uses the word “sound” to modify the word “doctrine.” The word “sound” is a translation of the Greek *hugiaino* from which we derive our English word hygiene (healthy). Is there a kind of teaching that produces spiritual health? Any teaching that does not originate in the Word of God is unhealthy. For example, the Calvinistic doctrine of once in grace, always in grace, is not healthy. Why is it not healthy? It gives people the idea that they can do whatever they please without endangering their souls’ eternal welfare. And yet the author of Hebrews affirms: “Take

heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). The word “departing” is from the Greek *apostenai*—from which we get our word “apostasy.”

Many leaders within American religion, including some preachers among churches of Christ, react negatively to the Bible’s emphasis on doctrine. One Gospel preacher told Thomas B. Warren: “The brethren are tired of these old doctrinal sermons.” R. Kirby Godsey serves as president of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Godsey wrote a book in which he foolishly affirms: “Doctrinal soundness is arrogant theological nonsense” (17). Godsey denies there are any final answers. “When we set forth our belief as the only right belief, we are wrong. No finite person has absolute answers” (47). I have tried to discover Godsey’s reasons for writing his book since he does not believe anyone has or can have right answers. He does argue, however, that “Jesus Christ, not the Bible, lies at the heart of the Christian revelation” (52). Is that an absolute answer? If it is not, we should just forget about it.

Does the Word of God contain good doctrine, healthy doctrine? The Bible writers believed they were preaching soul-saving doctrine. Is that not what Paul meant when he wrote: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation; to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:16-17)? Paul used the verb form of the word “power” when he commanded the Ephesian elders: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which *is able* to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

The Bible lays great stress on knowing, believing and loving the truth, sound doctrine. Jesus promised: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The apostle John assures his readers that they can know the truth. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). Paul quotes these words from Isaiah 28:16: “As it is

written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed” (Rom. 9:33). But it is not enough to know and to believe the truth. We must love it. Some of the people at Thessalonica had received the truth, but they did not love it, so they could not be saved. “And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

No church can be faithful to God without preaching and practicing healthy doctrine. But there is more to being a faithful church than preaching and practicing sound doctrine. The church at Ephesus apparently was orthodox, that is, it apparently was teaching the truth. Christ does not criticize that church for preaching false doctrine. He commends the church for its labor and patience and their unwillingness to bear those who were evil. He then says: “And you hast tried those who say they are apostles, and are not, and found them to be liars” (Rev. 2:2-3). In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ had warned of the danger of false prophets (Matt. 7:15-20). Paul warned the elders of the Lord’s church at Ephesus: “For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Churches that would be faithful to God must not only teach healthy doctrine; they must also oppose and refute false doctrine.

The church at Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. The Lord also hated their deeds (Rev. 2:6). We do not know who the Nicolaitans were or what they were doing, but for our purposes, it really does not matter. We know they were engaged in unchristian behavior. We also know that we are to hate every false way (Ps. 119:104). In spite of the orthodoxy of the church at Ephesus, our Lord said: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4). As absolutely vital as sound doctrine is, it is not sufficient. We must also practice what we preach. Our Lord urged the Ephesians: “Remember therefore from whence you have fallen, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his

place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:5). Orthodoxy (right teaching) is essential, but so is orthopraxy (right practice).

Right Worship

Millions of people, including some devoutly religious people, argue: It does not matter what you believe so long as you are honest. As essential as honesty is, it is not the test of truth. Does anyone doubt the honesty of the men who flew American airliners into the Twin Towers or into the Pentagon? The apostle Paul was honest in his persecution of the church of our Lord. He believed he was doing God service by making havoc of the church. But he was dead wrong in his opposition to the church of our Lord.

When we carefully examine the conduct of the Jews under the old covenant, we discover that some of them were condemned because they did not follow the Lord’s instructions. They did not observe the silence of the Word of God. For example, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire on the altar. And what is “strange fire?” Moses does not leave us to wonder. The King James Version says it was fire which the Lord had not commanded (Lev. 10:1-2). Is there a difference between “fire he had not commanded” and “fire he commanded not?” The first expression indicates that the Jews were to honor the silence of the Scriptures. The fire was strange because it was fire that the Lord had not authorized. The second expression speaks of specific prohibition regarding worship. Does that mean we must do only what is authorized and refrain from violating a specific prohibition?

Did you know that most religious groups that identify themselves as “Christian” engage in common acts of worship? Do you know of any denominational group that does not sing praises to God almighty? It is true that some of them sing very little. It is also true that some of them have singing groups, such as choruses and quartets, to entertain them, but they all so far as I know, have singing in their worship. Is singing just a customary activity or do they believe they have scriptural authority for singing? Paul commanded the Ephesians: “Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making

melody in your hearts to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18-19). The Bible unquestionably authorizes singing as an act of worship.

Do not most religious groups partake of the Lord’s Supper, or as some denominations incorrectly call it, the Eucharist? I shall not take the time to read what the Gospel writers say about the institution of the Lord’s Supper. But the apostle Paul makes it plain that churches of Christ are to observe that sacred meal. He explains:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death till he come. (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Some denominations partake of the Lord’s Supper monthly or quarterly or even less frequently. Oddly enough, most denominational scholars argue that the early church partook of the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s day. How can they justify taking it less frequently than the first century church did? What did Paul mean by the expression, “For as *often* as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death, till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26, emp. added)? Is showing the Lord’s death one time a month or one time quarterly or one time annually sufficient? Should we not partake of this glorious supper every Lord’s day, just as the early church did?

All denominations engage in public prayers, just as the early Christians did after the day of Pentecost. How can Christians meet to worship God and not raise their voices to God in prayer? “And they [the first converts to Christianity] continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine [or teaching] and fellowship, and in breaking of

bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). The Bible authorizes Christians to pray, but it does not authorize them to pray the Rosary.

So far as I know, most denominations have sermons during their worship services. We know that occurred in the early church (Acts 2:42). While the apostle Paul was doing mission work at Troas, he met with the church in that city. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). If a church expects to be a model church, it must have preaching and teaching. No church can grow and be faithful without sound teaching.

The worship of the church must include contributing of our means. Oddly enough, some churches tell their members how much they are to give in support of the work. When a church does that, it is violating the explicit teaching of Scripture. Do you remember Paul’s instructions to the church at Corinth: “Every man according as *he purposes in his heart*, so let *him* give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7, emp. added)? Each person, not the elders and not anyone else, must determine what he will give into the Lord’s treasury.

The acts of worship I have outlined from the Scriptures are almost universally practiced by all groups that call themselves “Christian.” The reason they engage in these practices is because the Bible specifically authorizes them. But what about those additional acts of worship practiced by various denominations? Where is the scriptural authority for using mechanical instruments of music in worship? The truth is: Most denominational groups make no attempt to find authority for playing on instruments. Many of the members of those groups cannot imagine that anyone would question the practice. After all, everybody does it. As a matter of fact, not everyone does it and not anyone did it for several centuries after the church was established. Many of the founders and prominent leaders in denominational churches opposed instrumental music in worship. John Calvin, one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church; John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church; Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran Church; Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of the Baptist Church’s

most influential preachers; and others strongly opposed instrumental music in worship.

The Right Government

Many denominational churches have elaborate hierarchies for governing their organizations. The Roman Catholic Church has dozens and dozens of offices, most of which have absolutely nothing to do with the Scriptures. The governmental structure of the Roman Catholic Church more closely resembles that of the ancient Roman Empire than the New Testament church. Where in the Bible do we find popes, cardinals, bishops as distinguished from elders, archbishops, monsignors, parish priests and dozens of other offices? These offices have no place in the church of the New Testament.

The churches in the New Testament were all independent. There was no synod or conference. When Paul and Barnabas were doing mission work in Asia minor, they ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Paul told Titus: “For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you” (Titus 1:5). The elders are to guide and lead the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Any organization larger than the local congregation cannot be justified from the Scriptures.

Right Conduct

As essential as right authority, right doctrine, right worship and right government are, none of it makes sense unless the members live according to the Word of God. I have already given you evidence of that truth. The church at Ephesus was an orthodox church, but the Lord criticized the members for having left their first love (Rev. 2:4). The church at Sardis had a reputation for being alive. But the Lord had a different view of that church. He said the church was dead (Rev. 3:1). The church at Laodicea may have believed and taught the truth, but they were lukewarm and made the Lord sick at his stomach, figuratively speaking (Rev. 3:14-22).

Right conduct has both positive and negative applications. God demands: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of the faith” (Gal. 6:9-10). Many New Testament passages outline the good works God requires His children to perform. Are not Christians obligated to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison (Matt. 25:35-36)? If we fail to do good works, will our Lord say: “Enter into the joys of thy Lord?”

The apostle Paul admonished his Ephesian brethren: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame to speak of those things that are done of them in secret” (Eph. 5:11-12). Paul charged the Roman Christians: “Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We must realize that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

Conclusion

It is not enough to believe the great truths I have discussed in this lecture. We must be informed about the situation in our nation and in the church. We must also have the courage to speak out about all evil, including abortion, homosexuality, adultery and such like. Failure to oppose the immorality in our nation simply means it will get worse. We must also declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. Do we not realize that silence can be sinful?

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Redeeming The Time

Ephesians 5:15-17

Glenn Hawkins

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:15-17)



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Under consideration in these three verses is how the Christian is to walk (live his life as a Christian). Three particular things are mentioned relative to how the Christian is to walk. First, he is to walk circumspectly. Second, he is to redeem the time because the days are evil. Third, he is to understand what the will of the Lord is.

We will give attention to all three things mentioned with particular emphasis on the phrase “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16).

Ephesians 5:15 says, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” Thayer says that the word translated “circumspectly” comes from the Greek word *akribos* meaning “exactly, accurately, diligently” (24). The *New American Standard Version* translates it “be careful how you walk.” The *Revised Standard Version* translates it “look carefully then how you walk”, as does the *English Standard Version*. The *New English Version* translates it “see to it that you conduct yourselves carefully.”

The New Testament uses the word “walk” as an expression of the daily living as a Christian. Earlier in Ephesians 4:1, Paul wrote, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Colossians 2:6 tells us, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” The Christian life is certainly a walk. But it is a walk that is to be done “circumspectly.” As we have pointed out, “circumspectly” is translated by a variety of phrases, but it includes the idea of walking exactly, accurately, carefully, and diligently. In our daily walk as a Christian, we must ever be careful and aware of how and where we are walking.

Paul then tells us that we are to walk as wise, not as fools. Thayer says of the word “fool” or *asophos* that it means “unwise, foolish” (81). The fool is the person who is unthinking, thoughtless, careless, uncaring, and worldly minded. This person gives little thought to where he is going or where he should not go. He is the opposite of one who walks according to the Spirit. This person cares little about living a careful, accurate, strict, and disciplined life.

We should be walking, not as fools, but as wise—the very opposite of foolish. How do we walk as wise? The wise person is a thinking, thoughtful, careful, caring and spiritually minded individual. This person is always conscious of the fact that he or she is walking in the presence of God and His Son, Jesus. The wise individual is not only concerned about every step he takes, but he struggles to watch every step—to make sure that he walks upright, self-controlled and in the exact path of our Lord.

This brings us to the second point—our focal point. “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). A Christian is to walk carefully, exactly, and accurately by redeeming the time. The key phrase is “redeeming the time.” What does this mean? The *New American Standard Version* translates it, “making the most of your time.” The *Revised Standard Version* says, “making the most of the time.” The *English Standard Version* says, “making the best use of the time.” The *New English Bible* says, “use the present opportunities to the

full”, and the *New Berkley Version* says, “who make the best possible use of their time.”

The word “redeeming” comes from the Greek word *exagorazo*. Thayer says of its use here in Ephesians 5:16, “to make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good” (220). It carries with it the idea of judiciously using one’s time to the very best advantage.

Time is a gift from God. We are stewards of the time God has allotted to us. We will give an account to Him on how we have used our time. As the above translations have suggested, we are to make the most of the time and opportunities God has given us. Once a moment of time and an opportunity have gone, they can never be recalled!

Paul wrote a similar statement in Colossians 4:5, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Solomon wrote, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1-2).

We have a choice to make in how we use the time God has given us. We can sit around and waste time or “kill time,” as we like to say, on things that have little value or worth. We can use our time to go after the works of the flesh, which are empty, worthless and transitory. Or we can wisely use our time in “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). This means we can use our time and opportunities to live righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12); to be about the preaching and teaching of the Gospel to others (Mark 16:15-16); to be diligent on the job; to be good husbands, wives and parents to our children; and to devote ourselves to prayer instead of worry (Philip. 4:6-8).

The days or time of our lives on Earth are limited. We must make the best use of it because we will not always be here. Psalm 39:4-5 says, “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold,

thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.” The Psalmist further exclaimed, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10).

Why should we be “redeeming the time”? The writer continues, “because the days are evil.” The Christian lives in a world that generally gives over to evil. We live and walk with evil around us every day. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Peter tells us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

With so much evil surrounding us, there is the temptation to not stay alert to keep from falling. This evil can range from mild temptation over to persecutions, from small money problems to a world economic collapse, from a minor family squabble to world war.

Another temptation to the Christian is to simply give up in the face of all the evil around us. We should not develop a negative attitude that things are so bad that we cannot do anything about it. Rather, the Christian should remember that he is a light in the world of evil and that he is to shine so that others can see his good works and glorify the Father in heaven as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16. Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:9-10, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

The third point in this passage is, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). The “wherefore” is because of what is said in the previous verse. Because “the days are evil” and we need to “redeem the time,” we must be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Proverbs 15:14 says, “The heart of him that hath understanding

seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.” Thayer says that the word translated “unwise” (*aphron*) means “without reason, senseless, foolish, stupid” (90).

Thayer says “understand” (*sunieimi*) means “to put [as it were] the perception with the thing perceived; to set or join together in the mind” (605). The Christian needs to not only hear God’s Word, but be able to understand it and apply it to his life. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32). We are all familiar with the statement of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study [give diligence] to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Contrary to what many say, there is an objective body of truth, and we can know it, and we can know that we know it! Understanding the Will of God will help redeem, or make the best use of, our time.

Three things, then, are incumbent upon every Christian in our text. **First**, we must walk circumspectly—carefully, accurately, exactly, and diligently, not as fools, but as wise. **Second**, in our walking circumspectly, we must “redeem” the time—make the best use of our time and take advantage of every opportunity for good because the days in which we live are evil. **Finally**, we must not be unwise, but understand what the Will of the Lord is. Only by understanding God’s Will can we walk circumspectly, redeeming the time.

I would conclude with these words from Paul.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. (Rom. 13:11-14)

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Biographical Sketch

Glenn Hawkins was born October 16, 1943, in Dexter, MO, to Jack and Frona Hawkins. He graduated high school in Newark, OH, and attended Ohio Valley College where he attained his A.A. degree in 1963. In 1965 he was awarded his B.A. in Bible at Harding University, followed by his M. A. in Philosophy of Religion from Harding Graduate School in 1975.

He has done local work with the George Street Church of Christ in St. Marys, WV, St. Clair, MO, Waverly, TN, and Macon Road in Memphis, TN. Since 1975 he has ministered to the church in Massillon, OH. He has also taught Bible at Ohio Valley College, writes a weekly news paper article, entitled *Truth for Today*. He has spoken on several lectureships and written for several Gospel papers. He serves as co-director of Family Camp Week at Northeastern Ohio Christian Youth Camp.

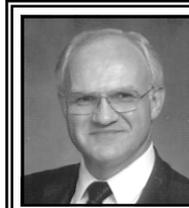
On June 27, 1965, he married the former Hope Shutts from Parkersburg, WV, and they are the parents of Ken Hawkins of Atlanta Georgia and Adam Hawkins of Massillon, Ohio. They are the grandparents of Addison Grace Hawkins.

Blessings In Christ Ephesians 1:3-14

D. Gene West

Introduction

C. A. Young recorded in his *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union the Declaration and Address* of the inimitable



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Thomas Campbell. In his “Declaration” Campbell made the following important point regarding the Sacred Scriptures:

That although the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the Church, and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, [Nation of Israel] and the particular duties of its members. (109)

We see very clearly that Thomas Campbell was claiming that the Holy Scriptures were sufficient to guide God’s people through

this life, through the door of death, and on into that great eternity. We agree with his assessment of the Scriptures.

Later Campbell's extraordinary son, Alexander, would state in his work *The Christian System* a very similar thought when he wrote:

The Bible, or Old and New Testaments, in Hebrew and Greek, contains a full and perfect revelation of God and his will, adapted to man as he now is. It speaks of man as he was, and also as he will hereafter be; but it dwells on man *as he is*, and *as he ought to be*, as its peculiar and appropriate theme. It is not, then, a treatise on man as he was, nor on man as he will be; but on man as he is, and as he ought to be; not as he is physically, astronomically, geologically, politically, or metaphysically; but as he is and ought to be, *morally* and *religiously*. (3)

Again, we find it a great pleasure to agree with our brother regarding the Scriptures and their purpose for mankind in our time. For this reason we find deep pleasure in approaching the grand passage which was assigned, and hope to produce a profitable study of it.

We begin by reading the inspired text from Ephesians 1:3-14.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the

mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

This is one of the most thrilling passages in the Book of Ephesians and one worthy of all the effort that can be put into a study of it. It is our intent to study this passage verse by verse and sometimes word by word. We invite your attention to it.

Ephesians 1:3 – Blessed, blessed and blessing.

Since words are the vehicles by which ideas and concepts are transferred from one mind to another and since the words of Scripture are the vehicles by which the mind of God is conveyed to the mind of man, the first thing which we must do is take notice that all three of the above words are developed from the same Greek noun as that from which we get our English word *eulogy* which means “to praise highly” (Encarta Electronic Dictionary). Essentially the word has the same meaning in the language from which it originally came. *Blessed* comes from *eulogetos*, which, according to Perschbacher, is a present, nominative, singular, masculine, meaning, *worthy of praise* (181). Hence, Paul said, *Worthy of praise* is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... The second time the word appears is in reference to the Father blessing us with all spiritual blessings. Here the word is *eulogesas* which is a nominative, singular, masculine, aorist, active participle

meaning, “to confer a favor upon” (181). Again we paraphrase; *Worthy of praise* is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has *conferred favor upon* us. The third time the word appears it is **eulogia** and Arndt and Gingrich point out that it refers to a *benefit* conferred by God or Christ. Here *blessings* is modified by *spiritual* and refers to the blessings bestowed on the inward man, or spiritual man by God through Christ and His death on the cross (323). Finally, we paraphrase thusly, *Worthy of praise* is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has *conferred* on us every spiritual *benefit* in the heavenly *realms* in Christ.

There is yet one more word to define in this verse. It is the one translated *heavenly places* or *heavenly realms*. Actually the words “places” or “realms” is not found in the Textus Receptus, but is an interpolation. Of *epouraniois*, Perschbacher said it is “dative, plural, neuter, adjective and it means *heavenly*, in respect to locality, *the upper regions* of the air; in respect of essence and character *unearthly* and *divine, spiritual*” (169-70). “Even in 1:3...according to the usage of Eph. to be understood locally *in heaven*” (Arndt and Gingrich 306). This is not the easiest concept to get fixed. Renn comments on this verse in these words, “Eph. 1:3, 20 refer to the ‘heavenly’ realm of the supra-terrestrial sphere in reference to the position granted to Christ; and in Eph. 2:6 refers to our position as believers with the Lord” (481).

Vincent, comments as follows:

In heavenly places ... Another key-word; one of the dominant thoughts of the epistle being the work of the ascended Christ. *Places* is supplied, the Greek meaning *in the heavenlies*. Some prefer to supply *things*, as more definitely characterizing *spiritual blessings*. But in the four other passages where the phrase occurs, i.20; ii.6; iii.10; vi. 12, the sense is local, and *epouranios heavenly*, is local throughout Paul’s epistles. The meaning is that the spiritual blessings of God are found in heaven and are brought thence to us. (364)

In a similar vein, Robertson wrote:

In the heavenly places in Christ. . . . In four other places in Eph. (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). This precise phrase (with *en*) occurs nowhere else in the N.T. and has a clearly local meaning in 1:20; 2:6; 3:10, doubtful in 6:12, but probably so here. In 2:6 the believer is conceived as already seated with Christ. Heaven is the real abode of the citizen of Christ’s kingdom (Phil. 3:20) who is a stranger on earth (Phil 1:27; Eph. 2:19). (517)

Robertson seems to suggest that in the final analysis this expression refers to the kingdom of Christ which was conceived in Heaven and brought to Earth through the work of Jesus Christ. Brother David Lipscomb in his commentary on the Book of Ephesians put the matter very succinctly writing, “This must refer to the church of Christ and the exalted spiritual relations into which God brought them in Christ” (7). Weed agreed with brother Lipscomb and wrote:

. . . . **In the heavenly places** is used five times in the letter (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; [6:12]), possibly being astrological terminology Paul has borrowed in order to emphasize the scope of the Christian’s blessings. The Christians’ blessings come not just through Christ but come **in Christ**. That is, insofar as they are incorporated into him, his body the church, they partake of these eternal blessings. (124)

There is wholehearted agreement with brethren Lipscomb and Weed. However, we must grant the possibility that Paul, with the Spirit’s inspiration, is making a play on words. Inasmuch as Old Testament prophecy, specifically Isaiah 65:17, refers to the kingdom of Christ as a *new Heavens and a new Earth* created by God Himself, the writer could be saying that blessings we receive are in the *new Heavens and new Earth* which is as much a creation of God as the literal Heavens and Earth. If true Christian’s

blessings are in the heavenlies, then clearly, they are in the *new Heavens and Earth*, the kingdom of Jesus Christ–His church. Surely the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual one and not physical, for Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here...” (John 18:36). The kingdom of Christ, the church, is Heaven conceived, Heaven bought, Heaven revealed and will be delivered up to God the Father in Heaven (1 Cor. 15:24). It is therefore, heavenly and the only realm in which the indescribable spiritual favors are to be found.

Favors (blessings) Granted by God in Heavenly Realms in Christ.

Blessing First: Paul immediately, without ever even breaking his sentence launches into a listing of the great spiritual favors enjoyed from our being in Christ, in His body the church. The first two of these are revealed in verse four in which Paul wrote, “...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...” It should be emphatically pointed out that God chose us, we did not choose Him! He did this when He conceived of the great scheme of redemption before the foundation of the world. This is a beautiful thought, besmirched down through the centuries since Augustine, and later Calvin, decided it refers to a particular choosing over which man has no control. Nothing could be further from the truth. The word rendered *chose* in this verse is *exeloxato* and according to Perschbacher is third person, plural aorist middle indicative from *eklego* (149) meaning, “to choose by calling out.” Perschbacher added, that *eklego* denotes “to choose out as the recipients of special favor or privilege” (128). There is a foot note in the NKJV interlinear which reads as follows: “*Eklegomai*: verb meaning choose, select, from the preposition *ek*, ‘out’ and the verb *lego*, to ‘say, call, or name.’ The consistent use of the middle voice in the NT usually implies choosing for oneself. It often refers, as here, to the *election* of believers by God in Christ, to salvation”

(670-71). Consequently, before the foundation of the world, God knowing what He would do in Christ called out to us. Christ then made His advent into the world and died for our redemption, and when that story was told men answered God’s divine call and were thus chosen to be His children and joint-heirs with Christ Himself (Rom. 8:16-17). Before leaving this point we should point out the similarity between *eklego*, calling out, and the word most frequently translated “church” in the New Testament. It comes from *ekklesia* which means “the called out ones.” Perschbacher wrote, “...to summon forth a popular assembly...the congregation of the children of Israel, Acts 7:38; transferred to the Christian body, of which the congregation of Israel was a figure, *the church*, 1 Cor. 12:28; Col. 1:18, et al. ...” (127). So, if men and women are called out by the story of the cross, and they are (1 Cor. 15:1-4), after they have responded to the call God sets them in the heavenlies that is, the *ekklesia*, the called out ones, the church, the kingdom of Christ.

Blessing Second: The second great spiritual blessing mentioned in this verse is that those who receive and respond to the call of God “should be holy and without blame before Him in love...” For those who answer the call—Christians—there is the great blessing of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus resulting in the Christian’s being *holy*. Those in the heavenlies are set apart for a sacred purpose. His primary interests are no longer in the mundane, but he is living on a higher plain. As Peter put it, Christians are a very special people. He wrote, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10). But that is not all! Not only are we chosen and holy, but we are *without blame* before Him. The words, *without blame* indicate that we are pure creatures because we have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. No one can point the finger of shame and declare “sinner, sinner,” for Christians no longer practice sin. On the

contrary, they are a holy people, a people set apart to sacred service to God because they are walking in the light. John declared, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Being without blame and holy are great spiritual blessings found only **in** Christ Jesus. Notice God makes the Christian blameless before Him *in love*. These blessings come as a result of the *agape* that God has for broken people. Jesus told Nicodemus about this love when He said, “For God **so loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, emp. added). Truly the love of God for the creatures He made in His own image defies all comprehension. Though we do not understand and cannot measure its depth, surely we can learn to appreciate, to some degree, the love that will not let us go.

Blessing Third: In verse five, Paul recorded the third great spiritual blessing which we have in Christ Jesus. He wrote, “...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” When God called and we answered He predestined us to a great end. Due to the false teaching of Calvinists of all hues and varieties, it is a bit of a shame that the word “predestined” is used in this text. The Greek word simply means, “*to see before hand*” (Arndt and Gingrich 709). In other words, God knew before He ever called that some would answer and some would not, because He allows man to exercise his free moral agency. Knowing before hand that some would answer He determined at that time to adopt them as sons, and this adoption is the great spiritual blessing of this verse. However, the thing that makes that adoption possible is our accepting the blood shed by Jesus Christ as the agent for the cleansing of the soul. Notice in addition to this that the Father foreknew that we would be adopted as sons. Not just as children, but as sons! What is the significance of that? It is simply this, in ancient times sons inherited from the father. Daughters did not, unless there were no sons. Our Lord is the Son of God by His very

nature, but we who were estranged from Him by sin must become sons by adoption. This figure is used by Paul rather frequently. In Galatians 4:4-5 he wrote, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” For this reason he could declare in Galatians 3:26-27, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” We must ask, what does it mean to be adopted sons of God? It means God treats us as if we were never estranged from Him by our sins. This adoption is accomplished not by some legal ceremony; it is not like becoming a naturalized citizen of the United States, but when we are cleansed by the warm, red blood of Jesus and we stand before God justified, we are then accepted as sons with all the rights and privileges of sons through the shed blood of Christ our elder Brother. God did not do all this for His wayward children with the attitude of disgust or resentment, Paul said He did it “according to the good pleasure of His will.” This was something God wanted to do; a thing in which He found great pleasure. After all, He was restoring His fallen children to the happy position of being reconciled to Him. Consequently, salvation comes to man as a result of God’s enjoying pleasurable satisfaction when He draws those who answer His call back to Himself. Remember the happiness of the Father in the story of the prodigal son.

Blessing Fourth: This was also done to the praise of the glory of God’s grace (v. 6). The knowledge that we are adopted as sons of God gives cause, or reason to pay honor to the grace that moved God to provide the means by which we could/can be reconciled to Him. After all, and here we come to the fourth of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, the grace of God moved Him to make us accepted in Christ. To Titus Paul wrote:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the

present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (2:11-14)

The word *accepted* piques our interest. It refers to God's favoring us by adopting us as His sons in Christ. What a great favor it is! Who else could bestow such favor on us and how better could He do it than by accepting us as His adopted sons? But notice, this grace is proffered in one place only, or rather we should say through one person only and that is "in the Beloved One." Adoption, sonship, the receiving of God's divine favor can be found only **in** Christ Jesus. He who rejects Christ rejects all His blessings.

Blessing Fifth: In the seventh verse, Paul wrote of the fifth spiritual benefit we have in Christ. He expressed the matter this way, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Again, notice where this benefit is found; it is **in** Him. There would be no spiritual blessings were it not for the sacrificial and atoning death of our Lord. When Paul emphasized where all the blessings are found, each time they are found **in Him**. Therefore, to be the recipient of any of the benefits that are provided by the death of Christ on the cross, one must be **in** Him. If it be asked what Paul meant by the frequent use of this phrase, one can only answer that it means to be in fellowship with Christ in His spiritual body—the church. It means one is a Christian, as that is set forth in the New Testament. He has been cleansed by His blood and added to His own church or kingdom. Let us now consider this particular benefit or blessing—redemption. It is the state of having been redeemed—having had a ransom paid to be bought back from Satan. Paul wastes no time pointing out the redemption price. He said it was accomplished through the blood of our Savior. Peter echoed the same sentiment when he wrote these marvelous words:

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Peter 1:17-19).

The noted Lutheran scholar Stoeckhardt penned some impressive words on this subject.

And now we Christians are the very ones who, being in Christ, actually have and possess ... the present redemption and forgiveness which has been purchased for all sinners. We have Christ, through faith He has become our very own, and thus we are partakers of the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.... In his Second Letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:19 sqq.) Paul testified that God was in Christ and reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins unto them, i.e., He has forgiven their sins, wherefore all that is now required is that man becomes reconciled to God and by faith takes possession of God's redemption and forgiveness. (55)

In this passage Paul equates "redemption" through the "blood" of Christ with the "forgiveness of sins." To be redeemed is to be forgiven and to be forgiven is to be redeemed. This redemption is a present gift to those who have been cleansed by the blood of the Redeemer in the waters of baptism. Concerning our redemption, though he would not have connected in any way with immersion, Macpherson, the nineteenth-century Scottish commentator, wrote:

In regard to the redemption of which He is to speak, he says that we have it in the Beloved. It is a present experience. Though His death accomplished in the past is

the condition of acceptance, the price required and actually paid, the redemption is conceived of as something that belongs to the whole living Person of Christ, rather than to any isolated act or incident of His life. *Christ* is the Redeemer. It is true that His blood, that is, His death on the cross, is properly defined as the redemption. (131)

This knowledge should stir within us worshipful excitement and thanksgiving directed to the Father because of what His Beloved Son did for us on Golgotha's Cross. Has there ever been a greater, more profound, gift given to mankind than this? If so, let it be named! Paul told the Corinthians "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).

Two other brief but important thoughts should be emphasized regarding this verse. The first is, though it is not translated in many versions, neither the one we use, nor in the KJV, the word *redemption* is preceded by the definite article *tes* (the). The article is significant because the redemption we enjoy through the shedding of the blood of Jesus is *the* redemption. It is a very special redemption. It is *the* redemption God planned before the foundation of the world. It is *the* redemption that could be accomplished only through the death of Christ on the cross. It is *the* redemption that gives us hope for eternal life in heaven. There is no other redemption for mankind! Secondly, this only of its kind redemption, like all other spiritual benefits comes to us through the riches (*plouton*), the abundance, opulence, copiousness (Perschbacher 333) of the grace of God! There is nothing insufficient about the grace of God. Furthermore, in verse eight, Paul pointed out that God had made His grace "to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence." "In the gift of Jesus Christ on the cross to redeem us from all unrighteousness, God caused His grace to abound (*eperisseusen* from *perissieo*), to exist in full quantity, ... it richly furnishes, to be possessed of a full sufficiency" (324-25). This boundless grace was/is toward Christians who have submitted to the will of God through faith in and obedience to

Jesus Christ. This was given through wisdom and insight. Some think the wisdom and insight (prudence) belongs to God and it was because of His wisdom and insight into the needs of man that His grace proffered redemption through the blood of Christ. However, an Anglican commentator, Candlish, takes a slightly different view which he sets forth in the following words:

Wisdom is specially a quality of the reason, or faculty by which we apprehend first principles, whether of knowledge or of practice, and denotes a clear and correct insight into these: prudence belongs to the understanding, or faculty of comparison, by which we draw inferences and adapt means to ends, and denotes a right use of that faculty to direct our actions. (38)

It may be that the wisdom and insight of which Paul speaks is both that of God which caused Him to provide for our forgiveness through the shedding of the blood of His Son, and our own that causes us to apprehend the need for that salvation through Christ and sue at the gates of Mercy, through faith and obedience, to have God fulfill our spiritual needs—which can only be supplied in Christ.

Blessing Sixth: However that may be, we must hasten on now to study the sixth benefit received in Christ Jesus. In the ninth verse Paul wrote, "having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself..." Not only did God provide salvation for us through the death of His Son, but He made known the mystery of His will—He gave the inspired Gospel (New Testament) which revealed all, including the way in which the benefits of the blood of Christ are received. From a study of the Book of Ephesians itself, we learn that the complete mystery of which Paul here spoke included the salvation that came to the Gentile as well as to the Jew in ancient times, and of course, to all who would today accept the Gospel of Christ. O'Brien did an adequate job of defining this term for us when he wrote:

‘Mystery’, which appears twenty-one times in Paul’s letters (out of a total of twenty-seven New Testament occurrences), is used in a variety of ways, though the apostle normally employs the term with reference to the revelation of what was previously hidden but has now been disclosed by God (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:10; Col.1:26-27; Eph. 3:3, 5). The ‘mystery of God’ (1 Cor. 2:1 *v.l.*; cf. v. 7) focuses on salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ. It cannot be understood through human wisdom but comes to be made known as God reveals it by his Spirit to those who love him (v.10). ... In Colossians ‘mystery’ refers to the heart of Paul’s message and has to do with the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation in Christ here and now (1:26-27). (109)

Paul concluded this verse by saying that the revelation of the mystery of God’s will was “according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself...” Of this portion of the verse Caldwell commented in the following vein:

As in verse 5, the action of God is attributed to his own wishes and purposes. His **good pleasure** (*eudokian*) is not selfish but it is his, not ours. It is always solicitous of man’s welfare but it promotes the eternal desires of the God who created us. It is aligned with what he has **purposed** (*proetheto*) and those intentions and objectives will not change at the whims and pleas of men. The revelation of the mystery of God was intended to be a blessing to man. It grew out of God’s heart filled with love and concern. The point Paul made is that God wants us all to understand God’s wisdom so that it may be appropriated for our welfare. (32)

In verse ten Paul revealed that God purposed to grant salvation to the world through Christ at a very specific time which he called “the fullness of the times.” The verse reads: “[T]hat in the

dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.” Essentially, Paul said here what he said in Galatians 4:4-5 when he wrote, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” It seems the words “fullness of time” and “the fullness of the times” must refer to the same thing which is, when the time was right in the sight of God; when the time had come that He had determined before the foundation of the world, God sent our Lord to accomplish our redemption through His death on the cross. The “fullness of the times” was of course, the final days of the Jewish era when God would bring salvation to the world and inaugurate the final days through which mankind would ever pass, the Christian era. This age had its beginning on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. It is deemed wise to consider the comments made by brother Caldwell:

The expression **fullness of times** (*pleromatos ton kairon*) simply means “when the time was right.” When God determined that the proper time had come in his dealings with man to send Christ into the world, he enacted his plan. John the Baptist announced it by saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, Repent, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The writer of Hebrews described it in the following words, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:1-3). Peter added, “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who

through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:20-21). ... Paul in other places spoke of the fact that one period ended when its fullness came and another was begun. (33)

Blessing Seventh: The seventh spiritual benefit which we have in Christ, is that Christians are a part of that in which God has gathered and is gathering “together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth” (v. 10). This marvelous thought has reference to the fact that God would and will, gather all His children together in the body of Christ—His kingdom—His church whether they are living on Earth or martyred in Heaven. James Macknight commented both interestingly and thrillingly on this passage when he wrote:

The word *oikonomia* properly signifies, the plan which the master of a family, or his steward, hath established for the management of the family. Also it signifies, a plan formed for the management of any sort of a business. In this passage it signifies, the plan which God had formed for accomplishing the salvation of believers, by gathering them together into one church, under Christ as their head or governor, chap. iii. 2. (263)

Regarding the gathering together of “all things,” Macknight pointed out that the neuter word “things” refers to people. He said, “Here it is used metaphorically, to denote the gathering of believers of all nations into one church, of which Christ is the head” (264). Regarding “both which are in heaven and which are on earth” Macknight wrote:

Because *the powers of heaven*, Luke xxi.26. denote the Jewish rulers; and *the shaking of the heaven and of the earth*, foretold by Haggai, is interpreted by St. Paul, Heb. xii.25. of the abolition of the Jewish and heathen religions,

I am inclined, by *things in the heavens and things upon the earth*, in this verse, to understand the Jews and the Gentiles. According to this interpretation, the gathering of all things under Christ, means, not only the forming of the Jews and Gentiles into one catholic church, but the bringing of them both into the heavenly country, through the mediation of Christ, as is evident from ver. 11–13. (264)

On this subject there is another thought to consider. Since in the first century so many Christians were martyred for their faith, and since in Revelation 6:10 John, while looking into heaven saw their souls under the altar, Paul may be referring to the fact that some in the church, especially those martyred for Christ were already in heaven.

Blessing Eighth: Now to the eighth great spiritual blessing Christians have in Christ Jesus. In verse eleven Paul wrote, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” Paul, supposing faithful service to Christ throughout life, said in Him—in Christ our Lord we have “obtained an inheritance.” Of course, as the adopted sons of God we would, wouldn’t we? We have something to look forward to when we have completed our sojourn here and it is “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). Notice the characteristics of the inheritance to which we are “predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” It is incorruptible—it cannot be touched by sin, death or decay; it is undefiled—it has never been touched by that which is filthy, unwholesome or sinful, and it does not fade away. It is eternal in its nature and will never be taken away. What an indescribable spiritual blessing! What an unspeakable tragedy it would be to lose it!

On the twelfth verse which reads, “...that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory,” we merely cite an appropriate comment by Macknight.

Who before hoped in the Christ. Chandler's note here is good: He saith, "This is a proper characteristic, or distinguishing mark of the Jews. They had the promises of the Messiah or Christ, and therefore hoped in him before the time of his actual appearance. Thus we find it was the common character of the devout Jews, that they *waited for the consolation of Israel*, Luke ii.25. and that *they looked for the redemption of Jerusalem*, ver. 38. that is, they hoped in the Messiah before the time of his appearance." This circumstance, therefore, proves that the apostle is speaking of the Jews in this verse: For the Gentiles had no hope in Christ before he actually came, Eph. ii. 12. (265)

Blessing Ninth: In verse thirteen Paul pointed out the ninth of the great spiritual blessings found in Christ Jesus. The Gospel of our salvation, the Word of truth, after coming to a knowledge of it, causes us to *trust* or believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The verse reads: "In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." The word "trusted" is an interpolation inserted for clarity, according to the view of the translators. Consequently, we use it only for convenience sake, since what the Apostle speaks of is faith in Christ as he afterward pointed out. It is only after one gains knowledge of, and understands, the "Word of truth," the "gospel of our salvation," that he can come to believe in—accept and trust Jesus for salvation. Since the Gospel teaches acceptance of Christ by faith and obedience to His commands and this results in being saved from past sins and set on the path of eternal redemption in Christ, it is properly called the "gospel of your salvation." This, at the same time demonstrates a trust in Christ to deliver him finally and safely into the habitations of glory. On this passage Burton Coffman, after commenting on differences in the KJV and the RV in the verse wrote:

In the general sense, of course, if "believing" is understood as the whole complex of actions involved in conversion

(faith, repentance, confession, and baptism), no error is implied; however, "believing" or "faith" as used in the limited, technical sense of the theological jargon current today, is alleged to be something apart from being baptized into Christ, enabling jugglers of the sacred text to claim the meaning to be "Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit at the time of believing only, and not after being baptized into Christ." That this is a false view is evident since both versions reveal the sealed person to be those "in Christ"; and since no one was ever "in Christ" except by being baptized into him, the true meaning shines through despite all efforts to hide it. (141)

Paul went on to assert that when these Gentile Christians had believed they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. We look at this section of the verse by first defining the word "sealed." It comes from *esphragisthete* which, according to Perschbacher, is second person, plural, aorist, passive of *sphragizo*. This word means "to stamp with a seal...set a mark upon, distinguish by a mark; to set one's own mark upon" (176, 398). Hence, Paul plainly declared that when the Ephesians were converted, or when they believed, the Holy Spirit Himself had set His own seal, or mark upon them. Of course, immediately one asks, "What does that mean?" The late and deeply lamented, friend and mentor, brother Franklin Camp would answer:

"...Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13). Compare this phrase with the following: 'And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied,' (Acts 19:6). Acts 19:5 states that the Ephesians were baptized, but there is no mention of their receiving the Holy Spirit in consequence of their being baptized. But the next verse plainly states that they received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid his hands on them. In view of the record that is given in Acts 19 of the Ephesians

receiving the Spirit through Paul's hands, speaking in tongues and prophesying, why should their being sealed with the Spirit mean a non-miraculous sealing they received when they were baptized? ... The word "sealed"—The word means "something visible." A seal was to confirm or to certify something as genuine. Christ was sealed by the Spirit to confirm Him as God's Son and to certify Him as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. The apostles were sealed by the Spirit to confirm and to certify them as the ambassadors of Christ. The seal on the Ephesians was the manifestations of the Spirit that confirmed them as God's people. ... The seal of the Spirit was a public sign, mark, or certification that God had sent His Son and that He was all that He claimed to be. The seal of the Spirit on the apostles was a confirmation and certification that Christ had sent them as they claimed. The seal of the Spirit on the converts of the apostles was a confirmation and certification that God had received them. (175-76)

In other words, the "mark" of the Holy Spirit was the use of the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:6-11. The doing of such things as Paul mentioned in this passage would be "visible," and would certainly demonstrate that these were Christians since only Christians had the gifts.

In the final verse of our study Paul wrote, "...who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." This statement continues a discussion of the blessed Holy Spirit introduced in the preceding verse. Firstly, we notice that Paul said the Holy Spirit is *arrabon*. On the meaning of this word Thayer commented, "to pledge; a word which seems to have passed from the Phoenicians to the Greeks, and thence into Latin, *an earnest*, i.e. money which in purchases is given as a pledge that the full amount will subsequently be paid..." (75). Today, one would suppose Paul was referring to the Holy Spirit as a "down payment." It is difficult to

understanding how the Holy Spirit, a divine person of *Elohim* (the Godhead) could be considered a guarantee, a down payment, a pledge, or an earnest to the Christian. Let us look at some thoughts advanced on this verse, first from McClintock and Strong, in which we find this explanation of the word *arrabon*:

The word is used three times in the New Testament, but always in a figurative sense: in the first (2 Cor. i, 22) it is applied to the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit which God bestowed upon the *apostles*, and by which he might be said to have hired them to be the servants of his Son; and which were the earnest, assurance, and commencement of those far superior blessings which he would bestow on them in the life to come as the wages of their *faithful* services: in the two latter (2 Cor. v, 5; Ephes. i, 13, 14) it is applied to the gifts bestowed on *Christians generally* upon whom, after baptism, the apostles laid their hands, and which were to them an *earnest* of obtaining a heavenly habitation and inheritance upon the supposition of their fidelity. (6)

Based on this paragraph from McClintock and Strong, brother Franklin Camp wrote:

The word "seal" is used in both II Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13 and 14 with the word "earnest." The seal of the Holy Spirit was the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit that certified and guaranteed the integrity of the revelation given and obeyed. The "earnest" of the Spirit is a figurative term to indicate the inward enjoyment of the blessings of Christianity, because of the assurance given by miraculous manifestation. How could one enjoy the blessings of Christianity unless he was assured of the truthfulness of the gospel he had received? The "earnest" is the other side of the "seal." The "seal" to certify the integrity of the gospel given directly, and the "earnest," the assurance of the blessing promised therein. (182)

We often find ourselves floundering in the interpretations of some passages of Scripture because we forget when the New Testament was written, to whom it was written and the circumstances under which it was given by revelation and inspiration. Until we learn to do that we will find ourselves having many interpretative problems.

Conclusion

It is a soul-thrilling experience just to sit quietly and contemplate this great list of benefits that come to a child of God, the younger brothers and sisters of Christ. To be saved from the ravages of sin and entertain the hope of an everlasting home in Heaven is really unsurpassable. If we go through this life, never enjoying these spiritual blessings, and others that are found in the New Testament, then leave life with no hope of that eternal life with Christ, no matter what we may have done while living here, all has been in vain. In our dying hour we will have to exclaim as did Captain John Lee:

I leave to the world this mournful memento, that however much a man may be favored by personal qualifications or distinguished mental endowments, genius will be useless, and abilities avail little, unless accompanied by religion and attended by virtue. Oh, that I had possession of the meanest place in heaven, and could but creep into one corner of it. (qtd. in Lockyer 132)

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Biographical Sketch

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Ambassadors Of Christ

Ephesians 6:19-20

Sam Bartrug

Introduction

When Paul wrote the letter we know as Ephesians he was a prisoner. Although the bulk of this epistle contains very little personal information about Paul, he is careful to point out this fact on three occasions (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). While it is not the purpose of



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this lecture to explain all the facts concerning this imprisonment, it is generally supposed that it is the one detailed in the latter portion of the book of Acts. Regarding the time and place for writing Ephesians, Lipscomb writes: “The place was undoubtedly Rome, and it was written during the two years’ captivity which we find recorded in Acts (28:30), which would make the date about 62” (11).

It is during this less than desirable turn of events that Paul writes some of his more revealing insights concerning the church and individual Christian conduct, for in addition to Ephesians; Paul also appears to have utilized his prison time to compose other New Testaments documents as well. Lipscomb continues:

Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon were evidently written from Rome, sometime in the year 62. There are many links of connection between them. Tychicus was the bearer of both Ephesians and Colossians (Ephesians 6:21, 22; Colossians 4:7, 8), and Onesimus, the subject of Philemon, was companion of Tychicus (Colossians 4:9).

Greetings are sent in Colossians and Philemon to the same group of friends (Colossians 4:10, 12, 14; Philemon 23, 24). In Philemon 2 a message is sent to Archippus, and in Colossians 4:17 we learn that he was a very useful man in the church at Colossae. (245)

It is a tribute to Paul's spiritual fortitude and deep devotion to the God of his salvation that he would continue to express concern for both saint and sinner during what must have been a very difficult time in his own personal life. His epistle to the Ephesians, with so little focus upon his own misery, and so much emphasis upon the state of the church and the plight of the lost; forever serves as a model for us as we set the priorities that will determine our own behavior during times of personal crisis.

Christianity is, to a large extent, a faith that demands we see that there is something bigger and more important than self. Paul was able to grasp that truth well enough to redirect his thoughts from one man bound by Roman chains to a body of believers needing spiritual direction, and a world full of lost souls needing the salvation he had already found in Jesus Christ. "And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20).

Paul and Prayer

The above text, located at the end of a portion of the Ephesian epistle often called, "The Christian Armor" is actually a request on Paul's part for the prayers of the church at Ephesus on his behalf as an ambassador for the Lord. It is both touching and insightful that this great man of God would petition the prayers of his brethren during this turbulent time in his personal life.

The place of prayer in the Christian's life was an important part of Paul's message. From his inspired writings we learn that we, among other things, are to pray for the salvation of the lost (Rom. 10:1), pray when the church is come together in one place to

worship (1 Cor. 14), pray for the spiritual growth and development of our brethren (Eph.1:15-23), allow prayer to help us overcome anxiety and bring us a peace from God (Philip. 4:6-7), and make prayer a continual part of our Christian expression (1 Thess. 5:16).

It is, however, one thing to teach something, it is quite another thing to practice it or make it a matter of personal priority. Paul, in virtually every one of his epistles mentions his prayers on behalf of the readers. In Ephesians he incorporates at least two prayers on behalf of his readers into the text itself (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21) and stresses the importance of prayer in defeating the attacks of the devil (6:18). In Acts 16 we are informed that Paul was praying and singing at midnight when imprisoned at Philippi. Paul, who taught so many the value and place of prayer, who spoke so frequently to God on behalf of others, now humbly requests the prayers of fellow Christians on his own behalf.

Paul basically makes three requests of the Ephesians when he asks them to pray for him in verses 19-20. (1.) He wants them to pray that he will have the means and opportunity to speak the Gospel message ("that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel"), (2.) He wants them to pray that he will remember who he is in the midst of his circumstances ("for which I am an ambassador in chains"), and (3.) He wants them to pray that he will not shy away from the opportunities that come his way because of their prayers ("that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak").

Paul the Ambassador

The portion of Ephesians 6:19-20 that I have been assigned, however, is not that of Paul's prayer-life; but of his ambassadorship. In discussing this aspect of Paul's work I would like to point out three things: (1.) What it meant to be an "ambassador," (2.) What it meant to be an "ambassador in chains," and (3.) What lessons we might learn from the first two observations.

Paul refers to himself in Ephesians 6:20 as "an ambassador." If indeed he was imprisoned in Rome at the time this epistle was

being written then it is altogether fitting that he might use the concept of being an ambassador to make a point about his ministry. Rome was the capital of the world at this time in Paul's life. It would be safe to assume that the entire known world sent ambassadors to Rome to represent their national interests before this greatest of world powers. Paul, in the midst of all of this political intrigue, would find it quite natural to characterize his role, as God's official representative, by using a term synonymous with government and prevalent within the city of Rome. Foulkes observes:

He was aware of the many ambassadors who came to Rome from far and near; he, though in prison at the will of the powerful Roman emperor, felt the dignity and tremendous importance of his position as representative of the King of kings. He was the bearer of the word of his royal master, the word that entreated people who were at enmity against Him to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. v. 20). (179)

The word rendered "ambassador" in our text is interesting in its meaning and usage. Robertson point out concerning the word, *Presbeuo* is an old word for ambassador (from *presbus*, an old man) in the New Testament only here and 2 Corinthians 5:20. Paul is now an old man (*presbutes*, Phil. 9) and feels the dignity of his position as Christ's ambassador though "in a chain" (552).

It is of more than a passing interest that this word is rooted in the same term used as one of three descriptive titles for the men who would be appointed to lead a local congregation of God's people. Hodge writes: "There are three Greek words for elders with six English translations: *Poimen* (pastor, shepherd), *episkopos* (bishop, overseer), and *presbuteros* (elder, presbyter)" (27).

In the ancient world it seems to have been a common practice to use older men as ambassadors. Over a period of time it was only natural to use a word basically meaning, "older" or "aged" to refer to a position reserved for men from that age grouping. Vine, in

linking the concept of age and being an ambassador together, says the following: "[P]*beuo* ... denotes (a) 'to be elder or eldest, prior in birth or age'; (b) 'to be an ambassador,' 2 Cor. 5:20, and Eph. 6:20... There is a suggestion that to be an ambassador for Christ involves the experience suggested by the word 'elder.' Elder men were chosen as 'ambassadors'" (25).

While it is impossible for us to know how old Paul was as he wrote the epistle to the Ephesians, it is obvious that he considered himself to be a man of age (Phil. 9). There may be a lesson there for us in the church today. There is wisdom and a level of experience that often comes only with age. This wisdom and experience is vital to the leadership of the church, and it is not often found among her younger members. It is no accident that God describes the leadership of the church in terms of men who are older. Unfortunately we live in an age when older people are often thrown aside and their wisdom and experience allowed to go untapped. The end result of this is often churches that lose their sense of history and identity. A good friend of mine once observed, "You can't put an old man's head on a young man's shoulders." Perhaps it is time for us to return to what appears to be God's plan for leadership. Apparently He desires that older ones be His representatives in the matter of church leadership.

Whatever his age, Paul realized that he was an official representative of God within the city, which was the center of world power. Paul did not have to assume this to be true, for the Lord told him as much in Acts 23:11 when he said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." Paul's journey to Rome, as recorded in the closing chapters of Acts, was not totally the result of human decision; God wanted him there and there he would be. While Paul would probably have preferred his visit to Rome be under better circumstances, he was willing to be God's man there however that had to happen. Those who would be ambassadors of God are not always free to choose the circumstances and conditions that may come with it. It is our responsibility to serve well as His representatives regardless of the situation (Philip. 4:11-12).

Paul the Ambassador in Chains

Being a Christian in the first century was not always easy. Throughout the Book of Acts, and hinted at in many other New Testament books, is recorded the fact of terrible persecution leveled against Christians. The saddest thing about this persecution is how undeserved it was. Peter once implied that there was shame to be attached to suffering for wrongdoing, but we did not have to be ashamed for suffering as a Christian (1 Peter 4:15-16). His point seems to be that suffering as a Christian is undeserved. In a just world the Gospel would be welcomed with open arms and those who try to do and teach what is right would be hailed as heroes and role models for all. We do not live in a just world! We live in a world that is often at enmity with the truth; one that does not like to have its wicked lifestyle challenged (John 3:19-20). Paul could attest to that fact from personal experience.

Paul points out in Ephesians 6:19-20 that he is an ambassador in chains. The reason for the chains is even spelled out for us. They were the result of his efforts to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Paul's crime was that of preaching the truth! His ministry, although it often stirred up controversy among unbelievers, was actually one that was blessing the world of his day. It was delivering people from superstition and false religion (Acts 18-19). It was allowing people to see that there was a different and better way of life to pursue (Eph. 2:1-10; Titus 2:1-14). It was introducing people to a God who truly cared for them and without Whom they would be lost eternally (Acts 17:15-31). What was Paul's reward for taking this life-changing message to the world of his day? We can read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 and get an elongated list of his experiences, but the simple word of our text says it just as well, "chains."

Doing right is not always rewarded in this sin-tainted world. In fact, it is often assailed, mocked and punished! It may well be that Paul found in the grace of God the strength and insight that allowed him to see doing right as being its own reward. Whatever the case, it is obvious from our text that Paul felt no shame over the chains that bound him. He once told the brethren at Rome that

he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17) and here we see that this was not just some far-fetched claim. Paul loved God, he was committed to the preaching of the Gospel, and he would not allow persecution to dissuade him from that love and commitment.

It might be good, at this point, to note that Paul realized the potential for timidity and fear that could accompany his present circumstances. He was not some super human apostle whose faith could never be undermined. For this very reason he asks the church at Ephesus to keep him in their prayers during this time of ambassadorship in chains. Paul knew what he ought to do under the circumstances his chains had brought him and he truly wanted to do just that; but he also knew that he could fail to be bold enough to take advantage of the opportunities he would be given. Perhaps this is what makes Paul such an admirable character. While he was a man of great determination, and was almost single-mindedly devoted to the work of the Lord, he was also humble enough to admit the possibility of failure and thus his need for the prayers of others on his behalf.

Lessons to be Learned

It cannot be in the same sense that we, as Paul, are ambassadors for Christ since Paul was an apostle of Christ. However we, like Paul, are representatives for the Gospel. There is a sense in which we represent God in this sinful world. We are not to shirk the responsibility of carrying the Gospel to the lost, nor should we take it lightly. Then too, we must always remember that how we live has an effect on how the world views God (Matt. 5:13-16).

Like Paul, our work may lead to chains. The world is hostile to truth when truth confronts or denounces worldliness. Sodom tolerated Lot until he took a stand against her citizens (Gen. 19:4-10)! We should prepare ourselves for persecution as we seek to present God's Word in this sinful world. One of the most dependable truths about our faith is that it will bring us suffering when we do it right (2 Tim. 3:12).

All Christians are “ambassadors” for the Gospel, but older Christians bring to that ambassadorship wisdom and experience that are priceless. The church will pay a price should it ignore or disparage its older members. Truth will suffer setbacks whenever the impulsiveness of youth overwhelms the patient insight of age. Perhaps we see some of this in the struggles with worship and digression many congregations are experiencing right now. There is never a time when elderly saints are to be ignored or disrespected (1 Tim. 5:1-2). One of David’s greatest fears was how he might be treated when the years had taken their toll on him (Ps. 71). Esteem and seek out the wisdom of years!

Persecution can bring out the best or the worst in a person. Some, undaunted by threat or mistreatment, steel themselves to serve God faithfully regardless of their ultimate fate at the hands of the world. Some, cowed by threat or mistreatment, are silenced and retreat from open expression of their faith. All, humbly aware of their human frailty, should seek the prayers of godly compatriots when staring persecution in the face. What a blessing it is to know that when we are incarcerated in the dungeons of worldly persecution and our souls are at a crossroad between faith and flight that precious brethren are carrying our plight to the very throne of God (Acts 12:1-5).

Conclusion

Chains could not silence Paul. During his two years of Roman incarceration Paul’s ambassadorship did not cease; it merely changed venues. He was determined to be faithful as a representative of the Gospel of his God, and his Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. He sought out the prayers of beloved brethren; pleading with them to plead for him at God’s throne. He steeled himself to whatever outcome his chains might bring, and continued to preach, teach and serve the great God of his salvation.

May God help us remember who we are, and what we are about. We belong to Christ, and we are surrounded by a lost and dying world. May who we are help us to be faithful; may what the world needs help us to be fruitful. With Paul, let us ever remember,

“Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

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Biographical Sketch

Sam Bartrug is a native of the Hundred, WV, area. He graduated from Hundred High School in 1969 and holds both the A.A. and B.A. Degrees in Bible from Ohio Valley University. He preached his first sermon at the age of 13 and has been in full time pulpit ministry since 1973. He currently lives in McConnelsville, OH, where he serves as both pulpit minister and as an elder for the 7th Street Church of Christ. In addition to lectureships, he speaks in six to eight Gospel Meetings yearly, primarily throughout the Ohio Valley region. He and his wife Marty have three children and two grandchildren.

Disposition For Unity

Ephesians 4:1-3

Gene M. Carrell

One of the most beautiful words in human language is *unity*. The language of David expressed it well when it was said, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1). If nations could be united, the



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arsenals of warfare would be dismantled. If homes could be united, the divorce courts of the world would cease to exist. If churches could be united, the combined efforts of multitudes of Christians could spread the mantle of Christ over the world, and that world would realize that there is a reality in the Gospel which we preach.

Can that unity be achieved? Can that beautiful concept become a reality? The answer to those questions is “Yes!” IF we can all accept the same authority, the same standards, the same patterns for proper behavior. Realizing, however, that universal unity will likely never be attained, let us narrow the field somewhat and ask if unity among our own people can ever be achieved. We’re getting closer to a stronger “Yes” with this question, and authority still plays a part in making that unity something within our reach. Perhaps a good starting place for the accomplishing of this unity is a disposition for unity.

A dictionary definition of *disposition* explains that it is as a “. . . prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination . . . temperamental makeup” or, further, that it is “. . .the tendency of something to act in a certain manner under given circumstances” (330). Let us

relate this definition to the language of Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3. Paul's letter reads "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Our aim in this writing will be that of spelling out those things which are involved in this disposition for unity.

Our Lord Prayed for Unity

One cannot read the words of Paul, nor the words of our Lord, and come away with a belief in "unity at any cost." When Paul said to "keep the unity" he used a present infinitive and such usage refers to continuous or repeated action. It is something that keeps on going. When Jesus prayed for unity, He made it clear that the Word of God was paramount in this endeavor for unity. A reading of John 17:17-26 will confirm our Lord's continuing use of "Thy Word," or "Thy Words." "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy Word" (John 17:6). "For I have given unto them the Words which Thou gavest me" (John 17:14). "I have given them Thy Word" (John 17:8). "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17), ". . .that they also might be sanctified through the truth [Word]" (John 17:19). "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word" (John 17:20). The entire concept of unity is based upon the Word of God. The "faith" or the "Gospel" involves unity in truth, but not unity in error.

Jesus prayed for unity, despite the fact that He emphatically declared that He had come to this Earth to bring "division" (Luke 12:51). That division comes when men reject the Word of God, and Jesus forever pointed men to the Word. We have no right to disagree in those areas of truth in which God has given direction. The prophet Amos made it clear when he said, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Notice the order which leads to unity. In order to "walk together" (have unity), we

must "be agreed" (have the same standard of authority). In Ephesians 4, when Paul spoke of "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all," his language is not difficult to understand. Should it be said that there is "one president, one governor, one mayor," few, if any, would have difficulty understanding such words. However, when we hear Paul speaking of "one body," and then defining the "body" as the "church" (Eph. 1:22-23), the religious world refuses to accept that standard of authority.

Years ago I spoke on several occasions at a federal prison in Indiana. Sitting at lunch one day with the prison chaplain, following my presentation, the chaplain said, "Carrell, you said some things today that I believe in; I think you and I could be spiritually united." I then asked him, "On what basis?" He responded, "On the Lordship of Christ." I then asked him: "If the Jewish chaplain were sitting with us, could you be united with him?" He said, "No, I have to draw the line with the Lordship of Christ." I followed this with the observation that Jesus said that His very words must be obeyed and that we disagreed on those words. He "drew the line" at the Lordship of Christ, and I "drew the line" at the words of Christ and the inspired writers. Again, the question of Amos looms over us: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

A Unity of Attitude

Someone coined an expression during the restoration movement which said: "In matters of faith, there must be unity; in matters of opinion, there must be liberty; and in all things, there must be love." This is simply to say that in those areas where God has legislated we *must* be united. In those areas where God has not legislated and which call for opinion, we must grant liberty of thinking. In all areas, however, there must be an attitude of love.

It is possible that we can be absolutely right on a given matter, but dead wrong in attitude. Over the years there have been problems that have plagued the church, and brethren have taken

sides on these issues, sometimes to the point of ill will, animosity, and what appears to be actual hatred. In such controversy there is a tendency to develop a party spirit. “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Cor. 1:12). Have you ever thought that even those who said “I of Christ” may have been a little proud, a little vain, trying to rub it in that they were the *true* followers of Christ? The thing that hurts most in a controversy, is not so much that people are in error, but that they lose their sense of love for their fellow Christians. Those who are in error can be taught, but those who are wrong in spirit, *will not* be taught.

It is possible that few congregations ever existed which had more difficulties than the church in Corinth. They were following after different men; they were allowing fornication to exist without a challenge; they had members going to the courts against members; they had problems connected with marriage and divorce; they misused their spiritual gifts, but Paul thanked God for them (1 Cor. 1:4). To me it is interesting that Paul spent twelve chapters giving them sound, doctrinal advice on every problem they had and then spent one chapter telling them about love (1 Cor. 13). Was this chapter simply an interjection into the main stream of his work? Did it really belong in this letter? Did he simply stop in the midst of correcting all these errors and say, “Now, brethren, let us balance all this out with some thoughts on love.”

Paul realized that unity demands a unity of attitude. He said, “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [agape], I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2). Was the apostle saying, in effect, “Though I am doctrinally sound, but have a flawed attitude toward my brethren, I am nothing”? The apostle then lists the virtues of love: love suffers long; is kind; envieth not, does not seek its own; is not easily provoked; rejoices not in iniquity. Is it possible that sometimes we secretly rejoice (and sometimes not so secretly) when someone falls on his face, or makes a slip of the tongue?

Many years ago I was speaking in Logan, OH, and I made reference to a man in the Fishinger and Kenny congregation in

Columbus where I preached. I said that this man was perhaps the kindest man that I ever knew, and at the same time he was as sound in the faith as anyone would ever hope to find a man. When I finished, a man came up to me and said, “I know who you were talking about,” and he called him by name. Far better that my brother should be known as one who spoke the truth in love, than one who spoke the truth in doctrine but not attitude.

The Bond of Peace

One cannot read Paul’s letter to the Ephesians and fail to see a tremendous emphasis on unity. He uses strong language when he speaks of the “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6). It is likely that people of that day would take offense at hearing him say that there is one God, when they believe in other gods. People of our present day often take offense when we speak of the “one body,” and then allow Paul to define it as “the church” (Eph. 1:22-23). The words that precede those “ones” that Paul speaks of cannot be overlooked. He speaks of “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Years ago an old brother in Christ taught me a great lesson. He said, “Let’s read those words slightly differently from our familiar emphasis. Instead of reading ‘**THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT** in the bond of peace,’ let us read it ‘the unity of the Spirit **IN THE BOND OF PEACE.**’” He was suggesting that we place a renewed emphasis upon *the disposition for unity*—that it might be kept “in the bond of peace.” The question is HOW?

Paul tells us that we must “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” If we are to achieve the “unity of the Spirit” then it becomes necessary for us to recognize that the Christian life is a “vocation,” or perhaps more clearly “an invitation.” The word “calling” bothers us a little, because others have misused the word, but Thayer defines this “calling” as “. . .*the divine invitation to embrace salvation in the kingdom of God,*” which, Thayer continues, is “. . .made esp. through the preaching of the Gospel” (350).

When Paul says to “walk *worthy* of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” he is using a word which perhaps better translated would say “worthily.” In other words, live the kind of life which becomes the Gospel, a life which truly indicates that one is making a sincere effort to bring peace to the brotherhood of believers.

The Divine Formula for Peace:

Lowliness: Paul uses four expressions which help us in our understanding of unity. Each of those expressions points directly to the “disposition for unity.” He begins with “lowliness.” This word is clear and simple, and it means nothing more than “humility.” The Greek word for humility is one which was coined by the Christians of the first century, according to William Barclay (159). He indicates that “in [the] Greek [language] there is no word for humility which has not some suggestion of meanness attaching to it. . . . [I]n the ancient world . . . humility was not counted as a virtue at all” (159). Rather, in the life of the first century Greek man, humility would have been looked upon “as a cowering” and “ignoble” quality (159). Who, in that day, would want to be considered as “humble”? Yet, in the midst of such an understanding, Paul is admonishing Christian people to be humble.

Humility is born from an understanding of one’s self. Anyone who has ever known Jesus the Christ, will necessarily look upon his own life as appallingly lacking. If I cannot observe the perfect life of our Lord and come away with a feeling of inadequacy, something is wrong with me. All too often we see ourselves as the focus of life, when our Lord said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Matt. 16:24). There was a time when I wondered what the Lord meant in that statement. How does one “deny himself” was my question. My first thought was, “Deny himself of what?” Then I noticed the experience of Peter when he *denied* the Lord by saying, “I do not know the man” (Matt. 26:72). Suddenly it dawned on me that my denial of self will finally come when I can say with all sincerity, “Gene Carrell, I don’t know the man.” Can I ever get over self and simply realize that “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20)? May God help us to realize our own failures, our own inadequacies!

Christian humility is likewise born from the experience of placing our own lives over against the demands of God. How do I stack up against *perfection*? Viewing the demands of God, my life shall forever be woefully lacking. When I compare myself to the *average* Christian, I may come out looking pretty good, but the Christian standard is Jesus Christ and the demands of His God, and against such a background as that, there is no room for pride. It is truly a humiliating experience to realize that we are not *the best* at anything, and genuine humility will be the result of an awareness of that reality.

Meekness: In our day of brotherhood wrangling, church splits, and journalistic debates, one would hardly expect to find *meekness* as a characteristic of the embroiled combatants. We look upon meekness as weakness, cowardice, lacking in the necessary courage to blast our way through to victory. What, then, shall we do with our Lord’s comment, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5)? Or, beyond that, how shall we allow *meekness* to be a part of a proper disposition for unity (Eph. 4:2)?

The Bible speaks of Moses as being meek “above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Anyone familiar with the life of Moses and how he stood in opposition to the mighty forces of Egypt, will immediately realize that this man, meek above all men on “the face of the earth,” was no weak, shrinking violet. Whatever *meekness* means, it cannot mean “docile,” or “lacking in courage.” Barclay, citing Aristotle, has an interesting definition of the Greek word which is translated “meekness.” He says that *praotes* is “the mean between being too angry and never being angry at all” (162). He says that *praus* is the Greek word for “an animal which has been trained to obey the reins or the word of command, an animal . . . completely under discipline and under control” (162). The word carries the idea of strength under control, one who is truly God-controlled. What a beautiful definition, and does it not fit well with the description of Moses as one who was meek above all men?

Patience: Still another quality which Paul describes as being a part of this quest for unity is what the King James version of the

Bible describes as *long-suffering*, patience. I have always appreciated the expression, *long-suffering*, because it so adequately describes that individual who is willing to suffer for a long time the annoyances of another. Referring to Barclay again, I appreciate his analogy of the big dog and the little puppy. The puppy yaps at the big dog, snaps at him, growls at him, and perhaps even bites him, but the big dog, which could crush the puppy with one blow, patiently endures the irritating antics of the little one (163).

The Bible frequently describes the *long-suffering* of God. Peter speaks of the *long-suffering* of God during the days while the ark was being prepared (1 Peter 3:20). God could have wiped out the world before the flood, had He so chosen. Can we not learn to show patience toward our fellow man, even as God has shown patience toward us?

Christian Love: The word *love* has almost become a bad word in today's brotherhood parlance. Some writers are saying, "Love, love, love, all we ever hear is love." Let me make it clear that I did not put the word there in Ephesians 4:2. I did not just *run it in!* Of all the words translated *love* in the New Testament, this one word (*agape*) is a word which was hardly known among the people of the first century. It was not like the other words for *love*. The other words carried a sense of emotion a love for those who are very near and dear to us. Or, a sensual love a sense of raw emotion. But *agape* was a word born out of both emotion and will. It was an "unconquerable benevolence" (164) which carried the idea that one's enemies could never, by any act of ill-will, cause us to "seek anything but their highest good. . . . [It has been well said that] "*agape* is the power to love even the people whom we do not like" (165).

When I can look upon you, as I look upon myself, as one who was made in the image of God, I can disagree with your thinking, but never in a spirit of ill-will, never in a sense of hatred. One day, when I was a child, two of my friends got into a fight. One of them had the other down on the ground, and then, using language that he perhaps had heard his parents use, said, "I'm just doing this because I love you," and then *SPLAT*, he let him have it right in the

mouth. Not a whole lot of love shown there. Thankfully, nothing was broken, and they both lived to see another day when they could play together. Would to God that we could see the day when we could express honest disagreement, without a desire to seek revenge, without a fear of *losing* the battle, without a spirit of ill-will, but truly with a mind set toward the goal of keeping the unity of the Spirit *in the bond of peace*.

Paul once said that "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife" (Philip. 1:15). When men actually enjoy *strife* and look forward to the divisiveness which produces that strife, they have, without question, abandoned the quest for the unity of which the apostle spoke. When men "preach Christ of contention" (Philip. 1:16), they lose the very spirit of love which should be a part of their "defense of the Gospel" (Philip. 1:17).

Let this Mind Be in You

Paul spoke of our Lord as one who "humbled himself" and preceded those words with the admonition, "Let this mind be in you" (Philip. 2:5-8). The virtues described in Ephesians 4 are totally dependent on one thing—the obliteration of self. We live in a *me first* world, a world where self dominates, where self rules, where self is the center and focus of life. In that kind of world, Christ knocks on the door and says, "Let me in!" When self can die, and when Christ is allowed to come in, only then will we achieve the peace, the unity, the tranquility that is so perfectly described as "the bond of peace."

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Biographical Sketch

Gene M. Carrell has preached for sixty-three years, his last full-time work being with the Fishinger and Kenny congregation in Columbus, Ohio. He served the church there for twenty-seven years and retired from that work in 1994. He now preaches each Sunday for congregations in Ohio. He has held more than 200 Gospel meetings and appeared on various brotherhood lecture Programs. He holds the B. A. Degree from Abilene Christian College and the M.S. from Butler University School of Religion. He and his wife Henrietta have been married fifty-nine years. They have three daughters (one deceased), seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

Walking In Love

Ephesians 5:1-7

Tim Hatfield

The apostle Paul was greatly concerned about the conduct of his fellow Christians. In all his letters he wrote of the kind of life we are to live as followers of Jesus. Paul would write of what we are



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to do, and what we are to avoid. In Ephesians chapter five, Paul writes of how the Christian is to walk. In verses one through seven, he teaches us we are to walk in love.

Be Ye Followers of God

The fifth chapter of Ephesians begins, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.” The Christian is instructed to be an imitator of the Father. Jesus would challenge us with this same thought in Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” The qualities that we see in the Father are to be instilled into our lives. We are to grow to love the things He loves, and to hate the things He hates.

We are instructed to follow God as dear children. One of the sweetest actions that can be witnessed in this world is seeing a little child trying to walk in his or her father’s shoes. I fondly remember seeing my children attempt to put on my boots and walk

in our house. But this great memory brings to heart a sobering thought. Our children see our actions and we must make sure the example we are setting for them is worthy of imitation. Paul tells us to imitate God as dear children. Just as little children long for the approval of their fathers, we should desire the approval of our Heavenly Father.

The second instruction Paul gives is that we are to walk in love. Our conduct is first and foremost to be characterized by love. Jesus would say, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). In First Corinthians Paul discusses how love acts.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth. (1 Cor. 13:4-8a)

As Paul commands us to walk in love he gives us the example of Christ’s sacrificial love to follow. We are reminded how the love of Jesus for us moved Him to give His life in our place. Jesus explained in John 15:13, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” By using the example of Christ’s love for us we are challenged to give ourselves for our brethren. The idea of walking in love means I am going to put others ahead of myself.

By using the example of Jesus’ love for us Paul also reminds us of the atonement made in Christ’s death. Jesus understood this to be the reason for His crucifixion. In Matthew 20:28, Jesus said, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” In Matthew 26:28, Jesus spoke of the fruit of the vine used in the institution of

the Lord’s Supper, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Jesus, in love, was willing to lay down His life for our sins. The offering and sacrifice of Jesus was pleasing to God because it made possible the salvation of man. The apostle John would later write, “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). The greatest love that the world has ever known is seen in Jesus.

Let It Not Be Named Among You

In Ephesians chapter five, Paul warns the Christian about activities he must avoid if he is going to walk in love. He writes:

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph. 5:3-5)

The list that Paul gives us in this passage reminds us of other lists of sins that Paul shared with different readers. None of these lists are exhaustive, but all of them show us the kinds of actions we are to avoid.

Paul mentions fornication, uncleanness and covetousness as he begins this section. These activities speak of sexual immorality of all kinds and the actions and thoughts that lead to them. Just as Jesus went to the thinking behind the action, Paul warns against covetousness and uncleanness, which leads to fornication. These sins were often associated with the practice of idolatry. Many of the Christians in Ephesus had been called out of idolatry by the Gospel and they would have faced a great temptation to go back to their former ways. As saints, people set apart for the service of God, they needed to avoid this kind of conduct. Paul knew they were not perfect, but he did not want any Christian to involve himself in these sins.

Christians today face a similar challenge. Our world, like that of the Ephesians, is given to fornication, uncleanness and covetousness. The message we receive through the media is one of living for the moment and doing whatever it is that pleases us. We are told to accumulate as much as we can and do our best to keep up with the Jones'. In our world purity is belittled and immorality praised. In spite of all these things, the words of Paul need to be our desire, "let it not be once named among you."

Sadly, we cannot say this is the case. Is there a congregation of the Lord's people that has not felt the pain these sins bring to the church? Far too often we hear of members of the church giving in to temptation and bringing reproach upon the body of Christ. In one congregation we hear of a deacon who has left his wife for a woman at work. In another, it is a Bible Class teacher that has left her husband and two children for someone she met on the Internet. In another, it is the preacher who is forced to resign because he is involved with a woman in the congregation. In still another, it is an elder who is having an affair with a woman he was supposed to be counseling. We could talk for hours of the situations we are aware of where the very things that Paul says, "let it not be once named among you" have taken place.

Satan delights in the fall of any Christian, but I believe this is especially true when he can use a sinful situation to bring reproach upon the church. The sins of fornication, uncleanness and covetousness provide this opportunity for the devil. The harm that is caused in communities by these sins can hurt the work of the church for generations.

The next warning Paul gives concerns our speech. "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." Our words reveal our character and if our speech is about immoral and unclean things it is likely that our actions will not be far behind. Talking about things that are immoral and joking about things that are filthy is not the kind of speech God wants to hear from His children. Instead, Paul tells us that our time should be spent in giving thanks for the blessings that God has given. "Giving thanks always for all

things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20).

In verse five, Paul reminds us of the consequences for involving ourselves in these sinful things. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Paul is very plain in his teaching. He wanted these Christians to know that if they did these things, if they continued in them, they could not go to heaven. Paul gave a similar warning to the Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

Paul was making it clear that if they chose to walk in sin, rather than to walk in love, they would suffer the consequences.

Let No Man Deceive You

As Paul encourages the Christians at Ephesus to walk in love he warns them to be on guard against those that would attempt to pull them away from the will of Christ. In verses six and seven he writes, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them." Paul knew that in days to come there would be men who would teach that the very things he had warned them about were acceptable to God. He knew that with their vain words they would be able to deceive some of the people. Paul knew this because there have always been those who are willing to teach what people want to hear, rather than hold to the Word of God.

The situation in our world is no different. We have men today who tell people living in sin that they do not need to change. We have men claiming to be preachers of the Gospel telling those in adulterous relationships that they have God's approval. We have churches sanctioning and sponsoring events that are counted as uncleanness by the Scriptures. Sadly, just as in the days of Jeremiah, the people love to have it so. These men, with their enticing and vain words, are able to deceive many into believing that they can be right with God while continuing in their sins.

Paul paints a very different picture for the Ephesians. He reminds them that it is because of sin that God's wrath comes upon the disobedient. This message is one that is given throughout the Bible. In Romans 1:18, Paul would write, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." If we go back to the Old Testament we find the Israelites suffering for the very things Paul warns the Ephesians about in this chapter. In Exodus chapter thirty-two, we read of the Israelites practicing uncleanness while Moses was upon the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from God. As a result of their transgressions three thousand lost their lives. On another occasion, recorded in Numbers chapter twenty-five, we read of many of the Israelites being involved in fornication with the people of Moab. God's wrath was poured out on the children of Israel and twenty-four thousand died in the plague. In Joshua chapter seven, we read of the iniquity of Achan. This man was moved by covetousness to take items from the city of Jericho when he knew it was forbidden. Tragically, Achan lost his life because of the sin of covetousness. Sin always has consequences, the greatest of all being spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).

Paul taught of the wrath of God but many today have been led to believe that God will not punish man for his wickedness. In spite of all the teaching that is given in the Scriptures to the contrary, many believe that the idea of God punishing anyone is not in keeping with His character. The predominant idea in our world concerning this matter is that as long as one is a pretty good

person God will not send them to hell. So man is deceived into thinking that a little uncleanness, well that's just boys being boys, and God understands. Man is fooled into thinking that a little covetousness, that's what makes the world go round. Man is duped into believing that fornication is just having a little fun. All the while, men are failing to see how they are making themselves subject to the wrath of God. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).

Rather than walking in these sins, the Christian is admonished, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them." The Christian cannot participate in sinful activities with others and be pleasing to his Lord. The child of God must do his best to avoid sin. In Second Corinthians chapter six, Paul wrote:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor. 6:14-18)

The world will always try to bring the Christian down to its level. If successful, the world believes that Christians are no different than the rest of us, so why be a Christian? The message the Christian needs to give is that we are not better than others, but we are forgiven and now we are living by a different standard. Peter

warned that this would be difficult in part because the world will not understand the change we have made in our lives.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. (1 Peter 4:1-4)

Rather than walking in sin with those outside of Christ, we must determine to walk in love.

Conclusion

Paul's words give a great challenge to the Christian. We are to be imitators of our Heavenly Father as dear children. We are to walk in love, following the example of Christ's love for us. As we walk in love, we must avoid sin. Transgressions like fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, will cause the Christian to lose his inheritance and make him subject to the wrath of God. We must be careful as we walk in love because there will always be those who would seek to deceive us with their vain words. They will want us to believe that it is acceptable to God for us to walk in sin and that God really will not punish man as His Word teaches. We cannot afford to make the mistake of walking in sin with others. Christians, let us walk in love, love for the Father, love for the Son, love for the church, love for the Word, love for souls, and love for righteousness.

Biographical Sketch

Tim Hatfield was born in Columbus, OH, in 1964. He is the son of Jim and Sue Hatfield. He was baptized into Christ January 3, 1977. Tim married Tammy Bates in 1986; they have been blessed with three children, Jim, Jessica, and Jennifer. He graduated from Ohio Valley College in 1986, with a Bachelor of Arts in Bible. From 1986 to 1996, he worked with the Camden Avenue Church of Christ, in Parkersburg, WV. From 1997 to 2000, Tim worked with the Martin Church of Christ, Martin, TN, and, since June of 2000, has been working with the New Philadelphia Church of Christ, in New Philadelphia, OH. As a part of his work he serves as the speaker for two radio programs, "What Saith The Scriptures" and "Bible Thoughts." Brother Hatfield conducts three meetings each year and has been involved in campaigns to Costa Rica, for the past ten years.

The Church Christ Loves

Ephesians 5:21-33

Denver E. Cooper

I want to thank those who invited me to appear on this program. It is always an honor to be a participant on this lecture program. Your presence and continued support of West Virginia School of Preaching is appreciated and we hope it will continue. Please keep



Denver E. Cooper presently serves as Director of WVSOP. He has served congregations throughout the Ohio Valley for more than 65 years. He also served as Interim President of Ohio Valley College for a brief period during the early 1960's.

us in your prayers. As you are now well aware the theme of the Lectures is *The Glorious Church of the Glorious Christ*. The term glorious is defined as something beautiful, wonderful, magnificent. (*Webster's* 490).

Please note that my subject is, The church that Christ Loves. Since there are more than 3,000 different religious bodies in the United States it is extremely important that it be emphasized that the New Testament declares that there is just one church (bride) that Christ loves. Satan continues to attack the church today by subtly deceiving many folks into believing one church is just as good as another.

Ephesians 5:25 declares, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The monogamous nature of marriage began in the garden of Eden. Paul compares the responsibilities of husbands and wives to the relationship of Christ and His church.

Our society, unlike many in the world, permits courtship which may involve more than one dating partner. However, when the marriage vows are said the freedom of courtship must end the multiple dating relationships. Remember, young folks and older

too, that when the marriage vows are said, a promise is made to forsake all others and cleave to the “bride” or “groom” of your youth. There is not the tiniest bit of room for affections to be divided between your wife, (or husband) and any former girlfriend or boy friend. Though society has come to greatly ignore God’s universal law, a marriage after God’s order remains, one man and one woman united for life.

In the Greek society in which Paul found himself, the Christian women were necessarily excluded from public life and certainly not socialites by any standard. Divorce was very common. According to historians multiple marriages, as many as 20 or more was not uncommon. I have heard of a husband or wife having or attempting to have a dating relationship with a former close friend. Inevitably that person would be considered unfaithful to his marriage vows. A husband is expected to place all of his affections on his wife. The wife is expected to place all her affections on her husband.

How much different then is it for Christ to be thought to have spiritual relationships with churches other than His own bride, the church. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *IN* Christ” (Eph. 1:3 emp. added). If all spiritual blessings are in Christ, how could Christ be counted faithful to His bride and shower those who are no part of His bride with the same blessings? Denominations may not and absolutely cannot be considered objects of Christ’s affections as part of His bride. When Florence and I pledged our love to each other 62 years ago we had turned our affections away from all former dating companions and pledged them to each other. Though Christ died for all men, the purchase of His church demands that all of His affections be bestowed upon His bride, the church.

Second, the church Christ loves is the one of which He is the Head. Paul declares, “And he is the head of the body, the church...” (Col. 1:18a). Then again in Ephesians 1:22 we read “And hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is the fullness of him that

filleth all in all.” Did you notice Christ is **THE HEAD** of **THE CHURCH**? No more can Christ be the head of many denominations than a husband can be the head of many wives! 1 Corinthians 11:3 tells us, “But I would have you to know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is man; and the head of Christ is God.” Can you imagine many physical bodies with just one head? Such a monstrosity would be in the circus. First Corinthians 12:12 says, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” God placed all things under the feet of Jesus when He raised Him from the grave, which leads to a natural declaration that Christ is Lord, ruler or head of the church.

Ephesians 1:22 is the first appearance of the word church in the book. The Greek term from which it is translated (*ekklesia*) is found 115 times in the New Testament. It is used nine times in the book of Ephesians, all in the universal sense as it first occurred in Matthew 16:18 in Jesus’ statement, “I will build my church.” You will please notice that the term church is singular. It was God who appointed Him the head of the church. He was not and could not have been made head of any denomination since none of them existed when God appointed him to be the head.

One of the things that makes the church so glorious is its head. Christ was in the beginning with God (Gen. 1:1), and left the riches of Heaven to become a man and serve God and man. His walk on Earth was perfect. No Sin! No guile found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22). Most of all He submitted to the Father’s will, suffering the horrible death on the cross. He died a perfect death, but came forth victorious to become Lord (ruler) and Christ (anointed) (Acts 2:36).

Just as a head with many bodies would be a monstrosity, so a body with many heads would also be a monstrosity. However, most denominations claim that Christ is their head while maintaining a central headquarters in some city of the world. Yet they will often put the name of Christ on their bill boards in such a way as to leave the impression that Christ is the head of their church. In fact, Christ is the head of one church. He is the head of no denomination; just the head of His church.

Third, the church Christ loves is the one which He purchased with His blood. The apostle Paul met with the Ephesian elders at Miletus and instructed them, “take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). How much of His own blood did He use for the purchase price? Every last drop of it! No part was animal nor that of any other person. No money was exchanged, no rubies or diamonds were paid; just the precious blood of Jesus Christ bought the church.

Blood has always been important in God’s scheme of redemption. For instance, when God through Moses was pleading with Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery, blood was important. Pharaoh refused to let them leave Egypt until God required the death of the first born. Exemption from that judgment on the people of God was made possible by sprinkling blood on the lintels of the door. All of those who obeyed the Lord avoided the judgement of God. For the next fifteen hundred years the blood of animals was used in sacrifice to God for the sins of the priest and the people of Israel. In Zechariah 13:1, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” Matthew 26:28 declares, “For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands: That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:11-12)

Almost all religious people will agree that the blood of Christ cleanses a sinner from sin. The question that is most often asked is,

“just how does one reach the blood for that cleansing?” That is exactly the point where baptism in water enters the picture. Paul wrote beautifully concerning this matter when he said:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death: [that is where the blood was shed] Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Rom. 6:1-6)

That is exactly the reason that when Ananias was sent to Saul; found him penitent and praying that he asked him, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Since it is in His death that His blood was shed and since it is the blood that does the cleansing, it is necessary that one enter the likeness of His death to reach the blood. Baptism is the act by which that is accomplished.

Ever so often I purchase a new suit of clothes. I have never purchased a suit of clothes, brought them home and hung them in the closet and just left them there. I know and so do you, that if I get the worth of the purchase price from that suit of clothes I must put it on and wear it. Just so with the blood of Christ, the purchase price of the church.

John said, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). When I was baptized I was not only cleansed from my sins the day I was baptized, but I have been cleansed from my sins by the blood every day since. As long as I walk in the light there is a perpetual cleansing of one’s sins. Peter

says, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Fourth, the church Christ loves is the church for which He died. God had carefully planned from eternity that His son would redeem mankind by offering His body as atonement. “And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John. 2:2). “Hereby perceive we the love of God; because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

The death of Jesus was no ordinary death. Many deaths come instantaneously; some without a great deal of suffering. Even when death is painful a long time coming, it cannot compare with the death of Jesus. To say that the death of Jesus was different is to put it mildly. “There they crucified him” are the four words which Luke uses to describe His death (Luke 23:33). Today, most people have a respectable place where they may spend their last hours upon this Earth. Their death is followed by a respectable handling of the body, a memorial service, careful and descent burial in a tomb that has been purchased long before the death in a cemetery that is well kept and marked well for future remembrances. Such does most certainly not describe the death of Jesus. He was crucified outside the city wall. The bodies of animals which had been sacrificed for the sins of the people were cast outside the walls of the city. Hebrews 13:12 states, “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” It was a place called Golgotha, “the place of the skull.” As people passed by the shameful place they wagged their heads and remark, “‘Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.’ Even the priests and scribes ridiculed Jesus by saying, “‘He saved others: himself he cannot save’” (Mark 15: 29-30).

Who was it that crucified Him? I mentioned on a radio program a few years back that the Jews were responsible for His

death. I received a call from a Rabbi assuring me that the Jews had nothing to do with Jesus’ death. I read to him Matthew 27:1, 2 which states, “When the morning was come all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.” Of course, he did not believe it. They also demanded that he die. Mark writes, “And Pilate answered and said again unto them, ‘What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?’ And they cried out again, ‘Crucify him.’ Then Pilate said unto them, ‘Why, what evil hath he done?’ And they cried out the more exceedingly, ‘Crucify him’” (Mark 15: 12-14).

Notice too that the Romans shared in the responsibility because they, even though in ignorance, placed Him on the cross.

But then, you and I are responsible for Christ’s death. Isaiah records, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). All men have sinned (Rom. 3:23). There is not one thing that makes possible our salvation without the death and shedding of blood by Jesus. “There they crucified him.” The Roman cross was the most cruel method of torture ever known to man. Today, it has become a symbol of that which is good and noble. Why? Because Christ loved the church so much that He gave His life freely for it.

Fifth, the church which Christ loves is the church that wears His name. When a woman marries a man she usually takes his name. Only once in my preaching career have I been told by the bride, “I’m going to keep my maiden name.” She told me that only as we were prepared to begin the ceremony before a crowd of people. To say the least I was shocked. I can only imagine how Christ must feel when folks refuse to wear His name while claiming to share the sustaining love of the groom.

Just as a young lady making her vows to a young man is happy to wear his name, so is every one who desires salvation happy to wear the name of Christ.

For hundreds of years one part of the human race was called Jews. They were amenable to the Mosaic law which came to

Moses on Mt. Sinai. These same people were called the circumcision by the Gentiles. Gentiles were called uncircumcision by the Jews. Jews continued as subjects to the law of Moses until it was abolished. According to Ephesians 2:14 Christ “broke down the middle wall of partition.”

Likewise the Gentiles were amenable to a different law; the Patriarchal Law. They did not stop serving the Patriarchal Law when Moses gave the Jews the law from Mt. Sinai. They were still Gentiles, (uncircumcised); at enmity with the Jews. The Jews were, though serving God under the Mosaic Law, still at enmity with the Gentiles. But God wanted and planned from eternity (Eph. 3:11) for there to be only one name by which they would be known. Isaiah prophesied, “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will name” (62:2). Now, the question is, what is that new name? Of course, we have children of God being called disciples (Acts 1:15); saints (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7); and brethren (1 Cor. 3:1); but these names do not represent that new name. However, according to Acts 11:26 Barnabas and Paul assembled with the church for a whole year during which time they taught many people. “And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.” I believe this is the new name which came from the mouth of the Lord. The name “Christian” means, “belonging to the Anointed.” The name is found a second time in Acts 26:28 when Paul had been preaching to King Agrippa. “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Peter admonished in 1 Peter 4:16, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” What an honor it is to be called by the name which signifies that I am a part of the Bride of Christ. He will never bring shame or disgrace on the name. Just as a good wife honors her husband by faithfully, lovingly and obediently wearing his name, so does the church honor Christ.

I would by no means stand for my wife to include the name of a former dating companion as a part of, or by hyphen, be joined to mine. The name of the true child of God is Christian and Christian

only! There are no true hyphenated Christians. If one goes by the Bible he is not a Wesleyan Christian, Campbell Christian, Peter or Paul Christian, he will be just a Christian. That is the individual name.

There is a name given for the entire body, the Bride of Christ. It is saddening when brethren today are sometimes changing the name for a name which fails to honor Christ. From Matthew 16:18 we read, following Peter’s confession of the Christ that Jesus said, “And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church [singular]; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Church of Christ is the logical prepositional noun phrase. Christ’s church is the noun phrase. When I introduce Florence as my wife, no one will conclude that she is sister West or call her by any other name than sister Cooper. Surely such should be as easily understood when Jesus declared, “I will build my church.” It is identified as His possession.

When we talk to folks about the names of various religious bodies there are always questions asked such as, “What is in a name?” Of course, it does not take long before they realize that there is really something in a name. They have no trouble when it comes to signing a check, having the attorney make the deed for a house, or when the salesman prepares the title for the new car. One always wants the right name, spelled correctly on each of these. It is only when it comes to religion that some folks are bothered. Let me ask, do you find the name of the church of which you are a member recorded in the New Testament? If not, why is it not there? Does not the absence of the name suggest that it must be of human origin? There are thousands of churches which have sprung up over the years, the names of which cannot be found in the New Testament. Such cannot be Christ’s church.

It would seem to me that when the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul declared, “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16), that it ought to be clear enough and well enough for you and me to call it, the church of Christ. It does not matter that the world may scorn it. They scorned Christ and His name when He was on Earth.

It is often declared, “Oh, but preacher, the church does not save anyone!” I am well aware of the fact that we are saved by the blood of Christ, by grace, by faith, by the Word, by hope and by other things, but please remember that Paul said, “For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23). First Corinthians 12:13 informs us, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, bond or free; and have all been made to drink of one Spirit.” Into whose body were we baptized? Why, into Christ’s of course, and His body is the church. He is the Savior of the body the church; therefore we must be in the church to be saved.

Some say, “One church is just as good as another.” If one is talking about man made denominations, that is true. One is just as good as another. But it is incorrect to refer to the church of Christ as a denomination. The church is simply the body of Christ. Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Sixth, the church that Christ loves is the church which is submissive to Him. “Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph. 5:24). Christ, as the perfect Head, has the perfect right to expect the church, His bride to honor Him. Faithful, loving wives want to please their husbands in everything. “Submit” is defined as follows: “to commit to the discretion or decisions of another or group” (cf. *Webster’s* 1160). Being submissive does not mean that the wife is inferior in any way. In fact, because it is a command of God, submitting to her husband will bring great blessings to her. The same is true of the church. Many excuses are made by many leaders of the church today for failing to submit to the will of God. I did not ever believe that I would see the day when I would need to defend the act of baptism to anyone claiming to be a brother in Christ. However, it has happened. Some who have been preaching for many years have decided that the old time preachers have been off base and driven people from the truth by telling them they must

be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). A good husband will make no unreasonable demands of his wife. Nor will Christ be unreasonable in His requirements of His Bride. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Romans 6:23 tells us that “. . . the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Since it is impossible to get to God without going through the Son (John 14:6), we must submit to the authority of Christ in order to get to Heaven. Jesus said, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). That is why Paul told the Philippian Jailor to believe on the Lord. He then preached to him that he might have something to believe. The Jailor heard Paul preach, believed what he preached, repented of his sins as evidenced by the fact that he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, then was baptized. That is submitting to Christ.

Once one has been baptized into Christ, he must “worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Every Christian must, on the first day of the week, assemble with the saints (Heb. 10:25), he must sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), pray and observe the Lord’s Supper according to 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. Giving as one is prospered is another act of submission to God (1 Cor. 16:1-2). The preaching is also important and is an expression of our worship. Acts 2:42 informs us that those most recently baptized “...continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers.” Every Christian as a part of the Bride of Christ will do this loyally and faithfully as long as he lives (Rev. 2:10).

We must never allow the change agents to persuade us to give up the way that is prescribed by our Lord. May God help us to do all we can to be the spiritual Bride without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

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Biographical Sketch

Denver E. Cooper was born April 2, 1923 in Cairo, WV. His parents were Jesse and Sarah Cooper. One sister, Doris died in 1931. Donald R. Cooper, now preaching in LaGrange, OH, is his brother.

Florence Smith became his wife March 25, 1945. Denver and Florence have raised nine children, (one adopted). They include Edward T., who preaches for the Washington Street church in St. Albans, WV, Denver Jr., Kelly R., Timothy, Rebecca Messer, Jesse, Prisca (deceased); Denise Conley (her husband, J. D., preaches for the Harmar Hill Church of Christ, in Marietta, OH), and Martha Noland (her husband, Bob, preaches at various congregations).

Denver has served churches throughout the Ohio Valley for more than 65 years. He now serves as director of West Virginia School of Preaching.

Paul An Apostle **Ephesians 1:1; 6:20**

Hal Smith

The book of Ephesians begins: “Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (Eph. 1:1). An “apostle” very simply means one who is sent on a mission. Implied in the word is that the one being sent has all of the necessary credentials to fulfill that mission. Paul was sent out by the Lord to represent the kingdom of God and was endowed with all the power, rights and privileges to accomplish this mission as the other apostles were despite the fact that he considered himself to be “as one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 9:8). Paul later said, “I suppose I was not one whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5).

Paul felt he was “born out of due time” because he was not at first a believer in Jesus as the Christ. Our first introduction to Paul is as Saul of Tarsus. Saul believed Jesus to be an imposter and His followers worthy of death, and took a mission upon himself, with the approval of the High Priest, to do all within his power to destroy Christianity from the face of the Earth. Paul later told King Agrippa:

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. (Acts 26:9-11)

While on his mission to destroy Christianity, Saul had all the power, rights and privileges given him by the High Priest to accomplish the mission he created for himself. He was a tireless

persecutor of Christians. We are told that those who stoned Stephen “laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul” (Acts 7:58). He was the leader of the persecution against Christians; “making havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:4).

Like an enraged bull, Saul requested and received authority from the chief priests to go to Damascus to bind and put into prison all Christians. It was on that journey that he met Jesus face to face. At noon as he came near to his destination, a light brighter than the noonday sun began to shine round about him and a voice from heaven spoke, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). The astonished Saul inquired, “‘Who art thou Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks’” (Acts 9:5).

On that day Saul saw the resurrected Jesus seated at the right hand of the throne of God and heard His voice. This would qualify him to be a “witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard” (Acts 22:15). When Saul arose from the ground he was blind and had to be led by the hand into the city of Damascus by his companions. There he fasted and prayed. After three days the Lord appeared to Ananias and instructed him to go visit with Saul. Ananias was reluctant because he had heard the purpose for which Saul was coming to Damascus. The Lord assured Ananias that he really had no cause to fear Saul because, “he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9: 15-16).

The mission Paul was sent on by God was altogether different from the mission Saul created for himself. The mission indicated in Ephesians 1:1 was not something Paul decided to do on his own, nor was he commissioned by some man or group of men. He was “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (Eph. 1:1). He was even more succinct in his message to the Galatians, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)” (Gal. 1:1). Paul was

chosen by the Lord Himself to be a messenger of good news and a representative of the church of Christ.

While he was not called to be an apostle in the same manner as Peter, Andrew, James, John and the other apostles were, Paul was nonetheless called by the Lord to be an apostle. His call was unique. He never doubted that he was undeserving of being saved or being called into this great work of the Lord. He never forgot that he was what he was because of God’s marvelous grace. He told Timothy:

And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life. (1 Tim. 1:14-16)

Even when he was enraged against Christians, God had great plans for him. When Paul reminded the Galatians of his former life as a persecutor who “beyond measure persecuted the church of God and wasted it” (Gal. 1:13), he said “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen” (Gal. 1:15). While he was not limited to preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, that seems to have been his primary mission. Paul declared, “For he that wrought effectively in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:8).

Those events that transpired on the road to Damascus were stamped inerasably on Paul’s heart. He never forgot who he was or what the Lord did for him. Twice in the book of Acts, chapters 22 and 26, he related those events, and often in his writings he referred to the dramatic change those events brought about in his life. He was not, as some claim, saved on the road to Damascus. At

Jesus' revelation to him, Saul, "trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). At that point, he accepted the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior, but he was not saved. Jesus told him "to arise and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6). After three days of penitently praying and fasting, Ananias told him to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He became a Christian like everyone else did in the book of Acts, and just like we do today. There is only one way to be saved and that is the way Paul was saved, by being buried with Christ in baptism in order to have his sins removed (Rom. 6:3-4).

Paul felt honored that God would forgive him of his heinous sins and call him to be an apostle, and he always felt a very keen responsibility to preach Jesus to every creature under heaven. He said:

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and the Barbarians, both to the wise, and the unwise. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:14-16)

Whatever it took to save a single soul, Paul was willing and ready to do it. Whatever sacrifice needed to be made, he would gladly make it. His entire life was consumed with the thought of telling every creature about the loving Savior. He said, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2-3). That statement certainly indicates Paul's burning desire to save the lost Jews, but his concern was not limited to the Jews. He had that burning desire for every soul. To the Corinthians he makes this clear:

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak I became as the weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Cor. 9:15-22)

Despite the fact that Paul could say in Colossians 1:27 that the Gospel "was preached to every creature under heaven," he did not quit preaching. He did not retire or sit back and take it easy. He kept on preaching Christ, the Savior of man, until his last breath was drawn.

Paul's burning desire to preach Christ to a lost and dying world caused him to be in constant conflict with most of the world's population. The unbelieving Jews ran him out of Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium. He was stoned in Lystra and left for dead. He was beaten in Philippi and ridiculed in Athens. He was in constant danger as he traveled from place to place preaching Christ. There were bad roads, bad weather, wild animals and vicious Jews to contend with every step of the way. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 for a full account of Paul's trials and tribulations. Through it all his attitude was "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Paul would not allow any of those adversities to prevent him from doing what the Lord had called him to do. Even when he was in prison, Paul kept on teaching God's Word. At his first imprisonment, we are told, "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

Paul was never idle, but constantly writing letters and teaching whomever he could. As he sat in prison, his thoughts were not upon himself and how he had been treated unjustly but upon other people. In fact, the letter to the Ephesians was one of those letters written while he was in prison.

To encourage the Philippian brethren he wrote, “But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Philip. 1:12). Because he was imprisoned he could not travel from place to place as he was accustomed to doing, but he found other ways to teach. He turned his adversity into an opportunity that he would not have otherwise had. He preached to and converted some who were of Caesar’s household. (Philip. 4:22). The devil with all of his angels rallied behind him could not shut the mouth of the great apostle nor could he daunt this man’s great and courageous spirit. As he contemplated the trials and tribulations of the life of one devoted to God, he says:

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:37-39)

Paul’s life is an example of victory in Christ.

Paul closes the Ephesian letter by asking the brethren to pray for him that he might continue to boldly proclaim the mystery of the Gospel of Christ, “For which I am an ambassador in bonds that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:20). An “ambassador” is a distinguished gentleman who, because of his age and experience, represents his nation to another nation. This is what the apostle was.

Since his conversion to Christ, Paul represented Christ and His kingdom well. Despite being bound and imprisoned because of his

preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, he was not giving up. He still considered it his obligation to preach Christ and finish his mission.

To this wonderful ambassador of Christ, the apostle Paul, we owe a great debt of gratitude. Not only did he set an example of what it means to be a Christian and how a Christian should live, he is the author of fourteen books of our New Testament. The lessons we learn from his writings are invaluable and far too numerous to count.

One of the lessons Paul teaches us is to “be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). If we could learn just one lesson from Paul, this would be it: No matter what happens in life, we must never give up. No matter how difficult life becomes, we must never give up. No matter what the world says about us or does to us, we must never give up. In the letter to the Philippians, Paul says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philip. 3:13-14).

Paul was a faithful ambassador for Christ until the very end of his life. As he sat in Nero’s prison waiting to be taken to the executioner’s block and have his head severed from his battle-scarred body, he was thinking of the church and her needs for the future. He wrote to Timothy and charged him to carry on this great work of preaching the truth, no matter if people wanted to hear it or not, and he also warned Timothy about those who would oppose him. Paul was not afraid of the executioner’s axe. He said:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

Can we continue to work for the Master and endure whatever hardships come our way? Of course we can, if we have the attitude Paul had that, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philip. 4:13).

May God grant us the wisdom and the courage to follow Paul's example as he followed Christ, and never give up or make shipwreck of our faith.

The Whole Armor Of God **Ephesians 6:10-18**

J. D. Conley

How wonderful it is to appear on this fine lectureship! Whereas good lectureships are conducted annually across our brotherhood, it is this one, the West Virginia School of Preaching Victory Lectures that I anticipate and appreciate the most. A tremendous



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debt of gratitude is owed to the sound eldership of the Hillview Terrace church, the lectureship committee, brother Cooper, and all those involved with the tedious and time consuming production of the lectureship book. It is my earnest hope and prayer that our Lord will continue to shine His approval upon this lectureship, and all it hopes to accomplish. In keeping with this year's theme, *The Glorious Church of the Glorious Christ*, may we, the church, use this week to the glory of Almighty God.

Introduction

The Lord's church today is under a vicious and sustained attack. The onslaught is coming from within and without. Liberalism is having a hey day and Satan is grinning from horn to horn. At the other end of the spectrum, ultraconservatism is doing its best to fragment the remnant that is holding the line against liberalism. As a result of these two factions, many congregations of the Lord's church have either been taken captive, mortally wounded, or at best left bleeding due to the escapades of the nethermost tyrant. Others have avoided confrontation by surrendering before a single volley was fired. But rarely has this ruthless attack left a

congregation unscathed. It's apparent that severe damage, and sometimes all out destruction, exists at every turn. The question is, why? Has the Lord left us defenseless? For that matter has He left us helpless to mount an offensive? Have we been left abandoned in the adversary's arena, left to our own puny devices to fend off the devouring forces of evil?

The answer to the above questions is a resounding and indelible "NO!" The Lord has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Jesus has kept His promise. But have we kept His Word? By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the intrepid apostle Paul carefully describes the protection each soldier of the cross is to don (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). The problem is many in the church today, by not taking this passage seriously, do not realize they are in a battle. Consequently they have failed to dress for the battle . . . an act of disobedience. Should it then come as any surprise when entire congregations fall victim to the current assault of Satan? It is difficult to grasp how so many members of the church cannot see the conflict in which they are engaged. Many have put their heads in the sand, while trying to convince themselves that things are not all that bad. Or they see the battle, but ignore it, believing they can stay above the fray. Worse yet, they do not care about the battle and are spiritual pacifists. May brethren everywhere obey the teachings of Paul and see the dire need to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). Our call to arms is clear. We must *dress* for the fight, and we must *fight* the fight. To fight and not dress, is spiritual suicide. To dress and not fight, is just as deadly.

The assigned passage, Ephesians 6:10-18, sets forth our war plan. As soldiers of the cross let us carefully examine this plan and then execute it with all dispatch. In our ongoing conflict with right and wrong, truth and error, these nine verses offer heavenly instruction, wisdom and guidance, which is absolutely indispensable for the soldier of Christ. By complying with these Divine tenants, and being made acutely aware of what Christians are up against, there is nothing Satan and his minions can do to defeat the glorious church of Christ! In considering the amount of

intelligence the Holy Spirit has gathered for our benefit, let us break this information down into seven "Our" headings.

Our Strong Ally

Superior strength is a great asset in any conflict, whether physical or spiritual. But the user of this strength must know how and when to employ it. Great armies have been defeated by lesser ones due to an improper use of superior strength. Sometimes the sheer will of a lesser force has overcome a superior force.

When it comes to the glorious church of Jesus Christ, we have superior strength at our disposal. Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phillip. 4:13). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). So the question is not, "Do we have the strength?" but "Will we properly use the strength made available to us?" Knowing we have superior strength at hand, it is absolutely inexcusable for the glorious church to allow the inferior forces of evil to overtake Her!

Verse 10 – "Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (emp. added). This is how Paul begins his battle cry for the glorious church. "Finally, as a last but most important consideration" (Gray and Adams 286), be strong. The Christian must be stout-hearted. Members of the glorious church dare not be weaklings! "Instead of excusing failures by a claim of weakness, be strong!" (Hamilton 119). The minute we obeyed the Gospel and were "added to the church," (Acts 2:47), we were thrust upon the field of battle. We have four choices in the matter, either we can fight, surrender, call a truce, or desert. Of course a truce with Satan is impossible, and desertion is a form of surrender. This leaves us with only one option. If we heed the admonition of Paul to be strong then we must *fight!* Strength equips us to fight. Weakness makes for a pathetic soldier, and more often than not, a dead one.

Furthermore, our source of strength comes from the Lord. The command is to "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," this is where our strength lies! What stronger or more faithful ally could we have at our side? The Psalmist penned, "I

will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1-2). Since Christ is our ally, and it is in Him we derive strength, “the power of his might,” is inexhaustible! The strength Christ affords us will never be depleted! Therefore, not a single soldier on the battlefield can make the claim, “There was not enough strength made available to me to finish the fight.” Those enlisted in the army of Jehovah have no excuse for surrender. The power is abundant and it is available to all through our Commander-in-chief.

The apostle Paul knew this better than anyone. While engaged in this same battle he told Timothy, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding *the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me*” (2 Tim. 4:16-17, emp. added).

Our Cunning Foe

Verse 11 – “*Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (emp. added). Assisting in the fortifying of this great strength mentioned in verse 10, Christians are now admonished to “Put on the whole armor of God.” Lenski says, “The emphasis is on the verb: ‘Put it on, put it on!’” (657). This denotes an urgency in the matter. It is our immediate responsibility to put on the armor. God is not going to put it on for us. The battle we are engaged in is not war games where paint balls and rubber bullets are pelted our way. No, we need real protection from the lethal weaponry of Satan. We are in a “heaven-hell” struggle. We are in a war without buffer zones or cease-fires. Surrender is not an option.

“. . . That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Our antagonist in this great conflict between righteousness and wickedness, good and evil, right and wrong, is formidable indeed! Just because he is lacking in the Divine attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience does not mean he can be ignored. What he lacks in these areas, he makes up for in ruthlessness, subterfuge, and plain old “kicking up dust” effort. *These* are the

reasons he should be taken seriously. He is not lazy, or indifferent, (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8). Paul tells the Ephesians as well as the glorious church today that we must “Put on the whole armor of God, *that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Eph. 6:11b, emp. added). Inspiration has forewarned us regarding our adversary, his skills at deception are honed to perfection. He is an expert in trickery, and lying, (Gen. 3: 1, 13; John 8:44). He wants nothing more than to cause Christians to be lost. “*Wiles*” comes from the Greek word *methodeias*, referring to “a deliberate planning or system” (Vincent 392). Our English word *method* is derived from this word. Thus the devil is an expert in the methods he uses to ensnare and devour Christians. One of the most effective methods he employs is he does not appear to be evil. To the contrary he often puts forth the appearance of good. He even has the ability to “transform himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). Paul warns us elsewhere not to be ignorant of his devices lest he gain an advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:11). We dare not underestimate our foe. It is certain we cannot fight him alone and neither does he fight fair. We need all of the Divine strength we can muster.

Our Dark Threat

Verse 12 – “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (emp. added). Having provided us an exposé of our arch nemesis, Paul proceeds to put Satan’s entire army on parade in verse 12. The review is sobering to say the least. Little wonder we are to put on the whole armor of God! What a tremendous power we face. What a dark threat faces the glorious church!

“For we wrestle.” This tells us that this conflict is not someone else’s. It belongs to you and me. We wrestle. We cannot get a stand in to do our wrestling for us, nor can we call a truce or a time out. Neither can we expect to fight from a distance. *Wrestle* denotes close proximity, hand to hand combat. Whether we like it or not, this conflict is up close and personal.

“Not against flesh and blood.” Lenski adds this interesting viewpoint:

When one contends with ‘blood and flesh’ he comes to grips, he wrestles with such an antagonist. This is a human antagonist. Wrestling is also only a game, a human game. In this game the wrestler only throws his opponent, he does not kill him as he does in war. Paul says that we have no mere wrestling match with an unarmed human opponent, who at worst is able only to lay our back to the floor, we face a tremendous army, all the evil forces of the supernatural world. (659)

Oh we wrestle, but not with any comparable human opponent. Our grapple is with Satan and the dregs of hell. They do not want to just pin us, they want to crush us into oblivion!

Just as we have allies that partake not of flesh and blood: The Divine Triune and the innumerable angelic host, so does our adversary. Even though Satan has much help from his human agents, Paul fills us in on the act that our battle is not with them. Our strife is with their leader, the one who puts them on maneuvers. He is described as “...the prince of the powers of the air” (Eph. 2:2).

“...[B]ut against principalities.” Brother Coffman says this is a reference to “various dominions of evil” (223). Adam Clarke notes, “beings of the first rank and order in their own kingdom” (468).

“...[A]gainst powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” “World Tyrants is better than world rulers” (Lenski 660). “Spiritual wickedness . . . highly refined and sublime evil; disguised falsehood in the garb of truth. . . . In high places . . . in the most sublime stations” (Clarke 468). We see wickedness in high places today, do we not? Adultery, drinking, gambling, abortion, homosexuality and other ilk is not only condoned, but is glorified and protected! Preachers, when you speak out against these things

you are contending with “wickedness in high places.” If you fail to preach against these things you are found fighting on the other side making yourself unworthy to be in the pulpit. “*For we wrestle not with flesh and blood.*” How true! Perhaps we now begin to grasp the immense power and vast force by which we are confronted! What a ruthless, formidable and frightening army we face!

Our Valiant Stand

Verses 13-14a. – “*Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand. Stand therefore*” (emp. added). “Wherefore,” because of the description of our enemy in verse 12, “take unto you the whole armor of God.”

Soldiers of Christ are once more reminded of the fact that they are responsible for taking up this armor . . . all of it. No one can put it on for you nor wear it for you. A soldier cannot possibly stand for long in battle without his armor and weapon. Considering the awesome strength of our enemy, it’s imperative that we obey the command to take the whole armor of God.

Too many Gospel preachers, elders and church members are failing miserably in taking a stand. Could it be because they have not put on the whole armor of God? Heaven has no room for such apathy. The glorious church simply cannot afford not to take unto herself the whole armor of God. Why? “That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand.” What is this “*evil day*”? Brother Jesse Whitlock writes, “‘The evil day’ does not refer to one specific day in world history, but to any day Satan calls one into the heat of battle. Any day of trial, trouble, tribulation, or temptation becomes the ‘evil day’” (322).

It takes courage to take a stand. Even though we may put on each piece of armor we can still have nagging reservations and be hesitant about going into battle. But we must remember this; “*this is God’s armor!*” Encasing ourselves in His protection makes us able to take this valiant stand. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). Jesus said, “These things I have spoken

unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). May we never forget these words of John: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Verse 14a – “Stand therefore” (emp. added). We are called once again to stand. If you are going to stand . . . *stand!* That means do not metaphorically lie down, recline, sit or crouch, but stand. Make up your mind once and for all and do it. Stand because God tells you to. Stand because you are protected. Stand because you have convictions. Stand because you are a soldier. Stand because you love truth and hate error. Stand so you can be seen and heard. Stand because you can. I wonder when some of my brethren are going to understand that standing up for Jesus doesn’t mean rising from a pew and singing a song with those lyrics? Do we not know we can stand up for Jesus in a seated position? In 2002 during my extended hospital stay in Charleston, W.V., I overheard a denominational preacher telling a patient across the hall that he did not need to be baptized in order to be saved. Although lying flat on my back, I realized I needed to confront the preacher about what he had said. As he left I summoned him over to my bedside. And in a laying down position I “stood up” for Jesus and His teaching on baptism, by quoting Mark 16:16. The preacher did not like the stand I took even though I was laying down! So bodily posture has nothing to do with taking the stand Paul is talking about in these verses.

Refusing to stand is insubordination and grounds for expulsion from the army of God. How tragic it would be on the day of judgment, for any soldier of Christ to stand in His august presence having been dishonorably discharged from the Lord’s service. A stand for truth and righteousness must be taken, coupled with a diligent effort to do so. Are we doing all we can to stand valiantly on the front lines of this great war? Are we pressing the battle?

Our Impenetrable Armor

Verse 14b – “...having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (emp. added). As we

picture the Christian soldier, Brother W. T. Hamilton says, “Don’t envision a glamorous knight of the middle ages. Think of a hard working, poor, Roman soldier. Paul was a prisoner in Rome—probably chained to a soldier—awaiting trial. He wrote to the Ephesians, and used this illustration to describe them to his battle and theirs” (121). Speaking of Paul’s time spent under Roman guard, as the Ephesian epistle was penned, William Barclay wrote, “As he writes . . . the soldier’s armour suggests a picture to him. The Christian too has his armour; and part by part Paul takes the armour of the Roman soldier and translates it into Christian terms” (183).

“Having your loins gird about with truth.” The belt of truth, being first in the order of dressing for battle, is significant. It was the belt that braced the soldier up, it is truth that braces up you and me. Peter wrote, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind” (1 Peter 1:13). The belt of truth provides us with constancy and firmness it keeps us from laxity. Paul knew this as evidenced earlier in this letter.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. . . . If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. . . . For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. (Eph 1:13; 4:15, 21; 5:9)

If we have no conviction and love for the truth, we are at once left vulnerable and exposed to brutal attack. We cannot hope to survive for any length of time on the field of battle apart from truth. Truth provides us with confidence and every incentive to engage the enemy. “And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (1 John 3:19). Our Supreme Commander has declared, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Dare we march into battle without the truth?

“And having on the breastplate of righteousness” (emp. added). The Roman soldier’s enemy would attempt to go for the quick kill by plunging a dagger into the heart. To prevent this, the Roman soldier wore a breastplate over the area of the heart.

If the Christian soldier neglects to put on his breastplate of righteousness, the forces of evil will enjoy a “quick kill.” Satan is on the prowl and he is “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He will stop at nothing. Just as a law enforcement officer must keep his bullet-proof vest on at all times, so must the child of God keep the breastplate of righteousness on at all times. If in a single unguarded moment he removes it, be assured Satan will go in for the kill. As a Christian soldier we must “follow after righteousness” (1 Tim. 6:11), “flee . . . youthful lusts: but follow righteousness” (2 Tim. 2:22), “The Lord loveth the righteous” (Ps. 146:8). Remember, since this is the “armor of God” (vv. 11, 13) it cannot be penetrated. It is the Lord’s breastplate of righteousness, that will protect and preserve. The prophet Isaiah noted, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa. 64:6). However we have this grand promise, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Verse 15 – “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (emp. added). Who among us would go into a sports arena without the proper footwear? What person would walk on to a construction site barefooted? Or what would you think about a soldier over in Iraq traipsing through the burning sand dunes and the bombed out streets of Baghdad in his stocking feet? At once we would deem that individual mentally incompetent. In fact, we can have on every article of clothing, along with every piece of necessary equipment concerning work and play, but if our feet are not properly shod and protected, we are vastly unprepared and cannot possibly perform the task at hand.

The Roman soldier wore a sandal-like boot, the soles of which were studded with hobnails, giving his feet a firm footing. Wherever we travel in the world as soldiers of Christ, the Gospel

of peace gives us moral traction and a firm purchase. Though we contend with the entire dark forces of the supernatural world, we can do so with calm confidence and without fear.

Our marching orders have been given. “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:15)! It is apparent that many are not preaching “the Gospel of peace” but “another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6b-7). Less than a year ago, it was reported that the largest congregation in the brotherhood (North Richland Hills, Ft. Worth, TX) would introduce an instrumental worship assembly with communion on Saturday nights. What has been the result? Peace? Hardly! Now because of their departure from the truth other congregations have followed their sad example. Brother Jesse Whitlock has stated the case well, “Some think of themselves as peacemakers when they have become pactmakers with Satan. When one compromises the Gospel of peace, he is in a league with Satan” (Whitlock 325). But with our feet equipped with the Gospel of peace we can take a bold and sure stand against “every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14) that blows across the battlefield and bring about its demise.

Verse 16 – “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (emp. added). The Roman shield was large and heavy, covering the entire body. It provided protection from the enemy’s sword, spear, arrows, and darts. Thus we can see that this shield was *the* crucial piece of equipment for the Roman soldier. By the wording, “*above all,*” one learns the shield of faith is *the* crucial piece of armor for the Christian warrior. It gives us spiritual protection in this spiritual warfare. Faith in God—in His power and goodness—is our shield. “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Prov. 30:5). “Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield” (Ps. 115:11). Rest assured we can be the victors in this daily struggle by properly using our shield, “and this is the victory that overcometh

the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). The shield of faith gives us patience and courage to endure to the end.

“Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” It astounds me when I contemplate the vast number of people who are seeking to destroy the church of Christ. It seems the number grows exponentially every year and the darts they hurl are infinite. Yet Paul informs us with inspired conviction that we are “able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Not just some, a few, most, but *all*. “During ancient battles, there were those soldiers who dipped their arrows in pitch and shot them into the midst of the enemy camp. This completely disequipped the opposition” (Coats 243). But soldiers of the cross are not to be at ease at Zion. Therefore we expect the attack. When we see the barrage of fiery darts coming our direction we are not taken by surprise. To the contrary we are more than able to extinguish each one by holding up the protective shield of faith.

Verse 17a – “*And take the helmet of salvation*” (emp. added). Even more obvious than proper footgear, verse 15, is the proper headgear. A blow to the head can be serious, even fatal. However, why should those of us who are already Christians put on the helmet of salvation? Aren’t we already saved? Notice that Paul also wrote these words to the church at Thessalonica, “Be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the *hope of salvation*” (1 Thess. 5:8, emp. added). Give attention to what Brothers Whitlock and Coats have offered on both these passages. “Why does Paul change the wording to ‘hope’ of salvation? Note the change of the breastplate from one of righteousness (Eph. 6:14) to one of ‘faith and love’ (1 Thess. 5:8)” (Whitlock 327). Brother Whitlock goes on to show that hope connects with faith and love in numerous passages showing that hope completes the trilogy. Brother Coats adds, “There is positively a salvation which comes to the faithful in the future in addition to that initial salvation which comes when one obeys the gospel” (243). “Some historians observe that Roman soldiers added plumage to their helmets for parade dress, to celebrate after a victory. Perhaps the ‘hope’ becoming ‘eternal salvation’ (Heb.

5:9) could be looked upon as our parade dress in a heavenly home” (Whitlock 328).

The hope of salvation is the helmet of the Christian soldier. By this hope we are inspired, we are led, we are urged to press the battle.

Our Lethal Weapon

Verse 17b – “. . . *and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” (emp. added). The armor we have discussed is defensive in nature. Now Paul draws attention to our offensive weapon—the sword of the spirit—our lethal weapon. The Roman Empire was not built by being defensive. The Roman army obviously had to be offensive as well. Their primary weapon was a straight double-edged sword, approximately twenty-two inches long. The glorious church of our Lord cannot expand either without going on the offensive. Therefore we must wage an aggressive war. It is not enough for us always to be in the defense mode, we must go on the attack! With the armor and weaponry we have, an all out blitz can be mounted to send Satan and his demons scurrying for cover. They can be made to tremble (James 2:19) if the church will make up its mind to trample! Armor does not frighten Satan. Neither does a weapon that cannot be used effectively against him and his legions. This is a problem in the Lord’s army today. We have this omnipotent weapon at our disposal, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, yet some even on the front lines don’t know how to use it! The power to blast Satan to smithereens is here (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12), but a dearth of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), leaves many in the army of God unarmed and powerless to fight back. The sword does us no good while in the sheath. It must be taken out of the sheath and wielded with skill before the tide of battle can be turned. May each soldier “Study to show himself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). May each soldier in the army of God “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

Our Supply Line

Verse 18 – “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*” (emp. added). Many a war has been lost due to the supply lines being cut off. The Christian soldier has a Divine supply line that, if kept open, will enable him to overcome any conflict. Those on the opposing side have no such supply line. How then can they be victorious? The captain of our salvation, while in the flesh, was a man of persistent prayer. He taught His disciples to be men and women of constant prayer. If we follow His example of persistence we cannot lose this war of wars. But how many of us pray as the Bible instructs? How many have fallen on the field of battle only because they chose to cut off their Divine supply line to God? The soldier of Christ is admonished to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), “pray always” (2 Thess. 1:11). Jesus taught, “men ought always to pray, and not faint” (Luke 18:1). Let us be habitual in our prayer life. Regularity in prayer will insure continued Divine assistance on the field of battle. The soldier of Christ simply cannot afford to stop praying for prolonged periods of time.

Paul also urges us to make supplication. All supplications are prayers, but not all prayers are supplications. A supplication is a fervent rendering of your heart to God. Paul says this is what it takes to be victors over Satan.

Notice, too that as soldiers we are to make this supplication “in the Spirit” and “for all saints.” This means our supplications and prayers are to be in harmony with the teachings of the Spirit. That teaching is found in the Bible, the Word of God.

Getting on our knees in prayer to God will prevent us from getting **knocked** to our knees by Satan. Let us not use prayer as a last resort, by then it may be too late.

Conclusion

The best conclusion to our study is for us to be reminded of where Paul began. “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God . . .*” (Eph. 6:10-11a, emp. added).

We have our marching orders, let us arm ourselves and go forth to meet our foe.

Encamped along the hills of light,
Ye Christian soldiers rise,
And press the battle ere the night,
Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below,
Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory we know,
That overcomes the world.

--Ira D. Sankey

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Biographical Sketch

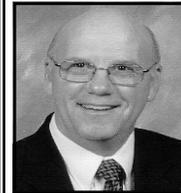
J.D. Conley was born in El Paso, TX., in 1959. He is a third generation Gospel preacher and is in his 15th year of preaching full-time. He majored in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University and is a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Fort Worth, TX. He's had three local works: Spencer, WV; Elkins, WV; and since 2004 has preached for the Harmar Hill Church of Christ in Marietta, OH. He has been married to the former Denise Cooper for 28 years. They have two daughters: Shalyn 21, a senior at FHU majoring in chemistry; and Amy 19, who lives in Cambridge, OH; and four sons; Shane 18, currently a student at WVSOP; Jesse 16; and Travis and Matthew 14 at home; they also have one grandson, Jeremiah, 7 months.

The Old Man and the New Man

Ephesians 4:17-32

Eddie Cooper

Over the years, after a baptism, I have heard many say, "I feel like a new person." Isn't that a great sentiment? Actually, it is more than that as we shall see in our study. A Christian is a "new creation," (2 Cor. 5:17) is to "walk in newness of life," (Rom. 6:4) and in our text a "new man" (Eph. 4:24).



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We have also known people who wanted to begin life all over again, but really didn't know where to begin. It begins with the realization that we have sinned, (Rom. 3:23) need to be reconciled to God, (Eph. 2:16) and that we want to be like Him.

Ephesians describes in detail the new life that Christ has provided for the Gentiles. The interesting thing is that the privileges have not been provided for Gentiles separately from Jews, but together with them. (Eph. 2:5, 6, 21, 22; 4:16)

What Does the Book of Ephesians Show Us?

When one reads the book of Ephesians, he cannot come away from it without understanding the necessity of the Gospel or the church. It sets forth God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, (Eph. 3:10, 11) to establish a society which stands out in contrast to the background of the old world. We realize that the church is characterized by life and not death, and a reconciliation that has taken place between Christians and God, and not alienation. The term "reconciliation" is a marvelous word that helps relate to the

concept of the “new man.” Making friends again with God should be the distinct possibility in the mind of every person. Some have known of individuals who were estranged for years, who have been reconciled. All rejoiced that they were no longer enemies, but now friends. Children, often get into disagreements but, in a few minutes are “friends again.” But, the greater picture is seen in one’s being reconciled to God by means of the cross. The “new man” is described as “reconciled to God” (Eph. 2:16).

In our text, there are also wholesome standards by which to live rather than living a life of corruption. Chapters 1-3 describe what God has done for us in Christ. Chapters 4-6 describe what we are to do in response to what God has done for us. Members of the church should be stirred with renewed vigor as they study the possibilities within the life of a Christian and the changes that can be made.

It is possible for those who enter the body of Christ to drag their feet and contribute to darkness and disunity. It is interesting to note the traits of those who live in darkness. These traits undermine brotherhood and unity, contributing to self-gratification (4:19). They are caught up in falsehoods (4:25). They are given over to anger (4:26), and they steal (4:28). All of these actions disrupt human well-being and unity. They are the ways of the enemy, not the ways of God. God is at work to bring this world into a loving and sharing relationship. The same disruptive results come from unwholesome talk (4:29), bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice (4:31). Walking in the ways of darkness are ways that alienate, disrupt, and destroy.

The Traits of those Who Live in Darkness

At the outset of our text, Paul wants his readers to grasp the contrast between what they had been as pagans and what they now were to be as Christians. We are not accustomed to doing our own thinking. It seems that people would rather have vital information “poured into their brain,” than have to THINK things through and arrive at truth. So, Paul reminds them of a futile mind, a darkened understanding, and ignorance, which all contribute to the moral

insensitivity of a pagan life. On the other hand, he speaks of the way in which he learned Christ, which led to a righteous and holy life.

The Christian life in Scripture is often compared to a journey. We have often talked to people about a “life of beginning again.” The Bible affords us the opportunity to see what we can be if we follow it on this journey through life. It is possible to examine the Bible in light of our lives and retrace our steps and see if we are maturing in Christ or not.

Here he uses the phrase, “*as other Gentiles walk,*” which shows that probably the mass of converts in the church at Ephesus were from among the heathen, and Paul regarded them as Gentile converts. Or, it may be that here he addressed himself more particularly to that portion of the church, as especially needing his admonition and care.

(1) **A VAIN MIND** (4:17). This means: “a waste of the whole rational powers on worthless objects” (Lipscomb 84). According to Albert Barnes, this word carries with it more than “emptiness.” It denotes moral wrong, being applied usually to those who worshipped vain idols, and then those who were alienated from the true God” (84). When God is not in our minds, our thoughts are futile. Apart from the knowledge of the true God, life is futile and frustrating (without meaning and purpose). This means they estranged themselves from God. It was because of what they had done and not what God had done. It is the same with us. We are the ones who alienate ourselves from God’s goodness and blessings afforded in Christ.

This alienation is due to their ignorance, the ignorance that was caused by the hardening of their hearts. Their alienation had its cause not in something external, casual or superficial, but in themselves—in a culpable ignorance in their own heart. Alienation from God is alienation from the abundant life. Jesus said, “...*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10, emp. added). Being alienated from the life of God is a life that is not like that of God, or a life of which He is the source and author. These individuals lived a life

which was unlike God, or which He could not approve. “Through the ignorance that is in them” (Rom. 1:21-23). John 17:3 reads: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Ignorance is the beginning of error and “fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). One of the reasons for so much ignorance about God is that man becomes darkened in his understanding. **“Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened”** (Rom. 1:21, emp. added). Unbelief and rebellion can be dispelled only when men believe and have their eyes enlightened.

(2) **A HARD HEART** (4:18). In spite of all that God has done to show Himself to mankind (Rom. 1:18-23), the man of sin hardens his heart and continues the downward journey that leads to torment. Albert Barnes said: “a man who has a blind and hard heart sees no beauty in truth, and feels not its force, and is insensible to all its appeals” (84). These were like those found in Romans one, because their minds were subject to debasing lusts. “This is not just the intellectual faculty or understanding, but also the faculty for recognizing moral good and spiritual truth” (Salmond 339). Involved is the giving of one’s self over to things that are devoid of worth or reality. We must not let our hearts become hardened.

(3) **AN EVIL CONDUCT** (4:19). Out of this vanity of mind and hardness of heart comes evil conduct. Mark 7:21-23 reads: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” These were **“past feeling.”** This involves moral insensibility. The result, then, of moral insensibility and guilty ignorance is gross corruption of life. Here is a spirit of recklessness, the reins are relaxed, and the soul is abandoned to the indulgence of all kinds of iniquity.

As one takes notice of the heathen hardness, darkness and recklessness, Paul sets forth the process involved in a Christian

education (Eph. 4:20-24). To become a new man, in contrast to the old, a transformation takes place that is described in three infinitives: “to put off” (v. 22); “to be renewed” (v. 23); and “to put on” (v. 24). If heathen darkness leads to uncleanness, biblical knowledge properly applied leads to moral purity.

It involves a radical change in one’s life, the repudiation of our former self and the putting on of the “new self.” The old man is crucified with Christ, **“...that the body of sin might be done away”** (Rom. 6:6, emp. added). The inward change is evidenced by the outward life. The old man dies, being conquered by the new.

Wicked men may arrive at such a height of sin as to have no sense of sin, no grief, nor challenge from the conscience to quit sinning. A watchful conscience doing its duty is the strongest restraint from sin; and where that is not, all other restraints will serve for little purpose.

Ephesians 4:22 of our text reads: **“...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”** (emp. added). Lusts are deceitful, because they promise happiness, if gratified, when they always bring misery. The man away from God is led by these lusts, and they always work corruption of life and degradation of character. James 1:14, 15 gives us the process: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

Paul says they **“...did not so learn Christ”** (4:20, emp. added). The “new man” comes as a result of what Christ would have one do.

It does not mean merely to learn His doctrines, but to attain the knowledge of Christ as the Son of God, God in our nature, the holy one of God, the Savior from sin, whom to know is holiness and life. Anyone who has thus learned Christ cannot live in darkness and sin. Such knowledge is in its very nature light. When it enters, the mind is refined, and purified. (Lipscomb 86)

The judgment of man is changed because of the light, which brings clearness and strength to the mind. He now judges the truths of religion to be real which once had no more force on his life than to bring doubtful conclusions. A new turn is made in his reasoning and a new use is made of it. 2 Corinthians 10:5 states: "...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." When the Word of God is used, it enables the "new man" to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Since Jesus was manifest in the flesh (John 1:14), we have in Him, the perfect likeness of God, after which the Christian is to model his life. Jesus came to prepare man to dwell with God. We have the precepts that would fit man in character to dwell in His presence. Not only did He give us the precepts, but, the example of what these precepts would make of the man who practiced them (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6).

The "new man" begins thinking properly and will "...*deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age*" (Titus 2:12, emp. added).

The Results of Putting on the New Man

(1.) He is to "put away lying" and speak truth with his neighbor. I can remember that my grandfather Smith used to say a "man's word is his bond." In other words, he was truthful with his neighbor. Neighbors would trade items or sell to each other based on the truthfulness of one's words, even a handshake would seal the deal. Nothing in writing, just the truthfulness of a neighbor. This is the way of the Christian. We are "...*members of one another...*" members of the body of Christ, the church. We are different in our relations with each other because we are a society of concerned people about the good or well-being of others. The lack of truth weakens the bonds of fellowship. Sad to say, it is becoming more and more popular to teach that it is possible to tell a lie under certain circumstances. How can one be relied upon who cannot tell the truth? Have we always told the truth?

Truth is to be observed in common conversation. People have more special need, in some respects, to be admonished of their obligations to maintain truth; for many are ready to allow themselves to transgress in what one thinks is a "trivial matter."

(2.) "Be ye angry and sin not." Albert Barnes, says that "the direction here is conformable to the usage of the Pythagoreans, who were bound, when there were many differences among them, to furnish some token of reconciliation before the sun set" (89). Even "righteous" anger can lead us to the evils in verse 31.

These words are not an injunction to be angry, but a caution not to sin when we are angry. Rash anger is sinful. Anger is sinful when it breaks out into indecent, reviling, and reproachful language; when it prompts one to act in a vengeful way; when it settles into malice. Paul says to control your anger and not let it control you.

We are not to "give place to the devil." The "new man" must subdue his lusts and rule his spirit. We must arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The devil will take advantage of our anger. Remember that anger is only one letter from DANGER.

(3.) A warning against theft. Stealing is taking and carrying away another's goods in a secret manner and without his consent. If a man may not live at the expense of others, he must live at his own; and if he does not have the substance by which to live, he must labor to acquire it.

Like lying, stealing belongs to the heathen man who has been replaced by the "new man." But Paul does not say stop doing wrong and then do nothing. He says to overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:21) He tells us to work "the thing which is good." A farmer and a grocer provide good food; a dentist or plumber gives good service. But what is good about publishing pornography, pushing dope, or bottling booze?

It is good to work for a living. The new man can do more. Paul tells the "new man" to work ...that he may have to give to him that needeth. The words "*have to give*" do not mean that he will be required to give; they mean that he will have something to give, that he will earn enough so he can share with the needy.

Vices to be Renounced and Virtues to be Cherished

The presence of the Holy Spirit with us is the seal that marks us as God's people until the day when Earth's history will be ended and our redemption will be made complete (cf. Eph. 1:13, 14).

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." (4:29) More literally, "***let no rotten word go forth out of your mouth.***" We know that profanity is being used more and more openly, and obscenity is not far behind. But these are not for the mind or mouth of Jesus' follower. The Christian's speech is not only clean, but also constructive. It is to be "***good to the use of edifying.***" Edifying is building. Christian talk builds high-level thinking, strong and upright character, and right action. And it does more. Its building is not only lofty, strong and straight, but graceful as well. It ministers grace to the hearers.

The possession of a human tongue is an immense responsibility. Infinite good or mischief lies in its power. Paul wants all speech to be useful or necessary for edification. Perhaps in nothing do we grieve the Holy Spirit more than by foolish and unprofitable speech, or by listening willingly and without protest to idle gossip and backbiting. James says:

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (3:6-8)

There are two words that need to be defined in this section (Eph. 4:31, 32): (1) malice which is "a fixed settled hatred, accompanied with a disposition to revenge. It is anger resting in the bosom and studying to do mischief" (Barlow 238); and (2) Clamor is: "noisy, complaining, and contentious language in opposition to that which is soft, gentle, and courteous" (238).

Christians are to be "***kind to one another***" (Eph. 4:32). This is a kindness that renders us useful. Kindness wishes well to all men, prays for their happiness, and studies to promote their interest. My mother is a good illustration of this word. When I was about ten years of age, we had a neighbor that didn't like the children playing near her yard, even though there was a fence separating the properties. This neighbor was a "mean" neighbor from the viewpoint of a child at that age. Well, mom calmly said she would take care of it. She prepared a big pan of homemade noodles and took them to the lady. Never again, as far as I remember, did we have any problems with that neighbor. This was a demonstration of kindness in action. We are not only to get rid of ill-will (4:31), but to replace it with goodwill. Kindness drives out bitterness and wrath; tender hearts banish anger and clamor; forgiveness takes the place of evil speaking and malice.

We are to "forgive one another" (4:32). Forgiveness does not oblige us to submit to every insult and always take the injury done. To those who have injured us we should maintain good-will and exercise forbearance. God's forgiveness of our sins is urged as a motive to mutual forgiveness ("Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" Eph. 4:32). When God has wiped out our sins and made us pure and spotless before Him, when He has rescued us from death and given us eternal life in glory, how can we refuse to forgive?

At times in our lives, it seems hard to forgive. I have heard Christians say that they would rather lose their soul than to forgive so and so. And, if those attitudes are never corrected, they will lose their soul. Forgiveness is such a sweet and tender word. Perhaps that is why it is listed with "be kind, tenderhearted." The tender heart is touched by the awful affects of sin and the damage it can do to one's life. Thanks be to God for such a Savior as we have, that has taken our place on the cross and afforded us the opportunity to be forgiven.

The "new man" recognizes that his life has drastically changed for the better. He has a different outlook on life. He now has purpose, meaning and direction for his life "in Christ." He is no

longer serving self, but serving others. He is a “reconciled” person with such a renewal in his life as to become like God, his Creator. He has the promise of eternal life within Him. What a great challenge is before us to talk to our friends and neighbors and let them have the opportunity to become that “new man.”

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Biographical Sketch

Eddie was born April 23, 1946, to Denver and Florence Cooper. He married Barbara Buckley of Parkersburg, WV, on September 2, 1966. They have two sons: Jason of Sumpter, SC. He is a Captain in the Air Force and has a PhD in Psychology. His wife, Martha, is from Nashville, TN, and they met at Lipscomb University. She completed her Master's Degree in June 2007. Scott lives in Portland, TN, and is Chief Financial Officer and Manager for Tennessee Farmers Co-Op in Nashville, TN. His wife, Leah, is from Leoma, TN. They met while attending Freed-Hardeman University. They have one son, Austin.

He is a graduate of St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV, in 1964, a graduate of Ohio Valley College with an Associate of Science Degree in Bible in 1966, and a graduate of Abilene Christian University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Bible in 1969.

He has worked for congregations in Ohio: Veto, Pennsville, Hanoverton, Sardis and Chillicothe; in West Virginia: Oakwood Road in Fairmont, the North End congregation in Parkersburg, and is currently with the Washington Street Church of Christ in St. Albans. He also preached in Lawn, TX, while a student at Abilene Christian.

He has served as counselor, teacher, director and board member of Northwestern Ohio Christian Youth Camp; teacher and board member of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp, in Pennsboro, WV. He has directed and taught in Training For Christian Service in Fairmont, WV, and has conducted Singing Schools in West Virginia and Ohio.

He has done radio and TV work and written articles for *Teenage Christian, Bible Herald, Gospel Truths, Gospel Advocate, Therefore Stand, Christian Bible Teacher, West Virginia Christian, and Upon the Rock*.

Awake, O Sleeper

Ephesians 5:8-14

Will Montgomery

I am greatly indebted to the Lectureship Committee for the invitation to speak to you good people in this, the 2007 Victory Lectures. It is an honor and a privilege to preach the Gospel anywhere and at anytime, but it is especially gratifying to be with



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you. The text that has been assigned to me is Ephesians 5:8-14. I will do my best to draw some appropriate lessons that I hope will cause us all to want to be of greater service in the kingdom of our Lord. May God bless us as we study together.

Introduction

We begin our study today by giving particular attention to Ephesians 5:14 in which Paul wrote these masterful words, “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5:14).

We in the church can become indifferent to our obligation and responsibility in Christ. One can be alive physically but dead spiritually as Paul declared in 1 Timothy 5:6 when he wrote, “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.” Sleep is sometimes used in the Scriptures to identify physical death as seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15, 16. The word cemetery means, “sleeping chamber.” Sleep can also mean spiritual illness, as Paul noted when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:30 saying, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” Sleep can also refer to religious indifference or apathy as noted in our text,

“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Our Opportunities

There are too many opportunities in this life to do that which is good. The Scriptures tell us what to do when these opportunities present themselves, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Christians need to awake from spiritual slumber. The writer of Ephesians challenges us to walk “circumspectly.” This requires being alert, being diligent and being willing to expend the effort. He also tells us why we need to walk this way in Ephesians 5:15, “Redeeming the time, *because the days are evil*” (emp. added). Christians must *awaken* to spiritual responsibilities. Even though Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30 to come to Him for rest He also points out that we must take His *yoke* upon us indicating that there is work involved in our coming to Him. He gives us rest from sin and He will give us eternal rest, but only after we have worked while here on Earth. He did not promise rest, from or after rest, but rest from our labors in His kingdom. The rest that Christ gives us is not a chance to sit back and do nothing and still go to heaven, but it is rest to our souls knowing we are in Christ.

Jesus talked about work in John 9:4 when He said, “I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” If Jesus, the only begotten Son of God felt the need to work, what does that have to say to us? How much more is required of us? The Lord declared that His followers must be cross bearers. “Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Again He said, “And He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). These passages indicate that the child of God must be awake to his or her responsibilities.

One of the responsibilities of a child of God is to be a good example to others. Jesus said:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-16)

If we are asleep spiritually we are not going to have the good influence we must have in bringing other people to Christ. If we are in a state of spiritual unconsciousness we can become good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men (Matt. 5:13). If I become good for nothing in the eyes of God, there is nothing that could ever be worse than that. Yet, there are many in the church today that feel no responsibility to the work of the church. They are willing to “lay back” or sleep and do absolutely nothing for the cause of Christ. Their answer is “let someone else do it.”

Things for Consideration

There are several things we will consider in this lesson that the child of God must awaken to do. We must awake to the responsibility to worship God regularly and in spirit and in truth. (Heb. 10:25-26; John 4:23-24). We have an obligation to be at worship and to worship God in spirit and in truth. Too many do not attend the services of the church as they should. We should be careful to take advantage of every opportunity to grow in Bible knowledge by attending, Sunday morning Bible study, Sunday morning worship, Sunday evening worship, Wednesday evening Bible study, Gospel meetings, vacation Bible school, and lectureships such as this one.

We allow too many other things get in the way of being faithful. When we attend we are to worship God using the following avenues of worship as we are given example by first century Christians in the New Testament. We are to sing (Eph. 5:19); pray (Acts 2:42); partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7); give of our means (1 Cor. 16:1-2) and preach and teach the Word of God (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:15). We should never go to sleep spiritually to our obligation to worship God in spirit and in truth.

How can I worship in spirit and in truth? In spirit has reference to the right frame of mind, with the right attitude and from the heart. In truth means we worship according to the Gospel. We do not come to worship to entertain nor to be entertained! We are not the audience. God is the audience. He is the object of our worship.

We also need to awake to the proper and appropriate attire for worship. We are to give God our best and not the most casual, or even what is the most fashionable. That which is fashionable may be completely immodest and inappropriate for worship. Worshipping regularly, faithfully, and properly is a responsibility that all Christians have!

We need to be awake spiritually to the task at hand, which is to please God and keep His commandments. In John 14:15 Jesus told His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Solomon the great preacher wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man."

Too many have fallen asleep to their obligation to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). Some in the church today see nothing wrong with drinking, dancing, mixed swimming, playing the lottery, gambling, etc. These things are not righteous or godly in the sight of God. There are too many warnings given about staying away from them. We must present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Paul said:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Our bodies and our minds need to awake to the responsibility of living, good, clean, moral lives in this present world and not letting the world mold us otherwise. If we are going to be a Christian we must wake up to the fact that we are not to love the world, for all that is in the world (that is the sin) is not good for us. John tells us that we are in the world but not of the world (1 John 2:15-17).

Our Spiritual Battle

We need to awaken to the fact that we are in a spiritual battle every day with sin and Satan. We need to be prepared for the battle by putting on the whole armor that God has prepared for us (Eph. 6:10-20). Some are unaware that the armor is there for them and they go into the battle unprepared. They will be wounded or destroyed without it. Others need to awaken to the fight against Satan. The devil is our adversary. Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). We must be awake to the challenge of the Devil (Eph 5:16). The devil is cunning, crafty and deceitful (Eph 6:11). The devil uses many devices to ensnare us (2 Cor. 2:11). The devil is man's adversary; he is a very strong opponent whom we cannot defeat without help. Therefore the Christian must walk circumspectly. We must always walk looking outward, watching out for pitfalls. The devil wants to hinder us from doing good works but God tells us in Galatians 6:10 that we are to look for and take opportunities that present themselves. Satan wants us to be asleep to our opportunities, to miss an opportunity to do that which is good.

In fighting this spiritual battle we need to use our time wisely. Remember Paul's injunction from Ephesians 5:16 in which he commanded that we are to be "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The word redeem from the Greek means to buy up

for oneself for one's own use. Thayer pointed out that in this particular verse the word means, "To make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good so that zeal and well doing are as if they were the purchase money by which we make time our own" (220).

Redeem the time, use it wisely. We need to use our time wisely when it comes to bringing people into Christ. In Colossians 4:5 Paul wrote, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Every door of opportunity that opens can close just as quickly. Therefore, we should follow the steps of Christ. He was awake and alert to every opportunity. We should follow Him in this matter as well as in all others as we read from 1 Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

We need to be vigilant in fighting the good fight of faith so that we may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). Paul commanded Timothy to, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." We cannot fight if we are not awake! Jude admonished in verse three, "Earnestly contend for the faith." Paul pointed out in Philippians 1:17 that he was "set for the defense of the Gospel." He also commanded the preacher Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). Who and what are we to fight? Obviously we are to fight Satan as we pointed out above; we are to fight sin, both in our lives and in the world around us, and certainly we are to fight false religious doctrine and those who teach it.

We cannot profess a good profession before many witnesses if we *are not awake!*

In our fight against Satan we must be informed of the devices that he uses against us, for certainly, Satan can and will get an advantage of us if we let him. In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul warned us to take great care "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Again, in Ephesians 6:12 he warned us of the strength of our adversary when he wrote, "For we

wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The best tools or weapons for our fight are, watching and prayer (Matt. 26:41); studying the Bible (gaining a knowledge of God's Word, 2 Tim. 2:15); fellowship with other Christians (Acts 2:42); and trusting in the Lord (Prov. 3:5-7).

We must be watchful, vigilant and on guard in our fight against false teachers. Paul warned of false teachers when in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 he wrote, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." This fight involves trying the spirits. We need to know the Bible and be able to recognize false teaching when we hear it (1 John 4:1). We must be aware of the fact that this false teaching can come from inside as well as from outside the church. Some have let this false teaching in and some have brought it in themselves. What happened to "speaking where the Bible speaks, being silent where the Bible is silent; of doing things in Bible ways and calling things by Bible names"? In Colossians 3:17, Paul commanded that we are to do all things in the name of the Lord, that is, by His holy authority.

We need to be awakened to the responsibility of how we are to treat people around us, those inside and outside the church. We need to be long-suffering as we are commanded in 2 Peter 3:15. We should exercise patience with others and with ourselves as we run the Christian race as the great Hebrews writer pointed out (Heb. 2:1). In like manner, we must develop the kind of compassion that Christ had causing us to reach out to the lost (Matt. 9:36), the sick (Matt. 14:14), and the hungry (Matt. 15:2).

There is so much work to do. Millions of people need our help. Just a few of the things we can do are: teach the lost, help the sick, feed the hungry, and provide transportation to worship for those who have none, or who cannot drive themselves. We can offer to take those who need our help to the hospital, or the doctor's offices, and so many other things. There is no end to the work we can do that will honor Christ.

Recall the woman with the alabaster box in Mark 14:3-9. Some in the church today have become like those who criticized her for the good that she was doing. They asked, why was this waste of ointment made? **Anything** we do for the Lord is not a waste. Of this wonderful woman Jesus said, “She hath done what she could,” but the people murmured against her. When we murmur and complain we are not working. Jesus said in Mark 14:9 “Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

We must also be aware of our responsibility of teaching the Gospel to the lost. There are many ways to teach the lost. Use the one that is most effective for you whether it is radio, television, tracts, film strips, personal evangelism, or pulpit preaching. It is said that a man left a tract about the New Testament church, by Roy Deaver, in a hospital room. The man in the room read it, contacted someone from the church—later he, his wife and children were all baptized and he became an elder in the church. All this resulted from one man leaving one tract.

The next time we hear someone say, “I can’t do anything in the church” ask them if they could leave a tract? We need to save the lost (Mark 16:15-16) and restore the erring (Gal. 6:1-2). We must never forget or lose the zeal that we had when we came from the waters of baptism (2 Peter 1:9) and then add knowledge to that zeal (Rom. 10:2). Remember zeal without knowledge will not do, but with knowledge and zeal we can do great things. From Acts 17:6 we read that the Apostles turned the world upside down with the Gospel. Could we not do the same thing today? There is a world that needs saved and many erring brothers and sisters who need to be restored to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Let us be awake to our responsibility to Christ to teach and restore them. From Job 29:12 we read, “Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and *him that had* none to help him.” Let us not be asleep to the cry of those who need us. The church makes a difference. Christians make a difference when they wake up and become vigilant in their awareness of the duty they have to Christ.

Let us look again at Ephesians 5:14 “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Remember the words of Jesus, “Ye are the light of the world, a city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid” (Matt. 5:13). One who goes to sleep while driving is a danger to himself and to others. Let us not be **asleep at the wheel** when it comes to our responsibilities and duties as Christians today.

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Biographical Sketch

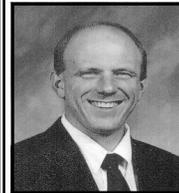
Will Montgomery was born in East Liverpool, OH, January 11, 1947. He was baptized by Frank Higginbotham at Chester, WV, in 1972. He began his preaching career while a deacon at the Chester congregation. He began located work with the East Liverpool, OH, congregation in 1981 where he continues in his 26th year. He has spoken on lectureships and holds 2-6 Gospel meetings each year. He is married to the former Anita Miller. They have one daughter, Tracy who is married to John Knight. They have two grandchildren.

The Ephesian Benediction

Ephesians 6:23-24

Andrew J. Robison IV

The close of any letter brings with it the warmest greetings; Ephesians is not only a non-exception, but more so—a beautifully instructive, inspired example.



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The holiest of thoughts have been explored in the course of the Ephesian treatise. That God, who is able to do above all that any man may ask or imagine (3:20-21), planned from eternity (1:4; 3:10-11) to make the wisdom of His once concealed mystery known by the church, and did so through the efficacious inclusion of once excluded Gentiles (2:11-22) ought to make all appreciators of Deity join Paul in bowing humbly (3:14) to the Father of the “whole family in heaven and earth” (3:15). That God, who could so outline a course of conduct to appropriately mirror the holiness and unity He established (4:1ff.), encompassing every relationship: in the church (4:1-16), in personal behavior and human relationships (4:17-5:21), in marriage (5:22-33), family (6:1-4), and employment (6:5-9), ought to inspire the soldier of God to don the battle armor and proceed with informed faith in the spiritual warfare against the devil and his hosts (6:10-20). Hearts—especially Gentile hearts—soar at the sublime thoughts of the first three chapters—that God had always planned to bless all men and include all races and nationalities in His gathering into one glorious church. Minds reel at the extent of the obedience expected, and the sustaining strength offered the brethren through the “power of the Lord and His might” (6:10) (chapters four

through six). An appreciation of the Ephesian letter so inspires the soul that the heart palpitates with joy and challenge by the approaching of the benediction.

That benediction affords rest. In drama, a denouement is the calming, settling end of a play, movie, or story after the thrilling climax has been reached. Ephesians 6:23-24 serves as the denouement following the exhilarating challenge to arm oneself for spiritual warfare. “Peace,” it begins, and “love,” it continues. These are not normally the trumpeter’s final call for war. But, in Christ, things are different. Peace resides within while foes are fought without. Love for all (cooperating brethren and antagonizing rival alike) is the supreme motivation.

Peace to the Brethren

In true style of inspiration, the pinnacle of profundity is reached in the simplest of words. It simply does not take human eloquence to express the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:1-5). *Peace, love, faith,* and *grace* are the soul’s longing and the Savior’s desire for His people. Paul employs these words so often in his greetings and conclusions (Rom. 1:7; 16:20, 24; 1 Cor. 1:3; 16:23; 2 Cor. 1:2; 13:14; Gal. 1:3; 6:16, 18; Eph. 1:2; 6:23, 24; Philip. 1:2; 4:23; Col. 1:3; 4:18; 1 Thess. 1:1; 5:23, 28; 2 Thess. 1:2; 3:16, 18; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 4:22; Titus 1:4; 3:15; Phil. 3, 25), but one must never view them as mere mindless filler. There are some persons in modern assemblies who get upset when a prayer leader uses similar wording in each of his public prayers. Paul teaches us by example that there are words worth using over and over again.

A quick survey of the above Scriptures reveals that the two most common words are *grace* and *peace*, and those in that order. Is there something significant to Paul’s reversal of the thought in the Ephesian benediction? Coffman joins Dummelow in viewing this as an evidence of the authenticity of Paul’s authorship, finding it unlikely a plagiarist would have so carelessly copied (Coffman 245). Perhaps indeed, there is much to be gleaned from seemingly simple passages.

In this case, the context of the book may be crying out to interpret the initial, “Peace to the brethren.” Gentile Christians had, in all the first century fuss over the binding of Jewish tenets (Acts 15; Gal. 5; Rom. 2:28-29), apparently thought of themselves as second-class citizens in God’s newly established spiritual kingdom. Paul’s reassurances were that they were “blessed with every spiritual blessing” (1:3), chosen “in Him before the foundation of the world” (1:4, cf. 3:5-6), and even “predestined to adoption as sons” (1:5) (not in the Calvinistic, individual sense, but in that their races had always been in God’s plans). They were redeemed (1:7), accepted (1:6), and a part of the “inheritance” (1:11), even though they were not of those “who first trusted in Christ” (1:12), that being the Jews. Nevertheless, their assurance was of no inferior quality. They, who “also trusted, after [they] heard the word of truth, the gospel of [their] salvation...were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13), the “guarantee of [their] inheritance” (1:14).

With such assurances, they could be confident they were a part of the one body gathered together (1:10). Though once separated from God (2:12), and alienated from God’s originally chosen nation (2:11), they had been “brought near by the blood of Christ” (2:13). The significance of this for the benediction is implied with force in 2:14, “for He himself is our *peace*.” He took away the Mosaic law that stood between Jew and Gentile, “so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making *peace*” (2:14-15). Reconciliation had occurred (2:16) because “He [Christ] came and preached *peace* to you who were far off [Gentiles] and to those who were near [Jews]” (2:17, emp. added). Peace is the clarion call of Ephesians 2. Once estranged from their Creator, they were now members of His household, with guaranteed full access to the One whom they could rightfully call heavenly Father (2:18-19). With Jewish believers (those one-time enemies), they now comprised the “dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (2:20-22). Peace had been achieved.

“Brethren” was now a fitting moniker for the prior antagonists. Throughout Scripture, the term *adelphos* is employed to refer

figuratively to those sharing a common bond in Christ. “Jesus called everyone who is devoted to him *brother*” (Arndt and Gingrich 16) (cf. Matt. 12:50; 28:10; Mark 3:35; John 20:17; Heb. 2:12, 17). The term is “used by Christians in their relations to each other” (16) (cf. Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:2; Acts 6:3; 9:30; 10:23; Rev. 1:9). Of course, then, it denotes membership in the Lord’s church (16), of individuals (cf. Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:1; 16:12; 2 Cor. 1:1; Philip. 2:25; Col. 1:1; 4:7, 9; 1 Thess. 3:2; Phil. 1; 1 Peter 5:12; 2 Peter 3:15) or groups (Philip. 1:14). The emotional attachment of this word, grounded in familial affinity, is apparent.

Paul counted preaching “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8) a great privilege, for he was able “to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery” (3:9). That fellowship (“communion, sharing in common” Vine 90) that “peace to the brethren” is no trivial matter. It was through that once concealed, since revealed mystery (3:9) that Jew and Gentile were brought together (as brethren) in the establishment of the church. And it is the establishment of that church that declares the “manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (3:10).

“Peace to the brethren” is, and must be, more than a salutary wish. Real unity in Christ’s church was Christ’s prayer (John 17:20-21) and the inspired apostolic demand (1 Cor. 1:10; Philip. 1:27). This unity is achieved in both truth (Eph. 4:4-16) and spirit (Eph. 4:1-3). That attitude of seeking peace must be foremost among the brethren. It must be equal to, and neither above nor below the concern for truth. Paul demanded that brethren be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*” (Eph. 4:3, emp. added). The Spirit worked hard, so to speak, to achieve that grand unity. Brethren ought to make it their life’s aim to preserve it. Care must be taken not to elevate one’s strongly held opinions to the status of doctrinal truth. Belligerent brethren often do so. Peace is not the result. Care must equally be taken to avoid the easy compromise of shallow thinking. The wishy-washy prefer not to think through a biblical doctrine in the name of

preserving peace. But issues of truth cannot be swept under a rug. Like the dirt of the “rug” metaphor, the problem is still there, and will simply grow worse until dealing with it becomes much messier. Brethren in blood families do not always enjoy a happy-go-lucky, mushy, avoid the issues sort of peace. They have to work through their differences, always with the knowledge that these “brethren” will simply not go away. They are there, and there must be some working resolution. Peace among spiritual brethren is not all that different. Solutions must be constantly sought. Peace in the church does not always mean a hearty laughter and a naïve viewing of the world through a rose-colored prism. It will require work, intelligence, and diplomacy. Peace processes between nations may serve as a helpful analogy, as well. They require constant attention and perpetual maintenance.

Love with Faith

Agape love is to be the telling point of who is a disciple of the Lord (John 13:34, 35). While not the totality of the message, it is the announcement of mutual devotion to the Lord, and even an initial enticement for others to share in the faith. The Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-3), motivated by love (1 John 4:19), now demands love of the brethren (Eph. 5:2). Again, the benediction of Paul’s letter grasps a recurring concept throughout his writing.

Those chosen Gentiles and Jews were chosen for a lifestyle of holiness and blamelessness “in love” (1:4). They were rightly exercising “love for all the saints” (1:15). The love of God had saved them from death in sin (2:4); Paul’s prayer, then, was that they be “rooted and grounded” in that love (3:17). “Endeavoring to keep that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3) would require “bearing with one another in love” (4:2). As previously noted, though, that love was not mere feel-good talk, it was to be accompanied by the truth capable of building up the body (4:15-16).

The lengths to which one could augment a biblical study of this subject are immeasurable. Confinement, for the purposes of this lesson, to the apparent issue of fellowship and brotherhood is necessary. The church must always work together in love, to

provoke good works (Heb. 10:24), that “hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love” (Col. 2:2). This promotes the “full assurance” God wanted the Gentile Christians to have, in “the knowledge of the mystery of God” (Col. 2:2; cf. Eph. 3:3-6). Individual Christians should be careful to “put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Col. 3:14), and let all that they do “be done with love” (1 Cor. 16:14). Love is one of the cementers of the bond Jewish and Gentile Christians would have. Paul’s plea with Philippian brethren is of important note:

Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philip. 2:1-4)

See how the demands of God’s will intertwine to hold the church together. There is the emotional comfort of love in the fellowship of the church. Joy results from being like-minded, that is, diligent to pursue truth together (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10). Love cements the bond in that while pursuing truth together, everyone is looking out for one another—in spiritual and practical ways.

Acts 11 is a significant illustration of this point. The Jewish-Gentile conflict was just beginning, following the conversion of the first Gentile household (Acts 10). Peter had to defend his preaching to them (Acts 11:1-18), and then verse 9 subtly records that some were “preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.” Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36), was called, possibly to weld two segments together peaceably (Acts 11:22-24). He seeks Saul, who would be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Eph. 3:8; Gal. 2:7). Only after the inclusion of Gentiles in the church, were the disciples “first called Christians” (Acts 11:26). The next act in the book is a move of generosity upon the churches of Gentiles to show goodwill toward the brethren in Judea in a very

practical way. A famine would come, said prophet Agabus, throughout the whole world. Even though this would include Gentile areas, those churches determined they were going to send relief to (the likely persecuted) brethren in Judea. It seemed quite an appropriate way to start off a loving relationship together by practically and financially acknowledging, “Hey, we’re in this together.”

Love simply must act to be real (1 John 3:16-19). Those who build relationships, in courtship or in the church, on the foundation of mere emotion are doomed to have those relationships shattered at first peril. The foundation was mere sand (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). Perhaps that is the reason Paul here couples “love” with all that is bound up in the word *faith*.

An examination of the discussion over whether this faith is the subjective trust in Jesus (Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 3:22) or the commitment to the totality of the Gospel (2 Tim. 4:7; Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Philip. 1:27) is here unnecessary. The context demands that the whole Gospel system—including a loving commitment to other brethren who have received grace—be in view. It can also be adequately argued that any true faith in Christ is only as deep as pursuant obedience and works will show (James 2:14-26; Rom. 1:5; 16:26). In Ephesians, Paul acknowledged Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith (3:17), and soon thereafter decreed there was only one such system of believing (4:5). The teaching of the “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers” (4:11) was to edify the saints (4:12) until they came “to the unity of the faith” (4:13). In Paul’s mind, the subjective and the objective, as they are often so termed—perhaps mistakenly—were inextricable.

Either faith, or the whole of salvation through the combination with God’s grace, is the gift of God (2:8). “**Love and faith** are gifts of God which characterize the new community created in the body of Christ” (Weed 190). While faith may be referred to as a gift (Eph. 2:8), it is not without its activity on man’s part (2:10). Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4:1-5), but he was also justified by works (James 2:21). By works his faith was made perfect (James 2:22).

Here, then, tucked away, in an easily overlooked passage, is a valuable nugget of truth arguing against much of the religious world's mountain of falsehood. All would agree that love must be active, but many view faith as passive. Inspiration never so distinguishes. The world says man's passive calling on the Lord is quite sufficient to warrant a rather cheap salvation. But love is costly, and so is faith. As David would not serve the Lord with that which cost him nothing (1 Chron. 21:24) so modern religionists should humbly submit to the obedience of faith. Even the requirement of baptism recognizes that works accompany faith—in this case, “faith in the working of God” (Col. 2:12).

A passage addressing the division between true Christians and the Judaizing teachers who sought to bind retroactive, Mosaic laws upon Gentiles is Galatians 3. Hear how it concludes.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

How amazing is God's Word and His plan! All (Jew and Gentile) are brought together into a supernaturally conceived unity. This is done through no mystical means, but through the real, noticeable act of baptism! As in Acts 2, where those Pentecostian Jews who were baptized were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47), so everywhere anyone is baptized—by faith—he becomes a part of the church, a part of the brethren to whom he then owes his love. See, and marvel, at how it all comes together! Paul desired that the strengthened (3:17) faith (1:15) of the Ephesians would reaffirm to them that they had “boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” (3:12).

Obedient faith is the foundation for this fellowship. Peace among a newly formed brotherhood is the continuing requisite. Love is the activity that motivates the persistence. Perhaps this is

one way to put it. Paul, though, has some passages that argue more clearly. Consider: The “purpose of the commandment” to “teach no other doctrine” is “love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:3-5). Without love, all spiritual gifts including knowledge, and even faith are futile (1 Cor. 3:1-3). The “work of faith,” “labor of love,” and “patience of hope” are inseparable (1 Thess. 1:3). As faith grows, love abounds (2 Thess. 1:3). It is no wonder Paul concluded another letter: “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen” (1 Cor. 16:13-14, 23-24).

Grace to Those Who Love...In Sincerity.

The last verse of Ephesians appears at first to have no hermeneutical issues. Grace is one of the most oft-defined biblical topics. In Ephesians, it repeatedly refers to God's motivation in planning for Jew and Gentile to be saved. The predestination “to adoption as sons” was “according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace” (1:5-6). Grace saved those who were dead in trespasses and sins (2:5). The “exceeding riches of His grace” is defined by His “kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (2:7). And grace, the undeserved outreach of God for the non-meritorious bestowal of blessing, was God's part in bringing mankind to the doorstep of heaven (2:8; cf. Heb. 2:9; Titus 2:11). But this grace is limited to those who “love” (there's that word again) “the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (6:24). And there is a hermeneutical issue, perplexing at first, instructive at last.

Let the scholar F.F. Bruce explain:

The construction of the last two words in the Greek text of the letter—“in immortality” or “with immortality”—is uncertain. Their position would suggest that they be taken as an adverbial phrase modifying the verb “love”: hence RSV ‘all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying’ (similarly ASV, NAB, NIV, GNB). The KJV

took the Greek word *aphtharsia* in a moral sense, translating "...that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (RV, with excessive literalness, "in uncorruptness"). But J.A. Robison found it impossible to "point to any passage in the writers of the second century" in which the word was "used of moral incorruptness, though...common enough in the usual sense of immortality." He further considered that "the disposition of the sentence" was "fatal" to the rendering adopted above, in which the word is attached to "grace." The justification for adopting this rendering lies mainly in the prevalence throughout this letter of the preposition "in" with a "comitative" sense, attaching the following word to one or more preceding words so as to complete a series. Cf. NEB ('God's grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, grace and immortality'); Jerusalem Bible ('May grace and eternal life be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ'). (415-16)

Let this humble scribe try to decipher. The issue has to do with whether the Greek *aphtharsia* is translated with regard to time (as it is concerning the incorruptible body in 1 Cor. 15:42, 50) or intensity. Is the love with such intensity that it is incorruptible, immortal, or is the duration of the love incorruptible, since, indeed, the love of a saint will continue for eternity into His presence (1 John 3:1-3; 1 Peter 1:3-4 [note the use of the same *incorruptible* in v. 4])? As Bruce noted, translations differ, and some are rather awkward. Versions with reference to time are these: "Grace to all of you who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love that never ends" (NCV). "May God be kind to everyone who keeps on loving our Lord Jesus Christ" (CEV). "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption" (Darby). "Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in immortality" (New American Bible). The New King James, following the King James, translates with reference to a moral intensity: "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (NKJV). Other versions tend toward ambiguity: "Grace to all who love our Lord

Jesus Christ with an undying love" (NIV). "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible" (NASB). "Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying" (RSV).

The common-sense Bible student may opt for what critics would call a cop-out. With Divine Inspiration, can not an "either-or" choice quite wisely become a "both-and" proposition? That the duration of the love must be incorruptible is given. Anytime one's love for the Lord dies, his salvation is rescinded (2 Peter 2:20-22; Heb. 10:26). Also, the strength of the love must be incorruptible. As no height nor depth nor any foe can separate the Christian from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:37-38), the disciple must proceed with an unbreakable, insurmountable, persistent love for the Lord. In this view, the phrasing simply defines the love of the previous verse (Eph. 6:23), as the deepest, most heartfelt, most sincere. The following verses combine the same thoughts combined in the Ephesian benediction, and focus on the intensity of the love and faith: "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith..." (1 Tim. 1:5). "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22). Oh, how beautiful! Paul's "Peace to the brethren, and love with faith" is amplified by these verses. Out of purity of heart, and a firm, sincere belief these brethren obeyed the truth. Involved inextricably was a sincere love of the brethren!

How instructive is this joint meaning. For the Christian to remain in grace, he must preserve, and grow his undying, sincere, incorruptible love for the Lord. Otherwise, he will fall from the Lord's favor (Gal. 5:4).

Conclusion

Salvation by grace is not the easy, individualized ride many want it to be. It entails the obedience of a deeply sincere faith to the unwavering truth of the Gospel. Upon such obedience, one is placed in the church, becoming automatically brethren with a montage of people of dissimilar races, nationalities, and interests.

Yet, the love between these brethren is to be based upon the incorruptible love for the Lord. The unity of the Spirit must be kept in the bond of peace between the brethren. This goal is worth the striving. The bestowal of grace is dependent upon it.

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Biographical Sketch

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Tychicus - A Beloved Brother

Ephesians 6:21-22

Edward N. Melott

But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. (Eph. 6:21-22)



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Introduction

Rightly has it been said that the book of Colossians focuses upon the Christ of the church as the book of Ephesians focuses upon the church of Christ. The theme of this study is found in Paul's words "that He might present her to Himself a *glorious church*, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27, emp. added). Those Christians who make up the "glorious church" are referred to in this letter as:

- ❖ Saints (1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18).
- ❖ Those in Christ (1:3; et al).
- ❖ Chosen ones (1:4) .
- ❖ Those "accepted in the beloved" (1:6).
- ❖ Redeemed (1:7).
- ❖ His body (1:22-23; 4:12).
- ❖ Those who have been "made alive" (2:1).
- ❖ God's workmanship (2:10).
- ❖ One body (2:16; 4:4, 16; 5:23, 30).

- ❖ Members of the household of God (2:19).
- ❖ Those who make known the wisdom of God (3:10).
- ❖ Family (3:15).
- ❖ The dwelling place of Christ (3:17).
- ❖ Dear children (5:1).
- ❖ The kingdom of Christ and God (5:5).
- ❖ Children of light (5:8).
- ❖ Those who wear God's armor (6:10-18).
- ❖ Brethren (6:21, 23).

Perhaps the church can be best described as those ones called out of the world to bring glory to God in the one body of believers (3:21).

The word church has its origin in the Greek *kurikon* which means "belonging to the Lord" (Jackson 31). The word in our Greek New Testament is *ekkllesia*, the called out ones. It is used in both a religious and a non-religious sense. For example the word is translated "assembly" in Acts 19:32 to describe the mob at the riot of Ephesus. It refers to the universal church of Christ as well as local congregations of God's people (Matt. 16:18; Acts 9:31; 1 Cor. 1:2). "It may refer to gathering of Christians in an assembled meeting (1 Cor. 14:34; 3 John 10)" (31). In that the "glorious church" consists of individual Christians, it would benefit us as students of God's Word and fellow Christians, to consider the life and work of our beloved brother Tychicus. He is the only Christian mentioned by name in Paul's letter to the Ephesian church and though his biography is short, many lessons may be observed and when applied correctly to the lives of God's people, aid in our proclamation of God's glory and His glorious church (Eph. 3:21; 5:27).

As much as is possible with our limited knowledge of the man with which this lesson pertains, and the work given him to accomplish, we shall consider: (1) *The Man Tychicus*, (2) *The Message of Tychicus* and, (3) *The Mission of Tychicus*.

The Man Tychicus (*tik'-ik-us*)

His name means "fortunate or fortuitous" (Lockyer 332) and is found some five times within the Word of God. He is listed in the

company that took the collection to the needy saints in Jerusalem, along with such men as Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius, Timothy and Trophimus [some opine that this was his brother, perhaps a twin] of Asia (Acts 20:4). In the closing chapter of Colossians, we read a companion text to our assigned text. It reads, "Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts" (Col. 4:7-8). Additionally, there was a possibility that Paul would send him to Crete to succeed Titus. He wrote, "When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there" (Titus 3:12).

At the close of Paul's last letter, the work of Tychicus is further confirmed, "And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus" (2 Tim. 4:12). From these references it is apparent that Tychicus was a native of Asia, of which Ephesus was capital, and had accompanied Paul during the concluding part of his third missionary journey. Most believe that he carried the epistles to the Colossians, Ephesians and perhaps the letter to Philemon. It is perceptible that Onesimus was placed in the care of Tychicus on route to his master Philemon. "The Greeks speak of him as one of the seventy disciples, and make him bishop of Colophon, in the province of Asia" (Barnes 135).

So obscure is his name that many students of the Bible simply read over it with little thought or consideration. He was not mentioned in the book, *Bible Nobodies Who Became Somebodies: 50 Inspirational Characters Who Prove that Anyone Can Be Special in God's Kingdom* (Wubbels and McDowel). He was not included in Henry and Tom Blackaby's book, *Anointed to Be God's Servants: Lessons from the Life of Paul and His Companions*. Though little is spoken directly about this relatively unknown servant of God, much can be learned from Paul's brief commendation.

“Tychicus a beloved brother”

John Gipson, in the 1988 Freed-Hardeman Lectures related a conversation that he had with a missionary friend who had at that time recently returned to the United States from Africa. Gipson asked his friend what he perceived to be the greatest difference between the church in Africa and the church in the United States. Sadly, he answered, “In Africa, there are many Christians who would die for me” (100). Implied in such an answer is his lack of confidence in the same type of love for the brethren among the Christians in the United States. Whether that is a fair assessment or not, it may be indicative of negligence in this endeavor.

The first words of commendation for Tychicus are words of endearment and relationship, “a beloved brother.” The words “brother” and “brethren” are used 864 times in God’s Word. Paul alone uses “brother” or “brethren” more than one-hundred times in his writings. Exhaustively, McClintock and Strong list fourteen different applications of “Brother” in the Bible (1: 895). However, by far the most important usage of the word is that of a spiritual nature in the family of God.

Tychicus was more than a brother; he was styled a “beloved” brother. The word “beloved” is translated from the root word *agape*. Howard Winters commented:

Agape or Christian love, love not conditioned upon natural ties, passionate desires, or emotional involvement. It is love with no strings attached—love not conditioned upon the status, response, or lovability of the object, love the nature of which is affectionate concern rather than mental or emotional attachment or attractiveness. In short, it is willed love. The word, in all of its forms, appears about 320 times in the NT. (176)

Kenneth Wuest added:

“Agapao” speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs

from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved. Agapao is used in John 3:16. God’s love for a sinful and lost race springs from His heart in response to the high value He places upon each human soul. Every sinner is exceedingly precious in His sight. (60-61)

Brotherly love is one of the chief components of Christianity. Another Greek word that lends itself very well for our understanding of God’s desire for His children is *philadelphia*. It means, “The love of brothers (or sisters), brotherly love . . . in the N.T. the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren” (Thayer 653). Further occurrences of this word can be studied in Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 2 Peter 1:7, etc. Jesus stated, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Peter exhorted, “Love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22), “love the brotherhood,” (1 Peter 2:17), and “love as brothers” (1 Peter 3:8). Paul enjoined, “Let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1). Similarly, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom.12:10). The exact reason for Paul’s deep affection for Tychicus is not stated explicitly; however, the next accolade given, a “faithful minister” must have only strengthened Paul’s fondness of his beloved brother.

Tychicus, a “faithful minister”

The word “minister” can be used as either a noun or a verb. A minister is “one who acts as the less (from minus or minor) or inferior agent, in obedience or subservience to another, or who serves, officiates, etc., as distinguished from the master...” (McClintock and Strong 6: 296). It is translated into English from three different Greek words: (1.) *diakonos* which is defined as “a servant, attendant, minister, deacon” (Vine 410), (2.) *huperetes*

which literally meant “under rower,” which originally suggested the servant who rowed the boat (Jackson 123) and (3.) *Leitourgos*, one who voluntarily served the state at his own expense (123). The first of these is the word employed by Paul to refer to Tychicus.

Though minister has reference to one who acts as the less, it should be observed that this is good and acceptable in the sight of God. James wrote, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:10). Additionally, Paul, Apollos, Epaphras, Timothy, and even Jesus were identified as ministers or servants (1 Cor. 3:5; Col. 1:7; 1 Thess. 3:2; Rom. 15:8). Within the writings of Paul a downward growth can be observed in his own estimate of himself. When he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians, which most estimate to be written in AD 57 he stated of himself “I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9). When he wrote the book of Ephesians, likely written in AD 63, he commented of himself, “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints...” (Eph. 3:8). Finally he concluded this downward growth when he wrote “...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15, written approximately AD 64). Jesus changed our perception of greatness when He taught “Yet is shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:26, 28).

In its generic sense, *diakonos* simply means servant and can therefore stand for all faithful Christians who offer service to Christ and His kingdom, men and women alike (cf. Rom. 16:1). In a more specific sense it is used for those men who meet the list of qualifications found within 1 Timothy 3:8-13 known as “deacons.” “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13). It seems also apparent that those who labor in the proclamation of the Gospel are ministers. “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ...” (1 Tim. 4:6). It is this last sense that we believe Tychicus

served his greatest usefulness to the Lord and His servant Paul, as a Gospel preacher. What higher commendation could a Gospel preacher receive than to be considered faithful? “Well done good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). Jesus said, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor” (John 12:26).

The Message of Tychicus

The matchless message is now complete. Paul is about to send it across the seas to his Christian friends in the distant province of Asia. How much farther it was to go no one could have dreamed. On across the centuries it has been carried, on to all the lands and nations of the earth, giving gladness and guidance to the people of God; opening up vistas of divine truth; revealing the grace of the Father, the love of the Son, the power of the Holy Spirit; revealing the dignity and destiny of the Church, the Bride of Christ, redeemed by His blood, commissioned to proclaim His Gospel, and looking in eagerness and love for His return. (Erdman 128)

The beautiful letter that Tychicus delivered has been described as “The Queen of the Epistles” and “The Alps of the Bible.” Adam Clarke commented, “There is no portion of the New Testament equal to this” (449). John Banister called Ephesians “the most profound book in the Bible” (152). John A. Mackay contended that Ephesians is “the greatest and maturest of all his writings...for our time, the most relevant of his works” (ix).

The message of Tychicus reveals to us the need for special revelation. First century homes were not adorned with telephones, answering machines, televisions, radios, computers with the World Wide Web, etc. A message may have taken many months to arrive at its destination. His message was a personal message from an apostle who had labored with them at length, at which time “all

who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). Paul had accomplished a certain amount of work in Ephesus at the concluding part of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21). Additionally, he worked among them for at least two years and three months on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10). He later commented that his total time in Ephesus was three years (Acts 20:31). Unsurprisingly the church at Ephesus would be concerned about Paul’s well being and his progress in the Gospel.

We are not told explicitly what the message of Tychicus was, only that it contained the following points: (1.) Paul’s affairs, (2.) how I am doing (not what I am doing, but how), (3.) all things were to be made known through his message (must be understood contextually as all things in reference to Paul and his work which would be of concern to the church at Ephesus), and (4.) said message was to bring comfort to their hearts. Roy Deaver astutely commented:

Can you picture the brethren of Ephesus gathered together (what a special occasion this would be) to hear Tychicus report on the welfare of Paul? Among other things, Tychicus reported: (1) He is enjoying a measure of freedom—enough that he is able to continue to work to some extent; (2) that having with him some of his close friends (Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas—Col. 4:10-14) has been a great source of comfort to him (Col. 4:11); (3) that he was hoping to be set at liberty and to see his brethren soon (Phile. 22; Phil. 2:19-24); (4) that he continued to work in spreading the gospel, even under such restraining circumstances; (5) that he was not despondent—for he had learned to rejoice even in tribulation, and that he taught others to rejoice (Cf. the book of Philippians); (6) that he never thought of giving up or quitting (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:7-8); (7) that he was concerned about the concern his brethren had for him; (8) that he especially coveted their prayers to God in his behalf, that he might do his work well. (310-11)

The Mission of Tychicus

His great mission is summed up with the phrase “he may comfort your hearts” (Eph. 6:22b). “Comfort” is from the Greek *parakaleo* which means “to call to one’s side” (Thayer 482). In our text it contains the thought “to encourage” and “strengthen” (483). Vine commented, “It combines encouragement with alleviation of grief” (110). As previously stated, the church at Ephesus had been blessed with Paul’s apostolic presence for three years and must have grown very affectionate of the apostle. Undoubtedly their last meeting with Paul had a profound and lasting effect upon them. He had called for the Elders to come to him in Miletus (Acts 20:17) and brought to their remembrance what manner he had “lived among them” (Acts 20:18). He further reminded them of the “tears and trials” (Acts 20:19), and that he had not kept back anything that was helpful (Acts 20:20). He had taught them “publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). He had worked among them and “did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). He had worked physically to provide for his necessities coveting no one’s silver or gold or apparel (Acts 20:33-35).

Unquestionably the part of that meeting that must have weighed heavily upon the hearts of those Elders were his words “now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying chains and tribulations await me” (Acts 20:22-23). Supplementary he revealed to them that none of them would ever see his face again (Acts 20:25). “And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more” (Acts 20:36-38a).

“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory” (Eph. 3:13). Possibly the brethren there had received some false reports regarding Paul’s state of affairs. Tychicus would be able to give them first hand knowledge of “the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you” (Eph. 3:1). What comfort it must

have given them to know that Paul was still living and had not become despondent.

Comfort “indicates the dispelling of grief by the impartation of strength” (Jacobs 678). God’s Word is replete with examples of various people “calling others to their side to alleviate grief by imparting strength.” For example, “And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother” (John 11:19). God is the “God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3b-4). Christians are to “comfort each other and edify one another” (1 Thess. 5:11). The Word of God brings comfort (Rom. 15:4; 1 Thess. 4:18). Paul encouraged the Thessalonian brethren to “comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (1 Thess. 5:14).

Christians everywhere need words of encouragement and comfort. We may comfort one another with our own thoughts and experiences; however genuine comfort only comes from the mind of the God of comfort revealed to us in His Holy Word of Truth. “My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your Word. . . . This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has given me life. . . Great peace have those who love Your Law” (Ps. 119:28, 50, 165). “Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom.15:4).

But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. (Eph.6:21-22)

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Biographical Sketch

Edward N. Melott was born in Clarksburg, WV, on December 14, 1978 and was raised mostly in Doddridge County, WV. He is married to the former Kimberly Baker (1996) and has two children: a son Hunter, who is eleven and a daughter Kameron, who is six. He is a 2001 graduate of West Virginia School of Preaching. He has worked with the Proctor Church of Christ in Proctor, WV, the Pike Church of Christ in Ellenboro, WV. He presently serves as minister with the Steelton Church of Christ in New Martinsville.

The Christian Household

Ephesians 6:1-9

Frank Higginbotham

The Christian household is a term that we use to describe the family unit that submits to the will of God in all things. Not every household can be called Christian. Any relationship we have in this life must be governed by the teachings of Christ. The term



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'household' is used in the Bible as a reference to the family of God. Those who submit to the Gospel of Christ become a part of God's spiritual household. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). In this study we are talking about those in God's family who are a part of an individual Christian household.

The passage we have under consideration is Ephesians 6:1-9. In particular we want to look at the relationships that we have in the family unit that relate to the Christian household. The husband and wife relationship is explained by Paul as he wrote to the church at Ephesus. The husband is to be the head of the Christian family (Eph. 5:23). The wife submits to her husband in love (Eph. 5:22). This relationship is used to explain the relationship of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32). The next relationship that gains the attention of Paul is the one involving parents and children. Ephesians six, verses one through four, describe how we are to act in this situation. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and

thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3). When children are taught to obey their parents they are being told to follow instructions, commands or guidance. One of the major problems of our generation is the fact that many young people are permitted to rebel against the guidance given by parents. Parents, by reason of the years they have lived and the experience they have gained, become the proper guides for the children who lack this experience.

Children who are left on their own will pay a great price in the rough school of Hard Knocks. Disobedience is not to be taken lightly. Under the Old Covenant when children became grossly disobedient they were to be taken before the congregation and ultimately stoned to death.

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. (Deut. 21:18-21)

God did not take disobedience lightly. In the New Covenant, disobedience is listed with many other serious violations of God's Law (Rom. 1:29-32). "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20). The expression, 'In the Lord' is used to make clear the kind of instructions that Christian parents give and that Christian children must obey. It simply means we are to obey the things that harmonize with the teachings of Christ. The Bible is our guide book and the rules God gives in regard to life are always right.

This instruction would require that parents and children alike have knowledge of the Word of God. It is sad when children inform their parents that they are not their bosses. Instead of profiting from having Christian parents who desire the best for them, they think they have become so mature that they do not need this guidance. This rejection becomes an embarrassment both to parents and eventually to children. "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke" (Prov. 13:1). How many times do we hear of children showing disrespect for their parents and then hear them admitting as the years go by that there was great wisdom in the words spoken? The lessons learned in childhood in regard to proper respect for parents carry out into other areas of life. A child who cannot respect the wishes of his parents will have trouble respecting any authority. In school the teacher will suffer from the same disrespect that has been shown for the parent. Officers of the law will also be held in contempt because the child has never learned to properly respect authority. Learning this respect begins in the home with the fathers and mothers.

Obedience is a taught trait. We do not automatically know that we are to obey our parents. This is instilled through correction and guidance from parents. As parents we are responsible for the good or bad conduct of our children. Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas who reached the depth of sin in their conduct. God held Eli responsible for their actions. "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:13). Some parents try to cover their lack of interest in the welfare of their children by simply saying that they are not going to make decisions for their children. This is a cop out that does not cover their lack of parenting. God holds us responsible for equipping our children so that they can make right decisions. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Certainly this passage should not be used to say that with proper training it would be impossible for the child to go astray. This would make us saying that we

believe in the impossibility of apostasy. Some, even with good training refuse to submit to things that are right but the general rule is that with proper training a respect for God's way will follow. Eunice and Lois are given credit for giving great lessons in faith to Timothy. "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5). They had spent time in teaching him about the Scriptures. "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Wise parents see to it that a child is given Bible teaching while he is yet very young.

There are times that gentle loving instruction is not enough. Another means of persuasion is needed. We live in a time when people equate a paddling with child abuse. Certainly no one who believes the Bible believes in child abuse but it is clear that wisdom sometimes requires the 'rod of correction'. Those who go overboard in philosophy are heard condemning any use of punishment in the training of a child. We have and are suffering through one generation of children who were brought up on the teaching of Doctor Spock. His philosophy was that parents should not use restraint or it will warp the development of the child. He later, after his advice was used by so many, issued a statement that recognized the short fall of his advice. The Bible had warned about this departure but the advice was ignored. If we have a choice between the philosopher of today and the wise man Solomon we obviously should stand with Solomon. Note some of the things he said about discipline. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). The use of the rod of correction is not a sign of hatred but rather a sign of genuine love. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). This is a hard lesson for a child to learn but a very important step in directing him in the right way. Wisdom will keep us from misusing this means of instruction for a child.

God's law demands that we honor our parents. Note that the verses that teach this do not limit our honor to good parents. Parents are not perfect and we need to honor them even though they do not live up to every standard we set for them. There are many reasons we ought to give them honor. They brought us into this world. They sacrificed in many ways because of their love for us. When we could do nothing for ourselves, they did for us. This honor for parents was included in the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai for Moses to deliver to the children of Israel. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12). A promise is attached to this instruction. Paul gives a similar statement for New Testament Christians today. "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:3). The promise of longer life was attached to the instruction to honor our parents. We should not take this admonition to be annulled after the death of our parents. Our honor for our parents should still pour forth long after their passing. Children should be happy to be given the opportunity to repay some of the care they received during their early years. As parents grow older they sometimes need the support and care that their family is able to show to them. Children should not be looking for a way to avoid their responsibility. This is the case that Jesus pointed out in His teaching of Mark chapter seven.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (7:9-13)

The people of Jesus' day were twisting the commandment of God to honor parents in a way that they felt free from responsibility in the care of their aged parents. They declared that what they had was Corban and thus belonged to the temple. How could they give that which was dedicated to the temple to the caring of their parents? Jesus condemned their hypocrisy. It was merely an attempt to sooth their consciences in not caring for their parents. If we listen to the lesson given in these verses we see clearly the need for us to give honor to our parents by responding to their needs. How calloused could we be in turning a deaf ear to the needs of our fathers and mothers?

Fathers are also seriously instructed not to provoke their children. Reasonable instruction and parenting keep us from demanding too much from our offspring. Some seem to find delight in angering their children merely because they have the power to do so. The rights and wishes of children need to be taken into consideration in making decisions. Parents need to remember that they are not always right on every matter of judgment. Talking matters over sometimes means that there might be a better solution to a problem that would be more satisfactory to both the child and his parent. Fathers need to be reasonable and easily entreated. Some matters need to be considered a second or third time to reach a good solution. We do not need to be building memories for our children of harsh and uncompromising stubbornness. They need to be able to recall parents who listen to their views and are willing to change if it is necessary. Being the head of a household does not mean that we can just give out orders and expect for everyone in the household to bow before us. Parents become leaders who will help others to know the advantage of serving God. In our hands is given the responsibility of molding and shaping the lives of children. In speaking of the departure of Israel from the way God instructed them, Jeremiah by inspiration used the illustration of a potter and clay. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:6). Now make application of this principle to the situation of parent and child. With proper care the child can be molded into a vessel of beauty.

It is not uncommon to hear some well meaning parent explaining that they are careful not to influence their child. They say that children do not need to have decisions made for them and they will not be guilty of influencing their decisions. This should be considered irresponsible. Think this through. Who tries to influence your child as he grows up? Do his friends try to help him make up his mind? Do the teachers in school try to influence his decisions? Do evil companions try to influence his activities? Do TV and radio seek to lead the minds of your children? Why should parents allow the whole world to try to help their child and have no part in this process? Being the head of a household involves giving the care that is needed by children for their physical well being. A good parent takes the responsibility of providing for his family. To fail to do so is to place one in a worse condition than the infidel. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). It is hard to understand some 'dead beat' dads who turn their back on the physical needs of their family. This physical care would involve health care. It is important that doctoring and other needs of the physical body be provided. No good, successful parent would turn down the need of his family to see a doctor. Also, each of us needs to have an education that will make it possible for us to make a living. The need for an education is becoming even more important than it was just a few years back. Many employers are requiring more formal education to work for them. We want our family to have every advantage possible in preparing for life.

If a parent provides for the health and the mental development of a child, has he met his obligation? The answer is no. Many in our world would state that the man who provides these things has been very successful with his family but to overlook the spiritual needs of a child is to make for a totally miserable failure. Children learn both from words spoken and also from the example that is set. If a parent lives a life that has no regard for moral and upright conduct, he can expect to see this example having an influence on his family. Seldom do children live above the example set before

them. It is unreasonable to expect children to do the good things they hear while observing the bad examples set before them. A successful parent takes seriously the instruction of God's Word that they train up the child in the way of the Lord. The instruction to train carries with it the obligation not only to speak the instruction but to help the child in the practice of that instruction.

One of the most neglected parts of raising children today is the neglect of their spiritual well being. It is not unusual for parents to ask their children concerning how they are progressing in school and if they are keeping up with their homework. How often do we hear of a parent checking about the Bible class work? Is spiritual training not important?

Would a successful parent teach love for God? When the children of Israel were coming to the time that they would enter the Promised Land that God had given them, Moses made it clear that God was to be held in love.

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. (Deut. 6:5-8)

These verses emphasize the importance of instilling a love for God in the hearts of children. Why do children need to be reminded many times in their lives that God comes first? We must never underestimate the power of reminding our children about God and His instructions. In answering a question asked of Him, Jesus replied that this is the great command of the Law. "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first

and great commandment" (Matt. 22:35-38). Love for God is not just something that we say but involves action. If a person really loves another, he shows this by his action. Jesus stated, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). We are warned not to just love in word but to show our love by our actions. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). This respect for God is seen by children of godly parents. They quickly pick up on the fact that God comes first in their family. This is a part of parental training that helps the children to establish priorities in their lives. Jesus taught, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Of all the different ways of life that people choose, parents who guide their children in loving God above all things, have done the very best with their stewardship.

You ask me why I go to church;
I give my mind a careful search.
Because I need to breathe the air
Where there is an atmosphere of prayer.
I need the hymns that churches sing;
They set my faith and hope on wing.
They keep old truths and memory green,
Reveal the work of things unseen.
Because my boy is watching me
To know whatever he can see
That tells him what his father thinks.
And with his eager soul he drinks
The things I do in daily walks,
The things I say in daily talks.
If I with him the church will share,
My son will make his friendships there.
(Author Unknown)

The Bible should always be present in the lives of our children. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,

nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2). A healthy respect for the Word of God is necessary for the household to be truly Christian. That respect for God’s Word also leads the family to appreciate the church for which Christ died. He purchased the church with his own blood. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Anything that cost the Son of God His life, is certainly to be respected by the Christian household.

The passage we next have under consideration suggests that of the slave/master relationship. This is not to be taken as an endorsement to promote masters and slaves but rather is a passage which regulated how people should behave in this relationship. The instruction will properly apply to the employer/employee relationship in our present time. Paul gives this instruction. “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:5-6). We must give honest work to the one who hires us and the employer must remember that he also has a master in Heaven. “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (Eph. 6:9). This relationship is defined by the expression, ‘as unto the Lord.’ We represent Christianity to the world about us. We cannot afford to behave in a way that gives dishonor to our profession. We are Christians always in every situation.

The Christian household is designed to assist each member of the household to live the best possible way of life in preparation for Heaven. When the home is subject to the instructions of Christ, God will receive honor!

Biographical Sketch

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV. He is the son of A.G. Bus and Garnet Higginbotham. He was graduated from Magnolia High School and Florida Christian College. He is married to Rose Marie King Higginbotham. They were married on June 7, 1954. They had three children, Donna who passed away in 1965, Janie who is married to Brent Gallagher (preacher for the Oakwood Road Church of Christ in Fairmont, WV), and Steve who is the preacher for the South Green church in Glasgow, KY. Frank is currently in his 42nd year of work with the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV.

Appendix

Manifold Wisdom of God

A.R.; Based on Eph. 3:10

Andy Robison

Man-i-fold wis-dom of God.

Man-i-foldwis-dom of God. Man-i-fold wis - dom of

Man-i-fold wis - domof God. The Lord has made known by His

God. Man-i-foldwis-dom of God. The

church the wis - dom of God. He has made known by the

won-der-ful wis-dom of God.

church to all of the world - ly pow - ers He has made

known by the church, the pur - pose He's worked through His

Son. He has made known through the Spir - it His

plan from be - fore the a - ges And through the

church all men shall know the wis-dom of God.

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Peace to the Brethren

Eph. 6:23-24

Andy Robison

Peace to the breth-ren and love with faith, through

God the Fa-ther and the Lord Je-sus Christ.

Peace to the breth-ren and love with faith through

Fine
God and the Lord Je-sus Christ.

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Grace be with all those who love our Lord Je-sus

Christ with an un-dy-ing love.

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Je-sus

D.S. al Fine
Christ with an un-dying love.

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