

# THE HIGH CALLING OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

## A Devotional Commentary on the Book of Ephesians

by Paul G. Apple, August 2001

### SINCE GOD DESIGNED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS GLORY AND BLESSED IT WITH THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, LET US WALK WORTHY OF OUR HIGH CALLING

For each section:

- Thesis statement                      ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline                    ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions                ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations          ... to stimulate deeper insight

Ephesians 3:21 *"to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus"*

Ephesians 4:1 *"walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"*

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## BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

**Malick:** His Big Idea for the book -- "IN VIEW OF THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS WITH WHICH GOD HAS ENRICHED BELIEVERS, AND THE DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE GENTILES FROM THEIR GODLESS POSITION TO ONE OF UNITY WITH HIM AND ONE ANOTHER, PAUL EXHORTS THE EPHESIANS TO MAINTAIN THEIR UNIFIED POSITION BY LOVING ONE ANOTHER, AND BY RESISTING DEMONIC ATTACKS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR THEM"

**Pounds:**

"Ephesians: Queen of the Epistles -- The Mystical Body of Christ

Ephesians tarries largely among the heavenlies. It is characterized by dignity and serenity which is in harmony with the elevation of its thoughts. There is scarcely even an echo of the great controversies which ring so loudly in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

It is 'the divinest composition of man,' wrote Coleridge. It has been called 'the crown of St. Paul's writings,' 'the Queen of the Epistles,' and the 'greatest and most relevant of his works.' W. O. Carver said, 'Ephesians is the greatest piece of writing in all of history.' It may well be the 'most influential document ever written.'

'Paul has written nothing more profound than chapters 1 to 3 of Ephesians,' writes A. T. Robertson. Stalker termed them the profoundest thing ever written. He sounds the depths of truth and reaches the heights. It is a letter written in the atmosphere of prayer. Most Christians have never prayed for some of the things which Paul prayed for in these two prayers.

Expositors observes: 'It is the grandest of all the Pauline letters. There is a peculiar and sustained loftiness in its teaching which has deeply impressed the greatest minds and has earned for it the title of the Epistle of the Ascension.'

**MacArthur:** "In this book the word *riches* is used five times; *grace* twelve times; *glory* eight times; *fulness*, *filled up*, or *fills* six times; and the key phrase *in Christ* (or *in Him*) fifteen times. Christ is the source, the sphere, and the guarantee of every spiritual blessing and of all spiritual riches, and those who are *in Him* have access to all that He is and has...

Paul's message throughout this epistle is that believers might understand and experience more fully all of the blessings granted by their heavenly Father and His Son and their Savior, Jesus Christ."

**Hendriksen:** Theme: The Church Glorious

I. Adoration for its

- ch. 1 Eternal Foundation *'in Christ'*
- ch. 2 Universal Scope (embracing both Jew and Gentile)
- ch. 3 Lofty Goal

II. Exhortation describing and urging:

- ch. 4:1-16 Organic Unity (amid Diversity) and Growth into Christ
- ch. 4:17-6:9 Glorious Renewal
- ch. 6:10-24 Effective Armor"

**Stott:** "The letter focuses on what God did through the historical work of Jesus Christ and does through his Spirit today, in order to build his new society in the midst of the old..."

1. The new life which God has given us in Christ (1:3 - 2:10)
2. The new society which God has created through Christ (2:11 - 3:21)
3. The new standards which God expects of his new society, especially unity and purity (4:1 - 5:21)
4. The new relationships into which God has brought us -- harmony in the home and hostility to the devil (5:21 - 6:24)"

**Guthrie:** "Throughout the letter, Paul insists that God is working out His great purpose for mankind by calling men to Christ and forming in Christ a new, redeemed society. This redeemed society, which constitutes God's new people, is referred to in various ways in the letter; for example, as God's people (1:2, TCNT), God's heritage (1:11, TCNT), God's building (2:19-22), Christ's body (1:22-23), Christ's bride (5:22-31), the church (1:22; 3:10; 21, et al.), and one new man (2:14,15). The suggestion in all these figures is that God now has a people in the world who belong uniquely to Him. In them His purpose of grace is being worked out, and through them He plans to effect His intention for the whole universe. Thus, the most comprehensive statement of the theme of Ephesians is this: the eternal purpose of God and the place of Christ and His people in that purpose. This concept is explained in the first three chapters of Ephesians; the last three chapters show its practical consequences for the Christian life."

## Malick: Background Notes --

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

#### I. AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul

- A. External Evidence: All tradition takes the epistle as being Pauline until it was first disputed by Erasmus (fifteenth century) and by later eighteenth-twentieth century critics. This tradition is unassailable in its unanimity
  1. Marcion included it in his canon, although under the title of Laodiceans (c. AD 140)<sup>2</sup>
  2. It was in the Muratorian Canon under the Epistles of Paul (c. AD 180)
  3. It is under the Epistles of Paul in the earliest evidence from the Latin and Syriac versions
  4. It probably preceded the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (AD 95) because of its development of thought<sup>3</sup>
- B. Internal Evidence: Although later critics, such as Erasmus (fifteenth century) and eighteenth-twentieth century scholars, questioned Pauline authenticity over internal evidence<sup>4</sup>, these arguments have reasonable answers,<sup>5</sup> and do not override the external evidence
  1. Self-Claims: The author of Ephesians claims to be the apostle Paul with personal knowledge of his readers:
    - a. The author claims to be Paul in the opening address much like Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Colossians 1:1
    - b. The author claims to be Paul in the body of the letter in 3:1 just as in 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 5:2, Colossians 1:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Philemon 9.
    - c. The letter abounds with statements in the first person
    - d. The author describes himself as one who has personally heard of the readers (1:15), who thanks the Lord for them (1:16), who is a prisoner of Christ Jesus (3:1; 6:1), received a mystery from God (3:3ff), was divinely appointed to ministry (3:7), presently suffers (3:13), intercedes for the readers (3:14ff), affirms the readers' need for a new way of thinking and living against a Gentile background (14:17ff), interprets the mystery (5:32), appeals for prayer on his behalf (16:19-20), and concludes with a personal salutation (6:21-22)
  2. Pauline Structure: The letter has distinct affinities with Paul's other epistles:
    - a. Pauline sequence: opening greeting, thanksgiving, doctrinal exposition, ethical exhortations, concluding salutations, and benediction

- b. The basing of moral appeals upon previous theological arguments is an integral part of the apostle's approach to problems
  - 3. Pauline Language and Literary Affinities: Similarity of words, vocabulary, and style support Pauline authorship
    - a. Many words are common with this letter and other Pauline letters which are also not found in the NT
    - b. The vocabulary is close to earlier Pauline letters
    - c. Ephesians has Pauline characteristics such as paradoxical antitheses (6:15,20), free citations of the OT (1:22; 2:13,17; 4:25; 5:2; 6:1-3; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9)
    - d. Striking similarities exist between Ephesians and Colossians (which few modern scholars doubt), therefore, Ephesians seems to be Pauline too
  - 4. Theological Affinities: This letter has been called the crown of Paulinism due to its rich Pauline theology:
    - a. Although the "Church" is a new emphases in the letter, there is a clear background of Pauline theology
    - b. God is glorious (1:17), powerful (1:19ff), and merciful (2:4ff)
    - c. The Believer is "in Christ" (1:3,10,11, etc.)
    - d. The cross has a reconciliatory value (2:13ff)
    - e. The Holy Spirit has a similar ministry (2:18; 3:5; 4:1ff, 30; 5:18)
    - f. God's counsel is predestining (1:5ff)
  - 5. Historical Data: The evidence here is negative rather than positive:
    - a. There is no mention of the fall of Jerusalem even though the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles is destroyed
    - b. There is no mention of the persecution of believers
    - c. There is no mention of ecclesiastical organization
- II. DESTINATION: Most probably Ephesus, but a circular letter is also possible to the churches of Asia minor with Ephesus as the primary church addressed
  - A. Tradition has handed down the letter as one sent to the Ephesian church
    - 1. All known manuscripts except for five<sup>6</sup> have ejn jEgevsw/ (1:1)
    - 2. The expression "to the saints who ..." is always followed by a place name in parallel Pauline passages (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1)
    - 3. Paul seems to have a particular group of people in mind (1:15ff; 6:22)
    - 4. Perhaps the words ejn jEgevsw/ were deleted early in some manuscripts in order to adapt the epistle for use in other churches. Apparently this

- happened to the book of Romans since Codex G (ninth century), 1908 (eleventh century), and 1739 all delete "in Rome" at Romans 1:7
5. If Paul meant this letter to be sent to the churches of several cities, why did he not say so as in Galatians 1:2?
  6. The title of the letter, *PROS EFESIOUS* ("To the Ephesians"), is attached to all of the Greek manuscripts even though 1:1 is not agreed upon
- B. Modern criticism has strongly disputed Ephesus as the destination:
1. The words *εἰς ἡγεμῶνας* are not in the best Alexandrian manuscripts (P46, [AD 200], a [AD 400], B [AD 400]),
  2. The letter has an impersonal tone which does not reflect Paul's writing to the Ephesians whom he knew so well (1:15; 3:2; 4:21) Even the benediction is impersonal since it is not addressed to "you" but to the "brethren" and to "all those" (6:23,24) To not mention any of the individuals of the church is unusual in view of the fact that Paul ministered among the Ephesians for three years (Acts 19:1--20:5), and developed a close relationship with the elders (Acts 20:17-38)
  3. The words *εἰς ἡγεμῶνας* seem to have been omitted from Marcion's text since he considered it to have been addressed to the Laodiceans, not the Ephesians But Marcion may only have had parts of the letter without the introduction, therefore the ascription may have only been a guess from Colossians 4:16.
- C. Possible Explanations:
1. Blank Space: It is possible that Paul left a blank space in the original manuscripts to be filled in by each church as they read it. This would make the five manuscripts with "in Ephesus" copies of the original However, there are no parallels of this in ancient literature However, this does not explain why all the rest of the manuscripts which survived have "in Ephesus" rather than some other place noted The blank might be more plausible if the *εἰς* was not also missing
  2. Circular Letter: Paul wrote the letter as a circular letter to all of the churches of Asia, but it came to be generally known as the letter to the Ephesians early on because Ephesus was the major city of Asia. Therefore, early scribes inserted "in Ephesus" into the text However, Paul does not include a greeting of a general kind as in Colossians However, if separate copies were made for each church, why did the scribe not fill in the church name?
  3. To Ephesus: The letter was written to the Ephesians and addressed to them even though Paul wrote it in a form which would make it suitable for other churches. It was intended to be circulated, and as it was a few scribes deleted

the words "in Ephesus" as some also did with Romans. The encyclical nature of this epistle may account for why Paul urged the Colossians to "read the letter from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16). Therefore, it is possible that the three Alexandrian Greek manuscripts do not contain the best reading for the following reasons:

- a. All of the versions include the words without exception
- b. The geographical distribution of the majority of Greek manuscripts which do include "in Ephesus" is wide
- c. No manuscripts of this letter mention any other city in place of Ephesus
- d. No manuscripts have only the word "in" followed by a space to insert the city's name
- e. "To the Ephesians" appears on all manuscripts of this epistle
- f. All of the letters Paul wrote to churches include their destinations
- g. The early church fathers Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian all understood the letter to be to the Ephesians<sup>8</sup>
- h. The absence of names:
  - 1) Perhaps Paul did not wish to single out certain persons in this short letter since he knew so many
  - 2) If the letter was also circular, Paul would have left specific Ephesian names out for the sake of relevance to the readers from Laodicea and Colosse

III. DATE and PLACE: AD 60-62 during Paul's first Roman imprisonment

- A. Since Clement of Rome cites Ephesians, it must be dated earlier than AD 95
- B. Paul identifies himself as a prisoner at the time of his writing Ephesians (3:1; 4:1; 6:20)
- C. It is possible that Paul could have written the letter when he was imprisoned at Caesarea<sup>9</sup> (Acts 24:27, AD 57-59), or in Rome (Acts 28:30, AD 60-62)
- D. Early in Paul's first Roman imprisonment seems to be the most likely time when he wrote Ephesians:
  1. It is thought that Paul wrote a group of epistles called the "Prison Epistles" at the time of his imprisonment in Rome:<sup>10</sup>
    - a. Ephesians
    - b. Philippians (1:7)
    - c. Colossians (4:10)
    - d. Philemon (9)
  2. Ephesians is placed in this time period because of its close association to Colossians-Philemon and the probability that Tychicus delivered both letters (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9)
  3. Ephesians gives no hint of Paul's release from prison as do Philippians (1:19-26) and Philemon (22); therefore, it may well have been written in the early part of his stay, or around AD 60.

- E. Following Paul's release from Rome:
  - 1. He traveled
  - 2. He wrote 1 Timothy and Titus
  - 3. Paul was arrested again in Rome
  - 4. Paul wrote 2 Timothy
  - 5. Paul was martyred in Rome
- IV. A DESCRIPTION OF EPHEBUS:
  - A. A leading center in the Roman Empire
  - B. Paul visited Ephesus twice:
    - 1. Paul visited Ephesus a short time on his way back to Antioch from his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-22)
    - 2. Paul stayed in Ephesus on his third missionary journey for three years (Acts 20:31)
  - C. While Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey several remarkable things occurred:
    - 1. Paul baptized about twelve of John the Baptist's followers (Acts 19:1-7)
    - 2. Paul had discussions in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)
    - 3. Paul performed unusual miracles (Acts 19:11-12)
    - 4. Paul performed exorcisms (Acts 19:13-16)
    - 5. Sorcerers were Converted (Acts 19:17-20)
    - 6. Paul was part of a city riot by threatened temple workers (Acts 19:23-41)
    - 7. Paul gave the Ephesian leaders a farewell address in the town of Miletus (Acts 20:13-34)
- V. PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
  - A. No particular problem is raised in the book unlike many of Paul's other letters
  - B. Some suggest that Paul's time in imprisonment enabled him to develop an "exalted Christology and a high appraisal of the privileges of believers in Christ"<sup>11</sup>
  - C. Hoehner understands "love" to be the issue that needs to be stressed with the saints in Ephesus because even though the church succeeded in keeping out false teachers (cf. Acts 20:29-30 with Revelation 2:2), they were losing the "vibrancy of their first love for Christ" (Rev. 2:4) and other saints (cf. also 1 Tim. 1:5)<sup>12</sup>
    - 1. The theology of chapters 1--3 focuses upon the need for the Ephesians to increase in their awareness of God's love so that they will imitate it to God's glory
    - 2. The application of chapters 4--6 are specific expressions of love for one another in view of God's love
  - D. Paul is encouraging the church to maintain their position of unity:<sup>13</sup>
    - 1. The Ephesian theology is centered on God's provision which leads to unity in the church
    - 2. Paul writes to encourage the Ephesians to continue in their unity through obedience, love, and spiritual warfare

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<sup>1</sup> Much of what follows is adapted from Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, pp. 479-521, T. K. Abbott, A Critical and



Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, ICC, pp. i-xxiii, Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in BKC, pp. 612-614, Brevard S. Childs, The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction, pp. 311-328.

2 This makes Pauline origin undisputed at this time since Marcion acknowledge only Paul as having authority.

3 See Abbott for a more in-depth discussion of the church fathers (Ephesians, pp. ix-xiii).

4 Guthrie, NTI, pp. 482-490; Abbott, Ephesians, pp. xiii-xxix.

5 Guthrie, NTI, pp. 490-507.

6 The five are P46, c\*, B\* 424c, 1739 as well as manuscripts mentioned by Basil and the text used by Origen (see Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the New Testament, p. 601; T. K. Abbott, Ephesians, pp. iff).

7 See Abbott for a full discussion of this hypothesis (Ephesians, pp. i-ix).

8 Adv. Haer. 5.2.36; Stom. 6.65; Adv. Marc. 5.11.17.

9 For a discussion of the Caesarean origin see Abbott, Ephesians, pp. xxix-xxxi.

10 This imprisonment was actually a time when Paul was kept under guard in rented quarters (Acts 28:30). Therefore, these letters could also be called the "House Arrest Epistles".

11 Guthrie, NTI, p. 515. See also A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 17.

12 Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians" in BKC, p. 164.

13 In his own way Childs affirms the same type of focus, but emphasizes that Paul has the new generation of Christians in view. As he writes, "Paul is desirous that the new generation of Christians understand the nature of God's present exercise of power in their lives according to the divine purpose which he accomplished in Christ and which encompasses the entire universe" (The New Testament as Canon, p. 325).

This emphasis upon the "new" generation of believers might explain why Paul uses a second-hand reference to the Ephesians in 1:15 et cetera (Ibid, p. 326). But it is also true that five years have passed since he was last with the Ephesians, therefore, it would be natural to hear of things which he had not recently experienced.

## Deffinbaugh: Overview

**Ephesians seeks to change our orientation from one which is man-centered to one which is God-centered.** We smile to ourselves when we think of the ancient view that the world is flat, or that the earth is the center of the universe. And yet, we see man as the central focus, rather than God. Ephesians unapologetically challenges this view, and calls us to a God-centered focus.

I have recently been reading a very excellent book by John Piper, entitled, *The Pleasures of God*. In this book, he speaks of this need to change our perspective from one which is man-centered to one which is God-centered:

We begin with the most fundamental truth, namely, that from all eternity God has been supremely happy in the fellowship of the Trinity. From this inexhaustible fountain of self-replenishing joy flows the freedom of God in all his sovereign work, creating the universe, spreading his fame, choosing a people, and bruising his Son.

... We need to see first and foremost that God is God—that he is perfect and complete in himself, that he is overflowingly happy in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity, and that he does not need us to complete his fulness and is not deficient without us. Rather *we* are deficient without *him*; the all-sufficient glory of God, freely given in fellowship through his sacrificed Son, is the stream of living water that we have thirsted for all our lives.

Unless we begin with God in this way, when the gospel comes to us, we will inevitably put ourselves at the center of it. We will feel that *our* value rather than *God's* value is the driving force in the gospel. We will trace the gospel back to God's need for *us* instead of tracing it back to the sovereign grace that rescues sinners who need *God*.

But the gospel is the good news that God is the all-satisfying end of all our longings, and that even though he does not need us, and is in fact estranged from us because of our God-belittling sins, he has, in the great love with which he loved us, made a way for sinners to drink at the river of his delights through Jesus Christ. And we will not be enthralled by this good news unless we feel that he was not obliged to do this. He was not coerced or constrained by our value. *He* is the center of the gospel. The exaltation of *his* glory is the driving force of the gospel. The gospel is a gospel of *grace*! And grace is the pleasure of God to magnify the worth of God by giving sinners the right and power to delight in God without obscuring the glory of God.<sup>8</sup>

**(10) To sum up the essence of the contribution of Ephesians, this epistle draws our attention to the glory of God.** The glory of God is not only the motivation, but the goal of God's sovereign work among men. There is no more majestic theme, no more noble pursuit than the glory of God. Moses' highest ambition and most noble request was to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:17–18:8). The first coming of Christ was a display of the glory of God (John 1:14; see also Matthew 16:27–17:8). The Apostle Paul was encouraged and sustained by his awareness of God's glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:7-18; 4:3-6, 16-18). The apostle Peter found the revelation of the "Majestic Glory" of our Lord a witness to the truthfulness of the prophetic word revealed through the apostles (2 Peter 1:16-19). Our Lord's second coming will be a revelation of His glory, and the cause for the saints' rejoicing (1 Peter 4:12-13). Every supreme goal of our

every action is the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). The Epistle to the Ephesians is all about the glory of God.

## **Overview of Ephesians**

I was fascinated to read in Piper's introduction how he had organized the material in his book. The first six chapters speak of the pleasure of God in His own person, and in the outworking of His plans and purposes, especially in the sending of the Son to provide salvation for lost sinners. The final chapters focus on the pleasure of God in the responses of His people.<sup>9</sup>

The parallel of Piper's structure and that found in Ephesians is strikingly similar. Ephesians 1-3 concentrate on the glory of God as brought about by the gospel—the glory of God in His church. Ephesians 4-6 focus on the glory of God in man's obedience to the gospel—the glory of God through His church. Consider, then, this very simplistic outline of the content of Ephesians, remembering that this epistle is the “Waterloo of commentators”:

Chapters 1-3	The Glory of God in the Church
Chapter 1	The glory of God of God in Redemption
Chapter 2	The glory of God in reconciliation
Chapter 3	The glory of God in the revelation of the mystery of the church
Chapters 4-6	The Glory and Pleasure of God through the Church
Chapter 4	The glory of God in the unity and growth of the church
Chapter 5	The glory of God in the imitation of Christ by the saints
Chapter 6	The glory of God in victory of Christ

Chapters 1-3 of the Epistle to the Ephesians urge us to be more heavenly minded so that, in obedience to the instruction laid down in chapters 4-6, we may be of more earthly good, to the glory of God.

May God grant us an appetite for the “meat” of this great epistle, and may He also grant us the ability to grasp the breadth and length and height and depth of God's glory, as seen in Christ and in His church.

# OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

## THE HIGH CALLING OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

SINCE GOD DESIGNED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS GLORY AND BLESSED IT WITH THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, LET US WALK WORTHY OF OUR HIGH CALLING

### (1:1-2) SALUTATION -- THE APOSTLE PAUL WRITES TO THE SAINTS

#### I. (CHAPS 1-3) THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH -- OUR WEALTH -- OUR SPIRITUAL POSITION IN CHRIST FOCUS ON OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Theme Verse: 3:21 *"to Him be the glory in the Church"*

##### **A. (1:3-14) THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH -- CHOSEN / PREDESTINED / REDEEMED**

Thanksgiving for our Spiritual Blessings

##### **B. (1:15-23) THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH -- WHICH IS HIS BODY**

Prayer for Enlightenment

##### **C. (2:1-10) THE SALVATION OF THE CHURCH -- BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**

Reminder of God's Grace and Power in Saving us

##### **D. (2:11-22) THE COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH -- ITS UNIVERSAL SCOPE**

Reminder of God's Reconciling both Jews and Gentiles into One Body

##### **E. (3:1-13) THE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH -- MANIFESTING THE WISDOM AND PURPOSE OF GOD**

Stewardship of the Grace of God

##### **F. (3:14-19) THE ENABLEMENT OF THE CHURCH -- THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Prayer for the Realization of the Love of Christ

### **(3:20-21) DOXOLOGY -- "to Him be the glory in the Church"**

## **II. (CHAPS 4-6) THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH -- HOW WE SHOULD WALK IN CHRIST**

### **YOUR LIFE SHOULD MATCH YOUR CALLING**

Theme Verse: 4:1 *"walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"*

#### **A. (4:2-16) WALK IN UNITY**

In humility, promote unity in a context of diversity with the goal of maturity

#### **B. (4:17-32) WALK DIFFERENTLY**

In a manner that is different from:

- the unsaved
- our former manner of life

Renewal process is the key:

- put away the old man
- be renewed in your mind
- put on the new man

#### **C. (5:1-2) WALK IN LOVE**

Christ is our Example

#### **D. (5:3-14) WALK IN THE LIGHT**

Moral Purity and Holiness

#### **E. (5:15 - 6:9) WALK WISELY**

Understanding the will of God and being filled with His Spirit;

This attitude will express itself:

- towards God and fellow believers -- in singing and praise
- towards other men -- in relationships characterized by submissiveness and consideration
  - wives to husbands (5:22-33)
  - children to parents (6:1-4)
  - servants to masters (6:5-9)

#### **F. (6:10-17) WALK STRONG (IN THE ARMOR OF GOD)**

The Warfare of the Church

- put on the whole armor of God

#### **G. (6:18-20) IMPORTANCE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

### **(6:21-24) CLOSING REMARKS AND DOXOLOGY**

#### **A. (6:21-22) CLOSING REMARKS**

#### **B. (6:23-24) DOXOLOGY**

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:1-3

TITLE: GOD DESERVES OUR BLESSING BECAUSE HE TOTALLY BLESSED US

**BIG IDEA:**

**OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES ARE IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Our thinking and how we act are based too much on our short-sighted focus on our own personal limitations and our own lack of personal significance or influence. This passage should wake us up to the riches that are ours right now in Christ..

How can our spiritual blessings and privileges be identical to those of our Lord Jesus Christ? Because they have been graciously given to us by a loving heavenly Father who is the omnipotent God of the universe. Our spiritual blessings and privileges depend solely on the work of God -- not on who I am or what I've done in the past or will do this next week. God wants us to view ourselves as He views us -- so totally incorporated into Christ that right now we are seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's the place of power and authority and will be the key to spiritual power for us living right now like the saints we are and have been called to be.

**(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: OUR MANDATE IN LIFE -- WHAT IS IT THAT GOD WANTS US TO BE AND DO**

**A. Author = *Paul***

**1. His Calling and Authority-- "*an apostle of Christ Jesus*"**

He had every right and obligation to address them with authority and provide such instruction and exhortation.

**MacArthur:** "The apostolic duties were to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17), teach and pray (Acts 6:4), work miracles (2 Cor. 12:12), build up other leaders of the church (Acts 14:23, and write the Word of God (Eph. 1:1; etc.)."

**2. His Submission and Authority-- "*by the will of God*"**

**Guthrie:** "Paul was deeply conscious that God had overruled his life, from his conversion, and throughout his missionary call... Paul's tone, therefore, is not that of pride but rather of sheer amazement and humble obedience."

**B. Recipients**

**1. Their Calling -- "*to the saints*"**

called to be holy; to be different

**Hoke:** "Don't be misled by the mistaken idea that sainthood is something which can only be conferred upon certain dead people by some ecclesiastical body. According to God's Word, all believers are already saints. From God's perspective, we are saints, not

because of who men say we are, but because of what Christ did for us. We are not holy because of our own good works or righteousness."

## 2. Their Physical Location -- *"who are at Ephesus"*

**Stedman:** The Epistle to the Ephesians is, in many ways, the crowning glory of the New Testament. But perhaps this letter ought not to be called "Ephesians" for we do not really know to whom it was written. The Christians at Ephesus were certainly among the recipients of this letter, but undoubtedly there were others. In many of the original Greek manuscripts there is a blank where the King James translation has the words '*at Ephesus*;' just a line where the names of other recipients were apparently to be filled in. That is why the Revised Standard Version does not say, 'To the saints at Ephesus,' but simply 'To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus...'"

## 3. Their Submission -- *"and who are faithful in Christ Jesus"* Faith and Perseverance

**Stott:** "To be '*in Christ*' is to be personally and vitally united to Christ, as branches are to the vine and members to the body, and thereby also to Christ's people. For it is impossible to be part of the body without being related to both the Head and the members. Much of what the epistle later develops is already here in bud... to be a Christian is in essence to be '*in Christ*', one with him and with his people."

## C. Greeting

*"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

**Stedman:** "The two great heritages of the Christian are grace and peace. These are two things you can always have, no matter what your circumstances. Grace is all God's power, all his love, all his beauty, available to you. It is a marvelous term which wraps up all that God is and offers to us. It comes from the same Greek word from which we get our English word charm. Grace is charming, lovely, pleasant. It is something which pleases, which imparts charm and loveliness to a life. Peace is freedom from anxiety, fear and worry. These are the two characteristics which ought to mark Christians all the time:

Grace -- God at work in their life; and  
Peace -- a sense of security, of trust."

## I. (:3A) GOD DESERVES OUR BLESSING

### A. Concept of Blessing -- *"speak well of"*

our English word "eulogize"; only used in the NT of either God or Christ; Think of how much God gets cursed rather than praised in our culture. Think of our own thought life and how many grumblings and complainings come to our mind.

Think of how you feel as a parent when one of your children sincerely expresses their

appreciation. One mark of our maturity is our devotion to God and how we express it. God deserves our blessing. Is He getting it?

**MacArthur:** "Nothing is more appropriate for God's people than to bless Him for His great goodness. In all things -- whether pain, struggle, trials, frustration, opposition, or adversity -- we are to praise God, because He is good in the midst of it all. For that we praise and bless Him..."

When we bless God we speak good of Him. When God blesses us, He communicates good to us. We bless Him with words; He blesses us with deeds. All we can do is to speak well of Him because in ourselves we have nothing good to give, and in Himself He lacks no goodness. But when He blesses us the situation is reversed. He cannot bless us for our goodness, because we have none. Rather, He blesses us with goodness. Our heavenly Father lavishes us with every goodness, every good gift, every blessing. That is His nature, and that is our need."

B. Designation of God -- *"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"*

Paul points to our unity with Christ as he describes God in terms of relationships that can apply to both Christ and to us

## II. (:3B) BECAUSE HE TOTALLY BLESSED US

Study the concept of spiritual riches in Ephesians -- 1:7; 3:8; 3:16;  
Here's our answer to those who hold to a special second blessing -- a baptism of the Holy Spirit that will elevate one to a constant mountaintop Christian experience. We have been blessed already with every spiritual blessing -- not just the second blessing.

A. Source of our Riches -- God Himself -- *"who has blessed us"*

His Will 1:5,9,11

His Grace 1:6,7

His Glory 1:12,14

His Good Pleasure 1:9

His Purpose 1:11

Conclusion: Total security because God guarantees these riches

B. Recipients of these riches -- all the saints -- *"us"*

C. Nature of these riches -- spiritual -- *"with every spiritual blessing"*

"Spiritual" in the sense that they are the blessings of grace, blessings of a divine order, belonging to the sphere of immediate relations between God and man. It is true that these blessings come from God through the Spirit but the point in view is what they are, not how they reach us.

D. Location of these riches

1) *"in the heavenly places"*

**Kent:** "Believers today have a new existence in that realm of spiritual reality where God



is the source of life. Spiritual warfare is being waged in this realm today, but when Christ returns to establish His kingdom He will accomplish His will completely, '*on earth as it is in heaven.*'"

## 2) "in Christ"

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do these verses help to convey a sense of purpose for your life? Are you connected to the high calling which God has for you in Christ Jesus? Are you burdened down with a sense of insignificance and a sense of the routine?"
- 2) To what extent are we completely submitted to "*the will of God*" for our lives? Is this a defining characteristic of our life?
- 3) In what ways have we specifically "*blessed*" God and our Savior this past week? What type of worshippers does the Father seek? How did the Son bless His Heavenly Father while on earth? What are some Psalms that can help us with this singing of His praise?
- 4) Are we too weighed down with the responsibilities and burdens of this physical world that we fail to appreciate all that God has provided for us in the spiritual realm? How can we change our focus?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Stedman:** "There are many who take the phrase, '*the heavenly places*,' which appears several times in this letter, as a reference to heaven after we die, but if you do this, you will miss the whole import of Paul's letter. While it does talk about going to heaven some day, it is talking primarily about the life you live right now. The heavenly places are not off in some distant reach of space or on some planet or star; they are simply the realm of invisible reality in which the Christian lives now, in contact with God, and in the conflict with the devil in which we are all daily engaged.

The heavenly places are the seat of Christ's power and glory. In chapter two, verse six we are told,

[God] *raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* {Eph 2:6 RSV}

But in chapter three we learn that here also are the headquarters of the principalities and powers of evil:

*... that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. {Eph 3:10 RSV}*

The conflict that occurs is set forth in chapter six:

*For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. {Eph 6:10-12 RSV}*

So you can see that this is not a reference to heaven at all, but to earth. It is to the invisible realm of earth -- not to that which you can see, hear, taste, or feel -- but to that spiritual kingdom which surrounds us on all sides and which constantly influences and affects us, whether for good or evil, depending upon our willful choice and our relationship to these invisible powers. Those are the heavenly places. In this realm, in which everyone of us lives, the apostle declares that God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. That is, he has given us all that it takes to live in our present circumstances and relationships. Peter says the same thing in his second letter:

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, {2 Pet 1:3a RSV}.*"

**Hoke:** " Many of us have trouble believing in the extravagant goodness of God toward us personally. The idea that God would lavish extravagant blessings on us is something we find hard to believe. It seems that we have been conditioned to think of ourselves as unworthy creatures. We are not good enough, or holy enough, or sincere enough to get the really good things from God - that is our thinking. Who are we to presume upon the goodness of God? But the fact remains that all of us have a rich and extravagant inheritance in Christ. In fact, when we are told just how rich is that inheritance, we easily find ourselves saying, 'I can't believe it!' We may not be able to believe it, but it is true.

This is one of the main themes of the book of Ephesians. It reveals to us the extreme magnitude of God's blessings to us in Christ. It tells us who we are and how we can live. And it is powerful."

**Hoke:** Re The Sufficiency of God as reflected in vs. 3 -- "Sometimes we can feel that we do not have what it takes to do what God is calling us to do. Throughout the Scriptures we find God calling us upward. There is a high calling for the believer. There is much the Lord commands us to do. But the commands of Christ are not burdensome. It has been said that every command of God is not a demand on you, but a demand upon the God who gave the command. In other words, God will never give you something to do that He hasn't already given you the power to do. In Christ you are already sufficient for everything He calls you to do. Begin to live in that knowledge."

**MacArthur:** "In the Greek, verses 3-14 comprise one sentence and encompass the past, present, and future of God's eternal purpose for the church. It is Paul's outline of God's master plan of salvation. In 3-6a we are shown the past aspect, election; in 6b-11 we are shown the present aspect, redemption; and in 12-14 we are shown the future aspect, inheritance."

**Stott:** "In the original Greek these twelve verses constitute a single complex sentence. As Paul dictates, his speech pours out of his mouth in a continuous cascade. He neither pauses for breath, nor punctuates his words with full stops. Commentators have searched for metaphors vivid enough to convey the impact of this opening outburst of adoration. 'We enter this epistle through a magnificent gateway', writes Findlay. It is 'a golden chain' of many links, or 'a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colours'. William Hendriksen likens it to 'a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends', and E. K. Simpson -- less felicitously perhaps -- to 'some long-winded racehorse ... careering onward at full speed.' More romantic is John Mackay's musical simile: 'This rhapsodic adoration is comparable to the overture of an opera which contains the successive melodies that are to follow'. And Armitage Robinson suggests that it is 'like the preliminary flight of the eagle, rising and wheeling round, as though for a while uncertain what direction in his boundless freedom he shall take.'"

**Wiersbe:** "The fact that Paul is writing about wealth would be significant to his readers, because Ephesus was considered the bank of Asia. One of the seven wonders of the world, the great Temple of Diana, was in Ephesus, and was not only a center for idolatrous worship, but also a depository for wealth. Some of the greatest art treasures of the ancient world were housed in this magnificent building. In this letter, Paul will compare the Church of Jesus Christ to a temple and will explain the great wealth that Christ has in His Church... Paul is saying to us, 'BE RICH!'"

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:4 (DR. KENNETH O. PETERMAN)

TITLE: THE GOAL IS HOLINESS

**BIG IDEA:**  
**GOD BLESSED US TO MAKE US HOLY**

*"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love." (KJV)*

**I. OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS PROCEED FROM GOD ALONE. (GOD BLESSED US)**

This "kathos" clause can be translated "in conformity with the fact that . . . He hath chosen us." In other words, all our spiritual blessings are in conformity with the fact that God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

GOD CHOSE US. Note that this is a statement and not a speculation.

Only two valid views of election:

- A. God chose us, then we believed.
- B. God saw we would believe, then He chose us.

Two reasons why view "A" is the correct one:

1. The Greek word "*eklegomai*" (*elect*) and its definition.
  - a. Definition: "To pick out for oneself; to choose or select"
  - b. Note 4 different elements deduced from the texts in which this word is used in the New Testament:
    - (1) When this word is used there are always several objects to choose from.
    - (2) When this word is used the person making the choice is not tied down by any circumstances which force his hand, but is free to make his own decision.
    - (3) When this word is used the person making the choice has the person or thing chosen at his disposal.
    - (4) When this word is used the act of choosing involves a judgment by the one choosing -- whether based on subjective or objective criteria.

Therefore, this word indicates that God chose us out from a group without any input from us, and His choice was based solely on His own criteria.

2. Based on the statement "*before the foundation of the world*"

This statement not only designates time but also indicates that the decision of election was made before anything was made. It originated in the eternal counsels of

the Godhead and had nothing whatsoever to do with us other than we were the objects of the election.

Consequently, election promotes humility in the believer and not boasting or arrogance.

Transition: Having seen that God blessed us, now we see that God blessed us to be holy:

## II. OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS SHOULD PRODUCE A GODLY PRODUCT

*"to make us holy and without blame"*

"*holy*" implies a relationship with God which is expressed not primarily through the ritual, but through the fact that believers are led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14)

"*holy*" behavior is behavior that relates to the Holy Spirit -- Gal. 5:22

ELECTION IS AN INCENTIVE TO HOLINESS NOT AN EXCUSE FOR SIN.

"without blame" -- this is not the best translation, it should be "without blemish." This was a technical term designating absence of anything amiss in a sacrifice. It is used in Ex. 29:2; Num. 6:14 and Ezek. 43:22 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

God's Goal: HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH

Application: Is this my goal?

Regarding anything, we should stop and ask: Will it blemish me?

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What special honors have we been *chosen* for in our life? How did that make us feel? Can we think of instances where we have been overlooked? Do we draw encouragement from the fact that God never overlooks us?
- 2) How does the fact that we were chosen by God "*before the foundation of the world*" help to deliver us from a works-oriented, legalistic approach to our Christian walk?
- 3) What type of confidence and freedom and security can we draw from the fact that God's predestined goal for us is that we be "*holy and blameless*" in His eyes?
- 4) Are we more influenced and motivated by our standing before God (in His eyes and in His presence) or are we dominated by our peers and their evaluation of us?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Martin Lloyd Jones:** "God has not chosen us before the foundation of the world in order to create for us the possibility of holiness; He has chosen us to holiness. It is what He has purposed for us; not possibility but realization. I therefore make this solemn assertion, that those who do not appreciate this truth and show some signs of holiness in their lives are not chosen, are not Christian. Being chosen and being 'holy' are inseparable."

**Summers:** "... the end of that choice is a cleansed believer or worshiper. In the New Testament the doctrine of election is not a dry theological bone at which people gnaw. It is, rather, a living, vital doctrine which man sees in operation every day of his experience. The end of that elective choice is an individual cleansed of his sin, remade in the spiritual likeness of God, and, hence, a fit object for God's fellowship."

**Hodge:** "There seem to be two things intended by this reference to the eternity of the divine purpose. The one is, to represent God as doing every thing in time according to a preconceived plan; or as working all things after the counsel of his own will. From eternity the whole scheme of redemption with all its details and in all its results lay matured in the divine mind. Hence every thing is certain. There is no possibility either of failure or of any change of purpose. The eternity of God's purpose is, therefore, a strong ground of confidence and comfort. The other is, to express the sovereignty of the divine purpose. The grace was given to us before we existed, before the world began, and of course before we had done any good or evil. It was, therefore, not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. If the one aspect of the truth that God chose us before the foundation of the world, is adapted to produce confidence; the other aspect is no less adapted to produce humility."

**Guthrie:**

- Election centers in Christ.
- Election is an expression of God's will.
- Election took place in eternity.
- Election has the highest aim.

**Harrison:** "How far in the past did He choose us? *'Before the foundation of the world.'* It was no after-thought with God; nor was my relationship to Him. My name was upon His heart prior to any concern for the world. He leads me to believe that but for this preplanned relationship the world would not have been. First the Bride selected for the Son; then the home for her."

**J. I. Packer**, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (quoted by **MacArthur**):

"All Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the Church -- the intruding of rationalistic speculations, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to

recognize the existence of mystery and to let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic. People see the Bible teaches man's responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the Scriptures, but jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty, and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even godly men should fall victim to it. Hence this persistent and troublesome dispute. The irony of the situation, however, is that when we ask how the two sides pray, it becomes apparent that those who profess to deny God's sovereignty really believe in it just as strongly as those who affirm it." (pp. 16-17)

**Piper:** "The difference between predestination, which is mentioned in verse 5, and election (or choosing) which is mentioned in verse 4, is that election refers to God's freedom in choosing whom he will predestine. Predestination refers to the goal or destiny for which he chose them. Election is God's choosing whom he will, and predestination is God's determination that they will become his children...

The ultimate goal of God in election and predestination is that God might be praised for his glory. And the highest point of that glory is grace. This is the final goal of our destiny. There is no higher hope, no greater tomorrow, no more meaningful future, no more worthy cause to live for, than to reflect and praise the glory of God's grace for ever and ever."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:5-6

TITLE: ADOPTION AS SONS

**BIG IDEA:**

**A STUDY OF THE 3 MAJOR NT PASSAGES REGARDING SPIRITUAL ADOPTION REVEALS FOUR COMMON POINTS OF EMPHASIS / GOD DETERMINED THOSE HE CHOSE WOULD BE LIKE HIS SON**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Our relationship to God can be pictured in a number of ways: (cf. **MacArthur** here)

1) Servants -- subjects of His kingdom

Christ is our Lord, giving us the direction we need and we are His servants carrying out his will. What a privilege to serve the King of Kings.

2) Friends -- John 15:15 goes beyond the relationship as servants to describe us as friends -- true companionship -- the sharing of intimate knowledge -- insight into the mind of God; so that we don't act out of just blind obedience

3) Our passage goes way beyond this to speak of adoption as sons  
cf. Hebrews 2:11

Background:

Adoption is a simple concept. The Roman practice of legally adopting a child would be similar to ours. In addition to all of the family privileges and the right of inheritance, there was the new civil status of all the rights of a Roman citizen.

Human parents can adopt children and come to love them every bit as much as they love their natural children. They can give an adopted child complete equality in the family life, resources, and inheritance. But no human parent can impart his own distinct nature to an adopted child. yet that is what God miraculously does to every person whom He has elected. He makes them sons just like His divine Son. Christians not only have all of the Son's riches and blessings but partake of the Son's nature.

Illustration: Adopting a cabbage patch kid

**I. (Galatians 4:5-7) -- ADOPTION -- THE GOAL OF REDEMPTION**

Background: a little different picture here: not entrance into the family of God, but the distinction between the OT position as a child under the tutelage of the Law and the position in this Age of Grace as mature sons

A. Accomplished by Redemption -- costly, expensive (:5)

1 Pet. 1:18-19

*"in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*



B. Involves some sort of Freedom and Liberty

In this context: freedom from *"the elemental things of the world,"* from *"under the law"* -- no need to fear earning blessing

C. The Consciousness of Sonship is Created in the Heart by the Holy Spirit (:6)

*"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!'"*

Significance of the expression "Abba, Father" -- the Aramaic and the Greek equivalent; the everyday Jewish family term used in the intimacy of the family; signifies tenderness, trust, love  
cf. small children crying out "Daddy" -- connotes delight and total security -- this is the expression in seed form; whereas "Abba, Father" is a more mature expression

used by Christ -- Mark 14:36

seems to have become a formula for addressing God in the early church

we should have assurance we are in God's Family -- should be able to feel that relationship and intimacy

D. Associated with our Inheritance (:7)

*"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."*

entitled to all that their Father's resources can give them

## II. (Romans 8:15 -- whole chapter) -- ADOPTION -- THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Those who are being led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God by adoption and have been freed from the spirit of slavery which leads to fear and given new confidence. We are under obligation not to live according to the flesh, but the Spirit.

A. (:3) Accomplished by Redemption

B. (:2, etc.) Involves some sort of Freedom and Liberty

C. (:15-16) The Consciousness of Sonship is Created in the Heart by the Holy Spirit  
same cry of "Abba, Father"

D. (:17, 23) Associated With Our Inheritance

Involves suffering with Him now knowing that we will be glorified with Him  
v. 23 -- shows that there still is a future aspect of this adoption = the redemption of our bodies

### III. (Ephesians 1:5-7) -- ADOPTION -- THE OUTWORKING OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN AND BENEFICENT PLAN

(Concentrate on the Application of these same 4 points)

#### A. (:7) Accomplished by Redemption

*"forgiveness of our trespasses"* -- we will look at this in depth next message

Costly and therefore precious

Already accomplished and therefore certain -- Nothing that we can add to it;

Our obligation is to live for the one who died for us (2 Cor. 5:15)

#### B. (:7) Involves some sort of Freedom and Liberty and Confidence freedom from the guilt and penalty of sins

no awkwardness or fear in our relationship with our Father, but boldness and access

#### C. (:15-16) The Consciousness of Sonship is Created in the Heart by the Holy Spirit

The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children; there is no need to ask God for external signs or confirmation.

We need to expect and cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit -- Holiness especially -- this leads to greater assurance (on a different track) of our sonship.

We should spend time crying out, "Abba, Father".

#### D. (:17, 23) Associated With Our Inheritance

Keep the sufferings of this life in perspective -- Plan and live accordingly (we can afford to risk all).

### CONCLUSION:

It's great to live as God's servants and even enjoy companionship as friends of God -- but the highest calling is to enjoy our relationship as adopted sons of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does a view of predestination which says that "God looked down in history,

saw who would eventually choose of their own free will to receive his free offer of salvation, and then chose them and predestinated them to adoption" -- How does such a view fail to live up to the intent and impact of these verses in Ephesians 1?

2) What children do you know who have been adopted? How precious are they to their parents? What benefits have they received as a result of adoption? What gratitude do we express daily for having been removed from the family of Satan and adopted into God's family?

3) Are we living as Sons of God? Do we understand that our adoption has involved the implanting of a new nature within us?

4) If the immediate goal is that we should be "*holy and blameless*" and the ultimate goal is that we should be "*to the praise of the glory of His grace*", how can we ever slip back into a legalistic type of lifestyle -- one that has no transforming power to renew us after the image of His Son?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Peterman:** "God not only chose us in eternity past but predestinated us to be exactly what He wanted us to be ... His sons. The word '*predestinated*' is different than the word '*elect*.' '*Horizo*' (predestined) means 'to mark out before time for a specific purpose. Our English word '*horizon*' is a transliteration of the Greek word.

'*Horizon*' = a boundary; something limited or defined; marked out definitely.

While the word '*elect*' refers to the act of God's choosing, the word '*predestinated*' refers to the purpose for which the subjects of election are chosen.

- Marked us out for a purpose;
- Defined the purpose of our existence;
- Fixed the horizon of our lives;
- Determined the reason for our election;

The purpose is to become like Jesus Christ in reality. God wants to look down and be able to say "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."

**Summers:** "As grateful recipients of God's redemptive work, it is natural that we should think first of the benefit that comes to us as we experience this grace. In the New Testament, however, the major emphasis is not on the benefit that comes to the individual who receives this grace. It is rather on the benefit that accrues to God who has extended this grace."

**Hendriksen:** "The Father is described as having *pre-horizoned* or *pre-encircled* his chosen ones. In his boundless love, motivated by nothing outside of himself, he set them apart to be his own sons. '*As the hills are round about Jerusalem, so Jehovah is round about his people*' (Ps. 125:2). He destined them to be members of his own family

(cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5). It is rather useless to look for human analogies, for the adoption of which Paul speaks surpasses anything that takes place on earth. It bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family-relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29)). Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to a large extent, unable to impart their spirit to the child. They have no control over hereditary factors. When God adopts, he imparts his Spirit! This adoption is *through Jesus Christ for himself*. It is through the work of Christ that this adoption becomes a reality. By his atonement the new standing and also the transformation into the spirit of sonship were merited for the chosen ones. Thus, they become God's children who glorify him."

**Kent:** "The refrain in verse 6 ends each stanza of this doxology. It shows how each phase of our redemption moves toward the praise and glory of God. In Paul's view, redemption originated solely with God and was made effective by His unchanging decrees. It is the greatest display of grace conceivable, for it bestows the most glorious privileges on completely depraved and fallen men, and this bestowal is all one-sided. Man merely accepts or rejects; he brings no merits."

**Vaughan:** Re "*according to the kind intention of his will*" -- "Here it directs attention to the fact that God's election is an act of His own pure goodness, of His own benevolent sovereignty. What He did, He did solely because it seemed right and good for Him to do it."

**Stedman:** "Here is a partial explanation of how God takes care of the past failures and shame of our lives in order to make us holy and blameless. He does it through a change of family relationship..."

More than that, the emphasis is upon living as a full-grown, mature, responsible son. We are not put into this family as mere babes; we are put in as mature, grown-up individuals. As soon as we grasp the truth we can exercise it. In other words, to put it very simply, we are to live exactly as Jesus lived.. He was a Son, the Son of the Father, and as such, a certain way of life was his. And now, in him, we have his lifestyle."

**Hoke:** Re vs. 1-6 -- "What a powerful passage! In Christ you are significant. In Christ you are sufficient. In Christ you are secure. You can say it another way. In Christ you are righteous. In Christ you are rich. In Christ you are received. You are a saint, so learn to realize your righteousness. You are blessed with every spiritual blessing, so learn to rely on your resources. You are accepted in the Beloved, so learn to rest in your relationship."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:7

TITLE: LIBERATED BY REDEMPTION

**BIG IDEA:**

**REDEMPTION FREES US FROM THE BONDAGE OF CAPTIVITY TO JOYFULLY SERVE CHRIST**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We live in an age of terrorism where the taking of hostages is a frequent occurrence. We understand what it is like to be a hostage; we identify with the hostages in their joy of release and appreciation of freedom.

God says that we all enter this life as hostages -- under the dominion and bondage of sin and of the rule of Satan (2:1-3). We must understand this bondage to appreciate our redemption.

**Illustration #1:**

Can you imagine our Secretary of State being sent over to a hostage situation (remember Iran ... remember the crew of the downed spy plane in China ... ) with containers full of ransom money and a huge military evacuation plane fueled up and sitting on the runway cleared for takeoff, ready to fly the hostages to freedom. Now picture the hostages refusing all help, crying "Yankee Go Home", and willingly staying in captivity.

Of course, Satan is a lot more crafty than any terrorist or political foe:

1) He has the advantage of willing captives -

We are sinners by nature; we are at home in the realm of Satan. Even though we were created by a perfect God who has the rights of prior ownership and allegiance - who made Adam and Eve in His own likeness and then watched them become entrapped in sin -- all the time working out His perfect plan of redemption.

2) He is supported by the power of peer pressure and the desire to conform to this age -

In a typical hostage situation, it is only a few that are held captive compared to the rest of the world. In the spiritual realm, it is the vast majority that are held captive. Broad is the way that leads to destruction and many take that route. The whole concept of Holiness has at its root the idea of being different and being separated from the world and from sin and dedicated to God and His purposes.

3) He makes captivity attractive -

Satan's captives are not sitting around blindfolded in some dungeons -- fully aware of the wrath of God hanging over their heads and the lake of fire that awaits them. But while his captives are enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, they do have spiritual blindfolds on.

4) The beauty of the situation from Satan's perspective is that his hostages (and perhaps even Satan himself) don't think they are in bondage -- they don't realize that they are in danger of eternal separation from a holy God in the fires of hell.

In fact, they make a big deal about how free and independent they are: free spirits; free thinkers; in control of their own destiny; "I do it my way" ...

The truth is that all men are owned by someone. You cannot separate salvation from Lordship. If people are honest they must admit that there are specific sins that have dominion over them (anger, etc.).

Key Question: Whom are you going to have for your Master?

Back to our illustration: We know that the hostages in the spiritual realm do not have free wills in the sense that they will never choose to get on the plane to freedom apart from God's election and His predestinating them to adoption as sons and His working in their lives so that they come to choose to trust Christ.

#### **Illustration #2:**

Can you imagine the hostages being loaded on the plane and ferried back to the U.S. to be reunited with their family and to be given the opportunity of freedom and the abundant life; but then sitting around in their room at home, overcome by fear -- paralyzed and continuing to live as captives.

Too often this is our position. God wants to shout at us this morning: "You Are Free!" Your sins have been forgiven; the chains of sin have been torn off; now willingly live as slaves of Christ, enjoying full rights as mature sons of God.

## **I. DEFINITION OF REDEMPTION**

To bring back into rightful ownership (restoration to one who possesses a more fundamental right or interest) by the paying of a price, or ransom

Buying back a slave or a captive; making him free by the payment of a ransom

Deliverance from bondage (any difficult situation) as a result of the payment of a ransom

This Greek word is an intensified form that emphasizes the separation from the former state -- the finality of our redemption -- never again to be brought into bondage

## **II. JEWISH BACKGROUND OF REDEMPTION**

In the LXX, this same Greek word is connected with the Year of the Jubilee (Lev.

25:10). The land belonged to the Lord. The Israelites only possessed the right to use the fruit of the land. If a family forfeited this right because they incurred debts and had to sell the property (imagine the sadness) the parcel of land was returned to the original family at the Year of Jubilee, which came every 50 years. Prior to this automatic restoration, the land could be redeemed (vs. 25). The nearest kinsman had the responsibility to do this (vs. 26 -- cf. story of Ruth and Boaz) and there is a price involved.

Also used of the release of people from slavery.

Other Greek words picture Christ coming into the marketplace and over to the slave auction block where He purchases slaves and removes them from the auction block and the market place forever.

### III. REDEMPTION VIEWED AS A PRESENT POSSESSION FOR US (THE SAINTS)

Importance of the context in Ephesians --

- Redemption is the focal point of history = the coming of Christ to redeem His people (Gal. 4:4-5);
- Redemption is the focal point of our spiritual blessings;
- Redemption secured the adoption of sons;
- Redemption is the focal point of the work of the Triune God on our behalf

**Summers:** "The tense of the verb 'have' speaks of the present reality of the possession. Redemption is ours as a present possession. This is the conception found throughout the New Testament. It is not to deny that there is a sense in which the future will reveal many things relative to our redemption."

### IV. REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH HIS BLOOD

= the means of redemption and the ransom price

There is no deliverance without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22).

Contrast with the OT sacrificial system -- where you could cover sins for a year on the Day of Atonement -- but these sacrifices were only types and shadows of the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God

When you look at what redemption cost Christ, surely He doesn't want us to continue in bondage to sin.

We can't add anything to the work of Christ -- no purgatory awaiting us where we will suffer for our sins; Christ made a once for all sacrifice for all time.

Blood sacrifices are not pleasant -- messy, smelly -- reminding us of our sins.

Transition: But while God wants us to remember our sins to appreciate the great price that Christ paid, He also wants us to forget our sins just as He has provided complete forgiveness.

## V. MAIN RESULT OF REDEMPTION = THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES

A. "*Forgiveness*"  
to send forth; send away; a dismissal; release

Sin thought of as an obligation; like a bad debt that we just can't get rid of no matter what we do.

Separated from us as far as the east is from the west; we did not just get off on some technicality -- but God's justice and holiness and righteousness were satisfied.

B. "*Trespases*"  
"a false step, a blunder"

Literally: "a fall beside" -- deviation from uprightness and truth and holiness

cf. the self-righteous Pharisees who don't think they take any false steps.

## VI. THE MEASURE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS "*according to the riches of His grace*"

That which God possesses in abundance; boundless -- like God's love, mercy, kindness.

Not a stingy, begrudging God, but a loving heavenly Father who wants to shower us with spiritual blessings.

We don't have to worry that our sin will outstrip God's gracious forgiveness.

**Summers:** "Paul's meaning is that we have the forgiveness of trespases in proportion to the riches of God's grace. Our forgiveness is not in proportion to our merit."

## CONCLUSION:

We now have the liberty to serve Christ (Rom. 6:15-18; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; titus 2:14). The higher our conception of God's holiness and deeper our sense of personal sinfulness, the greater our appreciation of the riches of His grace that were necessary to provide such redemption.



\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Note the switch in emphasis to the work of the Second Person of the Triune God. What is the significance of Christ being the one who has forgiven our sins?
- 2) Have we grasped both the concepts inherent in redemption -- the concept of liberation as well as that of new ownership? Have we submitted to the Lordship of Christ and are we enjoying the freedom from the bondage of our sins?
- 3) Trace the emphasis in the Old Testament and in Hebrews on the significance of blood sacrifice. How does the awful price which Christ willingly paid impact our appreciation of our redemption?
- 4) Do we view God as miserly and stingy in how He works in our life, or do we praise Him for *"the riches of His grace"*?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** "Israel's greatest holy day was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest selected two unblemished sacrificial goats. One goat was killed, and his blood was sprinkled on the altar as a sacrifice. The high priest placed his hands on the head of the other goat, symbolically laying the sins of the people on the animal. The goat was then taken out deep into the wilderness, so far that it could never find its way back. In symbol the sins of the people went with the goat, never to return to them again (Lev. 16:7-10)."

**Criswell:** "There are three ways in which God forgives our sins. First, there is personal forgiveness, a cessation of the moral indignation and righteous resentment of God because of our personal sin. Second, there is ethical forgiveness, the alleviation of the awful burden and oppression of guilt in our lives and on our souls. And third, there is legal forgiveness, the commutation of the sentence of judgment and damnation and death."

**Kent:** "The higher one's conception of God's holiness and the deeper his sense of human sin, the greater is his discernment of the riches of grace that were necessary to provide such a redemption."

**Martin:** "The Pharisees rightly observed (for once) that no man can forgive sins but God only (Mk 2:7). The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ forgives is evidence that he is God."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:8-10

TITLE: THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD HAS BLESSED US WITH INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL; AND THE UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF THE WILL OF GOD IS THAT CHRIST SHOULD HAVE THE PREMINENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

All of us wrestle with the question: What is the will of God for my life? Why doesn't God show me clearly what He wants me to be doing? Why does it seem so much like a mystery?

Review: In studying this first Chapter of Ephesians we have already learned much about who we are as Christians and what type of spiritual blessings God has showered upon us. Just as Paul was commissioned to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and could be confident of God's will for him, we have been commissioned to be saints -- that is God's will for us. We have been blessed with the riches of God's grace = every spiritual blessing:

- (1) God chose us -- to be holy and without blemish -- to be saints; to be like the Lord Jesus
- (2) God predestined us to adoption as sons -- to be saints, conformed to the image of His Son
- (3) God redeemed us and has forgiven us our sins -- to free us from bondage to sin so that we can live like saints; willing servants of our Lord Jesus Christ

**I. GOD BLESSED US WITH INSIGHT INTO THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL**

Why? So that we don't stumble around in the dark, never understanding how our life fits together and makes sense.

Instead, we can live as saints with insight into the will of God, understanding God's purposes and plans for the future.

**A. This Blessing of Wisdom and Insight is Practical**

There is no dichotomy between head and heart knowledge in the Greek mind; your heart can only know through the head.

1. Wisdom -- the larger concept -- wisdom in its broader sense; insight into the true nature of things

2. Insight -- the wisdom of action; the practical use of wisdom; the understanding that leads to right action  
(cf. title of Christian radio program -- "*Insight for Living*")

These 2 Greek words are linked together in the Septuagint:

- 1) Solomon -- 1 Kings 3:12
- 2) Proverbs (written by Solomon) -- 1:2; 8:1
- 3) Daniel

obviously not an academic subject or just ivory tower knowledge in view

**MacArthur:** "*Sophia* (wisdom) emphasizes understanding of ultimate things -- such as life and death, God and man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell, eternity and time. Paul is speaking of wisdom concerning the things of God. *Phronesis* (insight), on the other hand, emphasizes practical understanding, comprehension of the needs, problems, and principles of everyday living. It is spiritual prudence in the handling of daily affairs."

Probably in this context, used more as synonyms.

B. God is not Stingy With His Blessings (not like Scrooge)

Background:

- v. 3 -- "*every spiritual blessing*"
- v. 7 -- "*the riches of His grace*"

1. All wisdom and insight

2. He made to abound unto us

Illustration: of a cup running over -- granting something to someone richly so that they have it in abundance

2 Cor. 9:8; James 1:5

C. God Graciously Revealed This Insight to Us in the Proper Context of His Program for the Culmination of History

1. Described as "*the mystery of His will*"

"mystery" = something once hidden and not revealed, but now made known openly -- a secret (Not something we can't take in or understand even when it is declared to us)

Background in pagan religions -- special esoteric knowledge for the initiated; Instead by God's grace it is practical knowledge for all of the saints

Once God reveals a mystery, He does not want it to remain a secret;

Problem: natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God

Concept applied to:

- 1) divine plan of redemption as a whole
- 2) particular things belonging to that divine plan
  - a) inclusion of the Gentiles -- Romn. 11:25; Ephes. 3:3, 9
  - b) Transformation of Christians alive on earth at Christ's coming  
1 Cor. 15:52
  - c) Union of Christ and the Church -- Ephes. 5:32
- 3) Mystery of lawlessness -- 2 Thess. 2:7

2. He wants us to know this and has determined that we shall know it

*"according to His good pleasure"*

*"which He purposed in Him"* = setting before oneself and so determining

3. Understood in the proper context of his program for the culmination of history

*"fullness of times"* -- *kairos*

- a. *chronos* -- Gal. 4:4 -- time measured quantitatively in days and months and years
- b. *kairos* -- seasons; the critical epoch-making periods foreordained by God; the decisive times of fulfillment in the purposes of God

Here we are looking at the final culmination of human history; the close of a series of periods (dispensations) each of which had its peculiar character -- speaking of the millennial kingdom and the eternal state with the new heavens and the new earth that will be ushered in

History is headed somewhere -- the idea of a great household of which God is the Master and which has a certain system of management wisely ordered by Him.

(See Notes section for a message by Dr. James Boice on "Where is History Going?")

## II. THE UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF THE WILL OF GOD IS THAT CHRIST SHOULD HAVE THE PREEMINENCE

Illustration: In your job you need insight into the unifying principle that should govern your actions (Often: "to make money")

Greek word for "summing up" -- the Greek practice was to add up a column of figures and put the sum at the top. They would want to know "What's the top line?" just as we ask "What's the bottom line?" this is what is really important and ties everything together and helps make sense out of all the other numbers.

Also used of repeating summarily the points of a speech, gathering its argument together in summary form.

3 Ideas present in this picture:

1) Restoration -- never lose sight of God's original creation and what was lost through the Fall

2) Unity -- in the end, all things will be restored to their intended function and to their unity by being brought back to the obedience of Christ; the gathering together of objects now apart and unrelated into final, perfect unity

cf. Rom. 8:20-22; Heb. 2:8

Remember the Lord's Prayer -- *"thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"*

God wants to exalt His Son -- He wants Christ to have the preeminence in everything; He will accomplish this purpose ultimately in history.

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#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did God create a *mystery* if it was His intention to reveal that mystery to us?
- 2) Are we always confident that God's intentions towards us are kind and meaningful?
- 3) What are the *"things in heaven"* that need to be summed up in Christ?
- 4) How does a Christian view of history (a Christian world view) help us to maintain perseverance and hope despite the discouraging world news that flood the airwaves every day?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dr. Boyer (Grace Seminary):** Re Paraphrase of passage: "God brought His grace to bear abundantly on us in our mental capacities by making known to us the hitherto unrevealed purpose which He set before Himself by His own sovereign preference, a purpose which has as its goal a scheme of divine administration which is suited to the time when all the ages shall have run their full course. That purpose is to make all things come under the headship of Christ."

**MacArthur:** "When every trace of evil has been disposed of, God will establish an

incomparable unity in Himself of all things that remain. That is the inevitable goal of the universe.

Macbeth pessimistically declared that history is 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing' (Shakespeare, Macbeth, 5.5.19).

Apart from the wisdom and insight God provides His children, such a hopeless conclusion is inescapable. But history belongs to God, not to the puny plans of man or the perverse power of Satan. History is written and directed by its Creator, who will see it through to the fulfillment of His own ultimate purpose -- the summing up of all things in Christ. He designed His great plan in the ages past; He now sovereignly works it out according to His divine will; and in the fulness of the times He will complete and perfect it in His Son, in whom it will forever operate in righteous harmony and glorious newness along with all things in the heavens and things upon the earth."

**Kent:** "*The fulness of times*' is an expression similar to one used to describe the period which began with Christ's first coming (Gal. 4:4). It will reach its consummation when Christ comes again. It is called the fullness of the times because it is the period long prophesied in the Old Testament as bringing about the consummation of God's plan through Messiah. Thus we find the New Testament referring to the present age as '*the ends of the world*' (lit. '*ends of the ages*,' 1 Cor. 10:11), '*last time*' (lit. '*last hour*,' 1 Jn 2:18), and '*these last days*' (9Heb 1:2).

Paul, therefore, is stating that now God has revealed to us His plan for the management of the universe. It consists in bringing together all things in Christ... God has a plan for the universe and it will be fully accomplished through Christ. By the redemption which he made, sin was defeated and righteousness for man provided. Even the physical universe will eventually be cleansed from the disastrous effects which sin has caused, and all is due to the divine management which God put into operation through Christ."

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**Boice:** Message: "Where is History Going?"

Introduction: We might not be sure of all the details, but the question assumes that something significant is in process. In our culture people question whether history is going anywhere. This has not always been the case throughout history.

Progress involves motion and a plan. People have lost sight of the Planner; what remains is just chaotic motion.

#### 1) Greek View of History --

cyclical view -- nations rise and fall, but don't really get anywhere; there is no purpose; Greeks had no real interest in history in our sense;

Salvation consisted in escaping from history altogether = escape from the body -  
- eventually in death; but right now by the exercise of the mind

#### 2) New View of History involving Concept of Purpose -- based on Christian input

- a) New view of God -- no longer the unMoved Mover; but the Sovereign God in control of history; compassionate and concerned with creatures; intervened in history
  - b) New view of Man -- doctrine of the resurrection of the body (the body in itself is not bad)
  - c) New view of Final Judgment -- What we do counts; Life is meaningful
- 3) Darwinian, Scientific input -- Progress is Inevitable

Today we view that position as naïve because we have seen:

- a) increasing knowledge does not predispose how that knowledge will be used (cf. nuclear bombs)
- b) social planning does not guarantee progress -- there is great disillusionment today in government circles; government can no longer be projected as the answer to society's problems
- 4) Modern view -- people just shrug their shoulders and say they are not sure where history is headed, if anywhere
- 5) View of Christ -- Matt. 6:9

- a) There is a Goal in History = kingdom of God coming on earth
- b) There is a Struggle -- i.e. the goal has not yet been realized
- c) There is a Responsibility -- Pray and live in accordance with the realization of that goal

## FIVE GREAT DOCTRINES IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY THAT IMPACT A BIBLICAL VIEW OF HISTORY

### 1. Doctrine of Creation -- Genesis 1

God brought things into being for a purpose and will accomplish that by His sovereignty. the history of the human race is one history = all coming from Adam.

Problem in trying to write a universal history (cf. German Spengler and English Toynbee -- everyone takes a different perspective) is that since we are living in history and our viewpoint is constrained by our experience, it is impossible to be objective. Solution: God has revealed the true view of history.

### II. Doctrine of Providence -- God's Intervention in History

Natural laws flow from God's character; not just abstract and mechanical. All doesn't happen with ordered regularity. God is not interested in running trains on a tight schedule. (cf. dry periods and rapid, active periods of intervention in our own personal lives and in history)

III. Doctrine of Revelation -- strong view of Scripture is essential)

IV. Doctrine of Redemption

A. View of Sin -- it is still with us and affects us

B. View of the Cross of Christ -- stands at the center of Christian history

V. Doctrine of Final Judgment -- What I do Matters

Each individual and generation exists for the glory of God. Therefore, each of us counts a lot. God will not just judge history at that final moment in time, but will judge everyone who has participated in history.

God is bringing in His kingdom and God is interested in reproducing the character of Christ in us.

- Satan says: Who cares if you do the right thing or not?

- Holy Spirit says: Do the right thing; it matters and I will show you what the right thing is.

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TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:11-12 (DR. KENNETH O. PETERMAN)

TITLE: *JUST HOW SOVEREIGN IS GOD?*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY EXTENDS FROM THE HIGHEST AND THE GREATEST EVENT OR PERSON TO THE SMALLEST AND LEAST SIGNIFICANT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

When parents of troubled teens come for counseling they are often surprised by the amount of work I require them to do to strengthen their own relationship. I usually motivate them by sharing that if their teen sees them working hard on their materials, he has no excuse for not doing the same. If the work is necessary for the greater in experience and authority (in this case, parents) how much more so for the lesser in experience and authority (teenager). We have heard the same type of argument about the absolute necessity for prayer when it is stated that Jesus spent time in prayer. If the greater (Son of God) needs to pray, how much more do we? The same argument can be made in regard to God's sovereignty. If God is sovereign over the greater -- the severest evil conditions, the most powerful men, and over time and space, then He certainly is sovereign over the lesser -- believers and their circumstances. The question then must be answered, can we prove the extent of God's sovereignty?

**I. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS CLEARLY TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURE**

A. God's Sovereignty is Clearly Taught in the Old Testament (Ps. 105)

B. God's Sovereignty is Clearly Taught in the New Testament (Rom. 8:28)

Ephesians 1:11 "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

- "counsel" = plan, scheme, program (not just God's desire); very strong word
- "will" = desire or volition

Sovereignty defined: God is number 1.

**II. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED IN THE SCRIPTURE**

A. God's Sovereignty is Demonstrated in the Old Testament -- Gen. 37 (life of Joseph); Daniel 1-4

B. God's Sovereignty is Demonstrated in the New Testament --  
The Birth of Christ (Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 2:1-20) -- (focused on this area since this was a Christmas message)

1. God is sovereign over the world's evil conditions at the time of Christ's birth.

The birth of Christ took place in the midst of political, social and religious darkness.

Political darkness:

The political situation in Palestine was dominated by the Herod dynasty which by any standard was a corrupt and violent era. Politically, it was not an effective time for the birth of Christ to occur. Herod's evil reign was coming to an end and he was very paranoid about any mention of another "king" -- so paranoid was he that he previously murdered his wife and two sons in his jealous insecurity. If there ever was an inappropriate time politically for the birth of Christ to occur, it was during Herod's evil regime. This guy was so morally corrupt that Josephus in his secular history of Herod doesn't even mention his order to kill the babies in Bethlehem because in contrast to his other catalogued acts this hideous event was relatively insignificant.

Social and Religious darkness:

Socially, the atmosphere for a radical new "movement" was poisonous. The Jewish leaders had their own thing going and wanted no interference from outsiders -- especially those claiming to represent the Messiah. They were the ones to determine who was or wasn't the Messiah. Consequently, religiously the atmosphere was hostile to Christianity -- especially when a new movement would try to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies literally in obvious contradiction to the interpretation of the Jewish leaders. There was so much hostility on the part of the Pharisees and Scribes that they not only tried on several occasions to kill Christ, but finally attributed His miracles and teachings to Satan.

The hostile environment surrounding Christ's birth actually fulfilled God's holy purposes.

a. by showing the stark contrast between the teachings of the Pharisees and those of Christ and His followers. In Matt. 5 Christ in His Sermon on the Mount clearly contrasted the differences between His teachings and the Pharisees' system of religion. The times were dark but such a condition was a valuable backdrop for the unveiling of the Son of Man. As a diamond's brilliance is better contrasted by a black felt background, so the evil conditions: morally, socially, and religiously all provided an ample contrast for the wonderful sovereign working of our God at Christ's birth.

b. by utilizing man's sinful condition to fulfill the will and purpose of God to sacrifice His Son on the cross. Since evil men were prepared to perform such an incredible act (killing the Son of God), God used man's evil condition to accomplish His sovereign will (Acts 2:23). The wrath of man does not intimidate God, nor in any way frustrate the accomplishment of His sovereign purposes.

So, as God easily controlled man's sinful and hostile condition at Christ's birth, so he does the same today in our lives. Perhaps you are presently living within an evil situation. Perhaps, for instance, you are married to an unsaved person who is hostile to

your Christianity, yet wants to remain with you as your mate. This adverse situation must be accepted as the will of God but is certainly not outside of God's ability to fully control. Perhaps you are a teenager living with unsaved or carnal parents who do not share your spiritual desires, goal, or maturity in Christ. Certainly God does not want you to abandon your God-given authority because the situation is evil or unpleasant. God in his sovereignty will use the apparently harmful situation for your good and His glory as you faithfully implement His word. Perhaps you work in a hostile setting. God is in control of the conditions you face too.

#### INSIGHTS:

(1) God ordains evil situations to accomplish His will; we must persist in following biblical principles in the midst of such conditions. Evil conditions should not discourage us from applying God's Word.

(2) God will not allow an evil situation to cause more problems or pressure than we can spiritually bear. 1 Cor. 10:13.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

Doesn't it stand to reason that if God has total control over extremely evil conditions (as illustrated at the birth of Christ) that He also has total control over the lesser evil conditions -- that we face?

#### SOMETHING TO DO:

What evil conditions do you face? List them, then get on your knees with the list and thank God that He has sovereign and easy control over those conditions. After you have earnestly given thanks, list the positive aspects "hidden" within your pressurized situations.

2. God is sovereign over the designs and purposes of the most powerful of evil men (Matt. 2:1-18)

Magi arrive in Jerusalem

Matthew records that the Magi arrived in Jerusalem asking "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." This is all that Herod needed! Matthew continues that when Herod heard these things that he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him -- whenever Herod was troubled everybody was troubled because they did not know what evil he would do next. (Herod was very insecure and jealous.)

Herod was extremely sinister -- so much so that the slaughter in Bethlehem was not even mentioned by Josephus in cataloguing Herod's crimes. Henry Alford summarizes Herod's wicked character by saying:

"He sought to strengthen his throne by a series of cruelties and slaughters, putting to death even his wife Marianne, and his sons Alexander and Aristobulus. His cruelties, and his affection of the Gentile customs, gained for him a hatred among the Jews, which neither his magnificent rebuilding of the temple, nor his liberality in other public works, nor his provident care of the people during a severe famine, could mitigate. He died miserably, five days after he put to death his son Antipater, in the seventieth year of his age, the thirty-eighth of his reign, and the 750<sup>th</sup> year of Rome."

#### Magi meet Herod

While Magi must have heard some of these reports, they believed and trusted Herod's boldfaced lie. When they left Herod, they obviously felt that he was a fellow comrade in their search for the newborn king. (Even Gentiles knew that Jewish people were looking for a king and that a great birth was going to take place.)

#### Magi follow the star to Bethlehem

Again seeing the star, they followed it to Bethlehem where they found Jesus and worshipped Him. No doubt they were prepared to return to Herod and tell him the good news when God warned them in a dream not to return to Herod (Matt. 1:12).

#### God reveals Herod's real motive to the Magi

God in his sovereignty bypassed the king's word and evidently the Magi were more impressed with following the advice of the dream from the Almighty God than obeying Herod! Herod's "secret" plan was an open secret to God. The light and the darkness are both alike to Him.

-- "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." Prov. 21:1.

-- "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hidden from thee." Psalm 69:5.

-- "He revealeth the deep and the secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with him." Daniel 2:22.

When we are alone we glorify God the most -- only God knows the secret, deep things of our heart.

#### Herod's wrath

He felt he was mocked and had been made a fool of by the Magi. God not only sovereignly diverted the Magi from Herod but also removed his Son from Herod's subsequent evil revenge. Matthew 2:16 states: "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceedingly angry and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all its borders, from two years old and under ..." Herod made sure that he gave himself enough margin in territory and in age to snare the young king in his evil net, and he would have if God had not warned Joseph of Herod's

intention even before it happened. Psalm 139:4 says "for there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."

God warns Joseph to flee

Joseph didn't know Herod's intentions. Herod's intentions and plans although hidden from the Magi and from men were not hidden from God. According to Matthew 2:13 "an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying 'Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.'"

No power on earth can thwart God's will. No evil plan regardless how secret and how devious can thwart God's will. No person can hinder God's plans and purposes from being fulfilled.

Something to think about:

Doesn't it stand to reason that if God has total control over the most powerful of evil men that he also has control over the evil men of lesser power we face?

Something to do:

What individuals (especially evil people) in your life seem to have final control over your destiny? List them. How has God used them to develop your spiritual life?

3. God is sovereign in His Word regardless of the time lapse or apparent contradiction of human circumstances.

Circumstances that fulfilled specific Old Testament prophecies about the birth of Christ.

These particular prophetic circumstances clearly demonstrate God's ultimate sovereignty in that they had to be specifically fulfilled as prophesied in the Old Testament.

[1] The virgin birth predicted in the Old Testament

Isaiah 7:14 -- "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This prophecy was uttered by Isaiah under divine inspiration some 800 years before the birth of Christ. This prophecy was obviously supernatural in origin and execution.

When the angel appeared to Joseph who was troubled by Mary's pregnancy, he was "minded to put her away privately; But while he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit' ... Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, 'Behold the virgin shall be with child ...'"

[2] Christ's birthday prophecied in the Old Testament.

Micah 5:2 "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of these shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Joseph was living at Nazareth in Galilee while Mary was pregnant but as her time drew near, they were constrained to go to Bethlehem to register under the decree of Caesar Augustus. While in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth fulfilling accurately the prophecy of Micah uttered hundreds of years prior to the event. Did not God arrange the circumstances of a great empire to accomplish His holy will?

[3] Murder of the children in Bethlehem prophecied in the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 31:15 "Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."

Matthew 2:17 "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah, the prophet, saying ... " clearly indicates that this text was literally fulfilled when Herod slew the children of Bethlehem. The reason that Rachel is mentioned is because she is considered the mother of Israel and she was buried very near Bethlehem. The remark is a poetic way of saying that all the mothers wept for their children during that horrible event.

[4] Flight into Egypt prophecied in the Old Testament.

Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

Matthew (2:19) records that when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord again appeared unto Joseph saying "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel." Hosea's words were accurately fulfilled 700 years later!

[5] Christ's hometown prophecied in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 11:1 "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (There is no other specific OT verse, so this must be the passage.) The Hebrew word for rod is "*nezer*" from which the word Nazarene was evidently derived.

After the flight to Egypt from Bethlehem, Matthew indicates (2:23) that "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

Something to Think About:

These specific prophecies were spoken 700-800 years before the birth of Christ relative to the exact birthplace, boyhood home, mode of birth, and routes of travel. They cannot be coincidence, chance, or luck. It must be the hand of an Almighty God

manipulating circumstances to accomplish His ordained word. Will not God continue to honor His word today?

Something to Do:

As you read your daily Scripture, record specific promises God makes to you. Memorize them and believe them as you do the narratives of the birth of Christ or passages about salvation. God will honor His Word.

4. God's sovereignty is demonstrated in the fact that God's ways are higher than man's ways.

This concept is clearly demonstrated in the events of the story of Christ's birth. The following are some suggested areas of difference between how God ordained to send His Son and how differently man would plan and execute the same event.

- |     |                    |   |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| [1] | What man would do: | Totally avoid the Gentile world.  |
|     | What God did:      | Announce to the Gentile world through the star.   |
| [2] | What man would do: | Announce the birth only to the elite.   |
|     | What God did:      | Announce to Gentiles and Shepherds.<br>(those sensitive to the signs)                       |
| [3] | What man would do: | Plan for the king to live in Jerusalem (city of David)                                      |
|     | What God did:      | Ordain Him to live in a despised city in obvious preparation for his ministry to the lowly. |
| [4] | What man would do: | Avoid the humiliation of a virgin birth.  |
|     | What God did:      | Virgin birth.   |
| [5] | What man would do: | Clean up the evil conditions before Messiah's birth.  |
|     | What God did:      | Totally ignored the human conditions.   |
| [6] | What man would do: | Provide a birthplace suitable for a king.   |
|     | What God did:      | Provided a situation (manger) befitting our meek, lowly and humble God.                     |

(Apparently, what man thinks is important is not even a factor in God's way of thinking.)

## CONCLUSION:

The birth of Christ clearly demonstrates that God is sovereign over the most evil conditions and hostile environments in the world, over all of the designs and purposes

of evil men, in the absolute fulfillment of His holy Word -- regardless of circumstances or what man thinks.

If we say we believe this account of the birth of Christ, then we must agree:

1. That God's sovereignty extends over our lesser evil situation because it extended over greater evil conditions and situations in this account.
2. That God's sovereignty extends over all people in authority over us because it extended over the highest authority in this account.
3. That God's sovereignty extends to accomplishing his word regardless of time and space because it was fulfilled in this account (regardless of time and space perspective).
4. That the outworking of God's sovereignty will differ greatly from man's wishes and thinking because it did so in this account.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

(Look back at the "Something to Do" sections above.)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Stott:** "Putting these two Greek expressions together, with their clear Old Testament background, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Paul is alluding to the church as God's 'inheritance' and 'possession'. These words used to be applied exclusively to the one nation of Israel, but are now reapplied to an international people whose common factor is that they are all 'in Christ'. The fact that the same vocabulary is used of both peoples indicates the spiritual continuity between them.

This teaching, though entirely hidden by RSV and obscured by most of the English versions, is nevertheless basic to what Paul is writing in this paragraph. God's people are God's 'saints' (verse 1), God's heritage (verse 12), God's possession (verse 14). Only when that has been grasped, are we ready to ask two further questions. First, how did we become God's people? Secondly, why did he make us his people? Paul answers the first question by reference to God's will and the second by reference to his glory. And he states each truth three times."

**Hendriksen:** "Neither fate nor human merit determines our destiny. The benevolent purpose -- that we should be holy and faultless (verse 4), sons of God (verse 5), destined to glorify him forever (verse 6, cf. verses 12 and 14) -- is fixed, being part of a larger, universe-embracing plan. Not only did God make this plan that includes absolutely all things that ever take place in heaven, on earth, and in hell; past, present and even the future, pertaining to both believers and unbelievers, to angels and devils,



to physical as well as spiritual energies and units of existence both large and small; he also wholly carries it out. His providence in time is as comprehensive as is his decree from eternity."

**MacArthur:** "Scripture always presents salvation from God's side, in order that He should have full credit. In our humanly-oriented society, God's wanting exclusive credit seems inappropriate -- but only because men have no concept of His greatness, holiness, and glory. What views they may have of Him are simply projections of themselves. The praise and glory that men so much desire are totally undeserved, and their motives for wanting them are purely sinful. But God seeks glory for the right reasons and because He alone is deserving of it. His seeking glory is a holy desire of which He is supremely and singly worthy."

**Vaughan:** "Three matters must be considered in interpreting these verses. First, we must notice the use of the first person pronoun in verses 11 and 12 ...and the change to the second person in verse 13 ('*ye also*'). The conclusion to be drawn from this is that in verses 11, 12 Paul had especially in mind Jewish believers whose hope was fixed on the Messiah before He came, ... The second stage is implied in verses 13, 14, where Paul shows that Gentile Christians ... are included in that same comprehensive purpose.

A second matter to consider is the meaning of the expression '*in whom also we have obtained an inheritance*' (vs. 11). This rendering suggests that God has not only imparted to believers a knowledge of His redemptive purpose but has actually made them heirs of its blessings...Many interpreters, however, favor the idea expressed in the ASV rendering of the verse: '*in whom also we were made a heritage*' ... According to this translation, the teaching is not that believers obtain an inheritance (though this of course is true), but rather that they themselves become God's heritage...

A third matter to be considered is God's aim in making believers His possession. This is expressed by the words '*that we should be to the praise of his glory*' (vs. 12). God's intention was not that believers might take pride in their position and boast of their special privileges."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:13-14

TITLE: SECURITY FOR THE FUTURE

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT SECURES THE SAINTS' FUTURE --  
SECURES IT FOR US AND FOR GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

God wants us to appreciate the blessings He has given us. Sometimes we need a little reminder to get our focus off of some of the areas of confusion and uncertainty in our life and focus on His blessings.

Review: The Triune God has accomplished our eternal salvation. Note the work of each person in the Godhead, with each section marked off by the concluding refrain: *"to the praise of His glory"*.

Theme verse: (:3) we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing

(1) God the Father planned our salvation for His own glory (:4-6a)

chosen

predestinated unto adoption of sons

closing refrain

(2) God the Father executed our salvation through God the Son for His own glory (:6b-12)

Redemption -- the forgiveness of sins

closing refrain introduced in vs. 7: *"in accordance with the riches of God's grace"*

(a) Extended explanation of the importance of the Son (:8-10)

God has blessed us with insight into the mystery of His will; and the unifying principle of the will of God is that Christ should have the preeminence

(b) Extended explanation of the sovereignty of God (:11-12)

closing refrain picked up from vs. 7 and restated in vs. 12

Today's Message: Insecurity about the future affects our enjoyment of the present and our performance in the present.

Examples ...

**I. (:13) THE HOLY SPIRIT SECURES THE SAINTS' FUTURE AS A SEAL FROM**

## GOD

### A. Whom is Paul addressing here?

Note the change in pronouns -- in verses 3-12 all first person pronouns -- Paul including himself and the apostles together with all the saints; in verse 13 introduces the second person plural; 2 options:

1. Possibility that Paul is here just beginning to introduce the distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers that will be an important theme later in the Book as he describes how both have been united into one body -- the church.

Certainly it would have been difficult for some Jews to accept that God was now treating the Gentiles so favorably and on an equal footing, so the fact of the sealing with the Holy Spirit should help to clinch this and give these Gentile believers the assurance about their future that they need.

2. Otherwise the distinction would not be as dramatic, and would merely be between Paul and his associates and all the believers at Ephesus (with no special Gentile emphasis). Certainly it is true that all believers of all ages have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, not just Gentile believers.

### B. 2 Prerequisites -- Hearing and Believing

Paul is finally looking at salvation from the standpoint of man's responsibility and response to the work of God in his heart; up to now the emphasis has been totally on God's initiative and working.

Sealing with the Holy Spirit is not something that happens at some time subsequent to believing; not a second blessing or second work of grace; but rather is associated with our hearing and believing.

Proper content is essential -- not so much the personality or manner of presentation by the speaker. Described here as:

*"the word of truth"*

*"the gospel of your salvation"*

We must expose ourselves and our families to the proper content.

Lack of security in any area of our life should be addressed in the same way -- seek to hear God's truth as it applies to that area and believe it. Trust the Savior who is able to deliver from insecurity.

### C. Significance of the Holy Spirit as the Seal from God (Remember, it is God who does the sealing)

#### 1. Meaning of the seal

a. Marking as one's own possession -- ownership;

This is the objective sense = the meaning of the seal to God and to others (cf. Branded); Believers belong to God forever; the issue of ownership has been settled. They had a number of ways of accomplishing this sealing function in those days. The seal usually was made from hot wax, which was placed on the document, letter, etc. and then impressed with a signet ring (cf. how we use a Notary today). Served as an official mark of identification.

b. Confirming or authenticating

Subjective sense -- testimony to our own consciousness that we belong to God and enjoy all of these spiritual blessings (Rom. 8:16); people whom nothing can harm and for whom all things work together for good

c. Making secure -- to protect against tampering or harm; (just like they sealed up Jesus' grave and sealed Daniel in the lion's den);

Primarily the significance of "a" and "b" are involved in our passage.

2. Fulfillment of God's promise -- "the Holy Spirit of promise"

a. OT prophecies:

Joel 3:1-5

Is. 32:15; 44:3

Ezek. 36:26; 39:29

Zech. 12:10

emphasis on a new heart and new spirit

b. NT promises of Christ

John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13

Acts 1:4

c. Fulfillment on Day of Pentacost

Acts 2:1-4; 16-21; 38

3. Emphasis on Holiness

word position in the Greek makes this emphatic;

The primary nature of the Spirit's work in those he seals is to make them holy (2 Thess. 2:13); This has been Paul's theme throughout the first paragraph of Ephesians. We have been saved to be saints, to be holy.

This should be the objective mark of identification to others; they should know we belong to God because of our holiness; they should see our good works and glorify the Father. This should be the inward assurance of the reality of our union with Jesus Christ (cf. the tests of eternal life in 1 John). How are we progressing in this area?

## II. (:14) THE HOLY SPIRIT SECURES THE SAINTS' FUTURE AS A DOWNPAYMENT FROM GOD

### A. Significance of the Holy Spirit as the Downpayment from God

First installment; partial payment in advance (cf. engagement ring); Our present possession of the Spirit is a sample and guarantee, a partial payment of our future inheritance.

Full salvation will be different from our present experience only in degree, not in kind

### B. 2 Things that have been made Secure regarding the Saints' Future

#### 1. With respect to the saints -- Our Inheritance

Resurrection body which will correspond to our new position as adopted children of God free from sin and evil; full enjoyment of all spiritual blessings

Transition: our inheritance is marvelous, awesome and guaranteed, but it is not the primary purpose of our salvation

#### 2. With respect to God -- Full Redemption and Possession of Us

We will be totally His for all of eternity; no undivided allegiance. This is the great overriding purpose of God's redemption of men -- the rescuing of what is His own possession. His ultimate goal is "*the praise of His glory*"

## CONCLUSION:

Let's appreciate our spiritual blessings.

Our secure future should enable us to enjoy the present and to perform in the present.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Note how this passage confirms the principle that "*faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" Are we looking for opportunities to gain a hearing before unbelievers? Do we take seriously every opportunity we have to hear and respond in faith to the Word of God to grow ourselves? Do we encourage ourselves with the fact that we have responded in faith to the gospel message?

2) If God is the one who has done the sealing ... who is powerful enough to break that seal and to bring into question our eternal security?

3) How good is God at keeping His promises? What a comfort it is to have already received "*the Holy Spirit of promise!*"

4) Why does God want to fully redeem us and possess us as His own possession?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Kent:** "The goal of this sealing is stated as twofold. It guarantees the eventual experiencing of all aspects of redemption. Believers themselves are God's purchased possession. What we now enjoy in part will ultimately be experienced to the full (cf. Ro 8:15-24). There is also a benefit which God receives. By the work of the Spirit in regenerating and sealing believers, praise will come to the Father for all eternity because of His matchless saving grace."

**Stott:** "The glory of God is the revelation of God, and the glory of his grace is his self-disclosure as a gracious God. To live to the praise of the glory of his grace is both to worship him ourselves by our words and deeds as the gracious God he is, and to cause others to see and to praise him too."

**MacArthur:** "Faith is man's response to God's elective purpose. God's choice of men is election; men's choice of God is faith. In election God gives His promises, and by faith men receive them..."

Men have always wanted assurances. Because the promises of other men are so often unreliable, we demand oaths, sworn affidavits, surety bonds, guarantees, warranties, and many other such means of trying to assure that what is promised is received.

God's simple word should be sufficient for us, but in His graciousness He makes His promises even more certain -- if that were possible -- by giving us His own guarantees. Here the Lord guarantees His promises with his seal and with his pledge"

**Wood:** "The '*seal*' (*sphragis*) had various uses (MM, pp. 617, 618), all of which are instructive as applied to the Holy Spirit. It was affixed to a document to guarantee its genuineness. It was attached to goods in transit to indicate ownership and ensure protection. It also represented a designation of office in the state service."

**Robinson:** "It is noteworthy that St Paul is careful to employ in regard to the Gentiles the very terms -- '*promise*', '*inheritance*', '*emancipation*', '*possession*' -- which were the familiar descriptions of the peculiar privilege of Israel. Moreover in the phrase '*our inheritance*' he has suddenly changed back again from the second person to the first; thereby intimating that Jews and Gentiles are, to use a phrase which occurs later on, '*co-heirs and concorporate and co-partakers of the promise*'."

At last the great doxology comes to its close with the repetition for the third time of the refrain, '*to the praise of His glory*' -- words which recall to us the unfulfilled

destiny of Israel, *'that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear'.*"

**Piper:** "So then, what is God saying to us when he gives us his Holy Spirit and calls him a guarantee or a downpayment? He is saying, 'My great desire for those who believe in me is that you feel secure in my love. I have chosen you before the foundation of the world. I have predestined you to be my children for ever. I have redeemed you by the blood of my Son. And I have put my Spirit in you as a seal and a guarantee. Therefore, you will receive the inheritance and praise the glory of my grace for ever and ever. And I tell you this here in Ephesians chapter one because I want you to feel secure in my love and my power. I don't promise you an easy life. In fact, through many tribulations you must enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22). I don't promise always to speak in soft tones of approval, but to warn you in love whenever you begin to seek security in anything but me,' says the Lord."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:15-18

TITLE: PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

**BIG IDEA:**

**WE NEED THE ENLIGHTENING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FULLY UNDERSTAND AND RELATE TO GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

When a baby is born, his eyes are opened to a whole new world, a different dimension than anything he has ever known. He is very limited as to what he can see at birth. As the baby develops his eyes start to focus in on more things and he also starts to see not just what is close up, but things that are farther away. Still there is a growing process in terms of how much he can really understand and how well he can relate to what he sees -- this growing process can be described as enlightenment.

Just being alive would be abnormal as time goes by. However, many Christians seem content with just being alive, with having their eyes opened to some of the blessings of this new spiritual dimension, but never really growing in any depth in their personal knowledge of God and ability to relate to Him.

We need to catch the vision for our opportunity to know God better. We want to be able to see things that are far off, not just those things that are up close. We don't want our vision clouded by our own indifference, our persistence in sin, our love for the world, etc. We need to be open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

(Walt Russell's message on this text was helpful -- Grace Fellowship Church, Baltimore MD. His Big Idea = THE EYES OF OUR HEART NEED DIVINE FOCUS TO PERCEIVE MORE FULLY GOD AND HIS WORK FOR US.)

**CONTEXT:**

Verses 3-14 presented a fantastic account of how God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Now Paul is switching gears and praying that God will give us spiritual insight to understand, appreciate, and appropriate these blessings.

It is important to keep the balance between:

- 1) Praise for what God has given us, and
- 2) Petition for what we realize we need for spiritual growth

The danger of being lopsided here:

- 1) Some people are complacent with their limited understanding of God and have no appetite to go deeper
- 2) Some people are always praying for new spiritual blessings while seemingly ignorant of what they already have

Balance:

Yes, we have the Holy Spirit who has sealed us.  
Praise God!



Yes, we need the Holy Spirit in His ministry of enlightening us.  
Petition God for His grace in this area.

## **WE NEED THE ENLIGHTENING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FULLY UNDERSTAND AND RELATE TO GOD**

**I. MOTIVATION for this request for spiritual enlightenment =  
THE REALITY OF THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE =  
cause for both thanksgiving and pastoral concern**

A. *"for this reason"* --

these Gentile believers genuinely possessed the Holy Spirit who had sealed them and been the downpayment for their full inheritance.

B. They genuinely lived the spiritual life -- 2 fundamental qualities:

1. *"Faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you"*

2. *"your love for all the saints"*

Paul was in prison and had time to pray for these saints on a regular basis. He gave thanks for them and expressed his pastoral concern in praying for their growth.

## **II. MAIN REQUEST = THE ENLIGHTENING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

A. This gift of the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit flows out of the grace of God

1. God is addressed as:

a. *"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ"*

If our Lord, the object of our faith and our all-sufficient one for deliverance in every respect willingly submitted to God the Father here on this earth and needed insight, etc. how much more we do.

b. *"the Father of glory"*

His characteristic quality is glory. He is the one that deserves the preeminence in every respect. If the one we have the opportunity to get to know is the Father of glory, how can we be diverted by lesser pursuits?

Remember the refrain: *"to the praise of the glory of His grace"*

2. God's grace is the key; not our works or merit

B. This gift centers in the work of the Holy Spirit

*"Spirit of wisdom and revelation"*

Why do I think this refers to the Holy Spirit and not just a capacity or disposition in our human spirit?

- 1) the two are closely related anyway since the Holy Spirit would have to produce such a capacity
- 2) emphasis on the work of the Trinity
- 3) prominence of the Holy Spirit in the entire epistle
- 4) context in 1:13-14 dealt specifically with the Holy Spirit
- 5) concept of "revelation" is better connected with Holy Spirit
- 6) parallel verse from OT -- Isaiah 11:2 *"And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord"*

1. "Wisdom" -- intellectual insight into things as they really are  
not just wisdom in understanding the Word of God, but wisdom in our trials -- in how to face all the pressures of our daily lives

2. "Revelation" -- the unveiling of something previously hidden or unknown

Could be some confusion here. In our technical doctrinal classifications we tend to label this as the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit (helping us to understand what God has already revealed) since we do not believe God is revealing new truth today (through dreams, prophecies, etc.). But in a non-technical sense the Holy Spirit is constantly revealing new insights to us.

C. This gift operates in the sphere of the full experiential knowledge of God  
*"in the full knowledge of him"*

### III. REASON OR BASIS FOR THE REQUEST

Best translation of this Perfect tense in Greek here:

*"since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened"* -- Refers to the present possession of something received or experienced in the past. It was at salvation that the eyes of our heart were opened by God's grace through faith. Now we need these eyes focused by God's grace through faith. This prayer for spiritual enlightenment regarding the full knowledge of God can only apply to those who already have spiritual vision. That is why the reality of spiritual life in others should motivate us to pray in this way for them.

(Study Luke 24:13-35) for a good example of spiritual enlightenment)

#### IV. PURPOSE OF THE REQUEST = that we would understand:

A. His Goal for us = *"the hope of His calling"*

Primarily centers on holiness and being completely like the Lord Jesus Christ; includes our resurrection body and full inheritance

B. His gift for Himself = *"the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"*

This refers to the inheritance that will belong to God, not the inheritance that will belong to the saints. Reasons:

- 1) Note the same two-sided emphasis in verse 14 -- the Holy Spirit secures the saints' future both for the saints and for God
- 2) The phrase *"in the saints"* only makes sense in this view
- 3) There are parallel verses like Titus 2:14.

We are valuable to God. This should improve our sense of worth.

C. His Guarantee for Success = *"the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe ... "*

#### CONCLUSION: (from Walt Russell)

We do not know what was the short-term response of the church in Ephesus to Paul's heart-felt prayer for them. We do have an insight into their response some 35 years later when the Apostle John recounted Jesus Christ's assessment of the church in Rev 2:1-7. The particularly tragic part of that assessment is in verse 4: *"But I have this against you, that you have left your first love."* The eyes of their hearts had grown dull over the years. Instead of loving their wonderful God more and more each year, they lost even the early flush of love that they had felt toward Him. They lost the focus of the eyes of their heart.

There is no priority in life that is greater than the priority of coming to know God better. How does that fit in your priority scale?

- 1) Pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to get to know God more fully each day.
- 2) Invest significant time this week getting to know God better.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Does our spiritual life reflect a healthy growing balance of both dynamic *faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ and practical *love* towards all of the brethren without a

spirit of favoritism?

- 2) Do our prayers reflect a dominant tone of *thanksgiving* or of whining and complaining and just asking God for things?
- 3) Is our teaching driven home to the seat of emotions and the will by fervent prayer for this activity of enlightening and motivating that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish, or do we rely on the communication of content alone?
- 4) Are we excited about the riches that we enjoy in Christ and our secure future and are we aware of how excited God is to possess us as His very own?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**J. I. Packer:** Notes from *Knowing God*:

Value of Knowing God -- proper attitude is that of Paul (Philippians 3:7-10)

1. One can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him.
2. One can know a great deal about godliness without much knowledge of God.

4 Characteristics of People who Know God (from a study of Daniel):

- 1) They have a great energy for God (Dan. 11:32)

*"the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action"*

They have a definite reaction of action to the anti-God trends which they see operating around them; also have a lot of energy to pray for God's causes

- 2) They have great thoughts of God

God's sovereignty is clearly presented in Daniel; His hand controls all of history -- *"the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men"*; His kingdom and righteousness will prevail in the end

- 3) They show great boldness for God

*"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29)

cf. fiery furnace incident and Daniel in the lion's den

- 4) They have great contentment in God

Rom. 5:1; note contentment of Shadrach and friends before King Nebuchad.

Daniel 3:16-18 -- Live or die, they are content

How to pursue a knowledge of God:

- 1) Recognize how much we lack knowledge of God

## 2) Seek the Saviour

We have been created to know God -- that should be our aim in life:

John 17:3 *"this is life eternal, that they might know thee"*

Jer. 9:23 *"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me"*

The more complex the object, the more complex is the knowing of it. One does not know a living thing till one knows, not merely its past history, but how it is likely to react and behave under specific circumstances.

Knowing God involves:

- 1) listening to God's word and receiving it as the Holy Spirit interprets it, in application to oneself
- 2) noting God's nature and character, as His word and works reveal it
- 3) accepting His invitations, and doing what He commands
- 4) recognizing and rejoicing in the love that He has shown in thus approaching one and drawing one into this divine fellowship

Analogies the Bible uses to picture Knowing God:

- 1) a son knowing his father
- 2) a wife knowing her husband
- 3) a subject knowing his king
- 4) a sheep knowing its shepherd

All four analogies point to a relation in which the knower 'looks up' to the one known, and the latter takes responsibility for the welfare of the former. We know God in this way only by knowing Jesus Christ (John 14:6, 9).

**Vaughan:** "Many necessary and worthwhile endeavors compete for the Christian's time and energy, but without doubt prayer is the most important thing that ever engages his attention. It nurtures the soul, refines the character, promotes spiritual growth, and gives fortitude for victorious Christian living. The day of judgment will likely show that those who have done the most to advance God's cause in the world have been persons who made prayer a large factor in their lives. It is unquestionably the mightiest weapon that one can wield in the struggle against evil.

A person's prayers are the mirror of his inner life. They reflect the depth of his emotions, the tenderness of his affection, the breadth of his sympathies, and the sincerity of his devotion. Moreover, a person's prayers are an index to his sense of values. They reveal the things he considers to be really important."

**Stedman:** "He is talking about motivation of the will here, for this wise Apostle knew that nobody ever gets motivated by truth alone. Truth can be dull and academic, so he prays that their hearts might be stirred by the truth.

It is prayer that will do that. I have been greatly moved by this passage because it has made me aware that we must add, deliberately and intelligently, the dimension of prayer to our teaching. Teaching truth is never enough. We can teach another person--a student in the Sunday School or our own children at home--so that they can parrot the truth back to us, and we are often satisfied by that. But the Apostle was not satisfied. He knew that you don't know truth in that way. You never know it until it has gripped you, and you have been changed by it."

**Eerdman:** "Paul asks that these Christians may be granted that moral temper, that spiritual disposition, by which they would be able to receive divine truth and appropriate it for their lives."

**Criswell:** "Seeing with the eyes of the soul--this is the intuitive insight (which is the highest of God's exalted and heavenly gifts) that God has confirmed upon the man He made. To see with the eyes of the soul, that is what the painter does. He paints what his soul feels and sees. The great English painter, Turner, was famed throughout the world for his gorgeous sunsets. A woman came up to him one time and said, 'Mr. Turner, I never saw a sunset like that.' And the artist replied, 'Ah, but do not you wish you could?'"

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:19-23

TITLE: GOD'S POWER WORKING FOR US

**BIG IDEA:**

**HIS GUARANTEE FOR SUCCESS IS GOD'S POWER WORKING FOR US -- THE SAME POWER THAT RESURRECTED AND EXALTED CHRIST TO HIS POSITION AS HEAD OVER ALL -- BOTH IN THE UNIVERSE AND IN THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY**

Review:

Message of Ephesians: SINCE GOD DESIGNED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS GLORY AND BLESSED IT WITH THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, LET US WALK WORTHY OF OUR HIGH CALLING

Why do we need the Enabling Power of God?

1) We are in a war! We are attacking Satan and his world system and sin with the standards and purposes of a holy, sovereign God. We are under attack as well (Ephes. 6:10-13). Do we feel the pressure of the battle? Are we actively fighting? The purpose of the church is to equip soldiers to fight.

We need to tap into God's resources and power in order to live victoriously -- otherwise we will be discouraged and become casualties -- rendered ineffective and useless for fighting. Soldiers are not concerned with their comfort or quality of life during the conflict, but are oriented towards the future in expectation of the higher quality of life that will be enjoyed at that time. Our expectations should be focused on the future as well.

2) Our commander-in-chief is invisible! The Apostle Paul had been taken prisoner by the enemy. He is concerned that the believers don't lose heart at his tribulations (3:13). He is still actively fighting effectively behind the lines as an ambassador in chains relying on the same power of God (6:20). Paul points the saints to the exalted Lord Jesus Christ as their commander-in-chief. We do not want to have an unhealthy dependence on human spiritual leaders.

The enemy will try all sorts of propaganda techniques to try to discourage us. God's answer = We have the same POWER available to us as was evidenced in Jesus Christ (just as we saw that our spiritual blessings and privileges are identical to those of our Lord Jesus Christ).

**GOD'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT:**

- BY DEFINITION
- BY ILLUSTRATION

## I. GOD'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT -- BY DEFINITION

### A. The Nature of This Power

Paul presses all the words for power in his vocabulary into service in order to convey something of its all-surpassing character.

4 different Greek words (but the emphasis is not on the different nuances of meaning in each; rather the cumulative effect of these words):

1. "*dunamis*" -- strength, might, power -- general word to introduce the whole subject (cf. "dynamite")
2. "*energeia*" -- power in action; working power (cf. "energy")
3. "*kratos*" -- the strength exercised in the activity; over-powering master; dominion
4. "*ischus*" -- inherent ability -- whether exercised or not; strength possessed

### B. The Measure of This Power -- "*the exceeding greatness*"

You cannot measure it or exhaust it; it goes beyond all that we could ask or think (3:20).

Why would anyone fight on the other side? Let's make sure we are not fighting against the power of God. If we have such unlimited power available, let's do some significant fighting. The victory in the war is assured; the only question is which soldiers will get the medals.

## II. GOD'S POWER IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT -- BY ILLUSTRATION

4 great acts of God described (2 groupings of 2) -- what He already did for Christ:

1. raised Him
2. seated Him
3. put all things under His feet
4. gave Him to the church to be head over all

### A. The Resurrection

Represents the best proof of God's might; only God could do this. When the NT writers wish to show the fullness of God's love, they point to the death of Christ (Rom. 5:8); but the chief demonstration of His power is the resurrection.



Romans 1:4; 2 Cor. 13:4; Heb. 11:19

3 Reasons God wants us to look at a risen Christ:

1. God's Supreme Seal Upon His Son

a. As to His Person -- Christ linked His claim to Deity to His resurrection -- Matt. 16:14ff; God validated Christ's claims by the resurrection -- Matt. 12:38-40; John 10:18; Matt. 27:40, 63-64 -- all His enemies had to do was to produce Christ's body to prove it was a hoax

b. As to His Work -- validation of His death; accepted as sufficient sacrifice -- Romans 4:25; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:13ff

2. God's Guarantee for the Believer's Future -- Answers man's questions about:

a. Death -- it's been transformed -- Rev. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; sting of death is gone because the penalty and guilt is gone; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; the law calls for the execution of God's judgment on sin

b. This Body -- His resurrection is the guarantee of mine -- 1 Cor. 15:20; Phil. 3:21

c. Believers in Glory -- assurance of inheritance and place with Him -- 1 Pet. 1:3-4

3. Provides Power in the Believer's Life Right Now --  
Rom. 6:4-5 -- we partake of His very nature

Response of people makes all the difference: some mock; some say it's impossible; some believe

Transition: Christ is not only alive, but reigning; the resurrection and the exaltation are always linked in Scripture

B. Exaltation

1. Significance -- restored to His manifest glory; Sitting was a mark of honor or authority in the ancient world in the following contexts:

a. King -- sitting to receive his subjects

In Revelation, God is pictured as ruling on His throne; Mark 14:62; Heb. 1:3-4; we will reign with Christ

b. Court -- sitting to render judgment

- c. Teacher -- sitting to teach -- Matt. 5:1; Christ taught with evident authority
- d. High Priest -- always stood -- but Jesus was the exception -- Heb. 10:11-14

## 2. The Measure of His Exaltation

*"above all principality and power ..."*

possibilities:

- a. ranks of good angels
- b. includes different orders of demons as well (6:12 supports this)
- c. all grades of authority -- both human and super-human

Maybe not precise terms to specify graduated ranks, but rhetorical terms brought together in order to express the unique supremacy and absolute sovereignty proper to Christ, and meaning simply that whatever powers or dignitaries existed and by whatever names they might be designated either now or at any time in the future, Christ's dominion is above them all.

The world loves power and seeks after titles and honor and authority. Christ has it all. That same power of God is working for us and is more than sufficient to meet our need for significance and security.

## C. The Dominion of Christ over the Univers

*"put all things under His feet"* -- Ps. 8:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:8-9

Remember the charge given to the first Adam -- exercise dominion over the world; the purpose of God has always been dominion

cf. the song: "Master of the Universe"

## D. The Headship of Christ over the Church (next message)

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How will unbelievers experience the *"surpassing greatness of His power"*? In what areas is our faith challenged to doubt the ability of God's power to work on our behalf?
- 2) Why is it to our advantage to have the resurrected Christ seated at God's *"right hand in the heavenly places"* as opposed to still continuing His pre-cross ministry here on earth?

- 3) What prevents the power of God from being unleashed in our life?
- 4) What type of dominion do we picture us ultimately sharing with Christ? How does that motivate us to live for Him right now?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dunnam:** "Why is it that we continue in our anemic life, feebly getting on as best we can? Why is it that we plod along -- our Christian walk more a stumble than a stride? Why is it that we give way to trampling defeats and become uninspiring spectacles of spiritual ineffectiveness? Why do we allow the mean carnalities to shape our lives when a glorious heritage of life after *'the measure of the fullness of Christ'* has been promised?

Why? We do not lay hold of the *'exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.'* The RSV designates this the 'immeasurable greatness,' and the NEB translates it the 'vast resources' of His power. Paul opens the floodgates of his language-river to try to communicate the dimensions of this power.

1. It is resurrection power--the power God *'worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead'* (v. 20).
2. It is ascension power -- *'and set Him at His right hand in heavenly places'* (v. 20).
3. It is dominion power -- *"far above all principality and power and might and dominion ... and ... has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church"* (vv. 21-22).

That same power of God, which did all of that for Christ, is available to us who believe. Glory!

The call here is to bring the working power of God out of the past into the present. To be sure, we are to celebrate 'the mighty acts of God in history,' but that should make us even more aware of Christ as present power. This is the paramount miracle -- that His immeasurable power is available now to heal the sick, to drive out demons, to redeem our sins, to energize our wills, to renew our spirits, to reconcile our relationships, to bring peace."

**Hendriksen:** "The tremendously important place which Christ's resurrection occupied in the thinking of the apostolic age is apparent not only from the present passage but also from the following: Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20, 21; Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:26; 10:40; 13:34; 17:31; 23:6; 26:8, 23; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Peter 1:3; etc. Similarly, the significance attached to Christ's coronation, so that as a reward for his mediatorial work he rules the entire universe in the interest of his church, is clear in the present epistle from 1:20-23; 4:8ff, and elsewhere from Acts 2:33, 36; 5:31; 7:56; Rom. 8:34; Phil. 2:9; Col. 3:1; Heb. 2:8, 9; etc. See also Ps. 110:1... The living and ruling Christ was a living reality to the consciousness of the early church."

**Stott:** "If God's '*call*' looks back to the beginning, and God's '*inheritance*' looks on to the end, then surely God's '*power*' spans the interim period in between. It is on this that the apostle concentrates, for only God's power can fulfil the expectation which belongs to his call and bring us safely to the riches of the glory of the final inheritance he will give us in heaven. Paul is convinced that God's power is sufficient, and he accumulates words to convince us...

It is because of Christ's resurrection from the dead and enthronement over the powers of evil that he has been given headship over the church. The resurrection and ascension were a decisive demonstration of divine power. For if there are two powers which man cannot control, but which hold him in bondage, they are death and evil. Man is mortal; he cannot avoid death. Man is fallen; he cannot overcome evil. But God in Christ has conquered both, and therefore can rescue us from both."

**Piper:** Re v.23 -- "It means: God AIMS to fill the universe with the glory of his Son, Jesus, by making the church the showcase of his perfections. Or, to put it another way, and include the idea of body: God means to fill the universe with the glory of his Son by putting the church on display as the embodiment of his Son.

Christ fills the universe with his glory by showing the universe his body--how he chose her, how he destined her, how he came for her and taught her and suffered for her and died for her and rose for her and reigns for her, how he called her and justified her and cleansed her and kept her and will raise her and glorify her and satisfy her for ever and ever with himself."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:1-10 -- Dr. Kenneth O. Peterman

TITLE: *GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR POSITION AND OUR PRACTICE*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD POSITION (DEATH)  
TO OUR NEW POSITION (LIFE);  
GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD PRACTICE (SIN)  
TO OUR NEW PRACTICE (HOLINESS: GOOD WORKS)**

**I. (2:1-3) GOD'S POWER DEALT WITH OUR OLD POSITION (DEATH)**

**A. We were DEAD -- Ephes 2:1**

Death means separation. In this case, spiritual death is total, absolute, complete and full separation from God. We were absolutely powerless, helpless, unable, incapable to think, feel, or will anything to do with God or for God because we were dead in trespasses and sins. The Greek word translated "trespass" means "stepping over the mark or boundary" -- being a rebel. The word in the original for "sins" here means "missing the mark", "falling short" or being a failure. In our dead state, (separated from God) we were both rebels and failures.

Paul strives to clarify the fact that being fully dead, we were unable to come to God unless He provided everything -- including faith. We were capable in our old position to provide nothing toward God. We could not will to accept Christ because our natural will was inoperative. We were lost, undone, depraved, and unable to come to God.

Many believers do not like this teaching because they desperately want to be able to do something to earn or merit their salvation. Consequently, many present-day fundamentalist preachers teach that man is not fully dead, but can, in some weak measure, receive Christ if the man so chooses. The teaching that every man is just as capable as any other man to accept Christ if he so desires forms the basis of our begging people to please give God a try. These invitations put God on the passive end of the situation, whereas God is in reality on the active end, drawing the men and women that He has already chosen to be saved.

Note: If man is not fully, totally, and absolutely dead then Christ did not really die! This statement is supported by the parallel that Paul makes between Christ's physical death in Chapter one and our spiritual death in Chapter two. The two deaths stand or fall together in this text. Just as the power of God raised Christ from physical death, so did the power of God raise us from our spiritual death. Consequently, if man is not spiritually dead then Christ did not physically die because both deaths are intimately connected in this text. Our Arminian friends cannot have it both ways; either death is complete in both situations (ours and Christ's) or death is not complete. The parallel between the two in this text cannot be ignored unless one is merely willing to sustain their own view regardless of the facts.

## B. We were ENSLAVED -- Eph 2:2

### 1. We walked according to the age of this world.

The Greek word for "world" means "principalities that govern this world system: lust, greed, fear, hate, materialism, sensuality, independence, relativism, etc."

The Greek word for "age" signifies "time viewed in relation to what takes place in a certain period of time."

So in our enslavement, we walked according to the ungodly worldly principles that were emphasized in our time. For instance, in the 20's sensuality was not as emphasized as it is today. Materialism is more of a problem today than it was in the 50's. In our unsaved state, we were enslaved by those very principles that governed the unsaved world in that specific period of time in which we lived.

### 2. We walked according to the principles of Satan.

We walked according to the *"prince of the power of the air."* We were enslaved to Satan. This doesn't mean that we were demon possessed or demon affected, but it means we operated under some of the same principles that govern Satan's activities. Some of these activities include: lying, unbelief, pride, deceit, wickedness.

### 3. We walked according to the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.

The Greek word for "lust" means "strong desire." It can be used in both a positive and negative context, but usually is negative in connotation.

Lust of the flesh -- the phrase *"of the flesh"* qualifies the lust in which we walked in our unsaved state.

There are four main definitions of flesh:

- a. General: whole body of mankind; *"all flesh is as grass ..."* This refers to man in general.
- b. General: the covering of our bones.
- c. Particular: the whole human nature: that nature which Scripture represents as against God. (Gal. 5:17)
- d. Particular: sensuous part of our nature or the desires of the physical body.

In Ephesians 2:3 Paul refers to option "d" = the desire of the body. We were enslaved to these sensuous desires: eating, drinking, sex, etc. In other words, we abused these God-given blessings.

The phrase "*of the mind*" indicates the lusts of ambition, knowledge, independence, etc.

Summary: So we were not only dead, but enslaved to the principles of the world system, to Satanic principles, and to the lust of our flesh and of our minds.

In other words, Paul pictures unsaved man a corpse wrapped around and around with strong unyielding chains making it absolutely impossible to initiate salvation.

If this were not enough, Paul adds one more element to the picture.

### C. We were CONDEMNED BY BIRTH

*"And were by nature children of wrath even as the rest."* This phrase looks at origins. We were depraved, polluted, corrupted, evil, sinful, by birth. The Psalmist said *"In sin did my mother conceive me ..."* Psalms 51:5; Other passages teach the same truth -- Romans 3:9; Gal. 3:22.

Consequently, the Bible clearly teaches that man cannot come to God on His own. In our natural state, we were completely dead, totally enslaved by the world, the flesh and the devil, and fully and rightfully condemned.

Unless one has a clear understanding of this helpless spiritual position it is impossible to fully understand or appreciate the grace of God. "Only to the cross I cling, nothing in my hand I bring."

## II. (:5-6) GOD'S POWER PROVIDES A NEW POSITION (LIFE)

### A. (:5) We were MADE ALIVE

The Greek word here is a combination of three words meaning "to make," "life" and "with." God made us alive with Christ. Note that the work was done by God -- not us. We were made alive with Christ.

The basis of this new life is grace and the instrument through which it was accomplished was faith.

### B. (:6) We were RAISED UP WITH CHRIST

This means that we partook of his resurrection life. When Christ was raised physically, we were raised spiritually.

### C. (:6) We were SEATED WITH CHRIST IN THE HEAVENS

We have positionally experienced the victory that Christ now enjoys in heaven. Total victory in Him; total victory is also ours.

Since sin is associated with our old position of death -- the contrast -- holiness is associated with our new position of life.

### III. GOD'S POWER HAS CHANGED OUR OLD PRACTICE (SINFUL BEHAVIOR)

The Old Practice Characterized by the Ungodly Principles of:

#### A. Death:

1. Trespasses: active rebellion, sins of commission.
2. Sins: passive sins, sins of omission.

#### B. World:

Materialism, sensuality, independence, greed, lust, etc.

#### C. Devil:

Pride, deceit, hate, fear, lying, evil acts

#### D. Flesh:

Abuse of eating, drinking, sex, etc.

#### E. Mind:

Ambition, pride, independence, etc.

### IV. GOD'S POWER HAS ESTABLISHED OUR NEW PRACTICE CHARACTERIZED BY GODLY PRINCIPLES OF:

#### A. Life

Holiness is associated with resurrection life. The very fact that we are identified with Christ in his resurrection and ascension into heaven associates us with holiness or freedom from sin.

#### B. Glorifying God

The purpose of the new life and new position is to ultimately bring glory to God (2:7). Verses 8-10 give two reasons why our salvation will glorify God:



1. (:8-9) because our salvation is entirely by grace and not by our own works. This also includes our faith.

2. (:10) because we are his workmanship to be displayed in eternity as his trophies

- We are God's workmanship
- We were created in Christ Jesus by God; we did not create ourselves

The Greek word "workmanship" means the product of a person's hand. In the Old Testament the same concept referred particularly to the creation of a poem. If we are God's workmanship, we are the product of his hands or his poem.

### C. Holiness in General; Good Works in Particular

Note that we were created *"unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

This verse more specifically defines God's concept of our holy walk; the type of holiness in which we as believers are supposed to walk in is good works.

Exactly what are some of the good works in which God has ordained us to walk?

A close examination of the terminology "good works" in other contexts helps us to clarify what is meant here.

#### 1. Acts of Responsibility to those over us

Romans 13:3 *"Rulers are not a terror to good works."*

Titus 3:1 *"Obey magistrates, be ready to every good work."*

Ephesians 6:8 Relationship of servant/employees to their employers

#### 2. Any Practical Deed done to benefit others

Galatians 6:10 *"Let us do good to all men as we have opportunity."*

Acts 9:36 *"Dorcas, full of good works and almsdeeds."*

(she made coats and garments for others)

1 Timothy 5:10 *"Hospitality -- washed saints feet, relieved the afflicted"*

2 Corinthians 9:8 *"Giving money to those in need"*

#### 3. Our Ordinary Family Responsibilities

1 Timothy 5:10 *"Followed every good work: brought up children"*

1 Timothy 2:10 Reference to good works followed immediately by admonition to submission

#### 4. The Practical Use of our Gifts and Abilities or Talents in Active Ministry Towards Others

2 Timothy 2:21 *"If a man, therefore, purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *"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."*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of compassion do we have for those around us who are *"dead in trespasses and sins"*? How does understanding our former bondage and their present conformity to *"the course of this world"* help us to show them the type of mercy and kindness that God has shown to us?
- 2) Where do we face the strongest temptations in terms of falling back into *"indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind"*? How can we better focus on our new position in Christ in order to be more consistent in practicing this new life of holiness and good works?
- 3) Are we faithfully testifying to the *grace of God* as the instrument of our salvation so that others can see that our boasting is totally in the power of God and the work of Christ on our behalf?
- 4) What are some specific *good works* that have characterized our life this past week? Do we have a sense of God's magnificent foreordained plan for our life so that we will be eternal trophies of His grace?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Foulkes:** "Man's trouble is not merely that he is out of harmony with his environment and with his fellows. He is *'alienated from the life of God'* (v. 1b), that is, with respect to his true spiritual nature he is dead in trespasses and sins. There is probably no essential difference between the two nouns; the root meaning of the first is 'missing the mark' and of the second 'slipping' or 'falling from the way', and thus both express man's failure to live as he could and ought. Men were made in God's image to live as children in His family, aware of His presence, rejoicing in His direction. Freedom was given, but with it a warning that it involved the possibility of disobedience, and that disobedience would lead to death (Gn. ii. 17). This death is not primarily physical death, but the loss of the spiritual life given, life in fellowship with God and the

consequent capacity for spiritual activity and development. Thus the description here is not merely metaphorical, nor does it refer only to the future state of the sinner. It describes his present condition, and the Bible indeed often thus speaks of man in a state of spiritual death because of sin (e.g. Ezk. xxxvii. 1-14; Rom. vi. 23, vii. 10. 24; Col. ii. 13), and needing nothing less than new life from God (cf. Eph. v. 14; Jn. iii. 3, v. 24).

**Stott:** "So both words '*age*' and '*world*' express a whole social value-system which is alien to God. It permeates, indeed dominates, non-Christian society and holds people in captivity. Wherever human beings are being dehumanized -- by political oppression or bureaucratic tyranny, by an outlook that is secular (repudiating God), amoral (repudiating absolutes) or materialistic (glorifying the consumer market), by poverty, hunger or unemployment, by racial discrimination, or by any form of injustice -- there we can detect the sub-human values of '*this age*' and '*this world*'. Their influence is pervasive. People tend not to have a mind of their own, but to surrender to the pop-culture of television and the glossy magazines. It is a cultural bondage. We were all the same until Jesus liberated us. We 'drifted along the stream of this world's ideas of living' (JBP)."

**Wood:** "Yet again Paul reminds his readers (as in v.5) that they owe their salvation entirely to the undeserved favor of God. Grace is at once the objective, operative, and instrumental cause. He expands the previous statement by adding that the subjective medium (or apprehending cause) of salvation is faith, which is also its necessary condition. Faith, however, is not a quality, a virtue, or a faculty. It is not something man can produce. It is simply a trustful response that is itself evoked by the Holy Spirit.

Lest faith should be in any way misinterpreted as man's contribution to his own salvation, Paul immediately adds a rider to explain that nothing is of our own doing but everything is in the gift of God."

**Hendriksen:** "God's purpose in saving his people reaches beyond man. His own glory is his own chief aim. It is for that reason that he displays his grace in all its matchless beauty and transforming power. To some this may seem somewhat cold or even 'selfish.' Yet, on rereading the passage one will soon discover that God's overshadowing majesty and his condescending tenderness combine here, for the glory of his attributes is placed on exhibition as it reflects itself '*in kindness toward us!*' We are his sparkling jewels."

**Kent:** "Paul's thought is that the Christian is completely without grounds for boasting even in the good works which follow regeneration, for they too are God's handiwork. It was God who long ago planned the good works He wanted us to perform. Our responsibility is to follow His blueprint for our lives, responding to the impulses of His Spirit as He prompts us to perform His will."

**Stott:** "Paul was under no illusions about the degradation of mankind. He refused to whitewash the situation, for this might have led him to propose superficial solutions. Instead, he began this paragraph with a faithful portrayal of man as subject to three

terrible powers, namely 'sin', 'death' and 'wrath'. Yet he refused also to despair, because he believed in God. True, the only hope for dead people lies in a resurrection. But then the living God is the God of resurrection. He is even more than that: he is the God of creation. Both metaphors indicate the indispensable necessity of divine grace. For resurrection is out of death, and creation is out of nothing. That is the true meaning of 'salvation'."

**Piper:** Re being "dead in trespasses and sins" -- "If you were to ask most people why sin is a problem, and why we need a Savior from it, they would say that sin makes us guilty before God and brings us under condemnation; and so we need a Savior who can forgive our sins and take away our punishment. And that is absolutely right. But that is not the point of Ephesians 2:1 and 5.

The reason we need a Savior is not just that we are in the dog house with God and need to be forgiven for offending his glory. We need a Savior because we are in the morgue. In the dog house you might whimper. You might say you are sorry. You might make some good resolutions. You might decide to cast yourself on the mercy of God. But what can you do if you are in the morgue?"

**Piper:** Re vs. 2 -- "This then is the witness of God concerning our condition without a Savior. It is not the witness of 'eye witness new' or national commentators or cinema or journalism. It is God's testimony. This is the way God sees the world -- ruled by an alien prince, blinding the minds of unbelievers, filling them with ungodly desires, holding them captive to do his will, and then causing them to think all is well because they are right in step with the times..."

I have preached three things from Ephesians 2:1-3 about our need for a Savior. There is a downward spiral: Verse one, we need a Savior because of our corruption in sin. Verse two, we need a Savior because of our captivity to Satan. Verse three, we need a Savior because of our condemnation to hell. Dead in sin, captive to an alien power, children of wrath."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:11-22

TITLE: COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH: JEWS AND GENTILES UNITED IN ONE BODY

**BIG IDEA:**

**GENTILES ARE NOW UNITED WITH JEWS IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD ON THE BASIS OF THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST**

**I. (:11-13) THE INCLUSION OF THE GENTILES IS A BIG DEAL**

I am inclined to minimize things ... "It's no big deal" is one of my favorite expressions.

**A. Remember the Pain of Exclusion**

**1. Excluded by Designation**

- a. *"Gentiles in the flesh"*
- b. *"who are called Uncircumcision by the so-called Circumcision"*

Limitations of Physical Circumcision: (in contrast to spiritual)

- *"which is performed in the flesh"*
- *" by human hands"*

**2. Excluded by Lack of Privilege**

- a. *"separate from Christ"*
- b. *"excluded from the commonwealth of Israel"*
- c. *"strangers to the covenants of promise"*
- d. *"having no hope"*
- e. *"without God in the world"*

**B. Appreciate the Price of Inclusion**

**1. Accomplished by virtue of Union with Christ**

*"But now in Christ Jesus"*

**2. Former Position: *"you who formerly were far off"***

**3. Present Position: *"have been brought near"***

4. Price: *"by the blood of Christ"*

## II. (:14-18) THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST MADE IT HAPPEN

Two types of Reconciliation intertwined here:  
    between Jew and Gentile  
    between man and God

A. The Essence of Reconciliation is Peace  
    *"For He Himself is our Peace"*

*"thus establishing peace"*

B. The Result of Reconciliation (between Jew and Gentile) is Union  
    *"who made both groups into one"*

*"that in Himself He might make the two into one new man"*

C. The Obstacle to Reconciliation was the Enmity Associated with the Requirements of the Law

    1. Christ Abolished the Enmity -- *"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity"*

    2. The Enmity consisted of *"the Law of commandments contained in ordinances"*

D. The Ultimate Reconciliation for both Jew and Gentile = Free Unlimited Access to the Father

    1. Same Mediator = Jesus Christ  
        *"through Him"*

    2. Same Access for Gentiles as for Jews  
        *"we both have our access"*

    3. Same Empowerment  
        *"in one Spirit"*

    4. Same Family Relationship  
        *"to the Father"*

## III. (:19-22) THE CHURCH (BELIEVING GENTILES UNITED WITH BELIEVING JEWS) CONTINUES TO BE BUILT TOGETHER AND INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. (:19) New Position of Privilege and Inclusion for the Gentiles

1. Old Position -- *"you are no longer"*  
*"strangers"*

*"aliens"*

2. New Position  
*"fellow citizens with the saints"*

*"of God's household"*

B. (:20) New Structure for the Church  
different than the OT patriarchs

1. *"Cornerstone"* = *"Christ Jesus"*  
it all starts with Him and depends upon Him

2. *"Foundation"*  
*"apostles"*

*"prophets"*

C. (:21-22) Mutual Growth -- Jew and Gentile need one another

1. *"in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing"*

2. *"in whom you also are being built together"*

D. (:21-22) Ultimate Goal  
the church = God's holy dwelling place, indwelt by the Holy Spirit

1. *"into a holy temple in the Lord"*

2. *"into a dwelling of God in the Spirit"*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) In what ways does our church set up fences or barriers that prevent the full inclusion of all believers together in one body on an equal basis? What type of prejudices affect our relationships with other believers?

2) How important is the unity of the church to its Head -- the Lord Jesus Christ? How does the reconciling work of Christ grant all believers equal access to the Father and full inclusion in the body of Christ?

3) How is it true that "the sum is greater than the parts" with respect to the unified strength of the church as it is being built up together?

4) Why would a holy God want to equip us to be His dwelling place? Do we often treat sinners as lepers that we want to stay as far away as possible from?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** "God made Israel distinct for two reasons. First, He wanted the world to see and notice them, to realize that they did not live and act like other men. Second, He wanted them to be so distinct that they would never be amalgamated with other peoples. He gave them such strict dietary, clothing, marriage, ceremonial, and other laws that they could never fit easily into another society. Those distinctions, like the special blessings God gave them, were intended to be a tool for witness. But Israel continually perverted them into a source for pride, isolation, and self-glory."

**Stott:** "How can the apostle declare that Christ abolished the law when Christ himself in the Sermon on the Mount specifically declared the opposite, that he had not come to abolish it but to fulfil it? We shall see that the discrepancy is only verbal; in substance they were referring to the law in two different senses.

In the Sermon on the Mount the context shows that Jesus was referring to the moral law. He was teaching the difference between Pharisaic righteousness and Christian righteousness, and urging that Christian righteousness involves a deep and radical obedience to the law. Paul's primary reference here, however, seems to be to the ceremonial law and to what NEB calls 'its rules and regulations', that is, to circumcision (the main physical distinction between Jews and Gentiles, verse 11), the material sacrifices, the dietary regulations and the rules about ritual 'cleanness' and 'uncleanness' which governed social relationships... They erected a serious barrier between Jews and Gentiles, but Jesus set this whole ceremonial aside. And he did it in his flesh (surely a reference to his physical death) because in the cross he fulfilled all the types and shadows for the Old Testament ceremonial system.

It seems probable, however, that Paul is making another though secondary reference, this time to the moral, not the ceremonial law. Jesus certainly did not abolish the moral law as a standard of behaviour (it is still in force and binding on his followers); but he did abolish it as a way of salvation...

To sum up, Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law. Both were divisive. Both were put aside by the cross."

**Kent:** "Christ did more than simply ease the tension between Gentile and Jew. He created '*one new man*.' Thus there are three orders of man in this passage: Gentile, Jew, and Christian. As a result of Christ's work in redemption and regeneration, those who formerly were categorized as either Gentile or Jew are made Christians by new birth. In this '*new man*,' the former distinctions are irrelevant. Since Christ satisfied the Law and



made it no longer operative, it is not now a question of forcing Gentiles to become proselytes and adopt Jewish practices. The Law with its distinctions was made inoperative for all believers, regardless of their ancestry. (Of course, the moral principles in the Mosaic law have always been God's will for men, and still are ... But as a law code, complete with sacrifices and penalties, it was fulfilled and abolished by Christ. See Heb 7:11-19)."

**Wood:** "The aim of the process is that the church should become God's residence (*katoiketerios*). The term occurs only here and in Revelation 18:2 in the NT but is frequent in LXX to denote the divine resting place either on earth or in heaven. Formerly, God's earthly abode was thought to be on Mount Zion and in the Jerusalem temple. Now he makes his abode in the church. All this is achieved not only *by* but *in* the Spirit. He is at once the means and the element."

**Piper:** " There are not two saving covenants. There are not two saved peoples. And the reason is that there are not two ways of salvation. Verse 16 shows us the unifying foundation of salvation and the people of God. "[Christ] reconciled them both (Jew and gentile) in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." Jews needed the cross and gentiles needed the cross. After centuries of animal sacrifices that pointed forward to the True Sacrifice, Jews needed to be reconciled to God and gentiles needed to be reconciled to God. There was enmity not only between Jew and gentile, but at root there was enmity between Jews and God and gentiles and God that needed to be overcome by the peace-making work of Christ.

So there was one great work of salvation on the cross when Jesus died to remove the enmity between God and Jew and between God and gentile. And he did this reconciling work not separately but in one body, the church. Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in Christ. That is why being reconciled to God means being reconciled to each other. That is why there cannot be two peoples and two tracks to heaven. For there is one way to be reconciled to God: Christ reconciles us to God by uniting us to himself. And that means we become one body, Jew and gentile."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:1-13

TITLE: REVELATION OF THE CHURCH -- MANIFESTING THE WISDOM AND PURPOSE OF GOD --  
OPENING THE DOOR OF THE RICHES OF CHRIST TO THE GENTILES

**BIG IDEA:**

**MANIFESTING THE MANIFOLD WISDOM AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD BY GRANTING THE GENTILES EQUAL ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

**INTRODUCTION:**

CONTEXT: *“for this reason”*

**I. (:1-5) THE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH (A PRECIOUS TREASURE) HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO FAITHFUL STEWARDS –  
THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL -- STEWARDSHIP OF THE GRACE OF GOD**

A. (:1) Picture of a Faithful Steward = *“Prisoner”*

Great analogy because Paul writes this epistle from prison – but he views his imprisonment as unto the Lord in a greater mission rather than unto the enemies of the cross of Christ who are trying to fight against God’s program

1. Serves in Submission to the Master = *“Christ Jesus”*

he has given up all rights and completely surrendered to the will of the Master

a voluntary, liberating type of bondage as opposed to the bondage of sin and death

2. Serves for the Benefit of Believing Gentiles

*“for the sake of you Gentiles”*

not serving for his own benefit

B. (:2) Precious Nature of the Treasure

*“God’s grace”*

1. *“given to me”*

2. *“for you”*

C. (:3a) Process of Being Entrusted with the Treasure

*“by revelation there was made known to me the mystery”*

Def. of *“mystery”* – previously unknown, but now God was revealing it

not something that Paul studied or figured out on his own;  
not something that was in any way corrupted or confused

D. (:3b-4) Propagation of that Insight

1. Communicated Briefly in Earlier Writings

*“as I wrote before in brief”*

2. Elaborated on in this Epistle to Provide Fuller Understanding

*“And by referring to this, when you read you can understand”*

3. Focus of this Insight – Transition to Point #2

*“insight into the mystery of Christ”*

This is the key that needs to be understood

E. (:5) Privilege of Revelation and Enlightenment

1. Not a Privilege enjoyed in the past

*“which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men”*

2. But a Privilege made possible in the present

*“as it has now been revealed”*

3. The Divinely Appointed Ministers of this Message

*“to His holy apostles and prophets”*

Combination of:

- Character

- Function

4. The Divinely Appointed Medium for this Communication

*“in the Spirit”*

**II. (:6) THE CONTENT OF THE REVELATION EMPHASIZES THE EQUAL ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES AFFORDED TO THE GENTILES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

A. Equal Access and Privileges with True Israel – *“Gentiles are”*:

1. *“fellow-heirs”* – Future Inheritance  
equal share

2. *“fellow-members of the body”* – Present Fellowship / Total Inclusion  
no second class citizens

3. *“fellow-partakers of the promises”* – All Guaranteed by a Faithful God

B. Centered *“in Christ Jesus”*

C. Accomplished by the Power of the Gospel  
*“through the gospel”*

III. (:7-11) THE PURPOSE OF THE REVELATION IS TO MAKE KNOWN THE RICHES OF CHRIST – UNFOLDING THE WISDOM AND PURPOSE OF GOD’S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH (WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF THE GENTILES)

A. (:7-8) Privilege of Being Made a Minister of the Gospel

**Martin:** Re *“minister”* -- Paul was made a servant by God's gift. This is the word transliterated in English as *deacon* -- one who serves or waits on tables. Paul never considered his office something high, removing him from other men. He always spoke of himself humbly."

1. Based on Grace – *“according to the gift of God’s grace”*
2. Enabled by Power -- *“which was given to me according to the working of His power”*
3. Not Based on Merit – *“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given”*
4. Method of the Mission – *“to preach”*
5. Target Audience – *“to the Gentiles”*
6. Inexhaustible Depth of the Message – *“the unfathomable riches of Christ”*

B. (:9-10) Privilege of Making Known the Mystery of God’s Wisdom

1. Mission of Enlightenment  
*"and to bring to light"*
2. Mystery of God's Working Behind the Scenes of Human History  
*"what is the administration of the mystery"*
3. Muzzled for Ages  
*"which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things"*
4. Manifold Wisdom of God  
*"in order that the manifold wisdom of God"*

5. Medium and Timing of Enlightenment

*"might now be made known through the church"*

6. Majestic Audience

*"to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places"*

**Wuest:** "The Church thus becomes the university for angels, and each saint a professor. Only in the Church can the angels come to an adequate comprehension of the grace of God. They look at the Church to investigate the mysteries of redemption. I Peter (1:12) speaks of the things which the angels have a passionate desire to stoop down and look into, like the golden cherubim that overshadow the Mercy Seat, ever gazing upon the sprinkled blood that is upon it. The preposition *para*, 'beside,' is prefixed to the verb 'stoop down,' which speaks of the angels as spectators viewing the great plan of redemption from the side lines, not being participants in it."

C. (:11) Privilege of Unfolding the Eternal Purpose of the Church

*"This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

**IV. (:12-13) CONCLUSION: TWO APPLICATIONS**

A. (:12) With Regard to Our Relationship to Christ Jesus our Lord --

1. What do we have?

*"boldness"*

*"confident access"*

2. How?

*"through faith in Him"*

B. (:13) With Regard to Our Inner Peace of Mind and Heart --

Be Encouraged ... Not Discouraged

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

Paul's Imprisonment Has Been Worth the Suffering

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) Would we be willing to suffer as a prisoner for the benefit of the message of salvation reaching others? Think of some present day missionary stories where different ones were taken captive and God worked out His purposes through the trial and the suffering.

- 2) What is the difference between "*revelation*" and receiving "*insight*" from God to understand spiritual truth?
- 3) Do we tend to treat any class of believers as second class citizens in the household of God?
- 4) Do we tend to take for granted "*the unfathomable riches of Christ*" and the bold and confident access that we have into the presence of God through Christ?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** Re "*For this reason*" vs 1 -- The meaning, accordingly, must be, Because blessings so great have been bestowed upon both Gentile and Jew -- reconciliation with God and with one another, and the erection of one sanctuary consisting of Jew and Gentile -- therefore, etc. In fact, in view of the equally close relation between chapters 1 and 2, and the recurrence in 3:4, 9 of the concept *mystery*, first mentioned in 1:9, it is very probable that the connection goes back even further and includes all that has gone before in this epistle."

**Lenski:** Re "*the riches of Christ*" -- "all the saving grace and gifts belonging to Christ, which as "*riches*" abound to the uttermost. Paul was the hand of God to dispense this wealth without money or without price especially to the Gentiles. The blessedness of this office is ever present to his mind. He, an abortion that as a vile thing should have been buried out of sight (I Cor. 15:8), was made a great instrument of God."

**Wuest:** Re vs. 2 -- "The word '*dispensation*' is *oikonomia*, made up of *oikos*, 'a house' and *nomos*, 'law,' thus, 'the law of the house.' The word speaks in general of the oversight, management, or administration one has over something. Paul was given the responsibility of having oversight or management over the grace of God in the sense that he was to administer it in its publicity. He was given the revelation of the grace of God and the responsibility of properly preaching and teaching it."

**Stott:** "But what neither the Old Testament nor Jesus revealed was the radical nature of God's plan, which was that the theocracy (the Jewish nation under God's rule) would be terminated, and replaced by a new international community, the church; that this church would be 'the body of Christ', organically united to him; and that Jews and Gentiles would be incorporated into Christ and his church on equal terms without any distinction. It was this complete union of Jews, Gentiles and Christ which was radically new, and which God revealed to Paul, overcoming his entrenched Jewish prejudice."

**MacArthur:** "The church does not exist simply for the purpose of saving souls, though that is a marvelous and important work. The supreme purposes of the church, as Paul makes explicit here, is to glorify God by manifesting His wisdom before the angels, who can then offer greater praise to God. The purpose of the universe is to give glory

to God, and that will be its ultimate reality after all evil is conquered and destroyed.... The church is not an end in itself but a means to an end, the end of glorifying God."

**Kent:** "From ages past the plan to form one new body of believers in Christ had been hidden. It was no afterthought, however, for all the time it was hidden in God, that is, in His mind and purpose. But only now in connection with the apostles' ministry was it made known to the world. God is referred to in His capacity as creator of all things. It reminds us that in view of God's creatorship of all things, even the church was in God's plan at the beginning, and thus this new development is in perfect harmony with all creation."

**Piper:** " And the target for the church is to demonstrate to the evil powers of the cosmos that God has been wise in sending his Son to die that we might have hope and be unified in one body, the church. Therefore, when we fail to live in hope and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace we send this signal through the galaxies: God's purpose is failing; he was not wise, he was foolish.

I said last week that your gift, your God-given ability to disperse grace and strengthen faith, may seem small, but that as a part of God's eternal revelation of his glory it takes on stupendous proportions. Now we can see just how stupendous, for what's at stake is not merely being the light of the world but the light of the cosmos. The church is the cosmic showcase of God's mercy and if we fail to live as joyful beneficiaries of his mercy and fail to maintain the unity of the Spirit, we bring a cosmic reproach upon the wisdom of God."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:14-21

TITLE: THE ENABLEMENT OF THE CHURCH -- THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

PRAYER FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN CONNECT US TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST SO THAT WE CAN EXPERIENCE ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR US**

(:14-15) INTRODUCTION -- THE DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH SHOULD MOTIVATE US TO PRAY TO OUR SPIRITUAL FATHER

(for our own growth and here: for the growth of others)

- A. Context-- Spiritual Need: *"For this reason"* -- resuming the thought of 3:1  
How are we going to accomplish the Father's goal of being built up together
  - *"into a holy temple in the Lord"*
  - *"into a dwelling of God in the Spirit"*
- B. Spiritual Posture -- *"I bow my knees"* -- Must take the necessary action and Pray
  - 1. Dependent Prayer
  - 2. Worshipful Prayer
  - 3. Submissive Prayer
- C. Spiritual Family Relationship -- *"before the Father"*  
Remember our *"bold and confident access"*  
No Insecurity here
- D. Universal and Exclusive Source of Spiritual Blessing  
*"from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name"*  
Same approach will work for anyone;  
No other approach will work for anyone

**Wuest:** "The various classes of men on earth, Jew, Gentile, and others, and the various orders of angels in heaven, are related to God, the common Father, and only in virtue of that relation has any of them the name of family. But we must be careful here to note that the fatherhood of God over all created intelligences is in the sense of Creator, as in Paul's word to the Athenians, *'We are the offspring of God,'* not at all in the sense of salvation where only saved individuals are children of God."

Or **Martin:** "That is, the whole family of the redeemed--those who have gone before and those who are still alive here on earth--are under the one Father..."

**I. (:16) THE REQUEST: HOLY SPIRIT POWER**



- A. Comes as a Gift from God  
*"that He would grant you"*
- B. Cannot be Measured in Human Terms  
*"according to the riches of His glory"*  
Not asking for some small dose of power here
- C. Consists in Holy Spirit Power  
*"to be strengthened with power through His Spirit"*
- D. Changes and Transforms the Inner Man  
*"in the inner man"*

## II. (:17-19a) THE REASON: CONNECTION TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST

- A. Goal of Deepened Intimacy with Christ -- Requires Faith  
*"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"*
- B. Goal of Deepened Roots and Foundation of Love  
*"that you, being rooted and grounded in love"*  
2 metaphors: tree and building
- C. Goal of Deepened Comprehension of the Love of Christ  
*"may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge"*

## III. (19b) THE RESULT: EXPERIENCING ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR YOU

*"that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God"*

## (:20-21) DOXOLOGY: "TO HIM BE THE GLORY IN THE CHURCH"

- A. (:20) Reason for Hope and Optimism  
*"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us"*

**Wuest:** "Paul says that God is able to do super-abundantly above and beyond what we ask or think, and then some on top of that."

- B. (:21) Ultimate Goal  
*"to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is Christ truly at home in your heart? Do you have that type of abiding faith that causes that intimate relationship to deepen?
- 2) How has our interaction in the body of Christ taught us practical lessons about the love of Christ and demonstrated that love in practical ways?
- 3) Do we ask God for BIG blessings that are in line with the "*riches of His glory*" and the depth of His love for us and His desire to abundantly come through for us and His incredible "*power that works within us*" ... Or do we have some type of false humility that thinks we should just ask God for little blessings?
- 4) Do we think that God's ultimate agenda should revolve around making us happy and comfortable or do we see the glorifying of Him as the ultimate purpose for the growth of the church?

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### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** "The Lofty Ideal is to get to know thoroughly Christ's deep affection, self-sacrificing tenderness, passionate sympathy, and marvelous outgoingness. All of these are included in love but do not exhaust it."

**MacArthur:** "The inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit leads to the indwelling of Christ, which leads to abundant love, which leads to God's fullness in us. To be *filled up to all the fulness of God* is indeed incomprehensible, even to God's own children. It is incredible and indescribable. There is no way, this side of heaven, we can fathom that truth. We can only believe it and praise God for it... *Pleroo* means to make full, or fill to the full, and is used many times in the New Testament. It speaks of total dominance. A person filled with rage is totally dominated by hatred. A person filled with happiness is totally dominated by joy. To *be filled up to all the fullness of God* therefore means to be totally dominated by Him, with nothing left of self or any part of the old man. By definition, then, to be filled with God is to be emptied of self. It is not to have much of God and little of self, but all of God and none of self."

**Foulkes:** "The Church is the sphere of the outworking of God's purpose on earth, and even in heaven it will have the task of proclaiming the manifold wisdom of God (iii. 10). It is never to take glory to itself (cf. Ps. cxv. 1); its goal is to give praise and glory to Him (i. 6, 12, 14)."

**Stott:** "To express how fundamental Paul longs for their love to be, he joins two metaphors (one botanical, the other architectural), both of which emphasize depth as

opposed to superficiality. These Christians are to be rooted and grounded, or to have 'deep roots and firm foundations' (NEB). Thus Paul likens them first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the foundation on which their life is built. One might say that their love is to be of both a 'radical' and a 'fundamental' nature in their experience, for these English words refer to our roots and our foundations."

**Piper:** " Do you see the parallel with the power of God in verse 20? In verse 19 he says that the love of Christ for the church goes beyond what you can know, and in verse 20 he say that the power of God over the church goes beyond what you can think. When the massive weather front of God's love meets the massive weather front of God's power in the heart of a believer it produces a hurricane of confidence called 'Gloria'-- a powerful doxology: 'To him be GLORY in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever.

Amen"

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:1-16

TITLE: WALK IN UNITY

**BIG IDEA:**

**IN HUMILITY AND LOVE, PROMOTE UNITY IN A CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY WITH THE GOAL OF MATURITY**

**MAJOR TRANSITION:**

**(:1) TREME OF CHAPS. 4-6 -- THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH -- HOW WE SHOULD WALK IN CHRIST**

Paul has spent 3 chapters describing our high calling;

Now he "entreats" the believers to Walk Worthy in Chaps. 4-6

A. Example of the Apostle Paul

*"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord"*

B. Entreaty of the Apostle Paul

1. Tone

*"entreat you"*

2. Substance = Walk Worthy

*"walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"*

**I. (:2-6) UNITY -- PROMOTE AND PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST**

A. (:2-3) HOW?

1. Practicing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit in our Attitudes and Relationships

a. *"with all humility and gentleness"*

b. *"with patience, showing forbearance to one another"*

c. *"in love"*

2. Working Hard at Preserving the Unity of the Body

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

B. WHY? -- God Has Called us to a Unity of Oneness (outline here from **Wood**)

1. Realization of Unity in the Spirit

a. *"One body"*

- b. *"one Spirit"*
  - c. *"one hope of your calling"*
- 2. Focus of Unity in the Son
  - a. *"one Lord"*
  - b. *"one faith"*
  - c. *"one baptism"*
- 3. Source of Unity in the Father -- *"one God and Father of all"*  
Significance -- 3 Different Modes of Action:
  - a. *"who is over all"*
  - b. *"and through all"*
  - c. *"and in all"*

## II. (:7-12) DIVERSITY -- PROMOTE AND APPRECIATE THE DIVERSITY OF THE VARYING SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE BODY

- A. (:7) Christ has Gifted Each Member of the Body in a Unique Way  
*"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift"*
- B. (:8-10) This Gift Giving was in Fulfillment of Prophecy in Conjunction with the Victory of His Ascension
  - 1. (:8) Prophecy of the Spoils of Victory  
*"When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."*
  - 2. (:9-10) Aside: Reality of Ascension with its Majestic Glory contrasted with Corresponding Reality of "Descension"
- C. (:11) List of Some of the Leadership-Related Gifts -- *"He gave some as"*
  - 1. *"apostles"*
  - 2. *"prophets"*
  - 3. *"evangelists"*
  - 4. *"pastors - teachers"*

D. (:12) Purpose of Christ Gifting Such Leaders

1. Immediate Goal: *"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service"*  
The vision is Not for the leaders to do the bulk of the ministry
2. Ultimate Goal: *"to the building up of the body of Christ"*

III. (:13-16) MATURITY -- KEEP FOCUSED ON THE GOAL OF THE MATURITY OF THE ENTIRE BODY  
(WHICH REQUIRES MUTUAL LOVE IN WORD AND DEED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROCESS)

A. (:13) 3 Marks of Maturity -- *"to a mature man"*

1. Unity -- *"until we all attain to the unity of the faith"*
2. Knowing Christ -- *"and of the knowledge of the Son of God"*
3. Christ-likeness *"to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ"*

B. (:14) Resulting Doctrinal Stability

*"As a result, we are no longer to be children"*

1. Descriptions of Instability
  - a. *"tossed here and there by waves"*
  - b. *"and carried about by every wind of doctrine"*
2. Strategies of Instability
  - a. *"the trickery of men"*
  - b. *"craftiness in deceitful scheming"*

C. (:15-16) Mutual Love Centered In Christ Makes for a Healthy, Growing Body

1. Mutual Love in Ongoing Communication of the Truth  
*"speaking the truth in love"*
2. Mutual Growth of the Body Centered in Christ
3. Corporate Maturity Achieved by Mutual Love and Mutual Growth

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How have "unworthy" walks on the part of prominent Christians hurt the testimony of the church? How does a fuller doctrinal understanding of the riches of God's grace in our high calling help motivate us to "*walk worthy*"? How does such knowledge just "puff up" if our response is not to practice love towards one another?
- 2) How do we explain the existence of so many different denominations with the emphasis here of "*one Lord, one faith, one baptism*"? Is organizational unity a much different concept than the experience of unity in our personal relationships with other believers?
- 3) How do we view the gifted leaders mentioned here ("*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers*") in terms of their role in the present day church? Were apostles and prophets just "foundational gifts" for the early NT church or are these gifts still exercised in areas of the world where the church is just being established....?? Do we believe that God is still providing new revelation through the function of a prophet??
- 4) Are our leaders doing an effective job of "*equipping the saints for the work of service*" or have we changed the paradigm so that our expectation is that our leaders will do the bulk of the actual ministry?

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## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Wood:** Re vv.4-6 -- "The reasons why those who belong to Christ should be eager to preserve their unity are now supplied in a crescendo of nouns. In three groups of three items each, Paul's thought ascends from the realization of unity in the Spirit to the focus of unity in the Son and thence to the source of unity in the Father.

'*One body*' depicts the church as a single visible community. It is not simply a mystical concept. Its unity is recognizable in that Jews and Gentiles are now seen to be reconciled in Christ. In the pagan world there were many religious cults to choose from. Christians, on the other hand, were all members of one body.

'*One Spirit*' indwells the body of Christ. By him, the body lives and moves ( 1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit is its soul; apart from him it cannot exist. The same Spirit fell on the Jews at Pentecost and on the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. The '*one Spirit*' who has already spanned this widest of all gulfs will bring together all other diverse groups within the church.

The Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance (Eph 1:14) and so he is the guarantee of the '*one hope*' to which we are called ... It is, of course, the hope of sharing Christ's glory at the end of the age (1 John 3:2). There is no differentiation between Jewish and Gentile Christians...

The second trio of unities is related to the '*one Lord*' or master to whom all Christians owe their allegiance...

The last in the ascending scale (though the first in terms of cause) is the Father... The triple note, which is still to be found, merely divides up his modes of action."

**MacArthur:** Re vs 7 -- "It is important to note that the term **but**, with which this verse begins, is used here as an adversative rather than as a simple conjunction. It could be translated 'in spite of that' or 'on the other hand,' contrasting the previous subject matter with what is about to be said.

This interpretation of *but* brings together the emphasis of unity that has been the echoing theme of verses 3-6 with the parallel emphasis of diversity, which is the theme of verses 7-11. It sets the individual (each one) over against the 'all' (vs. 6) in regard to unity in the Body of Christ. The reading of **but** as adversative is strengthened by the emphatic use of *hekastos* (*each one*). Unity is not uniformity and is perfectly consistent with diversity of gifts. God's gracious relation to 'all' is also a personal relation to each one (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 11) and a personal ministry through each one. Thus Paul moves from the unity of believers to the uniqueness of believers."

**Kent:** "The great danger to immature faith is false doctrine; it is here compared to strong winds which toss about an unguided boat. Such false doctrine is always being promoted by crafty men who by trickery and scheming lead their victims into spiritual disaster... In contrast to the dangerous actions just described, believers are to strive for the goal of full spiritual maturity in Christ. This involves being truthful in all of our speech and dealings... The chief danger to spiritual babies (4:14) is the falsity and deceit employed by those who would entice them toward either heretical doctrine or unworthy conduct. Absolute truthfulness should characterize the speech and conduct of the one who shares the life of Christ. All truth, however, should be expressed '*in love*.' Orthodoxy has not always been noted for this virtue. Paul is not saying that truth may on occasion be sacrificed in the interests of love, but he does insist that it must always be maintained in a spirit of love."

**Hendriksen:** "Seed Thoughts of Ephesians 4:1-16 (one thought for each verse)  
See verse

1. The best missionary method is the truly consecrated life.
2. The qualities which Christ demands of us are those which he himself exemplified.
3. Though peace is indeed a precious gift imparted by the Holy Spirit, it is at the same time the product of human effort.
4. The church is not a man-made institution but the product of the Holy Spirit whose call to repent and to follow Christ in service we should obey. Obedience to that call imparts hope.
5. The one Lord Jesus Christ in whom all Christians believe and in whose name they have all been baptized welds together into one body God's children, those still on earth and those already in heaven.
6. Although the first person of the Holy Trinity, as Father he is 'over all,' for he exercises control over all. He is, however, also 'through all,' for he blesses us all through Christ our Mediator. And he is 'in all,' for he draws us all close to his heart in the Spirit. Thus we perceive that we worship one God, not three gods. It is folly



therefore to say, 'God is dead, but Jesus is still alive.' The three are One.

7. A talent is a gift, and to no one has Christ imparted every gift. The fact that a person's ability in any direction is a gift should keep him humble, for what has he that he has not received? It should also encourage him, for the way to the Giver and his inexhaustible gifts is known.

8. Not only Christ's suffering, death, burial, and resurrection were in our interest; so was also his ascension. He ascended not only to receive glory for himself but also to bestow gifts upon men.

9. The doctrine of Christ's descent into hell on Calvary should be retained. If our Savior did not suffer the torments of hell for us, is he then our Substitute?

10. Did the descended Jesus love us with a love so deep and intimate that nothing on earth can compare with it? The ascended Christ loves us no less!

11. An apostle was a gift of Christ to the church. This was true also with respect to the prophet; and also with respect to an evangelist. Today, too, the man to whom Christ has assigned the task of being 'a pastor and teacher' should be so regarded. If, when he truly represents the will of his Sender, he is rejected, those who are guilty of this sin are rejecting the Master himself.

12. It is the duty of the pastor to impress upon everyone under his care the duty and privilege of lay-ministry. Only when every member does his part is the body of Christ being built up as it should be.

13. Not only unity but also growth is demanded of us. The Church's Organic Unity and Growth is the theme of this chapter. 'Excelsior!' should be our motto. Reaching 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' our aim.

14. The church should emphasize teaching right doctrine.

15. Over against the deceitfulness of the opponent the church should practice truthfulness; always, however, in a context of love.

16. Just as the human body when held together by every supporting joint grows strong, so also the church when it receives the active support of every member, each co-operating according to his ability, will be built up in love."

**Piper:** " In other words, the uniqueness of Christ--the fact that there is only one Christ, and only one God, and only one faith--is the foundation for mission outside the church and the foundation of unity inside the church."

**Piper:** "The aim of the ministry is not just that individuals be built up, but that the body take on a personality like Christ's and a strength like Christ's and a love like Christ's and a spirit like Christ's.

We have much to learn here. We are, as Americans, utterly devoted to personal individual fulfillment and satisfaction that the idea of devoting our lives and ministries to building a body of Christ that as a whole looks Christ-like and as a whole has strong faith and as a whole has unified knowledge and as a whole looks and acts like the mature man, Christ Jesus--the idea of devoting ourselves to that, is very difficult to grasp."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:17-32

TITLE: WALK DIFFERENTLY

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE CHRISTIAN WALK MUST BE RADICALLY DIFFERENT --**

**- THAN THE UNSAVED**

**- THAN OUR OLD SELF**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Importance of this issue: *“This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord”*

Paul and the Lord on the same page on this important issue

**I. (:17-19) WALK DIFFERENTLY FROM THE UNSAVED** – Characterized by:

*“walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk”*

**A. Intellectual Futility**

1. *“in the futility of their mind”*

cf. the message of futility in the Book of Ecclesiastes

2. *“being darkened in their understanding”*

**B. Spiritual Death**

*“excluded from the life of God”* -- talk about being left out!

**WHY?**

1. *“because of the ignorance that is in them”*

Points backwards to the point already made

2. *“because of the hardness of their heart”*

Points forward to the next point

It is more of a moral and heart issue than it is an intellectual issue.

**C. Calloused Conscience**

*“and they having become callous”*

**D. Fleshly Sensuality**

*“have given themselves over to sensuality”*

1. **Manifold Impurity**

*“for the practice of every kind of impurity”*

2. Majoring in Greed  
*“with greediness”*

Not just indulging in impurity, but never satisfied and always craving more.  
Or talking about greed in a more general sense in terms of craving for money and material possessions.

**II. (:20-24) WALK DIFFERENTLY FROM YOUR PRE-CONVERSION DAYS  
(YOUR OLD SELF)**

- A. (:20-21) Follow the Lifestyle of Christ = the one that Corresponds to Truth  
*“But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus”*

Good Definition of True Discipleship = learning Christ

3 Key Steps:

- B. (:22) Put Off the Old Man  
*“that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self”*

Problem with the Old Man: *“which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit”*

- C. (:23) Be Renewed in Your Mind  
*“and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind”*

- D. (:24) Put on the New Man  
*“and put on the new self”*

Potential of the New Man: *“which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”*

**III. (:25-32) SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN’S WALK  
PRACTICAL APPLICATION --**

- A. (:25) The Christian’s Commitment to Integrity
1. Negative: *“Therefore, laying aside falsehood”*
  2. Positive: *“speak truth, each one of you with his neighbor”*  
Note: never enough to just cease the negative; you must replace it with the corresponding positive trait
  3. Why? *“for we are members of one another”*

B. (:26-27) The Christian's Anger Management

1. Positive: "*Be angry*"

**Martin:** "If you are angry, be sure it is the kind of anger that is not sinful... Even a righteous wrath by overindulgence may pass all too easily into sin."

2. Negative: "*and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger*"

3. Why? "*and do not give the devil an opportunity*"

C. (:28) The Christian's Work Ethic and Philanthropic Spirit

1. Negative: "*Let him who steals steal no longer*"

2. Positive: "*but rather let him labor*"

3. Clarification (Nature of Christian work): "*performing with his own hands what is good*"

4. Why? "*in order that he may have something to share with him who has need*"

D. (:29) The Christian's Speech

1. Negative: "*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth*"  
cf. sitcoms today on TV -- difficult to find a 2 minute segment without an unwholesome word or sexual innuendo

2. Positive: "*but only such a word as is good for edification*"  
cf. how the world thinks it is funny to try to outdo one another on putting other people down

3. Clarification: "*according to the need of the moment*"  
not some canned, rote presentation

4. Why? "*that it may give grace to those who hear*"

E. (:30) The Christian's Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit

1. Negative Catch-all: "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*"

**Stott:** Re what grieves the Holy Spirit -- "Since he is the 'holy Spirit', he is always grieved by unholiness, and since he is the 'one Spirit' (2:18; 4:4), disunity will also cause him grief. In fact, anything incompatible with the purity or unity of the church is incompatible with his own nature and therefore hurts him... For the Holy Spirit is a sensitive Spirit. He hates sin, discord and falsehood, and shrinks away from them. Therefore, if we wish to avoid hurting him, we shall shrink from them too. Every Spirit-filled believer desires to bring him pleasure, not pain."

2. Why? *“by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”*

F. (:31-32) The Christian's Tender Spirit of Kindness and Forgiveness

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

2. Positive: *“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other”*

3. Why? (The Standard is Christ) *“just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we truly appreciate the light of the glorious knowledge of the gospel and of Christ which God has shined upon us? Can we remember the pre-conversion days of spiritual ignorance and futility?

2) Do we find that our Christian instruction is teaching us truths about Christ or actually teaching us Christ himself so that our life becomes more like our Master? Is He not only the substance of our learning, but our teacher and the medium in which we are learning?

3) Which of these practical areas of the Christian's walk gives us the most trouble? What are some of the positive things we can "put on" in this area to live a life that is radically different from our former life?

4) Do we actively think about the danger of "*grieving the Holy Spirit*" and use this as a motivation to live lives of purity and love and unity and truth?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Kent:** "What is characteristic of individuals apart from God is the '*vanity of their mind*.' 'Vanity' here does not refer to pride, but to purposelessness, aimlessness, uselessness. 'Mind' involves more than just intellect in this passage, for volition and aim are included. The mind of the unconverted man may be filled with many things, and may be highly developed in its intellectual attainments, but spiritually it is wholly unable to apprehend the life of God. Those who are apart from God are in a state of darkness in their spiritual understanding. Even though the evidence of God lies all about them in creation, as well as by direct revelation in Scripture, their understanding is darkened so that it cannot perceive the light which is available to them. Therefore, they are alienated from the life of God."

**Wuest (quoting Vincent who quotes Eadie!):** "The change is not in the mind psychologically, either in its essence or in its operation; and neither is it in the mind as if it were a superficial change of opinion on points of doctrine or practice: but it is in the spirit of the mind; in that which gives mind both its bend and its material of thought. It is not simply in the spirit as if it lay there in dim and mystic quietude; but it is in the spirit of the mind; in the power which, when changed itself, radically alters the entire sphere and business of the inner mechanism."

**Lenski:** "The ethics which forbids all anger and demands unruffled calmness in every situation is Stoic and not Christian. If all anger is wrong, as some think on the basis of v. 31, Paul should have written, 'Be not angry!' and stopped with that."

**Foulkes:** "The Christian motive for earning is not merely to have enough for oneself and one's own, and then perhaps for comforts and luxuries, but to have to give to those in need. The Christian philosophy of labour is thus lifted far above the thought of what is right or fair in the economic field; it is lifted to the place where there is no room for selfishness or the motive of personal profit at all. Giving becomes the motive for getting. We may note the place that giving to the poor had with our Lord and His disciples, in precept and practice, though their resources must have been very slender (Mt. xix. 21; Luk. xiv. 13; Jn. xiii. 29). Then from the beginning the Church felt a great responsibility in this direction (Acts ii. 44f., iv. 32ff., vi. 1ff.). Paul himself laid great emphasis on provision for the poor (Rom. xv. 26f.; 2 Cor. viii and ix; Gal. ii. 10), and was an example, in spite of all his labours in the ministry of the word, both in working with his hands for his own support (1 Thes. ii. 9; 2 Thes. iii. 8f.), and also in supporting others in need (Acts xx. 34f.)."

**Stott:** "Christ is himself the substance of Christian teaching ... But what sort of Christ do they learn? Not just the Word made flesh, the unique God-man, who died, rose and reigns. More than that. The implication in the context is that we must also preach the lordship, the kingdom or rule of righteousness he ushered in, and all the moral demands of the new life. The Christ whom the Ephesians had learned was calling them to standards and values totally at variance with their former pagan life."

**Piper:** "As I have meditated on these three verses I have seen six levels of evil in my own heart that stand in opposition to Christ and the work he is doing.

First, the deepest problem is hardness (v. 18 at the end): *'due to their hardness of heart.'* My deepest problem in life is that apart from the free and sovereign grace of God my heart is hardened against God. I am like a stone toward all that is spiritual. It does not move me, attract me, delight me. This is a far deeper problem than ignorance. It is the cause of ignorance, and the guilt of ignorance...

Second, there is in me a deep darkness that swallows up my understanding, and keeps me from seeing the glory of the gospel or the excellency of Christ (v. 18 at the very beginning): *'they are darkened in their understanding.'* Notice 5:8: *'Once your were*

*darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light.'* Before the Lord shined in my heart I was darkness (2 Cor. 4:4-6). There was no light in me. And Jesus said in John 3:20 that I would not come to the light because I hated the light. And this is true whether I am a college professor or an illiterate native.

Third, the result of this darkness is a deep ignorance of reality (v. 18): *'alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.'* I say it is a DEEP ignorance, for there is a superficial knowledge in the darkened mind of man. Apart from spiritual light I can know ten thousand things, but I can't know the true meaning of anything -- not one thing. Because to know the meaning of a thing is to know why it exists. But Colossians 1:16 says, *'All things were created through Christ and for Christ.'* So until I know in my heart that every molecule in this universe exists for the sake of Jesus Christ, I don't know the final meaning of anything. I misunderstand everything, until the darkness of my mind is taken away.

Fourth, the hardness and darkness and ignorance of my heart results in licentiousness. Verse 19: *'They have become callous (which is the same as "hard,") and have given themselves up to licentiousness.'* The sense of the passage seems to be that when a person is ignorant of the true meaning of things, and the true values of life as God sees them, that person will make his goal in life something other than God. It may be the gratification of his body in sex or drink or drugs or food. Or it may be the gratification of his ego with more refined intellectual and cultural pursuits. Anything but God, and everything apart from God. The heart that is hard and dark and ignorant of God will also be a licentious and covetous heart.

Fifth, inevitably the hardness and darkness and ignorance and licentiousness spill over into practices of uncleanness. Notice how verse 19 ends: *'greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness.'* Literally, their covetousness drives them to pursue practices that in God's eyes are impure...

But that leads to the sixth level of evil in my disease that I haven't mentioned yet. Verse 18 says I am *'alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in me, due to my hardness of heart.'* Hardness and darkness and ignorance and licentiousness and the practice of uncleanness cut me off from the one thing that could save me -- the *'life of God,'* and leave me dead (2:1,5)."

**Piper:** Re putting off anger and nursing grudges -- "Which brings us back to where we started -- *'from your heart,'* from your new nature, the purified spring, the good tree. The only way to get victory over anger is to put off the old nature corrupted by desires of deceit -- Satan's deceit, and to put on the new nature, by acting according to the truth -- 1) the truth that none of us is so exalted that we can justify holding a grudge, 2) the truth that vengeance belongs to God, he will settle all accounts; 3) the truth that the cross of Christ is the wisdom and power of God, not foolishness; 4) the truth that the unity of the church is precious beyond words; 5) and the truth that it is possible by holding a grudge to commit spiritual murder and suicide simultaneously."

**Piper:** Re Work Ethic -- "Working in order to have is perhaps an American ideal -- if you earned it you should have it. But it is NOT a Christian ideal. The most radical thing about this text is that we are commanded to do all our secular work with a view to meeting the needs of others. You can live to HAVE, either legally or illegally. Or you can become a Christian and live to give. This is a thrilling teaching! I think it has the potential of changing your whole life...

Why? Because this is what it means to walk by faith. The very essence of faith is the delight of the soul in the experience and display of God's grace. And so faith is the power, by grace, to be content with what we have. And faith is also the power, by grace, to be DIScontent with what others DON'T have. And so faith doesn't have to steal or hoard in order to be happy. But it does have to give and share in order to be happy. The inflow of God's grace satisfies the heart of faith, and the overflow of God's grace satisfies the needs of others. And faith is utterly addicted to these experiences and displays of the grace of God."



TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:1-2

TITLE: WALK IN LOVE

**BIG IDEA:**

**WALK IN LOVE -- FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF**

**- GOD OUR FATHER**

**- CHRIST OUR SAVIOR**

**INTRODUCTION** -- *"Therefore"*

Based on the example of God in Christ forgiving us ...

Closely tied to ending verses of Chapter 4; yet this word is used in Ephesians to introduce new topics (cf. 4:1, 17, 25) ... so it serves as a good transition here to the new topic of walking in purity and walking in the light (next message)

**I. (:1) WALK IN LOVE -- FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF GOD OUR FATHER**

A. Imitate the Love of God

*"Be imitators of God"*

B. Reproduce Your Family Character

*"as beloved children"*

**II. (:2) WALK IN LOVE -- FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR**

A. Imitate the Love of Christ

*"and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you"*

B. Remember the Sacrifice Made by Christ

1. Sacrificed Himself for Our Benefit

*"and gave Himself up for us"*

2. Offered Up Himself as a Sacrifice to the Father

*"an offering and a sacrifice to God"*

3. Ultimate Example of Pleasing God

*"as a fragrant aroma"*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) If imitation is the highest form of flattery, how do our efforts at imitating the love of

God serve as the highest form of our worship? Is love for God or love for others (or both) primarily in view here?

2) How do we communicate to our children that we deeply love them as their parents? As children of God, how do we respond to the deep love that He has shed upon us?

3) How can we limit the extent of our love or sacrifice for others when Christ has not limited the extent of His love for us?

4) Have our efforts at loving others this past week truly been a "*fragrant aroma*" as an offering to God?

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### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Wood:** "A child will show himself to be a true child by wanting to grow up like his father. In the same way, God's precious children (*tekna*, those born from him) will be eager to copy him, as he enables them... God is love and the life that is like the life of God will be a life of love. If love is the essence of God's nature, it is the essential of the Christian character."

**MacArthur:** "The first five chapters of Leviticus describe five offerings commanded by the God of the Israelites. The first three were the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering. The burnt offering (Lev. 1:1-17) depicted Christ's total devotion to God in giving His very life to obey and please His Father; the meal (grain) offering (Lev. 2:1-16) depicted Christ's perfection, and the peace offering (Lev. 3:1-17; 4:27-31) depicted His making peace between God and man. All of those offerings obviously spoke of what was pleasing to God. Of each, the Scripture says it provided a 'soothing aroma to the Lord' (Lev. 1-9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3-5, 16). Philippians 4:18 explains that the fragrant aroma meant the sacrifice was 'acceptable ... well-pleasing to God.'"

**Wuest:** "The saint is to order his behavior or manner of life within the sphere of this divine, supernatural love produced in his heart by the Holy Spirit. When this love becomes the deciding factor in his choices and the motivating power in his actions, he will be walking in love. He will be exemplifying in his life the self-sacrificial love shown at Calvary and the Christian graces mentioned in I Corinthians 13."

**Lenski:** "It is not accidental that Paul writes about the supreme sweetness of the odor of Christ's sacrifice when he purposes to warn against filthiness on our part. The love of God brought forth such a pure, sweet sacrifice for us on his part. Can we, who were made God's beloved children by this sacrifice on our part return a life that is reeking and stinking with vile odor? It is thus that the idea of agape or love is colored and individualized by the additional concepts into the midst of which it is set for the apostle's present purpose."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:3-14

TITLE: WALK IN THE LIGHT

**INTRODUCTION:**

Remember theme of **Walk in Love** (:1-2). This leads in to the discussion on abstaining from impurity = the perversion of love.

**BIG IDEA:**

**KEEP YOURSELF PURE AS YOU WALK IN THE LIGHT AND EXPOSE DEEDS OF DARKNESS**

**I. (:3-7) ABSTAIN FROM IMPURITY**

A. (:3) Dirty Deeds (and Thoughts) Are Totally Inappropriate for Saints

1. List of Dirty Laundry

a. *"immorality"*

b. *"impurity"*

c. *"greed"*

2. Inappropriateness

let these vices not *"even be named among you, as is proper among saints"*

Does our speech in the body of Christ reflect only what is proper as befitting saints?

B. (:4) Dirty Talking Is Totally Inappropriate for Saints

1. List of Dirty Talking

a. *"filthiness and silly talk"*

b. *"coarse jesting"*

2. Inappropriateness -- *"which are not fitting"*

These are good verses to help us address those awkward moments when we choose not to go along with the crowd and laugh at the dirty jokes and innuendos.

3. Thanksgiving is Appropriate

*"but rather giving of thanks"*

C. (:5-6) Such Impurity is Worthy of God's Wrath

1. Make No Mistake -- no mystery here
  - a. No Confusion on this Issue -- *"For this you know with certainty"*
  - b. Guard Against Deception on this Issue -- *"Let no one deceive you with empty words"*  
There are many false prophets who make a good living by calling evil "good". Look at how we have stripped away much of the language of sin and guilt from our vocabulary.
2. List of the Guilty Reviewed
  - a. *"immoral"*
  - b. *"impure person"*
  - c. *"covetous man"*
  - d. *"idolater"*
3. Exclusion from God's Kingdom Blessings  
no such person *"has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God"*
4. Inclusion in God's Judgmental Curses  
*"for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience"*  
This passage clearly shows that hell is not for banishing sinful deeds, but for punishing sinful people. We hear the phrase: "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner" ... we need to rethink that emphasis and make sure we are giving a balanced perspective from God's point of view.

D. (:7) Abstain from Participation  
*"Therefore do not be partakers with them."*

## II. (:8-10) WALK IN THE LIGHT

- A. (:8a) Your Nature Has Been Transformed -- The Radical Nature of our Conversion
  1. From Darkness  
*"for you were formerly darkness"*
  2. To Light  
*"but now you are light"*
  3. Difference = Union with Christ  
*"in the Lord"*
- B. (:8b) Walk Consistent with Your New Nature

*"walk as children of light"*

C. (:9) Description of Walking in the Light

*"for the fruit of the light consists in":*

1. *"all goodness"*

2. *"righteousness"*

3. *"truth"*

D. (:10) Walking in the Light Involves a Process of Growth

Key Determining Principle: *"trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."*

**III. (:11-14) EXPOSE DEEDS OF DARKNESS**

A. (:11a) Don't Follow the Crowd (in their dirty lifestyle)

*"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness"*

B. (:11b) Rather Expose Their Deeds of Darkness

*"but instead even expose them"*

C. (:12) Any Association with Deeds of Darkness Is Disgraceful

*"for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."*

D. (:13) The Nature of Light Is to Expose Darkness

*"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light."*

E. (:14) Walking in the Light Requires Spiritual Alertness

*"For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) In what sense are immorality and impurity expressions of *"greed"*? How does a life of selfishness contrast with a life of sacrificial love?

2) If the dirty talking and innuendos we are called to avoid have regards to sexual impurity, what is the focus of the *"giving of thanks"* commanded in vs. 4?

3) Paul has already assured the Ephesian believers of their full reception of all spiritual blessings, of their certain inheritance and of their receipt of the Holy Spirit *"who is given as a pledge of our inheritance."* How can these themes be reconciled with the somber warning of verse 5?

4) How does light function to not only expose the deeds of darkness but actually convert darkness into light? What type of evangelistic application can we gain from this emphasis in vs. 13?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** "The Glorious Renewal of which Paul is speaking in this entire section (4:17-6:9) calls for self-sacrifice instead of self-indulgence. Since in the preceding verses great emphasis was placed on self-sacrifice in imitation of Christ, the attention is now shifted to its very opposite: self-indulgence. Stating it differently, the admonition to *'walk in love'* is followed here by the condemnation of love's perversion."

**MacArthur:** "Instead of being involved in immorality or filthy speaking, the believer's mouth should be involved in the giving of thanks. Thanksgiving is an expression of unselfishness. The selfish and unloving person does not give thanks because he thinks he deserves whatever good thing he receives. The unselfish and loving person, on the other hand, focuses his life and his concern on the needs of others. Whatever good thing he receives from God or from other people he counts as undeserved and gracious. He is always thankful because his spirit is one of loving and of giving. Instead of using others, he serves them. Instead of trying to turn the innocent into the immoral, he seeks to change the immoral into what is righteous and holy. He is thankful because the holy life is the satisfying life, and people see love for God in the thankful person."

**Kent:** "It is not enough merely to abstain from evil practices. Believers are to *'reprove them.'* To be a true follower of Christ is to take a positive stand for purity. Evil practices are not to be ignored or tolerated, but exposed and attacked for what they are. Jesus called His followers *'the salt of the earth'* (Mt 5:13), and the primary significance of this metaphor connoted the common retardant against corruption. Christians dare not be so cloistered that they raise no voice against the evils of the day. It should be clear to all whose lives we touch that our standards are those of God's Word, not those of the world of darkness."

**Stott:** Re vs. 14 -- "Here our former condition in Adam is graphically described in terms of sleep, death and darkness, from all of which Christ rescues us. Conversion is nothing less than awaking out of sleep, rising from death and being brought out of darkness into the light of Christ. No wonder we are summoned to live a new life in consequence."

**Piper:** "In sum, then, there are six things that this text of Scripture eliminates from the Christian life. The first three are fornication (premarital sexual relations), uncleanness

(gross sexual distortions like homosexuality and lesbianism), covetousness (not merely the simple urge for sexual experience which is normal and good, but the dominion of this desire that controls the behavior and elevates the pursued pleasure above the revealed will of God). The last three are filthiness, silly talk and levity, and together they show that the good gifts of God should not be treated as filthy or as flippant...

If fornication and impurity are driven by covetousness, and covetousness is a deep discontented craving that dominates your life and even leads you to go against the will of God, then it is clear that the opposite experience would be thanks giving. If you are overflowing with thanksgiving to God, then you are not dominated and driven by discontentment at what you have been denied.

Gratitude is what you feel when you believe God is for you and not against you. It's what you feel when you believe that he gives you only what is good for you and withholds no good thing (single or married!). It's what you feel when you trust Him, that the tragedies of your life are not evidences of his meanness or his incompetence; but rather that they are the discipline of a loving Father who values your holiness above your fleeting worldly happiness. That's why verse 20 goes so far as to say, "Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."

So you can see how thanksgiving is the alternative to a life driven by cravings for what you don't have (whether sex or money). Thanksgiving says, in God I have all that is good for me, and I will not be driven to dishonor the worth of his name just to get a few sexual sensations or a few new toys."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:15-5:21

TITLE: WALK WISELY

**BIG IDEA:**

**WALK WISELY**

- IN THE WILL OF THE LORD
- UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
- IN MUTUAL SUBMISSION

**I. (5:15-17) WALK WISELY IN THE WILL OF THE LORD WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY**

- A. (:15) Theme: Walk Wisely
  - "Therefore, be careful how you walk"*
  - 1. Negatively -- *"not as unwise men"*
  - 2. Positively -- *"but as wise"*
- B. (:16) Sense of Urgency
  - "making the most of your time, because the days are evil"*
- C. (:17) In the Will of the Lord
  - 1. Negatively -- *"So then do not be foolish"*
  - 2. Positively -- *"but understand what the will of the Lord is"*

**II. (5:18-20) WALK WISELY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH A SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING**

- A. Under the Control of the Holy Spirit
  - 1. Negatively -- *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation"*
  - 2. Positively -- *"but be filled with the Spirit"*
- B. Spirit of Thanksgiving
  - 1. Expressed Outwardly Towards Others
    - "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"*
  - 2. Expressed Inwardly Towards Self
    - "singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord"*



3. Expressed Upward Towards God

*"always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father"*

III. (:21) WALK WISELY IN MUTUAL SUBMISSION WITH A HEALTHY RESPECT FOR YOUR ULTIMATE MASTER

A. Mutual Submission

*"and be subject to one another"*

B. Healthy Respect for Your Ultimate Master

*"in the fear of Christ"*

\* \* \* \* \*

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we just meander carelessly through life or are we truly alert and careful to understand and carry out the will of the Lord? If we knew that life was full of landmines to be avoided, would we be more circumspect? If we knew that life was full of opportunities to be identified and seized, would we be more aggressive?

2) What is the real problem of being *"drunk with wine"*? (What does this passage contribute to the discussion of doubtful areas -- such as "Is it OK for a Christian to drink alcoholic beverages?") Have we lowered the Lord's standards if we are merely satisfied with not being drunk, but still go on living as we please?

3) What is your own definition in your own words of being filled either:  
- *"in your spirit"* OR  
- *"with the Spirit"*??

4) Do we experience other believers interacting with us in the sense of *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ..."*? Is Paul talking about just on Sunday morning here? Where do we see this today in our fellowship with others? Does talking about the weather and sharing sports stories really fit the bill?

\* \* \* \* \*

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** "The unwise are those who, having no insight into things that pertain to God and salvation, are not aiming to reach the highest goal and therefore do not know and do not even care to know what are the best means to reach it. They regard as very important what is in reality of minor value or may even be harmful, and they do not appreciate what is indispensable. They conduct themselves accordingly. Those who are

wise, on the other hand, have the proper insight and walk in harmony with it."

**MacArthur:** Re "*being filled with the Spirit*" -- "Before we look specifically at what the filling of the Spirit is, we should clarify some of the things it is not:

- 1) First, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a dramatic, esoteric experience of suddenly being energized and spiritualized into a permanent state of advanced spirituality by a second act of blessing subsequent to salvation. Nor is it some temporary 'zap' that results in ecstatic speech or unearthly visions.
- 2) Second, being filled with the Spirit is not the notion at the other extreme -- simply stoically trying to do what God wants us to do, with the Holy Spirit's blessing but basically in our own power. It is not an act of the flesh which has God's approval.
- 3) Third, being filled is not the same as possessing, or being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, because He indwells every believer at the moment of salvation ...
- 4) Fourth, being filled with the Spirit does not describe a process of progressively receiving Him by degrees or in doses. Every Christian not only possesses the Holy Spirit but possesses Him in His fullness...
- 5) Fifth, it is also clear from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that the filling with the Spirit is not the same as the baptism of the Spirit...
- 6) Finally, the filling with Spirit is not the same as being sealed, or secured by Him. That is an accomplished fact ...

The continuous aspect of being filled ... involves day-by-day, moment-by-moment submission to the Spirit's control. The passive aspect indicates that it is not something we do but that we allow to be done in us. The filling is entirely the work of the Spirit Himself, but He works only through our willing submission. The present aspect of the command indicates that we cannot rely on a past filling nor live in expectation of future filling. We can rejoice in past fillings and hope for future fillings, but we can live only in present filling...

3 additional senses of the word:

- 1) to be moved along in our Christian life by God Himself ...
- 2) God wants His Holy Spirit to so permeate the lives of His children that everything they think, say, and do will reflect His divine presence...
- 3) connotation of total control ..."

**Wood:** "'*With the Spirit*' is actually '*in spirit*' (*en pneumati*). The Greek text does not indicate whether the Holy Spirit is intended. The word *pneuma* can equally well mean the human spirit as affected by the Holy Spirit (RV mg.). We have noted a similar ambiguity in Ephesians 2:22 and 3:5 and will meet it again in 6:18. Lenski (p. 619) contended that Paul would not have attempted the daring comparison between wine and

the Holy Spirit, and that we are not told explicitly with what the believer is to be filled but only where he is to be filled, i.e., in spirit."

**Kent:** "This submission in verse 21 must not be explained as being in contradiction to the passage which follows. When Paul says that Christians should submit to one another, he does not mean, for example, that husbands and wives are to submit to each other, for that would render verse 22 meaningless and destroy the very pattern of authority which he is about to teach. Rather, he is exhorting against a spirit of self-exaltation by anyone in the church."

**Stott:** "Sometimes a person who claims to be filled with the Spirit becomes aggressive, self-assertive and brash. But the Holy Spirit is a humble Spirit, and those who are truly filled with him always display the meekness and gentleness of Christ. It is one of their most evident characteristics that they submit to one another."

They also submit to Christ... Incidentally, this expression *'in the fear of Christ'* is a notable if indirect testimony to Paul's belief in the deity of Jesus, since the regular Old Testament requirement was to live *'in the fear of God'*...

Such are the wholesome results of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They all concern our relationship. If we are filled with the Spirit, we shall be harmoniously related both to God (worshipping him with joy and thanksgiving) and to each other (speaking and submitting to one another). In brief, Spirit-filled believers love God and love each other, which is hardly surprising since the first fruit of the Spirit is love."

**Foulkes:** Re vs 21 -- "In this verse there is an unexpected, but not illogical, turn in the apostle's exhortation, and one that leads him into the instructions that follow in the whole of the next section, v. 22 - vi. 9. He has implied in verse 19 that the enthusiasm that the Spirit inspires is not to be expressed individualistically, but in fellowship... He knew from experience that the secret of maintaining joyful fellowship in the community was the order and discipline that come from the willing submission of one person to another (cf. Eph. iv. 2, 3). Pride of position and the authoritarian spirit are destructive of fellowship. The importance to Paul of the whole concept of submission is evident from the use of the word more than twenty times in his Epistles. He is to apply this in special instances in the next section, but we should note that he first gives it a completely general application. There must be a willingness in the Christian fellowship to serve any, to learn from any, to be corrected by any, regardless of age, sex, class or any other division."

**Piper:** "The second way of expressing the paradox of these verses is to say that we must live in the tension between analysis and exultation. Let me try explain what I mean."

Verse 15 says, "Look carefully then how you walk." Verse 17 says, "Do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is." So together these verses call us to use our minds in careful thought. Look carefully! Know yourself, know your enemy, know your commander, know the situation, apply your mind understand what the Lord wills in this crucial time. This is what I mean by analysis. It is the use of the mind to scrutinize, to examine, to sort out distinctions and seek relationships and patterns and to draw

conclusions and inferences.

But then verse 19 says that we should be full of exultation. We should make melody to the Lord in our hearts. Our emotions, not just our minds should be engaged. We should not merely scrutinize the providence of God, we should also be carried away by it. We should not just analyze the message of the Bible, we should be swept up into song when we read it. We shouldn't be content to formulate a theory of salvation, we should be filled with thanksgiving that we are saved."

**Piper:** Re filling with the Spirit -- " Nobody stays full of the Spirit all the time -- no one is always totally joyful and submissive to God and empowered for service. But this should still be our aim, our goal, our great longing. *"As a hart pants for the flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God"* (Psalm 42:1,2). But in order to slake that thirst we must fight the fight of faith. We must preach to our souls a sermon of hope:"

**Holwick** (quoting **Swindoll**): Re the Preciousness of Time --

Swindoll: Let's play "Let's Pretend."

Let's pretend that your banker phoned you late Friday night and said he had some very good news.

He told you that an anonymous donor who loves you very much has decided to deposit 86,400 pennies into your account each morning, starting Monday morning.

That's \$864 a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year.

He adds, "But there's one stipulation... you must spend all that money that same day.

No balance will be carried over to the next day.

Each evening the bank must cancel whatever sum you failed to use."

With a big smile, you thank your banker and hang up.

Over that weekend you have time to plan.

You grab a pencil and start figuring;

\$864 times 7 equals over \$6,000 a week... times 52.

That's almost \$315,000 a year that you have available to you if you work hard to spend it all each day.

Remember, whatever you don't spend is forfeited.

So much for "Let's Pretend".

Now let's play "Let's Get Serious."

Every morning Someone who loves you very much deposits into your bank of time 86,400 seconds of time --

---which represent 1,440 minutes

---which, of course, equal 24 hours each day.

Now you've got to remember the same stipulation applies, because God gives you this amount of time for you to use each day.

Nothing is ever carried over on credit to the next day.  
There is no such thing as a twenty-six hour day.  
(Though some of us wish there were).

From today's dawn until tomorrow's dawn, you have a precisely  
determined amount of time.

As someone has put it, "Life is like a coin. You can spend it any  
way you want to, but you can spend it only once."

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:22 - 6:9

TITLE: RELATIONSHIPS OF SUBMISSION AND CONSIDERATION

**BIG IDEA:**

**WALKING WISELY INVOLVES FULFILLING YOUR ROLE IN RELATIONSHIPS OF SUBMISSION AND CONSIDERATION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In each of the following relationships, the submissive role is discussed first.

**I. (5:22-33) WIVES AND HUSBANDS**

**A. (:22-24) Wives -- Relationship of Submission**

**1. (:22) Command with Qualification**

*"Wives, be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord."*

**2. (:23-24) Parallel Relationship = the Church being Subject to Christ**

**a. Parallel concept of Headship**

*"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."*

**b. Parallel concept of Submission**

*"But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."*

**B. (:25-30) Husbands -- Relationship of Consideration**

**1. (:25a) Command**

*"Husbands, love your wives"*

**2. (:25b) First Parallel Relationship = Christ loving His body = the church**

*"just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"*

**3. (:26-27) Objectives**

**a. Sanctification**

*"that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word"*

**b. Presentation**

*"that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."*

**4. (:28-30) Second Parallel Relationship = Husband caring for his own physical body -- Nourishes / Cherishes**

*"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies."*

*He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body."*

C. (:31-33) Summary

1. (:31-32) Review: Parallel Relationship -- Marriage and the Church

a. Marriage -- Commitment and Intimacy

*"For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."*

b. Church

*"The mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."*

2. (:33) Review: The Commands -- Love / Respect

a. Husband -- Love

*"Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself"*

b. Wife -- Respect

*"and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband"*

II. (6:1-4) CHILDREN AND PARENTS

A. (:1-3) Children -- Relationship of Submission

1. Obedience

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."*

2. Honor

*"Honor your father and mother"*

3. Promise

*"(which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."*

B. (:4) Fathers -- Relationship of Consideration

1. Negative

*"And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"*

2. Positive

*"but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"*

III. (6:5-9) SERVANTS AND MASTERS (WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS )

A. (:5-8) Servants -- Relationship of Submission

1. Command

*"Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh"*

2. Right Attitudes

a. Healthy Respect

*"with fear and trembling"*

b. Sincerity

*"in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ"*

c. As Unto the Lord

*"not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."*

*"with good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men"*

Transition to point #3

3. Looking for God's Compensation

*"knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."*

Same principle whether you work for someone else or are self-employed

B. (:9) Masters -- Relationship of Consideration / No Harshness / Fairness

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

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) How far back in American History do you have to go to find the principle of a husband's *headship* in the home and the wife's role of the *submissive* supporter as the accepted norm? When did marriage vows start to be changed to reflect a different perspective in these areas? What were some of the factors that influenced these changes and what have been some of the effects of these changes?

2) How much importance does the Lord lay on the institution and symbolism of the *marriage relationship* since He intends for it to be a picture of the union between Himself and His Church? What are some evidences that our society is taking a much too casual approach towards the institution of marriage -- an approach that is destructive to the very fabric of our society?



3) Do a study of the concept of "*Honor*" in the Old and New Testaments. What are some of the main principles that can be applied to how children should relate to their parents?

4) How is your everyday work transformed by the simple perspective of performing it *unto the Lord* rather than merely to men? How will those around us perceive this work ethic and in what different ways might they respond?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Wuest:** Re "*Submitting*" -- "The simple verb *tasso* was used in classical Greek in a military meaning, 'to draw up in order of battle, to form, array, marshall' both troops or ships. It speaks of soldiers marshalled in military order under a commanding officer. Thus, it speaks of the subjection of one individual under or to another. The prefixed preposition *hupo* means 'under.' *Hupotasso* in classical Greek meant, 'to subject, make subject.' In N.T. Greek, it means, 'to arrange under, to subordinate, put in subjection,' in the middle voice as it is here, 'to subject one's self to, to obey.'"

**Lenski:** "Honor is the form love assumes toward those who are placed above us by God. God rightly put the word '*honor*' into this commandment and not merely '*love*,' for it is 'love' plus respect, reverence, and corresponding obedience. God places father and mother on the same plane as far as the child is concerned, and Christian ethics is right in extending this commandment so as to include all persons who rightfully assume any part of the parental relation to a child, all the different kinds of parents, teachers, and pastors, even governors and rulers ('fathers' of their people)."

**Foulkes:** Re vs 31 -- "Now at last comes the quotation of Genesis ii. 24 that has been influencing all the apostle's thought. This statement from the creation story is the most profound and fundamental statement in the whole of Scripture concerning God's plan for marriage...Prior to marriage a man or a woman has his or her closest bond with parents, and to them owes the greatest obligation. The new bond and obligation that marriage involves transcends the old. Filial duty does not cease, but the most intimate relationship now, and the highest loyalty, is that between husband and wife, and parents only imperil that relationship by trying in any way to come between. There must be a leaving of parents on the part of husband and wife, and a corresponding renouncing of rights on the part of parents."

**Hendriksen:** Re: "*do not provoke your children to anger*" -- "Some ways in which parents may become guilty of this error in bringing up their children:

1. By over-protection ...
2. By favoritism ...
3. By discouragement ...
4. By failure to make allowance for the fact that the child is growing up, has a right to have ideas of his own, and need not be an exact copy of his father to be a success.

5. By neglect ...
6. By bitter words and outright physical cruelty"

**Kent:** "In His position as our Master, He is the one to whom we all are responsible and must eventually give account. In the slave, Christ as Master should inspire faithful service and assure of ultimate reward. In masters, Christ should inspire kind treatment of their subordinates because He will someday judge the masters. And this judgment will be absolutely impartial. Christ will not be swayed by the external factors that often affect justice on earth. 'The gold ring of the master does not attract His eye, and it is not averted from the iron fetter of the slave.' Christ is no more impressed with Christian masters than with Christian slaves. Righteous conduct will be the significant factor, not social standing. These principles apply just as much to Christian employers today as to slaveowners in the past."

**Stott:** "Once Christian slaves were clear in their minds that their primary responsibility was to serve the Lord Christ, their service to their earthly masters would become exemplary. First, they would be respectful, obeying them *with fear and trembling* (verse 5), which implies not a cringing servility before a human master but rather a reverent acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus whose authority the master represents... Next, they would obey in *singleness of heart* (5), with integrity or wholeheartedness, without hypocrisy or ulterior motives. Thirdly, they would be conscientious, not offering eye-service as men-pleasers, working only when the boss is watching in order to curry favour with him, but as servants of Christ, who is in any case watching all the time and is never deceived by shoddy work. Fourthly, their service would become willing and '*cheerful*' (NEB) instead of reluctant or grudging. Because they would consciously be doing the will of God, they would do it from the heart (verse 6) and with a good will (verse 7). As we might say, their heart and soul would be in it. And all this because they know that their Lord is also their judge, and that no good work, whoever does it (slave or free), is ever left unrewarded by him (verse 8)."

**Holwick:** "Three qualities of transformed relationships in Ephesians 6:5-9.

A. Equality.

- 1) All are equal before God. 6:9
- 2) God has no favorites. 6:9
  - a) Your social situation means nothing to him. 1 Sam 16:7
- 3) Slaves and owners both must know they will answer to God. 6:8
  - a) James: God will be harsh on the rich. James 2:1-7, 5:1-5

B. Justice.

- 1) Justice is implicit in Ephesians, explicit in Colossians.
  - a) Eph 6:9, "treat your slaves in the same way."
  - b) Col 4:1, "provide your slaves with what is right and fair."
- 2) The gospel gives everyone rights, including slaves.
  - a) Revolutionary idea for Roman society.
  - b) Significant thrust in our own day, in E. Europe, Russia.
- 3) All relationships are reciprocal. 6:9

- a) Workers have duty to do good job / right to decent wage.
- b) Bosses have duty to treat and pay fairly / right to expect job done right.
- c) Problem:
  - 1> Each side concentrates on securing its own rights, and on making the other side do its duty.
  - 2> Paul says concentrate on your responsibilities, not your rights.

#### C. Brotherhood.

- 1) The runaway slave Onesimus was to be welcomed as a brother.  
Philemon 1:16
  - a) Incredible thought in that day and age.
  - b) Even Seneca called them "comrades" instead of brothers.
- 2) Paul's message: "Slavery must be abolished from within."
  - a) Philemon 1:8 - instead of "ordering," Paul appeals on the basis of Christian love.
- 3) Paul includes slaves in God's family, the theme of Ephesians.
  - a) Churches shouldn't look down on anyone.
  - b) All have sinned, all can be saved by blood of Christ.
  - c) There is no slave or free, worker or boss, in eyes of Jesus.  
Gal 3:28"

TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-17

TITLE: WALK STRONG IN THE ARMOR OF GOD -- THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

**BIG IDEA:**

**WALK STRONG -- FIGHTING THE ENEMY WITH THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD**

**I. (:10-12) SPIRITUAL WARFARE REQUIRES GOD'S STRENGTH AND GOD'S ARMOR**

A. (:10) Be Strong in God's Strength

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."*

B. (:11a) Be Protected in God's Armor

*"Put on the full armor of God"*

C. (:11b-12) Understand the Enemy / Don't Underestimate the Enemy

1. The Enemy is Deceitfully Tricky -- The Crafty Devil

*"that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."*

2. The Forces of Satan are Extremely Powerful -- much stronger than flesh and blood

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness"*

3. The Enemy is Shockingly Wicked

*"against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

**II. (:13-17) PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD AND STAND FIRM**

A. (:13) Goal: Resist and Stand Firm

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

6 Different Pieces of the Armor of God:

B. (:14a) The Belt = Truth

*"Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth"*

**Holwick:** " 1)'Gird the loins' means hike up outer shirt.

a) Loose-fitting, all the way to ankles.

b) Run or fight in it, trip up.

c) Girding it into belt prepared soldier for action.

2) Bible characters said to gird up loins.

- a) Israelites did so at first Passover as they escaped Egypt. Exodus 12:11
- b) Elijah when he outran King Ahab's chariot. 1 Kings 18:46
- c) Christians should gird up mind. 1 Peter 1:13"

C. (:14b) The Breastplate = Righteousness

*"and having put on the breastplate of righteousness"*

**Wood:** "The '*breastplate*' (*thorax*) covered the body from the neck to the thighs. Polybius tells us that it was known as a heart-protector. Usually it was made of bronze but the more affluent officers wore a coat of chain mail. The front piece was strictly the breastplate, but a back piece was commonly worn as well. In Isaiah 59:17 we are told that Yahweh himself put on righteousness like a breastplate. In this context *dikaioσύνη* ('*righteousness*') stands for uprightness and integrity of character. But this moral rectitude and reputation for fair dealing results directly from the appropriation of Christ's righteousness..."

D. (:15) The Boots = Peace

*"and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"*

**Kent:** "The feet are what carry the soldier to the battle. Feet properly shod enable the soldier to march long distances and to fight without slipping or stumbling on rough terrain. Spiritually, the Christian is to be shod with the '*preparation of the gospel of peace*.' He achieves a confident readiness for the conflict through the peace of God provided in the gospel. A recognition that the good news of salvation has provided peace with God and thus all that we need for spiritual victory furnishes us with calmness for the conflict."

**Hendriksen:** "'Am I prepared to fight?' is the next question. In other words, Have I shod my feet with '*readiness derived from the gospel of peace*'? The meaning of this expression has been much debated. Nevertheless, the following facts must be admitted:

a. In order to promote facility of motion over all kinds of roads Roman soldiers were in the habit of putting on 'shoes thickly studded with sharp nails' (Josephus, *Jewish Wars* VI. i. 8). Thus, one important reason for Julius Caesar's success as a general was the fact that his men wore military shoes that made it possible for them to cover long distances in such short periods that again and again the enemies were caught off guard, having deceived themselves into thinking that they still had plenty of time to prepare an adequate defense... Accordingly, proper footwear spells readiness.

b. A person who experiences within his own heart the peace of God that passes all understanding, the very peace which the gospel proclaims, has been delivered of a great burden. The conviction of being reconciled with God through the blood of Christ gives him the courage and the zeal to fight the good fight. If the gospel, accepted by faith, had not given him this peace, how could he be prepared to engage in this battle?

c. The fact that this readiness is actually derived from the gospel whose message or content is peace is clear from such passages as 2:15, 17; cf. Rom. 5:1."

E. (:16) The Shield = Faith

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

**Holwick:** " Shield is not a little round one, but the large one which measured four feet by two feet, big enough to protect the whole body."

F. (:17a) The Helmet = Salvation

*"And take the helmet of salvation"*

G. (:17b) The Sword = The Word of God (the only Offensive Weapon)

*"and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some other OT examples of individuals strengthening themselves in the Lord? How did David do it? Moses? Joshua? Daniel??
- 2) Why are we so often oblivious to the unseen spiritual warfare that wages around us and to the evil spiritual forces of darkness? Why do we get so preoccupied with our own internal spiritual struggles that we lose sight of the bigger battle that is being waged?
- 3) What were some of the weapons used by Pilgrim in John Bunyan's classic work *Pilgrim's Progress*? How do we use the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith in our everyday life?
- 4) Do we find ourselves debating with others about the validity and effectiveness of the Word of God rather than just using the Sword of the Spirit and allowing it to accomplish God's intended purposes?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** "Jesus' ministry began in a great battle with Satan that lasted forty days (Luke 4:2). As Jesus' ministry ended, Satan besieged Him again in the Garden of Gethsemane with such force that He sweat great drops of blood (22:44). Among many other instructive truths, those two accounts teach us that the battle may not become

easier as we grow in obedience to God. If anything, Satan will intensify his efforts against those who continue to effectively serve the Lord. As believers grow stronger, so will Satan's attacks...

Satan opposes the believer in many ways, some of them direct and obvious and others of them indirect and subtle.

- 1) First of all, he attempts to impugn God's character and credibility, just as he did with Adam and Eve. Because man's greatest strength is to trust God, Satan's objective is to make him distrust God...
- 2) Second, Satan tries to undermine present victory by generating trouble that makes life difficult, thereby tempting us to forsake obedience to God's standards and calling. His most extreme tactic is persecution...
- 3) Third, Satan attacks believers through doctrinal confusion and falsehood. Christians who are untaught in God's Word fall easy prey to wrong ideas about the things of God ..
- 4) Fourth, Satan attacks God's people by hindering their service to Him. He opposes every faithful life and every effective ministry...
- 5) Fifth, Satan attacks believers by causing divisions. That is why Jesus prayed so earnestly and repeatedly for the unity of His followers (John 17:11, 21-23) and commands them to be quickly and willingly reconciled to each other (Matt. 5:24)...
- 6) Sixth, Satan attacks believers by persuading them to trust their own resources. To attempt to do the Lord's work in our own power is not to do His work at all...
- 7) Seventh, Satan attacks believers by leading them into hypocrisy...
- 8) Eighth, Satan attacks believers by leading them into worldliness, by enticing them to let the world squeeze them *'into its own mold'*...
- 9) Ninth, in a way that encompasses all the others, Satan attacks believers by leading them to disobey God's Word."

**Wiersbe:** "In one sense the *'whole armor of God'* is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), and He is our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and our peace (Eph. 2:14). His faithfulness makes possible our faith (Gal. 2:20); He is our salvation (Luke 2:30); and He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). This means that when we trusted Christ, we received the armor. Paul told the Romans what to do with the armor (Rom. 13:11-14): wake up (v. 11), cast off sin, and *'put on the armor of light'* (v. 12). We do this by putting *'on the Lord Jesus Christ'* (v. 14). By faith, put on the armor and trust God for the victory."

**Criswell:** "In symbolism and in type, in the New Testament and in history, Christianity is always martial. Is that not an astonishing thing? Marital imagery is so often used to describe the faith. The symbolism of the Christian life is filled with war and conflict, but it is not actual steel and iron that the Christian uses in spiritual warfare. It is the steel and iron of the spirit."

**Hodge:** "To enter on this spiritual conflict ignorant or doubting, would be to enter battle blind and lame. As the girdle gives strength and freedom of action, and therefore confidence, so does the truth when spiritually apprehended and believed. Let not any one imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories or with the speculations of other men. Nothing

but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a girdle of spider-webs. They give way at the first onset. Truth alone, as abiding in the mind in the form of divine knowledge, can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christian life, much more in any really '*evil day*.'"



TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:18-24

TITLE: INTERCESSORY PRAYER IS NOT JUST AN AFTERTHOUGHT /  
CLOSING REMARKS AND BENEDICTION

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PROTECTION OF THE SAINTS AND THE FORWARD PROGRESS OF  
THE GOSPEL DEPEND ON INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

**I. (:18) THE PROTECTION OF THE SAINTS DEPENDS ON INTERCESSORY  
PRAYER THAT IS ALL ENCOMPASSING**

Note four repetitions of the word "all"

- A. All Types of Intercessory Prayer Are Essential
  - 1. *"With all prayer"* -- general requests
  - 2. *"and petition"* -- specific requests
- B. Spirit-Directed Intercessory Prayer Is Essential At All Times / On All Occasions  
*"pray at all times in the Spirit"*
- C. All Perseverance and Alertness Are Required  
*"and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition"*
- D. All the Saints Are Standing in Need of Such Prayer  
*"For All the Saints"*

**II. (:19-20) THE FORWARD PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL DEPENDS ON  
INTERCESSORY PRAYER FOR BOLDNESS OF PROCLAMATION**

- A. Even the Greatest Evangelists Must Depend on the Intercessory Prayers of Others  
*"and pray on my behalf"*
- B. Boldness in Proclamation is the Key to the Forward Progress of the Gospel  
*"that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known  
with boldness the mystery of the gospel"*
- C. Such Boldness is Appropriate  
*"for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak  
boldly, as I ought to speak."*

## (:21-24) CONCLUSION: CLOSING REMARKS AND BENEDICTION

### A. (6:21-22) CLOSING REMARKS -- MISSIONARY REPORTS FROM THE FIELD ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

1. Communication from the Field is Necessary  
*"But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing"*
2. Faithful Messengers Get the Job Done  
*"Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you."*
3. Twofold Purpose of Missionary Reports From the Field  
*"And I have sent him to you for this very purpose":*
  - a. *"so that you may know about us"*
  - b. *"and that he may comfort your hearts"*

### B. (6:23-24) BENEDICTION -- GOD'S BEST FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD

1. Peace  
*"Peace be to the brethren"*
2. Love with Faith  
*"and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ"*
3. Grace  
*"Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible."*

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some examples where you prayed with *"all perseverance"* for some particular needs of the saints? Why do we tend to give up so easily and move away from our petitions before we have received an answer from God?
- 2) The need for *Boldness* in witnessing seems to be an ongoing universal concern in the church. Do we tend to assume our spiritual leaders are self-sufficient when actually they are in desperate need of our intercession and encouragement as they seek to depend on the Lord for boldness and strength?
- 3) As we reflect back on missionary conferences and reports back from the field, what are some elements of an effective presentation? How have you been made to feel an

active partner and co-laborer in the work? What commitment or level of involvement has been necessary on your part?

4) If these final verses are not just an empty benediction, but a meaningful prayer for blessing ... how do we seek to bless those around us with God's best?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Wiersbe:** "Prayer is the energy that enables the Christian soldier to wear the armor and wield the sword. We cannot fight the battle in our own power, no matter how strong or talented we may think we are. When Amalek attacked Israel, Moses went to the mountaintop to pray, while Joshua used the sword down in the valley (Ex. 17:8-16). It took both to defeat Amalek -- Moses' intercession on the mountain, and Joshua's use of the sword in the valley. Prayer is the power for victory, but not just any kind of prayer. Paul tells how to pray if we would defeat Satan."

**Hodge:** "The importance which the apostle attributed to intercessory prayer and his faith in its efficacy are evident from the frequency with which he enjoins the duty, and from the earnestness with which he solicits such prayers in his own behalf."

**MacArthur:** "Because the greatest problems are always spiritual, our greatest prayer concern and concentration--whether for ourselves or for others--should be for spiritual protection, strength, and healing. It is certainly appropriate to bring physical needs before our heavenly Father, but our greatest focus should be for spiritual needs--for victory over temptation, for forgiveness and cleansing of sins already committed, for unbelievers to trust in Christ for salvation, and for believers to have greater dependence on Him. The context of Paul's call to prayer is that of spiritual warfare, and the Christian's prayer should, above all, be about that warfare. Our greatest concern for ourselves and for other believers should be for victory in the battle against the enemy of our souls. Our deepest prayers for our spouse, our children, our brothers and sisters, our fellow church members, our pastor, our missionaries, and all others would be that they win the spiritual battle against Satan."

**Hendriksen:** "Those who are not '*alert*' but listless and indifferent to what is going on in their homes, in the streets of their city, in their state or province, in their country, in their church, in their denomination, or in the world at large will have a very restricted prayer life. Those who do not know the will of God because they devote so little time to the study of the Word will fail to harvest the fruits of prayer. Those who do not know the promises cannot be expected to 'go to the depths of God's promise' in their devotions. They will not partake of a deep and satisfying communion with God. Consequently, they will perhaps pray now and then only. There will be no '*perseverance*' and little '*supplication*' (petition for definite benefits)."

**Holwick:** Interesting emphasis on Prayer for believers instead of non-believers --

"Prayer for Christians. Eph 6:18b-19

A. Jesus never prayed directly for a lost soul.

1) Neither Jesus nor Paul commands us to do so.

B. In some places, prayer for unsaved may be inferred indirectly.

1) Prayer for persecutors. Matthew 5:44

2) Prayer for (pagan) leaders. 1 Timothy 2:1-4

3) Prayer for Jewish nation. Romans 10:1

a) But for nation, not individuals.

C. Christ tells us to pray for harvesters, not harvest. Matt 9:38

1) Paul doesn't ask for prayer for pagan guards. 6:19"

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