



Ephesians Masterclass

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4.1 Growing Up (4¹⁻¹⁶)

Our focus now shifts from the Heavens to the Earth. We have looked at much doctrine in [chapters 1-3](#) and now Paul moves onto exhortation. From hereon we are looking at everything with an earth's-eye view! This does not mean that we are back in the forest! (cf. section 3.3.7) – on the contrary, we walk in the forest but with the sight of someone seated miles above it!

In the first part of his letter, Paul has laid out for us what has happened to us: -

- Something has happened to us!
- In light of this,
- From death to life
- A new man arises
- Called for purpose
- Equipped for the task.

How does this new man (the church, the body of Christ) live in this fallen world? How does he walk in this world as one who is not of it? Paul turns now to this and tackles it head on! Paul's first exhortation to us is: -

“Live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

Ephesians 4:1

4.1.1 One Calling (vv.2-7)

We have two key things here, which come from our journey into the Heavens: -

- *We ALL have an individual calling:* - We have seen how Paul said we all had good works prepared in advance for us to do by God¹. He explained his own calling including the administration of grace given to Paul². Now Paul confirms (as we assumed in our earlier study³) that he is not alone for Christ has apportioned his grace to us all. We have

¹ Ephesians 2¹⁰

² Ephesians 3²

³ Section 3.5.2

learned that grace is not just something we all received but something with which we are entrusted to administer to the rest of the body!

- *We have ONE calling together:* - Paul's emphasis here is so obviously on unity. In fact he follows up his exhortation to them in **verse 2**, with another exhortation to unity. Why is Paul telling them there is only one Spirit, one baptism etc? Because he is emphasising that they are not all called to their own little missions, their own little ministry but called to the Kingdom of God, the extension of the body of Christ across the face of the earth. As we shall see, the gifts which come with calling are dependent upon other gifting, and thereby other callings, so that the church truly works like a body (as Paul describes elsewhere to the Corinthians).

4.1.2 The Conqueror's Gifts (vv.7-10)

Here we come to an interesting diversion or parenthesis, like others we have found in this letter. Paul starts off in **verse 7** talking about Jesus apportioning grace to individuals and he goes on in **verse 11** to describe the foundational ministries Jesus has provided for his Body, the church. In the middle of this he departs briefly to tell us how this came about. Below this is laid out with the verses left indented: -

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

8 This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.' **9** (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? **10** He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **12** to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Ephesians 4:7-13

This little diversion gives us a rare glimpse of what actually happened to Jesus when he died. As usual it also God's means of imparting precious truths to us: -

- The quotation is from [Psalm 68](#), about a conquering king who came back from battle with the spoils of war. Leading prisoners in his train. We find Paul talking about Christ disarming the powers and authorities making a public spectacle of them.
- There is one difference between Paul and David's account of the conquering king – Paul says that Christ *gave* gifts to men, whereas David's king *received* gifts from men. David knew God in battle to whom tribute must be paid. Although David knew the grace of God (in the face of his murderous sin) Paul had an even greater revelation of God's grace. This is because, as Paul had said earlier⁴ God's plan of grace had not been revealed by God to men of earlier generations. The Son of Man came to give and not to receive.
- There is perhaps another play on words here. The captives the king brought would normally be enemies taken from his victorious battle, but this king came to free captives from the underworld: -

“He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”

1 Peter 3:18b–20a

- Paul points out the obvious, which is that the Christ who ascended is the very one who descended in the first place!? Paul's point here is perhaps that the ascended Christ who today sits at the right hand of the Father is the same one who trod this earth and took on the whole human experience. He understands what it is like for us: -

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

Hebrews 4:15

- The very reason for Christ's ascension, he told the disciples before his death. It was so the Holy Spirit could come and lead them into all truth⁵. Here Paul expands on that and explains that it was also so that Jesus

⁴ Ephesians 3⁵

⁵ John 14⁵⁻¹⁴

could fill all things (only the NIV translates this as “universe”). Jesus is still in his glorified body and will be for eternity, he could not be more than place at one time. This could only happen through the Holy Spirit, filling the hearts of every believer, extending the kingdom. It is this to which Daniel refers when he interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The Kingdom of God is: -

“the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands.”

Daniel 2:45

“... the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth”

Daniel 2:35

4.1.3 A Sure Foundation

Often called the Ascension Ministries, Paul shows us the foundational ministries that Christ gave to the Body for the kingdom to go forward: -

- **Apostle: -**

The Greek word (*apostolos*) literally means *one sent forth*. endnotes. Paul described Apostles as Masterbuilders. They are like architects that survey the whole building and in this sense have a depth and breadth of vision that is unsurpassed. Many dispute the office of Apostle continuing beyond the original twelve Apostles, Judas’s replacement – Matthias and the *Apostle to the Gentiles*, Paul. The problem with such a view is that it ignores two key things: -

- Many other men were Apostles (see endnote⁶).
- Apostles, like the other foundational ministries here have been given to the body of Christ so that it may be built up to maturity, attaining *the whole measure and fulness of Christ* – that has not happened yet!

⁶Endnotes

The apostles in the New Testament were men who had a personal encounter with Christ (Acts 22:8) and were commissioned to an apostolic task (Acts 26:16-18) with authority from Christ (Mark 13:14-15, 2 Corinthians 10:8). In the New Testament at least 23 men are described as apostles, the original twelve with Matthias replacing Judas (Acts 1:21-26), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junius (Rom.16:7) two unnamed men in 1 Cor.8:23, Epaphroditus (Phil.2:25), Apollos (1 Cor.4:9), and Paul, Silas and Timothy (1 Thess.2:6). James brother of Jesus (not one of the original twelve) was also described as an Apostle (Galatians 1:19)

- **Prophet: -**

Whilst the Apostle is concerned with the overall design of the church, the prophet is able to bring a sharp focus of the purposes of God in a particular situation. The prophet is often given a revelation of the mind of God in relation to particular situations and needs. So the prophet will help people understand what God is saying to them at the time.

The prophet will also bring a force of the Spirit of God which inspires the people into action because of the anointing of God upon him. It will then be for the Apostle to fit this into its context and (along with the pastors and teachers) to put flesh on the message he brings and expound upon it. So the prophet brings the voice of God and brings direction to the church in partnership with the Apostle.

Once again we find many trying to dismiss this gift today as well. However if we look back at two statements Paul made earlier it is obvious that Paul is not referring to the Old Testament prophets as the foundation for the church but those of the New Testament: -

“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Ephesians 2:20

“which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.”

Ephesians 3:5

The Apostles were not partnered with dead Old Testament prophets but prophets from their own generation, as Paul clearly says ([in 5³](#)) above.

The New Testament Prophet fulfils a different role to the Old Testament prophet. Rather than being those who primarily look forward and foretell, they instead communicate the burden of God’s heart for the here and now, allowing the church to stay firmly in the will of God in the work of extending the kingdom. We find instances of Apostle’s functioning in this way in the book of Acts (Agabus⁷). This does not mean of course that God does not use Apostles in the church to foretell events⁸.

⁷ Acts 21¹⁰⁻¹⁵

⁸ Acts 11²⁸

- **Evangelist**

Although we see every member of the New Testament church taking their part in evangelism and the dramatic church growth, there were still some set apart as evangelists with specific gifting in this area. Philip is the main example⁹.

He moved with great power, proclaiming Christ and performing miracles so that whole cities were affected¹⁰, he led the converts through into water baptism¹¹, he travelled way beyond the local congregation¹², and he was a 'team-man', drawing upon the gifts and ministries of others¹³.

The ministry of the evangelist is not just to lead unbelievers to Christ, but to show the body of Christ how to be evangelistic, mobilising God's people for the mission with which Jesus has commissioned it. Evangelists have a way of making evangelism look almost effortless, and showing us how it can be part of our lifestyle.

- **Pastor: -**

The Greek word *Poimen* is literally translated *Shepherd*. A pastor is a shepherd; one who leads, guides, feeds, protects and cares for the flock of God. Pastors will therefore function within a local church and this is a key function of an elder in a local church¹⁴. Pastoral ministry equips God's people to care for one another, so that the body builds itself up, as God intended, instead of leaving this job to a small number of ministry staff.

- **Teacher: -**

Teachers function as those who equip the people in the Word of God. They are entrusted with the apostles' doctrine¹⁵. They are to expound upon the teachings of the Apostle and the burden of God's heart brought by the Prophet. They are to safeguard the church against false doctrine and error. Teachers are lovers of the truth of Scripture and are able to make the truth living and relevant. It is God's heart for His people to know His Word and be able to feed themselves from it. The Teacher is able to equip the members of the body of Christ in this way, as part of our journey to maturity.

⁹ Acts 21⁸

¹⁰ Acts 8⁵⁻⁸

¹¹ Acts 8¹²

¹² Acts 8⁴⁰

¹³ Acts 8¹⁴

¹⁴ Acts 20²⁸

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 2²

4.1.4 Equipping the Body

The purpose of these ministries is of course to enable every member to take hold of their calling and become mature, so that (as Paul says here) we don't remain as infants and open to deception, which very quickly became a problem for the early church. How do these ministries help the body of Christ function and grow then? How do they work together to this end?

APOSTLES - the eyes surveying the road ahead.

PROPHETS - the mouth of God to the whole church, not just individual congregations.

PASTORS AND TEACHERS - the arms that wrap around the Body of Christ, tending to it, feeding it and nurturing it.

EVANGELISTS - The legs and feet keeping us on the move!

Each ministry functions to equip different parts of the body. The five-fold ministries of Ephesians don't do everything so that there is nothing for anyone else to do. On the contrary, for as Paul says in the next verses ([v.16](#)) it is the body which builds itself up, with each member doing its part.

We must also understand that these ministries also equip the body by reproducing themselves. The Apostle imparts vision and the global divine strategy. He will enable us to see further than we normally do. The prophet imparts the prophetic mantle to the church, leading and showing the people of God their inherent prophetic nature in which they need to walk. The Evangelist equips the people of God in sharing their faith, whilst the pastor shows them how to care for each other. The Teacher lays out the Apostle's doctrine and equips the people in their understanding and revelation of the WORD of God, enabling them to give a reason for the hope they profess¹⁶.

¹⁶ 1 Peter 3¹⁵

4.2 Putting Off and Putting On (4¹⁷–5²)

The rubber hits the road now as Paul turns to our daily lives and how we live a life worthy of the calling we have received¹⁷. At this point we need to remember everything we have learned in the first half of Ephesians. We have every possible blessing in the Heavens in Christ Jesus. We have been raised with him and rescued out of darkness. God has given us new hearts – this is known as justification. From here begins the process of sanctification ...

4.2.1 Darkened Minds for Enlightened Hearts (v.17–19)

Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians earlier in his letter included his desire for the eyes of their hearts to be enlightened, so that they may know the hope to which they had been called. The distinction here is believers seeing with their hearts and unregenerate men and women understanding everything with their minds! The world interprets everything through the five physical senses, whereas the people of God see everything through the eyes of their hearts. Paul sums it up well elsewhere: -

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

2 Corinthians 4:18

This does not mean of course that our minds are irrelevant. When we were born again from above, we did not instantly change in our minds. Our hearts may have been renewed and the penalty for our sins paid but now God has to deal with our minds which have been programmed by the spirit of the age in which we live, by our history, by our human heritage, environment and genes! This is why Paul says: -

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

¹⁷ Ephesians 4¹

Did you notice Paul did not say transform your minds, but *be transformed by the renewing of your minds*? We cannot renew our own minds. Instead our minds have to be re-programmed by our new hearts, which are full of the Holy Spirit (to lead us into truth) and it is He who does the transforming. We have to cooperate with God and let him do it. Paul puts this into physical language for us – we have to put some (former) things off and put on new things of God.

It is only by this re-programming that we learn to distinguish, in all our choices, God’s will, as Paul says in the verse above.

4.2.2 Old Self for New Self (vv.20–24)

The first thing we put off is our “old self”. Now at this point we may say, *I thought the old self had been crucified when I died with Christ*? This is what we read in Paul’s letter to the Romans: -

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

Romans 6:6–7

The NIV footnote says an alternative rendering for *done away with*, which is *rendered powerless*. Another way of explaining this is that we were in a prison cell before. Not only did we not realise we were in the cell, we also had no idea there was a door. Jesus came and by his death, blew the door off its hinges for every man. Now he says “Come” to each of us, but it is up to us if we walk through that open door or not. This is putting off the old man, which is the prison cell which no longer can imprison us: -

“Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God’s grace.”

Romans 6:14

That choice we face time and again, in all our previous ways of living. When we reject the old way of doing things we are walking out of that prison cell.

4.2.3 Falsehood for Words of Truth (vv.25–27)

A better translation of this verse reads *Having put off once for all the lie ...* Although we did not know it, when we came to Christ we exchanged the lie of this world for the truth of God. This should remind us of the opposite we read elsewhere in the New Testament: -

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.”

Romans 1:25

It is this lie that we put off when we came to Christ and the truth of God was revealed once again to our hearts. Not only did we put off this lie but we must confess the truth to each other. Here Paul is coming back to the Body of Christ, which only functions when each part speaks truthfully to each other. This does not mean Christians bluntly insulting each other every day! Paul is instead talking about confessing the divine truths. We saw earlier on how we lay hold of things by faith and confession. Not only do we need to confess God’s truth over our own life but also over each other.

4.2.4 Tearing Down for Building Up (vv.28–29)

Another part of the new man we exchange for the old man is the ability to create and build up instead of tearing down, giving instead of taking. So here Paul perhaps addresses a problem that persisted among the Ephesian saints, stealing. He who was, or even is still, needs not only to stop but instead to look for ways to give to others and build them up.

This comes not only by our actions but also through our words. Did you notice how Paul says in [verse 29](#), that our words can actually build others up according to their needs? Our words can be so creative and meet the needs of others. This is why James talks about the tongue as the most powerful thing we have, with the power to create (as God did when he created the world) or to destroy.

4.2.5 Hate for Love (4³⁰⁻⁵²)

The last thing Paul addresses here is the exchange of love for hate. We have the love of Christ in our hearts. We saw earlier how the love of God became the good soil of God in our hearts, the coat that binds other virtues together. When Paul writes to the Philippians he tells them that he longs for them with the heart of

Christ. When he says this he actually means the very heart of Christ. It is almost as though Paul has had a heart transplant and now loves with the longings and pangs of the divine heart. The root of this love? Divine grace – did you notice how Paul refers at the end of this verse to the fact that the Ephesians had known God’s forgiveness. He wanted this to be their springboard into loving and bearing with one another. In the next verse (5’) he does the same thing again as he exhorts them to live a life of love – just as Christ loved them. There are two key things here for us: -

- Unity is essential for the Body of Christ. Jesus prayed that his body would be unified just as he and the Father are. If we live in unity then nothing will be impossible for us. It is the reverse of Babel – men coming together to glorify God, for whom nothing will be impossible. The enemy knows this full well, as Paul said to the Philippians: -

“... stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.”

Philippians 1:27b–28

This is why Paul says in [verse 27](#), *do not give the devil a foothold*. When the devil can come in between us then we have ceased to be a threat to the enemy. No matter how legitimate the cause for division may be, we must strive – in the Holy Spirit – for unity.

- All the things Paul lists in [verse 31](#) are rooted in that old enemy of ours – “self”. The truth is that when we are enraged and embittered by events and the actions of others it is really “self” that is trying to exert itself. If we have truly died with Christ then we cannot actually be offended! When was the last time you saw a corpse get all uppity about something about it!

We shall come back to Paul’s command to “put on” near the end of this letter and our study of it (Section 4.5.3)

4.3 Walking in the Light (5³⁻²¹)

Although Paul continues in chapter five with practical instruction for us, he has shifted the theme from the things we should put off to looking at the contrast between light and darkness. Paul is coming back to this theme he introduced at the beginning of chapter two, the transformation from death to life, from darkness to light ...

4.3.1 Separation of Light from Darkness (vv.3-7)

Paul starts with a very important instruction to the Ephesians, which is that there should not even be a hint of sexual immorality, impurity or greed. Before we look at these things, we should take note of Paul's use of the phrase, *not even a hint*.

This thought echoes God's instruction to his people down through the ages¹⁸. It also takes us back to one of the themes we looked at in [chapter 2](#), which was the exclusion of the gentiles from the covenants of promise¹⁹. The purpose of the distinction which must be drawn between darkness and light is because of the holiness of God. Peter reminds us that we are a holy priesthood²⁰, which means that we represent the holiness of God.

Later in this passage, in [verse 7](#), Paul therefore says that we must not be partners with the disobedient, in the vices he describes. In other words he is not saying completely separate ourselves from unbelievers, but do not partner ourselves with them in such acts of disobedience toward God. To the Corinthians Paul underlines this same thing: -

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **15** What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”

2 Corinthians 6:14-15

In the next verses ([following verse 3](#)) Paul shows us exactly what he means ...

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 7³⁻⁵

¹⁹ Ephesians 2¹²

²⁰ 1 Peter 2⁵

4.3.2 Conduct in the Light (v.3)

Paul lists three things, sexual immorality, impurity and greed. Looking at the immediate context for these verses, it is possible he has singled these aspects out for their contrast to the love of God, which he has told them to imitate. They are things which are also evidenced in the conduct of a person. You will note that Paul returns to these three things in [verse 5](#). In his letter to the Colossians: -

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

Colossians 3:5

The root of them all is simply idolatry. Those who pursue these things are on the surface serving sexual desire or greed for perhaps money or material goods, but ultimately “self” that old enemy we singled out in chapter two! Self is the ultimate idol. We have to realise that although Satan wants to be worshipped like God (the reason for his fall from a position of honour) the only way he can achieve this in man is to offer him something that will satisfy fallen man’s true god – self. This is why satan was completely off the mark when he tempted Jesus: -

“... the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’”

He was appealing to the “self” in Jesus, but of course there was none!

4.3.3 Speech in the Light (v.4)

As if to head off the suggestion that we need only separate ourselves from unbelievers in the way we act, Paul immediately adds that this prohibition extends to that which comes out of our mouths! Of course as we mature as believers we start to learn the massive significance of words. Perhaps one of the greatest mistruths ever spoken was: -

“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me”

Words made the very universe in which we live, they carry the ultimate power. Even in the natural, words have endured long after the power and might of any kingdom of man has passed away. How much more in the spiritual?! Observe James’ warning: -

“When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”

James 3:3-6

There is another reason Paul is singling out speech here, which is to say that we cannot have a mixture of speech in our mouths. We must be constantly confessing the truths of God (cf. 4²⁵), as James goes on to say in the same part of his letter: -

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

James 3:9-12

This is a sobering truth, God will not accept mixture from our mouths! There is much here to say and to investigate through the WORD which is beyond the scope of our studies here, but into which the student is recommended for further study.

4.3.4 The ‘Fruit’ of Light (vv.8-14)

This is a rather odd choice of phrase from Paul, in **verse 9**, the *fruit of the light*. Does light produce fruit? Maybe not, but Paul is not talking literally, but drawing on symbolic language. He starts out by pointing that we are in the light of the Lord – we just need to act like it. We are not trying to be children of the light, he has made us that already.

So why the language of fruit? Well, already we shall be thinking here of the fruit of the Spirit, of which Paul tells the Galatians: -

"... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Galatians 5:22-23a

But there is perhaps another significance in the use of Paul's language. Notice how he contrasts this with the fruitless 'deeds of darkness'? Why fruitless? Why did Paul not say the dark fruit or something similar? There is perhaps only one reason for this: light always produces something whereas darkness never produces anything.

4.3.5 Piercing the Darkness With The Light (vv. 12-14)

In **verse 12**, Paul starts to talk about the light exposing everything. We should look back to the gospels and all that Jesus taught us about being the light of the world, which he is also. Jesus talked about the light that pierces the darkness, the light on top of a hill shining out into the world. He told his disciples that they were both salt and light.

It is light that pierces darkness. In fact in a darkened room a lamp is lighted and the darkness effectively retreats from it. This is what happened when the Kingdom of God invaded this earth in the person of Jesus Christ: -

"Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining."

1 John 2:8

In **verses 12-14** here in Ephesians, Paul tells us some important things about our calling as children of the light: -

- **Our Light Shines Against the Darkness of the World**

Note how Paul says in **verse 11**, that we should expose the fruitless deeds of darkness. Now before we start thinking that part of our ministry to this fallen world is to point out everything in it that is wrong, look at Paul's next words - immediately he says that it is shameful to even mention what the disobedient do in secret. So what are we to do? Condemn the acts of the wicked or not? How else can we expose them, as Paul tells us to do in **verse 11**?!

The answer lies in **verse 13**, in that everything becomes exposed by the light. The church shines the light of God upon the world by being itself, by maturing in the light and letting its deeds shine upon this fallen world – its light piercing the darkness: -

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16

The light of God exposes the darkness to bring conviction, repentance, restoration and praise to God.

- **Don't Give The Darkness the Airtime**

It is not that the church of Christ should ignore what wicked things are done on this earth, but we have to be careful that we do not let such things dominate what we say. This is simply free publicity for the darkness. It is possible Paul did not want the Ephesians to get caught up in this and therefore cautioned them against becoming preoccupied with the deeds of the darkness. Instead, as Jesus says above, our responsibility is to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of Christ Jesus and let our light shine before men, holding out hope to fallen mankind.

4.3.6 Accountability in the Light (vv.8-14)

We cannot let our discussion on walking in the light pass without cross-referencing it with that of the Apostle John in his first letter recorded in the WORD of God. John talks about the purity of life required to walk in the light of God. John says that: -

- True fellowship with God only comes when we walk in the light²¹. In this state we remain cleansed²² by Jesus' constant intercession before the Father, on the basis of his sacrificial death as the propitiation²³ for our sins²⁴. See Appendix Three for more on *propitiation*.

²¹ 1 John 17^a

²² Hebrews 10¹⁴

²³ 1 John 2²

²⁴ 1 John 17^b

- When we refuse to accept the things which are not of God in our lives, then we call God a liar and are not walking in the light. Instead our constant prayer should be that of David in the Psalms: -

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalm 139:23-24

- We need to make full confession with our Advocate Christ Jesus²⁵. He is the one who takes our defence. If we do not confide everything in him but hold things back from him, then he cannot represent us fully²⁶.

4.3.7 Redeeming the Time (vv.15-21)

As those who walk in the light we have to walk in wisdom. Paul gives us four imperatives: -

- **Make The Most Of Every Opportunity (v.15-16)**

Paul here uses the Greek word *Kairos*, rather than *Chronos*. The latter speaks of minutes, hours and days etc and is from where we get our English word *chronological*, whereas the former may be defined as: -

Time as regarded in its strategic, epoch-making, seasonable, opportune seasons

Modern translations such as the NIV capture this well with the wording *making the most of every opportunity*. The sense employed here is not talking about making the best use of our time, in the sense of not wasting it, but instead instructing us to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

The question should therefore be, *opportunities for what?* The answer to this lies in verse earlier in [chapter 5](#). Paul says children of the light find out what pleases the Lord.

²⁵ 1 John 2¹

²⁶ We have here the picture of legal counsel. If a legal representative does not have the full facts about us then he is at a disadvantage in representing us. In the same way Jesus is able to atone for our sin, but only when it is confessed before him.

- **Discern the Will of God (v.17)**

Paul develops his earlier instruction to us (**from verse 10**) urging us to an understanding of what the Lord's will is. This is going beyond what pleases the Lord, because Paul is here also talking about our destiny. The body of Christ must learn to discern its destiny and each of us must learn our own calling. This is what Paul is talking about when he writes to the Romans: -

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

Looking at the context here in Romans Paul goes on to talk about people moving in their individual gifting/calling to the measure of faith that s/he has. This is not just looking to see what pleases God – there are many aspects of our general calling, which please God but Paul is referring to our individual calling. As Paul goes on to say to the Corinthians²⁷, we are all members of the body of Christ, but we do not all have the same function.

- **Be Continually Filled With The Spirit (v.18)**

The third imperative we are concerned with here is Paul's instruction to be filled with the Spirit. There are two things to note. Firstly, Paul uses the present imperative tense, which means that Paul is not referring to a one-off experience such as our initial baptism of the Holy Spirit, but a repeated experience. The Apostles themselves had experienced a repeated in-filling of the Holy Spirit following their initial experience at Pentecost: -

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 2:4

After Peter and John were released from arrest following their speech before the Sanhedrin, they returned to the other disciples. There they praised God for all he was doing and prayed for him to move powerfully in the face of opposition – they asked for the power and boldness of the Holy Spirit: -

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 12¹⁸⁻²⁰

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the WORD of God boldly.”

Acts 4:31

We may ask why should we need a fresh in-filling of the Holy Spirit in the first place? Well it is more an issue of control. As one of our contemporary Apostles has said: -

“Although every believer has the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit does not have every believer”²⁸

The mind controlled by the Holy Spirit, Paul tells the Saints in Rome, is life and peace. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a continual thing as is our faith in the Lord Jesus. Every day when we seek God we should ask the Holy Spirit to fill us. It is not that he leaves us every night, but we are daily submitting ourselves to his control, ensuring that *he has us*. The experience of the church was in distinct contrast to the men and women of faith in the Old Testament: -

“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet”

Judges 6:34

The Holy Spirit would often come upon people, such as Gideon, like a cloak that they would wear for a while, but because of their imperfect state it would usually only be temporary. In the New Testament we see the Holy Spirit filling the hearts of men and women – permanently. Jesus told us that he would make his home in our hearts, i.e., a permanent residence, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. So now the Holy Spirit wears us like a coat! The question of in-filling is about whether we allow him to do as he will with this coat he wears!

- **Be In Continual Thanks and Praise (v.19-20)**

The fourth imperative is for us to be in continual thanks and praise. We are called to voice this thanks and praise to each other – this is in part what Paul was talking about where he told the church to speak truthfully to one another (cf. section 4.2.3). Elsewhere Paul exhorts the church in this attitude of gratitude before God: -

²⁸ Keri Jones

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

If we turn back to the Psalms, fuel for the praise-filled life we can discover a secret about living this life of gratitude before God: -

“Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.”

Psalms 84:4

The secret is that when we live a life of continual thanks and praise then we shall find ourselves in the house of God. What has this to do with *redeeming the time*, we may ask ourselves? Later in the same Psalm we learn another divine law: -

“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”

Psalms 84:10

Although David does mean here that he would rather be just one day in God’s presence than a thousand without, God is also telling us that if we live in his presence and function in his power and strength, it will take us only a day to do all that we could do in at least a thousand days out of his presence and in our own strength. This is not meant to be literal, but to demonstrate the difference in and out of the presence and strength of God.

In his strength therefore we are able to redeem the time on this earth. The key to his strength is his presence and the key to his strength is his presence and the key to his presence is living a life of continual praise and gratitude before him. Hallelujah!

4.4 Lining Up With Christ (5²¹–6⁹)

This next section actually hinges on the verse which most translations put at the end of the previous section or paragraph ([ending at verse 21](#))²⁹. Paul gives us an exhortation from which he looks at some of the fundamental relationships through which the Ephesians experienced everyday life. It is in these everyday relationships that the mystery of Christ and the Church is shown and pictured here.

4.4.1 Line Up! (5²¹)

We start with Paul's command to all the Ephesians: -

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”

Ephesians 5:21

Following on from his instruction to walk in the light and all that means, Paul is instructing us now on the importance of submitting to God's authority, in all its different forms. Let's start by looking at this word Paul uses, submit: -

Hypotasso - to draw up under in order of battle, to form, array, marshal both troops or ships.

To expand on this, the word above represents the opposite of self-assertion. It is the desire to get along with others and be satisfied with less than one's due. The picture here is of a team, in which no one single member is seeking the credit for achievements, because they are working out of reverence for Christ.

It is also a call to arms! A call to attention, in readiness for our battle with the enemy, of which Paul goes on to speak in [chapter 6](#).

4.4.2 The Authority of Christ

One thing we have learned is that we have been raised and seated with Christ, co-heirs in both his authority and his kingdom. We are called to function in the

²⁹ NIV heading “Living as Children of Light”

authority of Christ, standing upon the promises of God, which are “yes” and “amen” in him³⁰.

One thing that Jesus showed us during the time of his ministry on earth, was that to function in authority requires a person to be under authority him or herself. Jesus told us that he simply did what he saw his Father doing. From that position he stood up in the boat and commanded the very waves and the wind. It is notable that in these days we are being reminded frequently about the uncontrollable force of nature, against which man despite all his technological advances stands helpless. Jesus stood in authority over that power because he was submitted to God.

4.4.3 The Submission of Christ (5²²⁻²⁴)

The first lesson we must learn then is to submit. Now at this point we have to say that the submission of Christ is nothing like the kind of submission we see in the world. To understand the submission of Christ, we can only do so by divine revelation. We have to shake off any experience of authority which we have had in the systems of a fallen world. Our starting point is always Christ himself and his position in the Godhead.

Jesus is head of all things, but he gives glory to the Father in all things. In fact Paul tells the Corinthians that once the Father has put all things under the feet of Christ, then Christ will turn everything over to the Father: -

“Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he ‘has put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

We need to see authority through the prism of the Godhead. No member is less equal than each other for the Father, the Son and the Spirit are one. However they have different roles. Jesus’ role is: -

“... the head of the body, ... that in everything he might be pre-eminent.”

Colossians 1:18 (English Standard Version)

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 1²⁰

However as we can see above, Jesus subjects himself to the Father. Now Paul starts here to talk about the husband/wife relationship and beginning with wives he reminds them they are subject to their husbands – he uses the same Greek word here, *hupotasso*. Wives are called to recognise their husband’s God-given authority, because God has asked them to do so. This is the order of creation, which ever since Adam and Eve fell men and women have been trying to throw off. Fallen man will try to force submission and fallen women will resort to manipulation in order to gain power. This was part of the curse, but in the kingdom of God we are redeemed from the curse – Godly order has been restored.

We should note that in **1 Corinthians 11**, where Paul instructs the church in observing this Godly order in their worship, in the presence of God and his angels, he says the following regarding the head covering which women are called to wear in the priestly function of representing either God (Prophecy) or the people (Praying): -

“For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.”

1 Corinthians 11:10

The headcovering is the sign of the woman’s authority – not the man’s. She stands in the authority delegated to her by God, because she stands in God’s order respecting this. Like Jesus, when women wear headcovering (when appropriate) they carry greater authority than when they choose to stand in their own authority (not delegated authority)³¹.

Jesus carried out his whole earthly ministry in delegated authority. In this same way women are called to represent Jesus’ submitted authority. Contrary to the view of this fallen world, it is an honour to be called to exhibit the submitted authority of Christ and exalts women to a place of authority, underwritten by God himself.

4.4.4 The Sacrificial Love of Christ (5²⁵⁻³¹)

In contrast, husbands are called to represent something different of Christ. They are called to demonstrate and represent the self-sacrificial love of Christ. This love works in partnership with the submission of their wives. It is only when both are working together in this way that marriages can ever really be all that God wishes them to be.

³¹ For more on Head Covering and Headship see Appendix Four

There is something important of which we need to take note: Paul has addresses wives first here only because he addresses three groups called to submit in some way³². The relationship of the husband and the wife represents that of Christ and his church. Christ gave himself firstly for the church and it was in response to this that she submitted to his lordship. It is essential for men to understand this principle. It is a hard one to learn, because it cuts against the pride of many Christian men who expect their wives to show submission and feel they can lay their lives down for a wife like that. However the responsibility in God's order falls firstly on men, which is why although Eve was the first to take the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was Adam to whom God went to for an explanation of what they had done because God held him responsible.

Men have to understand therefore that God holds them responsible for laying down their lives for their wives, wholeheartedly, without demanding submission from their wives first. So long as wives themselves are submitted to Christ, then they can only feel the need to honour the headship of their husbands in response to such love.

This is a mystery and certainly alien to society's "modern" view of male/female relationships. It might seem odd that Paul talks about husbands loving their wives in the same way as they love their own bodies – does he mean men should be vain?! No, Paul is saying here that for the redeemed man, laying his life down for his wife is as natural as his head looking out for his body. In other words your brain will by nature do everything it can to protect the body of which it is a part. It will send the necessary signals to any parts of the body which are in danger and it will react to any signal sent from the body to the brain complaining of pain by finding the quickest route out of pain. This is how natural it is for redeemed men to lay down their lives for their wives – if they live or act in any other way, then they are acting contrary to their new nature.

4.4.5 The Union With Christ (5³²)

Husbands and wives are also called to represent another divine truth, which is the union of Christ and his church. As Paul says in [verse 32](#) it is a mystery, but the union of man and woman through the marriage covenant is a picture of Christ and the church. We have seen Paul use various pictures of God's relationship with the church throughout Ephesians: -

God/Christ	Church
Head	Body

³² Ephesians 5²², 6^{1 & 5}

Cornerstone	Building
Father	Family
Husband	Bride

We should notice that although each picture tells us something different about the relationship, there is one common denominator which is the *union* in each case. Without the head the body would simply die; without the cornerstone the building would be shaken and collapse under pressure; without the Father the family would never even exist; and without the husband the bride would have no marriage!

What is vital for us to grasp here is the absolute union between Christ and the church – they could not be wed any closer to each other. This relationship is repeated again in the heart of the believer when we became one with Christ. Jesus spoke of our relationship with him when he prayed to his Father: -

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17:20-23

4.4.6 Sowing the Seed of Lordship (6¹⁻⁴)

The order of God must also be mirrored and fleshed out in the family, amongst the children of the saints as well. With their children the saints must sow the seeds of Godly order so that they may be brought up learning how we are called to function in our different roles (e.g., husband and wife).

Fallen men and women are almost invariably subject to role-models set by other fallen men and women who did not understand or function in God’s order. When children see their parents living in accordance with God’s order, they see the kingdom model being fleshed out and the right seeds are sown into them.

When they reach an age where they are able to choose Christ for themselves and their hearts are born from above, their minds will begin the process of being transformed³³. If they have been subject to Kingdom principles then the Spirit of God does not have to reprogram their minds out of the bad role models and into the Kingdom role models, for mum and dad have already shown them God's way.

Paul cautions fathers about exerting authority over their children in such a way as to create resentment in them. It is worth noting at this point, that in the Roman world of the time, fathers had absolute power over their children which ceased only at death. This was called *patria potestas* and meant that fathers could sell their children as slaves if they wished, punish them as they liked, even to the point of death.

There was also a custom of *child exposure* in the Roman world³⁴. When a child was born it was placed at its father's feet and he would either stoop to pick it up, acknowledging and accepting it, or he would turn away and the child could literally be thrown out. It is into this culture Paul instructed the saints of God to live, showing the patience and mercy of God whilst administering the discipline and order of God. Paul gave this instruction more succinctly in Colossians: -

“Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits.”

Colossians 3:21

4.4.7 Sincerity of Service (6⁵⁻⁹)

Paul now turns to an area which is not known in western culture any more³⁵, but just as in the example of children above, the principle still applies. The key here is that we must be people of integrity. We do all things to serve Christ and this means that the way we conduct ourselves does depend upon whether or not we are being watched. Paul puts it another way to the Colossians: -

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.”

Colossians 3:22-23

³³ Romans 12²

³⁴ *Letter to the Ephesians*. Barclay, William; © 1975 The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.

³⁵ It has been estimated that the Roman Empire contained as many as 60,000,000 (yes that's 60 million!) slaves.

4.5 Withstanding the Enemy (5²¹–6⁹)

We come to the last main exhortation of Paul to the saints concerning living “on the earth”. It is a call to arms! What God has done is wonderful, but we must never forget we are in a battle with an enemy who is on the run, for whom the death bell has already sounded. At this point it is useful for us to draw on what we learned in [chapter two](#) (Section 3.3) concerning the enemy and any influence or power he may have on this earth, despite the victory of Christ.

4.5.1 Know Your Enemy

The fallen angels (the ringleader of whom is satan) are our enemy, but remember that the chief enemy is actually the “flesh” or “self”, which was the poison which killed the relationship of man to his creator. The power of self has been broken for all who choose the Christ to be their Lord, but because God has given time for all men and women to repent he has allowed a period of grace before even the unwilling will be forced to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ³⁶.

It is during this period of grace that the devil and his demons will do everything they can to take fallen men and women with them to the lake of fire for which they are destined³⁷. In this respect, *the devil is dangerous*, for those with no defence, as Peter tells us: -

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

1 Peter 5:8

The very next instruction from Peter is ***“Resist him, standing firm in the faith”***. In this vein Paul now instructs the church in Ephesus how they as a body of believers should take their stand against the enemy.

4.5.2 BE Strengthened Continually! (v.10)

Paul’s first command is in the passive tense – i.e., it’s not something we do but something that is done to us. He says literally “Be Strengthened!” Remember

³⁶ Philippians 2⁹⁻¹¹

³⁷ Revelation 20¹⁰



Paul’s exhortation to the Saints in Rome, which we looked at earlier?³⁸ We noted that we are to “be transformed” by the renewing of our minds; it is something that God does for us.

It is God who strengthens us with all his provision for it is **HIS MIGHTY POWER**, which we saw in [chapter 3](#) is at work within us³⁹. So Paul’s command is to let God strengthen us. Of course, we must also note that this means it is possible to resist God’s strengthening.

Paul also uses the continuous tense here so that in the Greek we have the idea of regularity so that our strengthening is not a one off but a continual habit in our lives, as we saw with being continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

4.5.3 PUT It On! (v.11)

What we have here is a “doing” word, as many teachers have taught their pupils over the years. Now we are not contradicting our last point about God doing it, for we have to understand something fundamental about our partnership with God: even though God is the author and perfecter of our faith⁴⁰, we always have a responsibility to respond to God and take hold of what he is giving us.

When parents give things to their children they have to take them from the hands of the parents. We have to do the same and with the enthusiasm of a child! This is of course is the last “Putting On” to complete the set of them we saw earlier in [chapter four](#)⁴¹.

4.5.4 STAND Your Ground (v.11)

As we have said Christ gave a cry of victory from the Cross: -

“It is finished!”

John 19:30

Jesus has done everything necessary to win the war, but battles must still be fought – for the souls of men. This is what we are fighting for, to spread the gospel so that the kingdom of God may be extended from heart to heart so that the whole earth may be full of his glory. As believers we have promise in the WORD of God: -

³⁸ Section 4.2.1

³⁹ Section 3.2.6

⁴⁰ Hebrews 12²

⁴¹ Section 4.2

“Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7

When we submit ourselves to God we trust completely in the finished work of Christ and rely upon this our hope. The enemy will therefore first and foremost try to attack the finished work of Christ, in the only way now open to him – by deception. The Greek word Paul uses here is: -

Methodēia - cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery

Satan’s strategy has always been to undermine the truth (of God) in the minds of men, beginning with Adam and Eve. He will try to use the spirit of self at work amongst fallen men to imprison them and he will attack the saints by trying to undermine the finished work of Christ: -

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, as been hurled down.’”

Revelation 12:10

Later in this passage comes a warning: -

“But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

Revelation 12:12

So what we have to stand upon is the truth and not retreat from it. How does Satan attack us then? The New Testament tells us in many places how the enemy tries to work against all that is of Christ Jesus⁴²: -

- Hindering God’s work⁴³

⁴² “Life For Today” Verse By Verse Bible Commentary, Wommack A © 2000 Andrew Wommack Ministries, Inc.

⁴³ 1 Thessalonians 2¹⁷⁻¹⁸, Acts 17¹⁻⁹, Luke 4⁵⁻⁶ and Revelation 2¹⁰

- Blinding men's minds⁴⁴
- Beguiling, misleading, and deceiving men⁴⁵
- Tempting mankind⁴⁶
- Buffeting God's people⁴⁷
- Tempting to corrupt and infiltrate the Church of Jesus Christ⁴⁸

4.5.5 We Are Still In The Heavlies! (v.12)

Here we recognise the vital importance of catching the revelation of the Heavlies, that is the situation on the unseen realm. Although in this second half of his letter we are looking at our conduct and response down on the earth, we are still fighting our battles down here through our position in the Heavlies!

Paul's description of the forces at work in the unseen realm, which influence everything going on in the seen, physical world underlines the vital importance of learning to see the truths of God with the eyes of faith in our heart. It also highlights the need for us to change from being physically dominated people to those for whom the spiritual is more real to us than the seen: -

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

4.5.6 Standing Together

Something that can escape our attention in this passage is that Paul is addressing the church when he writes these words, he has been all along. We often personalise the instructions in this part of the letter, but you will recall that Paul calls for unity amongst them and he is explicitly addressing the church as a whole.

So the church as a body must put on the Armour of God. We come back again, in part, to the earlier command Paul gave concerning speaking the truth to one another. It will often be necessary for us to guard one another. Members of the body may find themselves under attack, perhaps in the ways above (4.5.4) and it is vital that they are strengthened by the good confession of other parts of the

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 4⁴

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 7⁵

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 7⁵

⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 12⁷

⁴⁸ 2 Corinthians 11¹⁵ and 1 Timothy 4¹



body around them. Our very words can bring strength to each other – creative and powerful.

4.5.7 The Armour of God

There is much to be said concerning the armour of God Paul describes here, much of which is beyond the scope of this module. However we may note the following: -

- **Belt of Truth**

The armour is described in the order in which a soldier would have put it all on. Before anything else the soldier put on a belt or girdle, which in itself is not part of the armour, but would bind together a soldier's undergarments before the armour itself goes on. This is a common expression in the WORD of God, the act of girding up garments before undertaking an activity⁴⁹. Before we can put on the armour of God we have to ensure we have truth inwardly.

It is often said that a soldier's belt would girt in his tunic and from which his belt would hang and which gave him freedom of movement⁵⁰. When we live in truth we have freedom of movement in all that we are called to do. Ultimately truth frees us for battle.

- **Breastplate of Righteousness**

The breastplate is that part of the armour, which protects the heart and other vital organs. When a man has righteousness he is impregnable. The accuser of the brethren may not successfully accuse him before God. As we saw in James' exhortation above when we submit ourselves to God that he imputes the righteousness of Christ to us and we can resist the devil so that he will flee from us.

We see below⁵¹ in Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians that the breastplate is described as being made of faith and love. This is because the righteousness of Christ comes through faith in him, but it is maintained by both our faith in him and his love in our hearts. As we saw earlier,⁵² this love is the aspect of our new nature that binds together every other virtue God works within us.

⁴⁹ Remember Elijah tucking his cloak between his legs before running ahead of the King.

⁵⁰ *Letter to the Ephesians*. Barclay, William; © 1975 The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.

⁵¹ Section 4.5.8

⁵² Section 3.6.2

Apart from the imputed righteousness that comes from God, many believe Paul is here also referring to the righteousness in which we are called to walk, day by day, by our own choice, borne out of our love for him. We have a responsibility to walk in the righteousness God has birthed in us. If we do not, instead choosing to compromise here and there the enemy will find a way to harm us... fatally! We must therefore keep a clean conscience and accountability before God.

So our breastplate is the partnership between us and God – righteousness which comes through faith from God but is our responsibility to walk in. Here is the great truth of the gospel – *his righteousness in us* is birthed by faith and maintained by love.

- **The Gospel of Peace**

As we have seen already in our studies, the WORD of God often uses what seem to be oxymoronic statements and here we find in the midst of a description of our armour and weapons of warfare, the gospel of *peace*.

So how does the gospel fit into our armoury? Well, remember who our enemy is – Satan and his fallen angels. We have already established that their most powerful weapon is “self” which rules the heart of fallen man. So the greatest weapon in our armoury is the gospel for it breaks the power of self in the heart. This is why we have to be ready with the gospel at every turn, to break the power of the enemy.

So why is it described as the gospel of peace? It is because the gospel is the announcement of the way for peace between holy God and fallen man.

- **The Shield of Faith**

To cover this entire armoury we have the shield of faith. The Greek word Paul uses here is *thyreos*, which comes from the Greek word for *door*. This shield was not the little round shield used for hand to hand combat but the large oblong (or door shaped) shield as Barclays explains: -

“... that great oblong shield which the heavily armed warrior wore. One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with tow dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made

of two sections of wood glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out. ⁵³

Of note is the fact that the Romans had a system of interlocking these shields to form a corporate defence. So our shield is faith - in God and his promises to us. Observe the words of the Psalmist: -

“... his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.”

Psalm 91:4-6

His faithfulness is our shield. This is because our faith is in *his* faithfulness and it is this which the enemy always seeks to undermine. The shield that protects us is our continued faith in God and everything he has said in his WORD.

- **The Helmet of The Hope of Salvation**

The head is used often throughout the WORD of God symbolically, appearing over four hundred times. It was seen as the seat of life and in warfare cutting off the head was a symbol of ultimate victory (cf. David cutting off the head of Goliath). Perhaps the most significant use of this symbol was in the messianic promise of God in Eden when he addressed satan: -

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.”

Genesis 3:15

The helmet obviously protects the head, but how do we find the connection between the helmet and salvation? Perhaps the answer lies in the Psalms: -

“O Sovereign LORD, my strong deliverer, who shields my head in the day of battle.”

Psalm 140:7

⁵³ Ibid.

Picking up on this we find the phrase *helmet of salvation* coming from Isaiah in his messianic description: -

“He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.”

Isaiah 59:17

Paul expands a little more on this in Thessalonians⁵⁴ where he calls this the *hope* of salvation. Perhaps this is in reference once again to the *now and not yet*⁵⁵. We have a hope of eternal salvation, but our adoption is not yet complete. There is a day of judgment coming and today although we can lay hold of all the blessings with which we have been blessed in the Heavens⁵⁶, we are living in hope of our vindication before the throne of God when the sheep are sorted from the goats.

- **Sword of the Spirit**

Nowhere else in the WORD of God do we see such a description of the WORD of God. Paul says that the Bible is the Sword of the Spirit. This is because the words of God are recorded in the Bible. Now at the time Paul wrote, the New Testament had not been canonised, however even at this stage the Apostles had some idea that they were being carried along by the Spirit of God⁵⁷ and producing Scripture. Peter himself confirmed Paul's letters as such in his second letter⁵⁸.

It is the sword of the Spirit because he authored it⁵⁹ and because the WORD of God was given to us for us to take into our hand and use, rather than to sit and gather dust upon the shelf. God chooses to anchor everything in his written word so that everything that we experience in the Spirit may be measured against the unchangeable WORD of God, rather than our own subjective judgements. The Holy Spirit uses the WORD of God as his primary tool to speak to us for this very reason. Everything he says can be verified through the Word. Indeed it is his Word which the Holy Spirit causes to germinate within our hearts: -

⁵⁴ Section 4.5.8

⁵⁵ Section 3.2.7

⁵⁶ Ephesians 1³

⁵⁷ 2 Peter 1²⁰⁻²¹

⁵⁸ 2 Peter 3¹⁵⁻¹⁶

⁵⁹ 2 Peter 1²⁰⁻²¹

“The Spirit makes the Word to germinate within. The Spirit germinates within by means of the Word ... Not until the Word has found a response can that Word become a living thing within. That is why an unsaved person can never know the meaning of the WORD of God. The meaning of any Word of God demands the inward work of the Holy Spirit to make it live, to make it germinate, and response to it opens the way for the Spirit.”⁶⁰

This should tell us how alien to God’s will is the often seen dichotomy in the church of “Word-people” or “Spirit-people”. As far as God is concerned his people should be “Sword of the Spirit – people”! When we let the Holy Spirit have full control of us he will use our foundation in his Word in the fight against the lies of the enemy to our inner man and to those around us. There is no lie of the enemy, which can fool the WORD of God: -

“For the WORD of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12

Jesus used the WORD of God to cut through the lies, intents and thoughts of the devil during his temptation in the wilderness. Again we see Jesus yield this Sword in battle in John’s revelation of the King of Kings: -

“Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations”

Revelation 19:15

It is in the heat of battle the saints need to have the WORD of God on their lips for the Holy Spirit to use as he prompts us and with which to destroy the enemy’s lies.

● Prayer

Although not listed as part of our armour, Paul does not want us to forget prayer. Jesus prayed constantly and from this communion with his Father was able, in the Spirit’s power, to do all that he did. How much more then should we abide in prayer and yet many of us find it

⁶⁰ *The Stewardship of the Mystery, Volume One - All Things in Christ: Austin-Sparks T. Reprinted, 2002 from the original, unabridged writings of T. Austin-Sparks.*

the harder of the spiritual disciplines. Perhaps with this mind Paul instructs us to pray with *variety* – on all occasions (i.e., not always in one particular setting) with all kinds of prayers and requests.

The other requirement Paul makes of prayer is that we are consistent. So often we can start praying for something or someone only to find that we have forgotten to keep this up! The principle is therefore perhaps consistency before volume!

4.5.8 A Ready Bride

In this last section we have looked at Paul refers to a specific day⁶¹, which he calls the day of evil. Throughout all of the New Testament writings we find references to a coming day (the day of the Lord) when the difference between the light and the darkness reaches its greatest intensity. Paul's instruction to the Ephesians and us was *having done all, stand*. Putting on the armour of God is the prerequisite therefore for the coming day of the Lord. This state of readiness is how the body of Christ will find itself when Jesus comes for his bride. In explaining this need for readiness Jesus told his disciples the parable of the ten virgins⁶². Likewise Paul instructs the Thessalonians Paul says: -

"Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet."

1 Thessalonians 5:1-8

⁶¹ Ephesians 6¹³

⁶² Matthew 25

