

## ~Personal Study of Ephesians~ 1

As I have gone through this study, I have had a hunger to know and to understand all that Paul is saying, hence, all that God is saying through His holy word. I find myself studying not only the forest, but also the trees in the forest itself; that includes the branches, leaves and roots of the trees, in an effort to drain every bit of knowledge and understanding that God allows me to discover in the process.

Then, I read the following from a David Jeremiah devotion, and pray that, as I proceed with this study, I don't forget this message!

A. W. Tozer wrote, "As we come to the Word of God, we do not come just for information; we come for an encounter with the living Word of God.... I will not settle for just the text. I want to see beyond that text and "encounter the Christ—the Word of Life." [1] (Emphasis mine) [1]A. W. Tozer, *God's Power for Your Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2013), 171

I pray that whoever reads this study will likewise be encouraged not only by its truths and the realization of God's wonderful plan for both you and me, but the "church" as a whole. Please be sure to take the time to stop and meditate on the words of truth as God presents them to us. God bless you richly as we dig into Ephesians!

Before we dig in, let's get some perspective regarding Ephesus and the Ephesians.

Acts 18:18-21 NIV Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will."

Acts 18: 24-26 NIV Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Wave Nunnally (Professor Emeritus of Early Judaism and Christian Origins Evangel University, Springfield, MO.) says that Apollos was empowered by the Spirit of God,

and because he had “extensive training and knowledge of the Scriptures, he could have brought many emphases to the Church at Ephesus. Instead, he marshaled all his learning to make Jesus the centerpiece of his proclamation.” He prioritized his outreach to the Jews.

Paul then traveled to Ephesus. Nunnally, quoting Bruce\* who cited “G.W.H. Lampe, notes that Paul’s return to Ephesus marks ‘another decisive moment’ in the early history of the church. Ephesus was to become a new center for the mission to the Gentiles similar to the role played by Antioch of Syria.”

\*Bruce, Book of Acts, 364-365 text and note 15, citing G.W.H. Lampe, The Seal of the Spirit (London: Longmans, Green, 1951), 76

It was here that Paul met some of John’s disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” [Acts 19:2] They responded that they had only heard of John’s baptism of repentance. Paul then proceeded to teach them concerning the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:4b-7 NIV He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues b and prophesied. 7There were about twelve men in all.

From this it becomes apparent that Paul recognized the importance of the infilling of the Holy Spirit as a significant necessity of maturing and the ministry (carrying on the Gospel) of the believers. The effects of the baptism of the Holy Spirit were visible to many such as the Samaritans (Acts 8:18), Paul himself (Acts 9:17) others (Acts 10:45-47; 11:15-17) Wave Nunnally p.499

When some Jews went around trying to drive out evil spirits in the name of Jesus whom Paul preached, they were unsuccessful. The bottom line is that they were not understanding the truth and needed correct teaching. It was during this time that they had been deceived and some even practiced sorcery. There was a great disturbance concerning the craftsmen whose businesses had been disrupted because the believers no longer needed their trade of worship idols. The craftsmen were concerned regarding the reputation of Artemis being discredited. After riotous conditions, the city clerk quieted the crowds down.

From the STUDY RESOURCES :: CHARTS AND OUTLINES :: EXECUTABLE  
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“On his third missionary journey Paul made it back to Ephesus for an extended stay of three years (cf. Ac 19:1,10; 20:31). After his initial success in converting twelve disciples of John (Ac 19:1-7), Paul spent three months teaching in the local synagogue (Ac 19:8).

Resistance to his doctrine forced him to leave the synagogue, but he was able to continue teaching in the school of Tyrannus for a period of two years. The end result is that the gospel spread from Ephesus throughout Asia Minor (Ac 19:9-10). A disturbance created by some of the local idol makers finally forced Paul to leave Ephesus (Act 19:23-20:1).

Toward the end of his third journey, Paul stopped at nearby Miletus, and met with the elders of the church at Ephesus. Reminding them of his work with them, he charged them to fulfill their own responsibilities as overseers of the flock of God, and then bid them a tearful farewell (Ac 20:17-38)."

Wave Nunnally surmises that, "It is likely that what drew Paul back to these remote regions (Paul had to walk some fifteen hundred miles to return to these places) were issues similar to those he battled in Epistles like that to the Galatians. His pastoral concern and zeal for the purity of the gospel is nowhere more evident. Horton has noted that Paul's return trip demonstrates that he was as much concerned with discipleship as he was with evangelism."

Chuck Swindoll says, "Ephesians deals with topics at the very core of what it means to be a Christian—both in faith and in practice—regardless of any particular problem in the community. ... Paul divided his letter to the Ephesians into two clear segments; applying the truths of the first makes possible the actions and lifestyle of the second. ...While Paul was not responding to a particular theological or moral problem, he wanted to protect against future problems by encouraging the Ephesians to mature in their faith. So after laying out profound theological truths in the first half of the book, Paul made his purpose clear: he expected that this community of faith would walk in accordance with its heavenly calling (Ephesians 4:1)."

Note disclaimer: Sometimes I have included different thoughts from commentators in order for us to meditate, pray and seek God's wisdom. May we draw closer to Him, always seeking truth.

## Chapter One

Ephesians 1:1 CSB "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will:"

I find God's will amazing! It was God's will to create man in God's image. It was God's will to provide for the problem of sin, which He knew ahead of time would be the fall of man, by providing His only Son to die for the sins of the world. It was God's will to call people to ministry and He provided all they needed to do so. God's will starts with His love for all mankind. God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever

believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life! Contemplate God's will further.... There is no end!

Acts 9:15 NIV But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument (speaking of Paul) to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."

What God chooses to do is the final answer. It's God's will!

Ephesians 1:1 (contd) "To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:"

This letter is written to the Christians in Ephesus; to those who are already of the faith, and believers in Christ. Paul is hereby clarifying some truths to them and encouraging them. He is also giving them directives and helping them to see what God wants them to see and to be doing. May we also recognize these truths and also be growing and doing according to God's will.

The ESV says, "To the saints." This is clarified nicely by a portion of the Jamieson-Faussett-Brown Bible Commentary: "to the saints... and to the faithful - The same persons are referred to by both designations, as the Greek proves: 'To those who are saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus.' The sanctification by God is here put before man's faith. The twofold aspect of salvation is thus presented, God's grace in the first instance sanctifying us, (that is, setting us apart in His eternal purposes as holy unto Himself); and our faith, by God's gift, laying hold of salvation (2 Th 2:13; 1 Pe 1:2)." (emphasis mine)

What is the difference between saints and believers? MacLaren in his Expositions says that this was simply Paul's designation for the church. He states Paul, "describes the whole body of believing people by these two words, which must always go together if either of them is truly applied, 'saints' and 'faithful.'"

Therefore, all true believers in Jesus are saints. They are set apart for a specific purpose to belong to Him, yielded to Him for His use and obedient to Him. Because we are not perfect, we are therefore being made "pure in heart day by day." ... A human. A human being can only be God's by the surrender of heart and will, and through the continual appropriation (becoming like) into his own character and life, of righteousness and purity like that which belongs to God." (MacLaren's Exposition)

Ephesians 1:2 ESV "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul begins by sending this greeting from God, His grace and His peace to those saints and believers in Christ Jesus. Grace: the Divine favor, the undeserved gift of God, Unmerited favor; ultimately, the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Matthew Henry includes the blessings of the Spirit through which we become holy and blameless. Peace: freedom from disturbance; tranquility. State or period in which there is no war or war has ended, Freedom from the harassment of the enemy. Peace with God which comes from trusting Him, 'casting all our cares on Him', obeying Him and seeking to do what pleases Him according to His will; patient through trials and various circumstances. (Benson) Grace and peace go together, like peas in a pod, and the source of grace and peace is God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. "Grace is the only foundation of true peace". (Pulpit Commentary)

I have been thinking about this greeting and have already been overwhelmed by the presence of God as I think about His undeserved favor, love and caring for me. As I begin to re-read this book, for what seems like the hundredth time, I am amazed each time that God would meet with me and in His presence bring peace so clear, free and gentle that I could just sit here and absorb it. May we meditate on each portion of His word. Take your time! Don't be in a rush to get through. Let God richly bless you as you draw near to Him during this study. May we meditate on each portion of His word. Take your time! Don't be in a rush to get through. Let God richly bless you as you draw near to Him during this study.

Hallelujah, peace in my soul and spirit!

Ephesians 1:3 ESV "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,"

From a greeting like that, he goes on to praise God, as do we! How can we do anything but to praise God for such grace. I just think, there was a time that I wanted nothing to do with Him, I ran from Him! Yet, He still loved me and pursued me! Blessed be His name indeed!

While meditating on this verse, I became aware that I have been truly blessed, but as I thought of this, I thought more of how He has blessed me with my husband and children, friends, good health, and so forth. But today, I see the phrase with every spiritual blessing.

Father, I do thank you for all of the blessings that You have given me, but how much more awesome is it to think of the spiritual blessings that I now have! Incredible of such,

I probably don't yet have an understanding regarding them all. I am still not walking in them. Open my eyes to see ALL the blessings that I have in You in the spiritual realm. I have found it very thought provoking to find that the NIV translation puts it this way: Ephesians 1:3 NIV Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

They put the phrase "in the heavenly realms" before "with every spiritual blessing". So I thought about how God created us while Jesus was still in Heaven, and He provided, from the beginning, "every spiritual blessing"! He knew ahead of time that we would need a Savior, and He already had the plan of salvation in His mind before sin had entered the world!

And the peace that I now have, such peace, I am free!!!! Truly free!!!! This is like heaven to me! Tony Evans (YouVersion Devotional: Exposition of Ephesians - chapter 1) helped me to see that "we live in the physical realm with our problems and needs, struggles and sins. However, the authority to address our problems proceed from the spiritual realm. ... The heavenly places comprise the spiritual realm where God and Satan battle for your allegiance" Wow! God thought of everything and has provided everything, just as He said!!!

He is true and faithful and we can have confidence that what He says, He will do. So why can't we remember and hold onto that? Because we get distracted and take turns off course, perhaps because we don't allow ourselves the discipline of staying in His Word and staying close to Him. We follow the distraction and don't look for that strength and power we need and indeed already have!

Tony Evans goes on to say that "everything that happens in the physical realm originates in the spiritual realm. ... The problems are the visible fruit, but their root is always spiritual in nature." How freeing is that?!! Dwell on that thought and its implications for a while.

"So if we want to fix our physical problems, we need to look for spiritual solutions. ... God wants our position in heavenly places to dictate our actions on earth. Only by operating from a spiritual perspective will you have access to God's kingdom power and provision to deal with life in the physical world because God has already deposited it into our account."

Let's see if we can grasp this: The realization of the connection between heaven and earth. The fact that we have our earthly struggles and that they are connected to the spiritual realm and that God and Satan are vying for me/us! But God has already provided the answer!!! In the end, Victory is ours!

Question: What are some issues or problems you have personally faced (or are facing) in which you were tempted to overlook the invisible, spiritual causes of the problems?

Ephesians 1:4 NLT “Even before He made the world,  
God loved us  
and chose us in Christ  
to be holy and without fault in His eyes.”

Wave Nunnaly has said to “let the Bible interpret itself.” So, we find that God chose. In Deuteronomy 7:6 we see that God chose the Jewish people.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

There are many other examples of God choosing, such as, He chose David to be king, and He chose Solomon to be his (David’s) heir. In Deuteronomy 21:5 God chose the Levitical Priests “to minister and pronounce blessings in the name of the Lord.”

Choosing us was God’s plan as well. God chose us to be holy and blameless. I can hardly imagine that He loved me (you) before anything was that now is!!! He knew all about me before I was born! He knew what would concern me and what I would struggle with. He knew my heart, what I would choose, and that after which I would strive. He knew that I would choose His plan for my salvation. He knew me!!! Not only that, but, He chose me to be holy and without fault! He knew my struggles, but He also knew my victory through His Son, Jesus Christ!

Psalms 139:14-16 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well, My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

I see that God is God, and He definitely knows His creation. He knows their beginning and their end. He knows their proclivity and how He chooses us is His business. We are clay pots in His hands and we do not know our end from our beginning. By faith I trust God! He will do with me/us as He sees fit. We know, often from experience, that anyone is capable of anything, good or bad, given the right circumstances. God knows and fulfills His plan and purpose accordingly. Praise God!! Bless His holy name!!! Praise and thank Him for His glorious grace. That’s why He sent Jesus! The invitation goes out to ALL!



Ephesians 1:5 ESV “He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, NLT God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do. And it gave him great pleasure.

God planned for us to be holy and blameless in the beginning. That’s the way Adam and Eve began life in Eden. I understand this (after much prayer and meditation) to mean that God is omniscient. He is all wise and everything that He made was made with much forethought. He made man in His image and He said that all He had made was very good. He created us to be holy and blameless in His sight. All of this brought Him pleasure!

Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. ...

He didn’t want a bunch of puppets serving Him because He controlled the strings, therefore, He gave man the ability to make choices. He knew and understood all the aspects of His creation and, in His wisdom, He provided the answer to the fact that man could choose. If mankind chose to follow God’s plan (by faith), they were blessed. If they chose to rebel against His perfect plan (as Lucifer did) He had an answer for that. Indeed, He knew that some would not receive His invitation.

Deuteronomy 33:11 Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.



Acts 4:27-28 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Because He (God) is holy, He could not tolerate sin, so His plan was to provide a way for sinful man (due to his choices) to be redeemed through His Son, Jesus Christ. He determined this before the foundation of the earth, because He already knew and loved “the world” (John 3:16) This was/is His plan for the redemption of all who would/will choose to obey and follow Him. He loved the Jewish people, but not all of them decided to obey His law and follow after Him. After Jesus, salvation was made available to ALL, but God also knew that not all would take advantage of His loving sacrifice of His Son.

An interesting commentary is included here for our thoughts and meditation.

#### Meyer's NT Commentary

“Predestination is not made dependent on any sort of *causa meritoria* (meritorious cause) on the part of man (comp. Ephesians 1:11), but is simply an act of free divine kindness, whose determination has its *causa impulsiva* (impulsive cause) only in Christ; so that, in the case of the predestined subjects, faith is set forth as the *causa apprehendens* (grasping the case) of the salvation...”

I am aware that I have had, a great deal of difficulty dealing with the word predestined. There has been so much discussion regarding this term and I find myself rather opposed to thinking that God just chose people long before they were even born. However, God is God. What I don't understand now, I will fully understand later. I am not a theologian and there is much that I don't know. Perhaps, at some time, God might give me a greater understanding, but until that time I am satisfied to simply trust His wisdom, desire and what pleases Him. He is my God!

Please take comfort in the fact that ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life’. (John 3:16) We take this by faith and by the inerrant word of God!

Let us not miss another very important part of Ephesians 1:5. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.

Because of this, we become “children of God”, “heirs of God” and thus, “heirs with Christ”! This causes us to Praise Him for His glorious GRACE that was freely given to us in Christ Jesus, His only Son, the ONE He loves.

Romans 8:15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Ephesians 1:6 ESV...to the praise of his glorious grace,  
with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

NLT So we praise God  
for the glorious grace he has poured out on us  
who belong to his dear son.

Can we even imagine the pain it caused Him to see His Son go through the horrors of His final day? Yet, we have redemption through Jesus' blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's GRACE that He lavished on us

God did this for the praise of His Glory. God has always wanted our worship, praise and our recognition of His goodness to us. How does one respond to the love of another? In my experience, it's with overwhelming gratitude and by doing anything and everything I can to please that one. Oftentimes, I cannot express beyond that, what it means to me. I just keep thanking and praising. What about you?

Take time to think about this. ...

Ellicott's Commentary states “that God's essential glory is best manifested in His grace - that He 'declares His almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity.' ...He is pleased to consider His glory best realised in the spectacle of souls redeemed and regenerate by His grace...”

In the Beloved means in Christ Jesus. The key here is to be “in Christ”. Matthew Poole says “having chosen us in Christ, he likewise favours us, is well pleased with us in Christ, to whom we are united, whose members we are, and in whom God looks upon us. We are hateful in ourselves as sinners, but accepted in Christ as sons.” Hallelujah!!!

Ephesians 1:7 NIV In him we have redemption  
through his blood,  
the forgiveness of our trespasses,  
according to the riches of his grace.

Redemption and Forgiveness are among the “Spiritual Blessings” that we have been given, but do we get this? Do we truly understand the cost? The result? This is the most amazing story of our redemption, at the cost of Jesus' death. The truth of the Gospel!

Now, I have a son. If we were confronted with a criminal who came for the purpose of his own selfish gain, would I willingly tell my son to go to jail and take the death penalty for the freedom of this criminal? I don't think so, and I realize that this is an extreme example, however, consider how many people in the world that God loves enough to do just that! Offering His Son to die, not for just one person, but for all who will put their trust in Him! The depth of this humbles me, and when I keep my eyes on Jesus and not worldly circumstances, I recognize that I am made clean, redeemed, forgiven, and blessed beyond measure! Why? Because of God's love and His amazing GRACE! He was willing to give up His only Son for me, by GRACE. Unmerited favor. Hallelujah indeed!!!

In the past, when I was reading something and I came upon a lot of scriptures, I used to hurry through them to get to the next portion. I have since learned that nothing can speak truth to us better than by the scriptures themselves. Therefore, I urge you to take your time and meditate on each one given, especially the underlined phrases (my emphasis). Ask God to speak to you through them. You will find the most 'delicious feast' along with the very presence of God as you seek Him through His word!

Acts 4:33-34 NIV With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.

Acts 11:23 NIV When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Romans 3:24 ESV and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 5:2 NLT Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege (grace) where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

[I had trouble with the NLT version and the phrase, "sharing God's glory, because of Isaiah 42:8 NASB "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to idols. As I explored this, I quickly became aware that this is a whole other study, therefore, my current understanding is this, 2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. (see also, Romans 8:30) If I must glory, I glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, my Savior. The Lord Jesus is our glory and joy. We give Him glory as we are His glory! See John 17:10]

Romans 5:2 Amp Through Him we also have access by faith into this [remarkable state of] grace in which we [firmly and safely and securely] stand. Let us rejoice in our hope and the confident assurance of [experiencing and enjoying] the glory of [our great] God [the manifestation of His excellence and power].

Romans 6:1-2 NLT Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

Galatians 5:4 NLT For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.

2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

Ephesians 2:4-5 NLT But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

2 Timothy 2:1 ESV You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

Hebrews 4:16 NIV Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Is it any wonder that God said that His grace is all that we need?

THANK YOU FATHER, for your GRACE!

Ephesians 1:8 NLT Which He lavished upon us,  
in all wisdom and insight

ESV He has showered his kindness on us,  
along with all wisdom and understanding. (emphasis, mine)

He gave us wisdom and insight into His plan of salvation, our redemption because of the riches of His grace. This is His kindness to us. When He lavished it on us, it was not given in a stingy way, but heaping and overflowing, extravagantly and profusely, He showered it upon us! In abundance! We, who are not holy, have a way to be redeemed from our sin and the ability to enter into His presence, because when God sees us, He

sees Jesus! So He no longer sees sin in us, because His loving grace has thus freed us! Such love!!! How can we, undeserving, thank and bless Him enough?

I have heard and read Darlene Betzer's (wife of Pastor Dan Betzer\*) He works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, that we might be for the praise of His glory! comments on God's lavish love and I'd like to bring some of her thoughts now.

"The splendor and majesty of God's gracious lavishness His attributes display are beyond any explanations we may attempt to teach to others! Divine attributes can only be given by God to a person who is able to give God the measure of glory due Him! This glory due God is beyond human flesh to reproduce! Only God's Holy Spirit bears Divine reality inside the body of a Spiritually Reborn "Christ-In-You" believer! Our attempts to offer up to God an attempt at trying to reproduce a love as lavish as God offers us in Christ Jesus and His death on His CROSS, could ever be THE REAL-Love - LAVISH LOVE - God Himself giving us LOVE, so LAVISH as to make sinners notice, a LOVE so LAVISH as to attribute it or call it "GOD-LOVE" or LAVISH-LOVE!"

\*[Note: Pastor Dan Betzer was the pastor of First Assembly of God in Ft. Myers, Florida for over 32 years]

Barnes Commentary states: "This grace has not been stinted and confined, but has been liberal and abundant". Ellicott's commentary states: "the knowledge of the true end of life, which can only come from some knowledge of the "wisdom of God," that is, the divine purpose of His dispensation\*. Such knowledge is revealed to us through the "mind of Christ," who is Himself the true wisdom or "Word of God."

\*a general state or ordering of things: specifically : a system of revealed commands and promises regulating human affairs by a particular arrangement or provision especially of providence or nature \_

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (on line)

Ephesians 1:9 ESV making known to us  
the mystery of his will,  
according to his purpose,  
which he set forth in Christ (emphasis, mine)

He works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, that we might be for the praise of His glory! God has already revealed to us His plan. Previously it was a "mystery" (unknown) but now it is made known. It is known because He sent Jesus to make it clear to us that we can be redeemed through God's precious Son.

It is interesting to me that many of the translations connect the phrase 'with all wisdom and understanding', to the last phrase, 'which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight'. Other translations use the phrase, 'With all wisdom and understanding (or

insight) to begin the next sentence: 'He made known to us the mystery of His will....In the first example, it appears to be describing God's grace, while in the second example, it seems to pertain to the mystery of God's will.

Matthew Poole says that wisdom "relates to the things we believe", and understanding/ prudence relates to the things we are to do. So, "He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure" It pleased God that we know and understand that He purposed that it was through His Son, Jesus, that we would be forgiven and redeemed. He had a specific time ("when the fullness of times reached their fulfillment") for this to be put into effect (for this to occur). His ultimate goal was to bring "unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ".

He made this knowledge of the mystery of His will known to us according to His good pleasure. To me, that means that when He was ready to reveal Jesus to the Gentiles (Ephesians), He did. He knew when they were in a place where they could receive such knowledge. The same with us. And it is only through Jesus Christ that His will is accomplished. The Jewish people had the first opportunity to receive this gift of grace, and because they refused to believe, the Gentiles were thus grafted in. All of this was according to His good pleasure.

Also, He made this knowledge of the mystery of His will known to us according to His good pleasure. To me, that means that when He was ready to reveal Jesus to the Gentiles (Ephesians), He did. He knew when they were in a place where they could receive such knowledge. The same with us. And it is only through Jesus Christ that His will is accomplished. The Jewish people had the first opportunity to receive this gift of grace, and because they refused to believe, the Gentiles were thus grafted in. All of this was according to His good pleasure.

Benson's Commentary says, "The gracious scheme of salvation by faith, the appointment of which depended on his sovereign will alone; termed a mystery, because it was but darkly revealed under the law, is now totally hid from unbelievers, and has heights and depths in it which surpass all the knowledge even of true believers."

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 NIV We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" b —

the things God has prepared for those who love him—  
these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things,  
even the deep things of God.

Ephesians 1:10 NLT And this is the plan:

At the right time (emphasis mine)

he will bring everything together

under the authority of Christ—

everything\* in heaven and on earth.

(\*other translations use the term “all things”.)

In the beginning, when God created the earth and all things, He said that it was good, and it was, and then sin came into the picture.

Barnes Notes states, “It is not all “persons,” all angels, or all human beings, or all the elect, but all “things.” “ He said that, “all things are placed under Christ.” ...and the design of God is to restore harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder not only in “mind,” but in “matter.” The world is disarranged. The effects of transgression are seen everywhere; and the object of the plan of redemption is to put things on their pristine footing, and restore them as they were at first. Everything is, therefore, put under the Lord Jesus, and all things are to be brought under his control, so as to constitute one vast harmonious empire.”

Ellicott expresses this thought this way.

“The full meaning of this expression is “to gather again under one head” things which had been originally one, but had since been separated. The best comment upon the truth here briefly summed up is found in the full exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians (Colossians 1:16-20), “In Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth . . . all things were created by Him and for Him . . . and in Him all things consist. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and . . . by Him to reconcile all things to Himself . . . whether things on earth or things in heaven.” “

Think of how fragmented the world is today! Arguments and strife, killings, rage and all manner of sin; fractures everywhere. But God, in His wisdom, has a plan and He will fulfill it. He also chose to let it be known and has given us the power and authority to tell the good news!

In contemplating the fullness of time or at the right time, I keep thinking about raising our children. There are certain developmental stages at which they are ready to learn or receive certain knowledge or understanding. So it is with us, both as an individual and/or as a culture or nation etc. The bigger picture. God knew what the world needed



to experience before He sent His Son. He knew the right time, and He knows the right time for His return.

Ephesians 1:11 NLT Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.  
ESV In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

I have included the esv version to also help with clarification. In this, I was having difficulty understanding God's thoughts on being predestined (as I mentioned earlier). I have come to this conclusion. In the beginning, God knew! He saw the first and the last, the beginning from the end. He knew us before we were born and He knew who would receive from Him and who would not. Therefore, when He planned a way to redemption, He knew who would accept it and who would reject Him and His plan. I believe that He chose us all, John 3:16, but because He knew who would follow Him, they were predestined, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, Eph. 11 (esv) I see this as His plan, His plan to redeem those who would turn to Him, His plan of salvation.

I am so drawn to MacLaren's Expositions, his remarks follow:

"A dewdrop twinkles into green and gold as the sunlight falls on it. A diamond flashes many colours as its facets catch the light. So, in this context, the Apostle seems to be haunted with that thought of 'inheriting' and 'inheritance,' and he recurs to it several times, but sets it at different angles, and it flashes back different beauties of radiance."

He goes on to explain that we have an inheritance from God which we will experience later in Heaven. God also has an inheritance ~ us, now and forever.

"So, then, there is a deep and a wonderful relation between the believing soul and God, and however different must be the two sides of that relation, the resemblance is greater than the difference. Surely that is the deepest, most blessed, and most strength-giving conception of the Christian life. ... My faith corresponds to His faithfulness and veracity. My obedience corresponds to His authority. My weakness lays hold on His strength. My emptiness is replenished by His fullness. ... We possess God, and God possesses us, and it is the same set of facts which are set forth in the two thoughts, 'We were made an inheritance,' (see Weymouth New Testament below)... "the earnest of our inheritance.' "

Weymouth New Testament Ephesians 1:11 In Him we Jews have been made heirs, having been chosen beforehand in accordance with the intention of Him whose might carries out in everything the design of His own will,

What about God's plan? He "works everything in conformity with the purpose of His will," and His purpose is expressed next.

Ephesians 1:12 NLT God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. (might be to the praise of His glory)

It is apparent that some Jews believed and trusted in Christ before the Gentiles at that time. But Barnes Notes offers this: "But it may be that by the word "we" in Ephesians 1:11-12, he refers to himself and to his fellow-laborers who had "first" hoped in the Saviour, and had then gone and proclaimed the message to others. ...They "first" believed, and then preached to others; and they also believed, and became partakers of the same privileges."

**"THAT WE MIGHT BE FOR THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY!"**

One of the commentators used the terms ACTIVE and PASSIVE in looking at this verse. The passive use indicates that "the excellence and greatness of God's wisdom, power, grace, mercy &c. might be shown forth in us by our being predestinated, called, sanctified, saved, (Poole) In other words, the process of our salvation from beginning to eternity is to bring glory to God for all He is and all He does for those He loves.

The active use indicates that "we by the holiness, obedience, and fruitfulness of our conversation, suitable to such privileges, might manifest and set forth the glory of him that vouchsafed them to us." So, the emphasis is on God and His character and what He has done, or on us and what we've become to bring glory to God.

Gill says it so beautifully, and I find it so important to take the time to spend time on this! "This is the end of predestination to the inheritance; and the sense is, either that the praise of the glory of God, in his grace and goodness, might be discovered and made know unto the saints, as it is displayed in election, redemption, justification, pardon, adoption, regeneration and eternal salvation; or that they should praise and glorify him, on account of these things, by ascribing all to his grace, and nothing to themselves; by giving him thanks for all his benefits; by ordering their conversations aright as become the gospel; and by doing all things with a view to his glory."

The beauty I see in all of this is that God is all in all and because of who He is (and always has been and will be) and who we were, and because of His grace and mercy,

are, and will be, He deserves the glory! He receives it through His own character and goodness and through observance of His life changing work in us! Glory to God!!!

The bottom line is that God receives praise and the glory is His. It is His desire that we all would bring praise and glory to Him. This certainly is not a difficult thing to do, realizing and understanding what He has done for us!  
Glory to God!

Ephesians 1:13 ESV In him you also,  
when you heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of your salvation,  
and believed in him,  
were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

We were included "in Christ" when we HEARD the message of truth and BELIEVED. It was then that we received the SEAL – the promised Holy Spirit, who is a DEPOSIT guaranteeing our inheritance until the REDEMPTION of God's possession (us). To the praise of His Glory! Full Circle.

First, one HEARS the word of truth. Someone presents the gospel of salvation to you and then you have a choice. Meditate on that, remembering when you first heard the truth. Did you believe right away? Some may, but I didn't. It took me a while (a few years actually), but when the Holy Spirit truly got through to me, I was radically saved. God had some work to do on me before I could receive His precious gift. (Perhaps, I simply had to live more of my life before I could realize that I needed something that I did not have, nor could the things of this earth provide for me.) Second, one BELIEVED. Third, one RECEIVED. The evidence of this "transaction" is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life, the SEAL.

2 Corinthians 1:22 NLT and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.

According to Jaimeson-Faussett-Brown: "A seal impressed on a document gives undoubted validity to the contract in it (John 3:33; 6:27; compare 2Co 3:3). So the sense of "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost" (Ro 5:5), and the sense of adoption given through the Spirit at regeneration (Ro 8:15, 16), assure believers of God's good will to them. The Spirit, like a seal, impresses on the soul at regeneration the image of our Father. The "sealing" by the Holy Spirit is spoken of as past once for all. The witnessing to our hearts that we are the children of God, and heirs (Eph 1:11), is the Spirit's present testimony, the "earnest of the (coming) inheritance" (Ro 8:16-18)." (emphasis mine)

Hallelujah!!! Praise and Glory to God!

Ephesians 1:14 ESV who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

(Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.)(esv) (emphasis, mine)

The King James Version says, the earnest of our inheritance and the explanation by MacLaren says, “An ‘earnest’ is a fraction of an inheritance, or of a sum hereafter to be paid, and is the guarantee and pledge that the whole shall one day be handed over to the man who has received the foretaste of it in the ‘earnest.’ So we have a guarantee that what has been promised will be fulfilled! All that is to the praise of God’s glory!!! Matthew Henry concludes his thoughts on this verse with: “For this we were made, and for this we were redeemed; this is the great design of God in all that he has done for us; let all be ascribed unto the praise of his glory.”

Before beginning verse 15, I am compelled to look more closely at the phrase “to the praise of His glory”.

Matthew Poole states, “Unto the praise of his glory; the final salvation and complete redemption of God’s people, will be especially for the glory of God,” “When he comes on that day, he will receive glory from his holy people—praise from all who believe. And this includes you, for you believed what we told you about him.”(2 Thessalonians 1:10). Jamieson-Fausset-Brown makes this comment: “When He shall have come, glorified in his saints—as the element and mirror IN which His glory shall shine brightly”

(John 17:1,4-5,10 NLT) 1After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. 4 I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. 10All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory.

In the ‘YouVersion’ of the Bible I use on my ipad, I found the following plan: 21 Days to Finding Eternal Purpose in Your Daily Work. It is from this devotional study that I found this quote from the day 8 devotion.

“John Piper says to ‘glorify’ God simply means to ‘reflect his greatness’ or reveal his characteristics to others.”

As we arrive at verse 15, we can take a look at where we are now, and where we are headed.

According to Meyer's NT Commentary, "Only now," after Paul has been giving "praise to God for the Christian economy" (the Creator's plan) "of salvation, which since Ephesians 1:3 flowed forth from him in an enraptured stream, does Paul reach that, with which he is wont on other occasions at once to begin - thanksgiving to God for the Christian position of the readers and intercession for them."

Ephesians 1:15 NLT Ever since I first heard  
of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus  
and your love for God's people everywhere,

I am drawn to think about how Paul (people) hear about the Ephesians (other people) without sending someone to find out, which Paul has done on occasion. Have we not been surprised, when meeting someone for the first time, to hear them say, "Oh, I've heard so much about you!"? Did Paul hear about them from someone traveling through Ephesus, or from some of the "faithful", or perhaps from the leaders there? Someone got word to Paul in prison, perhaps wrote to him in order to keep in touch. It's not clear how Paul heard.

This brings me to think about us. Do others hear about us and our spiritual endeavors? Some faithful servants of the Lord do their work subtly or quietly, seemingly unnoticed while others, because of God's calling, are well known. However, as people are touched by a ministry, they spread the word, and so it goes as part of their testimony. By the way, we lift up God, not ourselves. In this way we can continually pray for one another, especially as we hear about someone else in the faith.

This is what brings God glory; not only the salvation of His children, but also their growth in faith and in love for His people everywhere!

As Benson puts it, "Therefore, as his saying that he (Paul) heard of the faith and love of the Thessalonians and of Philemon, does not mean that he was ignorant of these things till they were reported to him, but only that he had heard of their persevering in the true faith of the gospel, and in their love to the saints; so the faith of the Ephesians, which he says he had heard of, was not their first faith, or their conversion to Christianity, but their continued and increasing faith, evidencing itself by the fruit here spoken of. Love unto all the saints -"

Paul heard of their FAITH (inward) in Jesus and their LOVE (outward) toward all the Saints.

Ephesians 1:16 ESV I do not cease to give thanks for you,  
remembering you in my prayers,

In Philippians, Paul remembered them and always prayed for them. In Colossians, Paul prayed for them because he heard of their faith. In Thessalonians, Paul prayed for them as he remembered their work produced by faith. To Philemon, he prays for him as he remembers, because he heard about his faith and love for all his holy people. In Galatians, Paul, after having been there for some time, heard of how they were led astray and so he begins right away to address their condition.

Paul says that the reason he has not stopped giving thanks for the Ephesian believers and continues to pray for them is because of their faith in the Lord Jesus as expressed in verses 3-14, and their love for all God's people.

Because this is so does not mean that they, or we, have arrived and no longer need prayer! As long as we breathe on this earth, we will need prayer. May it be a reminder of our faith and focus, for encouragement, for correction, for favor in our efforts for God, for His anointing, for wisdom, or for anything else that God brings to mind. We need each other and we need God at all times! How could we please Him otherwise?

Ephesians 1:17 NIV I keep asking  
that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the glorious Father,  
may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,  
so that you may know him better.

NLT asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
to give you spiritual wisdom and insight  
so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.

God's desire is that we pray for one another and seek Him, for ourselves and others, for spiritual wisdom and insight so that we might grow in our knowledge of God. I find that it's not just head knowledge about Him, but experiencing Him, His presence, His will, His desires, His direction; in other words "knowing Him" experientially. I want to live in Him, beyond my own earthly capacity to accomplish His will and bring Him glory!

1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Can we even imagine or get our mind around that? I truly want to KNOW GOD, to know how He thinks, what He feels, what He requires of me. I want to dwell on Him and with Him forever! I want to be so intimately acquainted with Him that we are like one (like a part of a working machine, a necessary part) I want to know what I already have and be able to use it, stand on it, live it!

“Prayer is denouncing our own ability or natural capabilities and engaging divine abilities that know no limits.” - Jim Maxim (Acts 4:13 Ministries)

Heading into Paul's prayer, Priscilla Shirer states, “ Paul wasn't asking in prayer that the Ephesian believers would receive - their abundant inheritance of spiritual riches, blessing, power, and authority, but that they would realize it was theirs. As Christians, they already possessed these things, just as we do. But until they realized it, what good would it accomplish?”

I enter into this prayer with this in mind. This is how I desire to pray for everyone. A key phrase here is, I do not cease!

Ephesians 1:18 NLT I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called— his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

AMP And [I pray] that the eyes of your heart [the very center and core of your being] may be enlightened [flooded with light by the Holy Spirit], so that you will know and cherish the hope [the divine guarantee, the confident expectation] to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (God's people),

What are the eyes of our heart?

I've been contemplating “the eyes of my heart”. As I thought of eyes, I see them as an entryway, one of our senses. We see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. Each one of these I can purpose (determine) to concentrate on or not. I may catch the drift of an odor and I can not pay attention to it and move on, or, I can purposefully seek it out to discover its origin.

The same with my eyes. Eyes can see, and yet not see or miss some of the things around them. Or, I can see things all the time, but sometimes I purposefully LOOK for something, such as lost keys, or a beautiful sunrise. When I think of the eyes of my heart, I think of what I am seeking out as most important and thereby dwell upon; my love for the Lord and His word, truth, direction and so forth.



Benson says: "Observe, reader, it is by the eyes of the understanding alone that we discern the things of God; and in order hereto these eyes must first be opened, and then enlightened, by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, spoken of in the former verse."

Another aspect of this verse that draws my attention is "light". I have macular degeneration and I need more and more light on my reading material (or sewing, close-up work) in order to see it better. Light clarifies what it shines on. It points out aspects we may not see clearly without it. God is my light. (1 John 1:5 ...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.) His light makes everything clear!

So Paul is praying that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened, that we would have an understanding of the hope to which He has called you. I believe that that hope encompasses all that the Word tells us concerning God in us, in the past, present and future, including what part we play in His plan; who we are and what we have been given.

Ellicott's Commentary says, "This hope is of the perfection of all, which we are called to enjoy really, but imperfectly, here. ... the great act of the divine mercy revealed to us in the Gospel, by which God summons and invites men to Himself, will naturally produce in those who have yielded to it a hope of immortal and perfect life." Our hope is of living a life of completeness in Heaven. This is God's promise to those who are chosen, called and yielded to the call.

MacLaren's Exposition states: "the great act of the divine mercy revealed to us in the Gospel, by which God summons and invites men to Himself, will naturally produce in those who have yielded to it a hope of immortal and perfect life." As we consider further this hope of our calling, MacLaren brings to our attention that since Paul has heard of the Ephesian's faith and love, that he prayed thus.

He further states: "These two-the faith which apprehends the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, and the love which that faith produces in the heart that accepts the revelation of the infinite love-are crowned by, and are imperfect without, and naturally lead on to the brightness of this great hope, Faith-the reliance of the spirit upon the veracity of the revealing God-gives hope its contents; for the Christian hope is not spun out of your own imaginations, nor is it the mere making objective in a future life of the unfulfilled desires of this disappointing present, but it is the recognition by the trusting spirit of the great and starry truths that are flashed upon it by the Word of God. Faith draws back the curtain, and Hope gazes into the supernal abysses."

What a thought! This takes some time and meditation with prayer that God will clarify exactly what He said, meant and wants for us to know. I am left with such an excitement concerning all that God has for us!

According to MacLaren, "No interpretation of 'the inheritance,' ... has come within sight of the meaning of the word, unless it has grasped this as the central thought: 'Whom

have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.’ Only God can be the portion of a human spirit. And none else can fill the narrowest and the smallest of man’s needs.”

Following this thought, I bring to our attention Psalm 119:57 You are my portion, LORD; I have promised to obey your words. Not only are we to know the “hope to which He has called us”, but also, “the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people,”

Benson says, “And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in his saints — How great the blessings of his grace are, conferred on his saints here, and what an immense treasure of blessedness and glory he hath provided for them hereafter.”

That is indeed so, but hear also from Colossians 1:27 NLT “For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.” [The mystery is the secret expressed in the NLT version.] To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (niv)

WOW! I see the words “Christ in me” in such a different context! God brings light to my understanding and it is so much deeper as I meditate on it. I see my job of dying to myself daily as crucial to allowing Christ in me to work freely! Now! Not just for my eternal inheritance, but for living victoriously now and doing God’s will now on earth. I know that I can’t live without Him; I’m desperate for Him! But wait, Christ is in me!!! That needs to enter my understanding completely and I need to live that out! This is why I must keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, so that nothing shall distract me from truth!

MacLaren’s Exposition regarding “in his people”: “How does a man belong to God? A man belongs to God by the affection of his heart, by the submission of his will, by the references of his actions to Him; and he who thus belongs to God in the same act in which he gives himself to God, receives God as his possession. ... Faith is set forth as the condition for heaven, because faith is the means of union with Christ, by and from whom alone we draw the motives for self-surrender, and the power for sanctity. You cannot have heaven unless you have God. That is step number one. You cannot have God unless you have holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. That is step number 2. You cannot have holiness without faith. That is step number 3. ‘An inheritance among them that are sanctified’; and then there is added ‘by faith which is in me.’ ..the inheritance is nothing less than the fuller possession of God Himself.”

How rich is that?!!!

Colossians 1:27 ...Christ in me the hope of glory.

Ephesians 1:19-20 NLT I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him.

This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

Again, WOW! That power is Christ in me, God says in Zechariah 4:6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.

Our finite minds find it difficult to understand/perceive what all this means. Compared to God, our thoughts are miniscule, earthly. Where have we seen God's power? From the beginning of all things and beyond we have seen the power of God at work. "In the beginning God created..." Behold the power of God to create in Genesis! Can we see it? Can we grasp it? God has infinite power!

A definition of power includes such words as strength, authority, might, and ability. As a title it includes The Mighty One, Majesty, One who is strong and capable. I can not help but to reflect on God's power expressed in the following scriptures. Enjoy, meditate on, worship and praise our Powerful, Majestic God!

What follows are numerous scriptures which I placed here purposefully, because when we read through them and meditate on what God is saying to us through each of them, we are in awe and humbled. We are also energized and empowered as we realize that this same power is available and within us! So amazing that it is often hard to grasp. Please take the time to think on these things!

Psalm 78:26 NIV He released the east wind in the heavens and guided the south wind by his mighty power. See also Psalm 78:42-72

Psalm 68:34 NIV Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the heavens.

Exodus 9:16 NIV But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Exodus 15:6 NIV Your right hand, LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shattered the enemy.

Romans 1:16 NIV For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.NIV

1 Peter 1:4b-5 NIV This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Deuteronomy 4:37 BSB Because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt by His presence and great power,

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 NIV Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 12Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.

2 Chronicles 25:7-8 NIV O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel—not with any of the Ephraimites. Even if you go and fight courageously in battle, God will overthrow you before the enemy, for God has the power to help or to overthrow.” This God said when God spoke to Amaziah.

Job 24:22 (context) Job: Judgment for the Wicked

...21They prey on the barren and childless, and show no kindness to the widow. 22Yet by His power, God drags away the mighty; though rising up, they have no assurance of life. 23He gives them a sense of security, but His eyes are on their ways....Berean Study Bible ·

Job 26:12-14 NLT 12By his power the sea grew calm.

By his skill he crushed the great sea monster.

13His Spirit made the heavens beautiful,  
and his power pierced the gliding serpent.

14These are just the beginning of all that he does,  
merely a whisper of his power.

Who, then, can comprehend the thunder of his power?”

Job 36:22 NIV God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him?

Psalms 21:13 ESV Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power.

Psalm 62:11 NLT God has spoken plainly, and I have heard it many times: Power, O God, belongs to you;

Psalm 66:3 NLT Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.

Psalm 71:18 Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

Psalm 90:11 NLT Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve.

Psalm 106:8 7Our fathers in Egypt did not grasp Your wonders or remember Your abundant kindness; but they rebelled by the sea, there at the Red Sea. 8Yet He saved them for the sake of His name, to make His power known. 9He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; He led them through the depths as through a desert....

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Psalm 111:6 NLT He has shown his great power to his people by giving them the lands of other nations.

Isaiah 40:26 NLT Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.

Jeremiah 27:5 NIV With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please.

Revelation 19:1 NIV After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

It is this mighty power that God has given to us, that is working in and through us.

Daniel 2:37 NIV (Daniel to king/about to interpret his dream) Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory;

Power is given to us by God. It's His to give! (Not only does He give transforming power to us individually, but this power is also given corporately to the church.)

Isaiah 40:29 NLT He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.

HALLELUIA!!!! What an awesome God, Heavenly Father we have!!!!

Ephesians 1:21 NLT Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else— not only in this world but also in the world to come.

I see Jesus now in a different light. In Philippians 2:6-7 it says: In his very nature he was God. Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn't take advantage of that fact. Instead, he made himself nothing. He did this by taking on the nature of a servant. He was made just like human beings.

Jesus came to earth willing to give of Himself entirely in order to achieve God's plan and goal of saving all, who were willing, from their sin. When He had accomplished His task, He was raised up to a place of the greatest honor, far above all authority on earth or in heaven. Far above the highest authority in the earth, be it government or any other leadership or wealth capacity, in heaven, far above angels, good or evil.

As Barnes says in his Notes, "The general idea is that Christ is elevated above all ranks of creatures, however exalted. and by whatever name they may be known. ... Not only in this world - Not only above all kings, and princes, and rulers of every grade and rank on earth. But also in that which is to come - This refers undoubtedly to heaven. The meaning is, that he is Supreme over all."

Why is He in this position? He didn't usurp God's authority in this, but God did as He said.

Ephesians 1:22-23 NLT God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

Colossians 1:16-17 NIV For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

So how does this benefit the church?

Colossians 1:18 NIV And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Barnes states it this way, "The meaning is, that the church sustains the same relation to Christ, which the body does to the head. It helps to form the entire person. There is a close and necessary union. The one is not complete without the other. And one is dependent on the other. When the body has all its members in due proportion, and is in sound and vigorous health, the whole person then is complete and entire. So it is to be in the kingdom of the Redeemer. He is the head; and that redeemed Church is the body, the fulness, the completion, the filling-up of the entire empire over which he presides, and which he rules."

In such a position He is to be worshiped and glorified.

NOTE: J. Vernon McGee says that "in Ephesians, Christ is exalted above all things, God having "put all things under his feet" (Ephesians 1:22. Christ is the center of the circle of which the church is the periphery."

## Church

Paul Ballard sums up chapter 1 as follows and gives a short synopsis of chapter 2.

"Christians have received every spiritual blessing through Christ (1:3)  
God's ultimate purpose is to transform the whole cosmos (1:9-10)  
This takes great power - the transforming power seen in the resurrection,  
Ascension and enthronement of Christ (1:19-23)  
Paul now wants to help us understand that this power is at work in our lives as  
individuals (2:1-10  
and corporately in the church (2:11-22)"

## Chapter Two

Ephesians 2:1-2 NIV As for you,  
you were dead in your transgressions and sins,  
in which you used to live  
when you followed the ways of this world  
and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air,  
the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.



It is said that verses 1-3 focus on the fact that “human beings are born into the kingdom of darkness and are enemies of God by nature.” (Paul’s prison Epistles: Paul and the Ephesians; YouVersion plan\*)

As I think about verses 1 and 2, I see that we/I do not realize our state, our need at that time. We may be aware that all is not well, though we choose to ignore this. We may feel that something is missing. We are not truly free and content with ourselves, and so we search and search the things of this world, which never fully satisfy.

Matthew Henry says, “ From Scripture it is clear that whether men have been most prone to sensual or to spiritual wickedness, all men, being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath. What reason have sinners, then, to seek earnestly for that grace which will make them, of children of wrath, children of God and heirs of glory!” We may have been perfectly content (deceived) enjoying the pleasures of this world. “Eat, drink and be merry!”

After all, who is the one who tempts and draws us? The “ruler of the kingdom of the air,” And the word says that he is “the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” Children of disobedience: we, as parents, work so hard to discipline our children and try to get them to obey! Yet, here we are as adults, who are being disciplined by our Father God in order to cause us to desire obedience over disobedience. In such a state we were enslaved,. Ballard says, “The devil kept us bound in sin and separated from God.” Such is human nature from the fall of Adam and Eve.

What is being “dead” in our trespasses and sins? I recently went to the visitation service for a dear friend who passed away. As I gazed into her casket, I was so aware that she was not there! She was not going to smile, say anything, enjoy or be disappointed with anything! She wasn’t there anymore. She could not react! When we were dead in our trespasses and sins, we could not respond any differently. We weren’t concerned with spiritual sins...we weren’t there! Should we care now about someone who is in that same state? What is our concern for the state of the lost ?

Matthew Henry says, “But if we viewed things aright, we should be far more affected by the thought of a dead soul, a lost, fallen spirit. A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world. Wicked men are slaves to Satan.”

Ephesians 2:3 NIV All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Before I get into the commentaries, I was thinking about our unregenerated nature and its beginnings. This took me back to Adam and Eve. They had such a wonderful relationship with the Father, one that should have satisfied their every desire. But they had a rebellious nature and wanted something that they were told they could not have. Hence, sin came into the world.

I, myself, used to be filled with thoughts of food; always hungry, always thinking of what I was going to eat next, thinking of all the luscious things my flesh desired and my taste buds craved. Unsatisfied! Nothing was ever enough! When it tasted soooo good, I wanted more, more, more! I “wore” that sin in my body of excessive “flesh”.

A child may behave the same way, wanting what they could/should not have. I remember working in the church nursery one summer and seeing these little ones, babes, who would hit another child with a toy if they couldn't have the one that they wanted. We, by nature, dream of what we want, want more than we need, be it money, things, food, drink ~ you name it!

So what do Biblical experts have to say? First, we understand that Paul is speaking not only about himself and the Ephesians, but now also about both Jews and Gentiles alike. Isaiah 53:6 says We all like sheep have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way;

Ellicott's Commentary states this: “, it includes both the appetites and the passions of our fleshly nature, and also the “thoughts” of the mind itself, so far as it is devoted to this visible world of sense, alienated from God, and therefore under the influence of the powers of evil. In fact, in scriptural use the sins of “the flesh,” “the world,” and “the devil” are not different classes of sins, but different aspects of sin, and any one of the three great enemies is made at times to represent all.”

Benson describes this nature as follows: “To the base appetites of which we were enslaved, so as to forget the true dignity and happiness of rational and immortal spirits: fulfilling the desires of the flesh — Yielding to, and suffering ourselves to be governed by those corrupt appetites, inclinations, and passions, which had their seat in our fallen body, or in our evil nature; and of the mind — The earthly and devilish mind, that is, the desires, lusts, and passions, which were inherent in our still more corrupted souls.” He further states: “Observe, reader, the desires or lusts of the flesh, lead men to gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, and other gross, brutal sins: and the inclinations or desires of the mind, or imaginations, ... prompt them to ambition, revenge, covetousness, and whatever other earthly and diabolical wickedness can have place in the fallen spirit of man. And were by nature — That is, in our natural state, or by reason of our natural inclination to all sorts of evil, and this even from our birth; children of wrath .”

I look at our world today and the sin that abounds. Not only are there unjust wars, (when is war justified?) but human corruption that the world has never seen before. Those who participate in such, feel that they are entitled, justified, and are doing no wrong! They don't acknowledge God and so they feel that they are accountable to no one but themselves and their pleasures and desires. Lately I have heard of high school students who say, "I am a dog." (and today, who can tell them otherwise?) and so they crawl around on hands and knees in the hallways! A girl stated that she was a cat, so she was allowed to be silent. What about the guy who says, "I'm a girl". Who can tell him otherwise? (God!) But no one does for fear of lawsuits etc. Anything goes these days and it will only get worse! Base depravity!

Barnes notes says: "While the utmost effort was to be made to save them, they were in no way to partake of their sins; their conduct was to be regarded as loathsome and contagious; and those who attempted to save them were to take every precaution to preserve their own purity."

God abhors sin and cannot tolerate it! Jude 1:23 NLT Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.

But God had a plan to deal with sin, before we were born.

Ephesians 2:4-5 NIV But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

According to the afore mentioned \*You Version plan (p.25), Verses 4-10 detail "the way God grants us citizenship in his kingdom is by transferring us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light."

It was God's character. He loved us, loves us, even in our sin, and He saved us, drew us up out of our sinful pit. It was His mercy and grace! It's because of Christ's sacrifice on my/our behalf, and our receiving God's precious gift of mercy, grace and forgiveness. We are alive in Christ!

I love the way MacLaren puts this. "We have got both sides ... ; man's actual condition, 'dead in trespasses'; man's possible condition, and the actual condition of thousands of men-made to live again in Jesus Christ, and with Him raised from the dead, and with Him gone up on high, and with Him sitting at God's right hand. That is what you and I may be if we will; if we will not, then we must be the other." (emphasis mine)

I see that God's mercy speaks to our heart that there is a better way. It is we who must decide to listen, hear and turn toward that loving invitation of God, the Father. It is we who must decide to turn, repent and live!

John 3:5-6 NLT Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.

We have been saved from God's wrath!

Ephesians 2:6-7 NIV And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

How amazing is it and how awesome is the realization that God loves us so much that when Jesus died on the cross, He really did take our sins upon Himself; and when God raised Him from the earth physically, He likewise raised us up with Him spiritually. (Our physical raising comes later.) Why did He do this?

7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. NLT

God's grace, having nothing to do with our efforts, has caused us to be raised up with Christ. Virtually, we are with Him spiritually in the heavenly realms and of a certainty, because God can't lie, we will be with Him physically in due time. Indeed, can we truly recite all of God's grace and kindness expressed to us? Let us count the ways!

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary:

6. raised us up together—with Christ. The "raising up" presupposes previous quickening of Jesus in the tomb, and of us in the grave of our sins.

made us sit together—with Christ, namely, in His ascension. Believers are bodily in heaven in point of right, and virtually so in spirit, and have each their own place assigned there, which in due time they shall take possession of (Php 3:20, 21). He does not say, "on the right hand of God"; a prerogative reserved to Christ peculiarly; though they shall share His throne (Re 3:21).

in Christ Jesus—Our union with Him is the ground of our present spiritual, and future bodily, resurrection and ascension. "Christ Jesus" is the phrase mostly used in this

Epistle, in which the office of the Christ, the Anointed Prophet, Priest and King, is the prominent thought; when the Person is prominent, "Jesus Christ" is the phrase used." God's reason or purpose for doing this is expressed in the seventh verse. The NLT says it best: So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. The riches of God's grace expresses the value of it, as "the incredible wealth".

Perhaps we can understand it better, realizing what great value we have in His grace! Ephesians 2:8-9 NLT God saved you by his grace when you believed.

And you can't take credit for this;  
it is a gift from God.

9Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done,  
so none of us can boast about it.

//8. NIV: For it is by grace you have been saved,

through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

God's grace is His unmerited favor. Understanding this is almost beyond our comprehension. How could He do this? Why? We see what He said, but we seem to understand from our worldly point of view and in that sense, it doesn't make sense. Who could/would do that? Only God! His love goes beyond human love and caring! He created us and He "knows" us. He knows from whence we have come and He knows His plan for those who, by faith, receive Him and choose to walk with Him, submitting to His will, His love, His character. He is so patient with us that He is willing to do this in order that His perfect will be accomplished! Hallelujah! Thank You, Father, for your mercy, love and grace (and patience)!!!

MacLaren's Exposition discusses the three terms: Salvation, Faith and Grace. He has some profound thoughts that are worthy of our attention.

"The more familiar a word is, the more likely are common ideas about it to be hazy." He gave an example as follows: "A frond of sea-weed, as long as it is in the ocean, unfolds its delicate films and glows with its subdued colours. Take it out, and it is hard and brown and ugly, and you have to plunge it into the water again before you see its beauty. So with these well-worn Christian terms; you have to put them back, by meditation and thought, especially as to their bearing on yourself, in order to understand their significance and to feel their power."

With regard to Salvation he says, "to begin with, and in its original and lowest application, this whole set of expressions is applied to physical danger from which it delivers, and physical disease which it heals." He goes further in saying that it is "a deliverance from something impending-peril-and a healing of something infecting us-the sickness of sin." What would it be that He is delivering us from? His wrath, the penalty for our sins. Salvation would be saving us from Hell, the penalty for the unrepentant

sinner. One is saved from spiritual death. To quote MacLaren, “He ‘saves a soul from death.’ Sin, wrath, death, death spiritual as well as physical, these are the dangers which lie in wait; and the enemies which have laid their grip upon us. And from these, as the shepherd drags the kid from the claws of the lion or the bear’s hug, the salvation of the Gospel wrenches and rescues men.”

So, what are the positive aspects of salvation?

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

MacLaren: “The Gospel then reveals the Mighty Power that lifts itself between us and judgment, the Mighty Power that intervenes to prevent absolute destruction, the Power which saves from sin, from wrath, from death. ... It not only strips off the poisoned robe, but it invests with a royal garb. It is not only negatively the withdrawal from the power, and the setting above the reach, of all evil, in the widest sense of that word, physical and moral, but it is the endowment with every good, in the widest sense of that word, physical and moral, which man is capable of receiving, or God has wealth to bestow. And this positive significance of the Christian salvation, which includes not only pardon, and favour, and purity, and blessedness here in germ, and sure and certain hope of an overwhelming glory hereafter-this is all suggested to us by the fact that in Scripture, more than once, to ‘have everlasting life,’ and to ‘enter into the Kingdom of God,’ are employed as equivalent and alternative expressions for being saved with the salvation of God.” (emphasis mine)

MacLaren also points out that “we have been saved”. “a past act, done once, and with abiding present consequences, which are realized progressively in the Christian life, and reach forward into infinitude.”

Past, present and future! Hallelujah! I can’t help but to sing out His praises for the love of our Father! What a plan!!! What love and compassion for “the world”.

And this is open to everyone! How unfortunate that there are so many who simply resist and refuse to acknowledge sin in their life! They reject God’s plan and provision to cover their iniquities. They think that if they don’t even acknowledge God, they don’t have to deal with all of this “sin” talk. To them, there is no sin. What loss they foolishly are resisting. How it must grieve God, who loves so lavishly and generously provides all things good for His children!

How very important it is for us to take our time in reading these scriptures and thoughts! We must not rush through any of it, but piece by piece, we must meditate on it and seek God’s revelation to us, helping us to see clearly and to understand the depth of God’s love and compassion that brought forth His plan for our salvation and care. God is

faithful beyond measure, and patient beyond our understanding, desiring us to believe Him and His word. Desiring us to yield and come to Him through His Son, Jesus. This takes thought and meditation to come to the full awareness of His grace.

We have been saved through faith. What is faith? Faith is the belief or trust in things unseen. I'd like to quote Wave Nunnally (Professor Emeritus of Early Judaism and Christian Origins Evangel University, Springfield, MO.) whose commentary on the book of Acts I have recently been given.

“Biblical faith is a relationship of trust in God. This trust is not based on a set of ideas, philosophy, speculation, intuition, subjective spiritual experiences, or mind games. Rather, biblical faith (trust) is based on God’s past record of faithfulness. It is grounded in the historical acts of God in history which reveal Him as a benevolent, trustworthy, faithful, covenant-keeping God. ... Biblical faith is an assurance , a trust in a God who has proven Himself to be One who is trustworthy. ” (emphasis mine)

And that brings us to worship and give thanks to our precious God and Savior! Oh God, How we exalt You!

Then we are brought to another step.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

It is imperative that we understand that God made us, and He made us perfectly. Indeed, we are His handiwork. However, then came the “fall” of Adam and Eve.

Romans 5:18-19 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.

In our regenerate state, God’s plan was for us to do “good works”, not to earn our salvation, but in concurrence with God’s plan.

MacLaren says: “We are to work downwards from salvation because we have it, not that we may get it. And whatever ‘good works’ may mean, they are the consequences, not the causes, of ‘salvation,’ whatever that may mean. But they are consequences, and they are the very purpose of it. “



The bottom line is that we are saved to do good works, not saved by them.

Philippians 2:13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

And as a result of God's will, we follow His plan, which includes the works that He prepared ahead of time for us to do.

Benson puts it this way: "for as all acts of acceptable obedience must proceed from faith, and this faith is wrought in our hearts by the gracious influence of the Divine Spirit, it is most certain that we must acknowledge ourselves to be his workmanship, so far as there is any thing in us agreeable to the nature and will of God; being created in and through Christ Jesus unto good works — In order that we may have inclination and power both to perform them, and to delight in so doing; and may give ourselves up to this, and be continually engaged therein, as far as we have ability and opportunity." (emphasis mine)

Philippians 2:13 ESV for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Ephesians 2:11 NIV Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.

Again, according to the You Version plan\*, verses 11-22 discuss "the nature of our citizenship in the kingdom of light."

According to Ellicott, the terms "circumcision" and "uncircumcised" are just words holding no meaning now. They refer to an act of the flesh and not the heart. In fact the "circumcised" looked down upon the "uncircumcised" with contempt and this Paul admonished as a fleshly or carnal attitude. Ellicott says this is, "a contrast between the false or carnal, and the true or spiritual circumcision, attributing the former to the unbelieving Jews, the latter to all Christians."

In the same way, we may feel that we are walking in obedience in every way and tend to feel pride in this fact, yet it's not the outward behaviors alone that God is looking at, but the heart as well. No one should boast!

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

“Wherefore remember - The design of this evidently is, to excite a sense of gratitude in their bosoms for that mercy which had called them from the errors and sins of their former lives, to the privileges of Christians. It is a good thing for Christians to “remember” what they were. No faculty of the mind can be better employed to produce humility, penitence, gratitude, and love, than the memory. It is well to recall the recollection of our former sins; to dwell upon our hardness of heart, our alienation, and our unbelief; and to remember our wanderings and our guilt, until the heart be affected, and we are made to feel. The converted Ephesians had much guilt to recollect and to mourn over in their former life; and so have all who are converted to the Christian faith.”

I can't say it better!

Ephesians 2:12 NLT In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope.

And so were we, living in this world without God and without hope and not even recognizing our state. Ellicott explains it this way.

“That condition is first summed up in one expression. They were “separate from Christ.” Then from this are drawn two gloomy consequences: first (1), that they had no part in God’s special covenant, “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,” and so “strangers to the (often repeated) covenants of the promise” of the Messiah; next (2), that, thus left in “the world,” they had “no hope” of spiritual life and immortality, and were “godless” in thought and act. For Christ is at once the end and substance of the covenant of Israel, and the Revealer of God, and therefore of spiritual life in man, to all mankind. To be without Him is to lose both covenant and light.”

Ephesians 2:13 NIV But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

This is the love of God expressed to us in our acceptance through Jesus Christ, His own blood sacrifice on our behalf. God has made a way! Benson adds this clarification: “But now in Christ Jesus — In consequence of your union with him, and your interest in him by faith, ye, who formerly were far off — From God and his people, (as in Ephesians 2:12,) are made nigh to both, by the blood of Christ — Whereby he hath

atoned for your sins, and opened a free and honourable way for your approaching God, and becoming entitled to all the privileges of his people.”

It is our responsibility to receive this incomparable gift of God, by faith. Jesus is the bond between the believer and God and each other. Now, we have access to the Father whereas previously we were separated in every way from God, His church and His promises. Praise be to God for His infinite love, mercy and plan for us!

Ephesians 2:14 NLT For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

Jesus Christ, Himself, is our peace!

David Jeremiah, in a recent devotion said this: “John 3:16 clearly states that the whole world is the object of God’s love. Though Jesus was sent first to the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24; Romans 1:16), it was so Israel might be readied to fulfill her role of being a “light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). From the beginning, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).”

As I meditate on this today, (2022) I pray that that which divides so many in this wonderful country of ours (the United States of America), would come to this same unity of heart and spirit through Jesus Christ. He is truly the answer! Nothing is too difficult for Him!

I have been thinking greatly about this passage. As I looked into Jewish history in the Old Testament, I don’t see where Non-Jewish people became Jewish. God chose the Jewish people from their lineage. However, Nunnally says, “The term (prosoelutoi) refers to Gentiles who have converted to Judaism and were now considered fully Jewish. [Acts 6:5, 13:43; Matt. 23:15]

According to (Answers by) Tony Garland, Th.M., Th.D., A278

“There is no indication in Scripture that any Gentile ever “become a Jew” in the sense that they were fully considered as a Jew. There were always distinctions made such that Gentiles that identified with the Jewish faith were distinguished from the Jews themselves, for example as “god-fearers” or “proselytes” (Acts 6:5; 8:27; 10:2; 13:4). A Gentile could never be a full Jew in any real sense—as is clear from the commotion that Jews raised when they accused Paul of having brought a Gentile follower of God into the temple where he would not have been allowed (Acts 21:28-29). ...

there is every indication in Scripture that Gentiles were never considered full Jews—since they lacked the physical line of descent from Jacob.”

Regarding the Jews and Gentiles,

There was always a clear distinction between God’s chosen people, the Jews and everyone else. However, Jesus came to get rid of that separation and any other that would separate man from God. The Gentiles were grafted in! Jesus had been preaching for 3 years and the Jews did not understand. They just didn’t “get it”! It took His death on the cross, the precious blood of Christ, God in the flesh, to show them that God loved the world and had a plan for the redemption of all who would believe and come to Him by faith. Faith that what He said was true and that He would do what He said He would do. Indeed, the veil was torn and there was now free access to the Father because of the sacrifice of the Son. Love conquering all!

Ephesians 2:15 NLT He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.

According to Ellicott, “The Law, therefore, is abolished as a law “in ordinances”—that is, “in the letter”—and is established in the spirit. ... Paul always implies in his proper and distinctive use of the word “law.” It signifies the will of God, as expressed in formal commandments, and enforced by penalties on disobedience. ... that Christ, “the end of the law,” has superseded it by the free covenant of the Spirit; and that He has done this for us “in His flesh,” especially by His death and resurrection.”

How amazing! I also see an example of “parenting” from the ‘ultimate’ parent! When we are training children, there are laws/rules that they must follow. As they grow, learn, understand and obey, the “rules” become internalized in their spirit and they “know” what is expected of them. Such a generalization falls so far short of what I have come to understand that God has done for us through Jesus Christ, but perhaps it gives a perspective regarding the law. It is never deleted, but works internally/intrinsically in our spirit, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus ended the “system” of law, bringing peace between Jews and Gentiles, and in so doing, He created “one new people from the two groups.” As Ellicott expresses it, “Here we have the former sense simply. In the new man “there is neither Jew nor Gentile,” but “Christ is all and in all”.”

Ephesians 2:16 NIV Together as one body,  
Christ reconciled both groups to God

by means of his death on the cross,  
and our hostility toward each other  
was put to death.

I am caught by the phrase “our hostility toward each other was put to death”. I see that this is referring to Jews and Gentiles, but I wonder about the state of affairs in our world today, in 2022. There is such hostility in so many places, not the least of which is in our own country! Barnes says, “but it was that both, who had been alienated from God, should be reconciled to “him.” ... In one body - One spiritual personage - the church;“ I see that today, the world is really at war with a Holy God! There is such a sense of evil around and, especially in our country, people are going out of their way to alienate themselves far from God. Truly I see that the battle is against principalities and powers...

Ephesians 6:12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. More about this later.

Ephesians 2:17 NIV He came and preached peace  
to you who were far away  
and peace to those who were near.  
[NLT He brought this Good News of peace  
to you Gentiles who were far away from him,  
and peace to the Jews who were near.]

Jesus came with a purpose. He, who is our peace, preached peace to both the Jews and Gentiles. According to Barnes, “The word “peace” here refers to reconciliation with God.” Again, I am drawn to John 3:16 NLT For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. They would be reconciled with God through Christ and the cross.

Matthew Poole’s Commentary:

And came; partly in his own person, as to the Jews, and partly by his apostles, whom he appointed to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: so 2 Corinthians 13:3.

And preached peace to you which were afar off; far from the knowledge of the truth, from Christ, and salvation by him, as Ephesians 3:13.

And to them that were nigh; nigh in comparison of the Gentiles, nigh by the knowledge of God and his law, and the promises of the Messiah: see Isaiah 57:19.

Ephesians 2:18 NLT Now all of us can come to the Father

through the same Holy Spirit  
because of what Christ has done for us.

Hallelujah!

Matthew Henry says it best.

“Through the person, sacrifice, and mediation of Christ, sinners are allowed to draw near to God as a Father, and are brought with acceptance into his presence, with their worship and services, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as one with the Father and the Son. Christ purchased leave for us to come to God; and the Spirit gives a heart to come, and strength to come, and then grace to serve God acceptably.”

Ellicott further points out that, “It will be noted that we have here one of the implicit declarations of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, so frequent in this Epistle. The unity of the whole Church, as united “to the Father,” “through the Son,” and “in the Spirit,” is here summed up in one sentence,”

So, the bottom line is that now anyone is allowed access to God, having been invited through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, there is no more division between Jew and Gentile.

Ephesians 2:19 NIV So now you Gentiles  
are no longer strangers and foreigners.  
You are citizens  
along with all of God’s holy people.  
You are members of God’s family.

I am drawn to the words stranger and foreigner. A foreigner is one who does not belong to a particular place or group; a stranger or an outsider. A stranger is one who does not know or is not known. I remember the feeling of being a stranger, or foreigner of sorts, when we moved from New York state to Florida. I was in 10th grade and it was the middle of the year. I was not easily accepted and had an intense feeling of loneliness and isolation; a sense of being excluded, which I was and not only because of school relationships, but also because I didn’t belong. Just as we were before we received the gift of God. I was part of the “world” and behaved as they did.

But now, because of the love of God and the gift of His Son, Jesus, who died in my/our place, we have been accepted and have access to God the Father. We not only belong to Him, but we are members of His household. “In Him the whole building is joined

together and has become a holy temple in the Lord". We are a part of that and the purpose is "to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit".

Benson's Commentary says this:

"Now, therefore — Being thus reconciled; ye — Believing Gentiles; are no more strangers and foreigners — ... in the former, (ζῆνοι,) the apostle may refer to persons of a different country; and in the latter, (παροικοι,) to those of a different family. ... The Church of God is here spoken of under the emblem of a city, as it is also Isaiah 26:1-2; Isaiah 60:1, &c.; Isaiah 62:12; Php 3:20, (where the original expression signifies, our citizenship in heaven,) as also Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:10-27, and in many other places of the Old and New Testaments. Of this city, the believers at Ephesus are here represented as genuine citizens, entitled to all the glorious immunities and privileges of it; and of the household of God — Members of his family, his servants, yea, his sons and daughters."

Another interesting comment was made by MacLaren as follows:

"The Roman Empire had in Paul's time gathered into a great unity the Asiatics of Ephesus, the Greeks of Corinth, the Jews of Palestine, and men of many another race, but grand and imposing as that great unity was, it was to Paul a poor thing compared with the oneness of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Asiatics of Ephesus, Greeks of Corinth, Jews of Palestine and members of many another race could say, 'Our citizenship is in heaven.' The Roman Eagle swept over wide regions in her flight, but the Dove of Peace, sent forth from Christ's hand, travelled further than she."

Ephesians 2:20 NLT Together, we are his house,  
built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.  
And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

Long ago, when I first became a Christian, we had a visiting evangelist who was preaching. I do not recall what his subject matter was, but I became so aware of a Biblical truth that I did not fully realize at the time, but it has never left me. It is in regard to the "temple of God". I became so aware that we are the temple of God! When I read this verse, I see that same principle "together we are His house".

Ellicott says, "Thus in 1 Corinthians 3:9, from "ye are God's building," St. Paul passes at once to the building of individual character on the one foundation; in 1 Corinthians 14:4-5; 1 Corinthians 14:12; 1 Corinthians 14:26, the edification of the Church has reference to the effect of prophecy on individual souls; in 1 Peter 2:5, the emphasis is still on the building up of "living stones" upon "a living stone."



I may not fully understand it, but I have such an internal conviction that we are that building, made of living stones! Imagine! “I can only imagine”!

There is so much preparation necessary before a building rises above the ground. I can't help but to think of this in relation to v.20. In today's modern world, there is much ground work before the actual foundation is laid. Footers, pipes, etc. (much of which I know nothing!) But after which the foundation is laid. The house could not be built (intending it to stand) simply upon the ground even with the soil preparations done. It needs that firm foundation (as upon a rock). In this scripture, the foundation is all that God has done before (Old Testament). We recognize the work of the prophets and the apostles (New Testament) who came before Jesus, Himself, being the Cornerstone)

Ellicott states this: “it appears to mean a massive corner-stone, in which the two lines of the wall at their foundation met, by which they were bonded together, and on the perfect squareness of which the true direction of the whole walls depended, since the slightest imperfection in the corner-stone would be indefinitely multiplied along the course of the walls.”

MacLaren adds the following: ‘...the representation of the foundation, as being laid by apostles and prophets, refers to them as proclaiming the Gospel. The real laying of the foundation is the work of the divine power and love which gave us Christ, and it is the Divine Voice which proclaims, ‘Behold I lay in Zion a foundation!’

From this I understand that Jesus is that foundation. He brings it all together. The church, which rises above all that went before, and Jesus, the One who is the Cornerstone. Jesus said to Peter that upon “this rock”, the truth of the gospel, (that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God), He would build His church.

Ephesians 2:21 NIV In him the whole building  
is joined together  
and rises to become  
a holy temple in the Lord.

I like the way Matthew Henry puts it!

“The church is also compared to a building, founded on the doctrine of Christ; delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New. God dwells in all

believers now; they become the temple of God through the working of the blessed Spirit.”

I can only imagine the unity and joy, and praise that arises from “the church” when we are with Him in Heaven. (We sometimes get a glimpse of this in our corporate worship.) It will all become so clear. We will be so full of gratitude and I’m sure we will never get enough of worshiping our God and Savior. I’m so thankful even now for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives! So, Let us begin to raise praise, thanksgiving and exultation to our Living God for all He has done and is doing!

Ephesians 2:22 NIV And in him you too  
are being built together  
to become a dwelling  
in which God lives by his Spirit.

This verse refers to the fact that Paul is saying that these Ephesians are also now a part of the church, “being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives...” There is unity in this body.

We are being built together to become a dwelling, a holy temple in the Lord.

Matthew Henry now says:

“God dwells in all believers now; they become the temple of God through the working of the blessed Spirit. Let us then ask if our hopes are fixed on Christ, according to the doctrine of his word? Have we devoted ourselves as holy temples to God through him? Are we habitations of God by the Spirit, are we spiritually-minded, and do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Let us take heed not to grieve the holy Comforter. Let us desire his gracious presence, and his influences upon our hearts. Let us seek to discharge the duties allotted to us, to the glory of God.” (emphasis is mine)

~Good questions to consider~

Now, consider what it will be like when we all get together with Him in Heaven! What glory that will be, and it will all go to God. We will be “to the praise of His glory”!

Chapter Three

Ephesians 3:1 NIV For this reason I, Paul,  
the prisoner of Christ Jesus  
for the sake of you Gentiles—

“Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Paul considers himself a prisoner who allowed himself to be captured by Christ Jesus, for His purpose which was to take the gospel of grace through Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Paul considered himself “a prisoner” , yet his bonds were real, but his perspective made him free. In his bonds he prayed for opportunity to preach/teach the gospel throughout the palace praetorian guard and all other places.

Benson says that the reason is, “That you may be so built up together, and made the temple of God, and his habitation through the Spirit;” (Eph.2:22) Paul is clarifying that his suffering in prison, is for the purpose of their redemption and that they are “not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.” (v.13)

Ephesians 3:2-3 NLT assuming, by the way,  
that you know God gave me the special responsibility  
of extending his grace to you Gentiles.  
As I briefly wrote earlier,  
God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me.

Paul is making sure that the Ephesians understand that God called him to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and that he is “a steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). It is not just ideas out of his intellect speaking to them.

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” NIV

1 Corinthians 4:1 This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. NIV  
See also: Galatians 1:15-20

Ephesians 3:4-5 NIV In reading this, then,  
you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,  
which was not made known to people in other generations  
as it has now been revealed by the Spirit  
to God’s holy apostles and prophets.

All through the Old Testament, the Jewish people were God's chosen people. Everything He did was for their good. He chose them, loved them, disciplined or chastised them, punished them and other times blessed them, protected them, saved a remnant etc. Yet, God kept a "mystery" from them. So now Paul proceeds to explain what God has revealed to Him, as well as the other apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. This would be his insight into God's provision for the Jews and Gentiles, both, to be the recipients of God's grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This "mystery" had not been revealed to the prophets of old but has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets of this present age. It came "in the fullness of time." (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10)

Ephesians 3:6 NLT And this is God's plan:  
Both Gentiles and Jews  
who believe the Good News  
share equally in the riches inherited by God's children.  
Both are part of the same body,  
and both enjoy the promise of blessings  
because they belong to Christ Jesus.

I am reminded of the workers who were hired at the beginning of the day and throughout the day. Those hired at the end of the day were paid the same as those who were hired at the beginning of the day. This translation makes this passage quite clear. They "share equally".

Ephesians 2:15-16 NLT He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

Galatians 3:14, 28-29 NLT Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith./ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Ephesians 3:7 NLT By God's grace and mighty power,  
I have been given the privilege of serving him

by spreading this Good News.

It was God's grace that called Paul to this "privilege" of such great importance and it was God's "mighty power" that saved him (brought him from his opposition to the truth of God such that he was killing Christians) and equipped him for it as well. He, indeed, saw his position as a privilege to be a servant. He was entrusted with that of great value and worth, the good news, the gospel, the truth of God.

It's the same with us. We have been given the grace (all we need) to proclaim the gospel of Christ, wisdom of God, to all people. Let them know that they too can, by faith in Christ, "approach God with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 3:8 NLT Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.

Paul expresses his position most humbly, recognizing his past, but likewise recognizing that he was called by grace and that not of anything that he has done to earn that, nor to be undeserving of serving the living God! God's grace and power is exemplified in and through Paul. He is also asserting that God called him to bring the good news to the Gentiles; those who had previously been ostracized and held separate.

Benson describes these treasures to be some as follows:

"In the riches of Christ, here justly said to be unsearchable, are included, 1st, His redeeming acts; such as his incarnation, his enduring temptation, his obedience unto death, his resurrection, ascension, intercession. 2d, His saving benefits; as illumination, justification, adoption, the spirit of adoption and regeneration, the restoration of God's image to the soul, communion with God, and eternal life." (His commentary goes on to explain extensively.)

Ephesians 3:9 NLT I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

This mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, is now made clear and Paul reiterates that he was chosen to explain this mystery to ALL. Though it had been kept secret from the beginning, now, everyone can know the truth! God's secret is now revealed and offered freely to ALL!

Colossians 1:15-16, 26 NLT Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God

created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. 26. This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people.

Ellicott says that Jesus even wept over Jerusalem "because His light was, by wilful blindness, "hidden from their eyes" (Luke 19:41)" And as Barnes stated, God's plan was "... to make all men see - In order that the whole human family might see the glory of God in the plan of salvation."

Ephesians 3:10-11 NLT God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Barnes notes declares: "One grand purpose in the creation of the universe was, that the wisdom of God might be clearly shown by the church. ... the divine character which could be obtained only in connection with the redemption of the world. Hence the universe was created, and man was made upon the earth, not merely to illustrate the divine perfections in the work of creation, but in a still more illustrious manner in the work of redemption."

"Now, since the Messiah is come; now, under the Christian dispensation, this revelation is to be made to distant worlds. Unto the principalities and powers (The general sense in this verse is, that the Lord Jesus was exalted to the highest conceivable dignity and honor; \*) - To the angelic hosts - the intelligent beings that surround the throne of God;" \*Found in the notes of Ephesians 1:21.

The NIV version uses the expression manifold wisdom. Barnes explained that as follows: "The manifold wisdom of God - Literally, "much-variegated." It means the "greatly-diversified wisdom." It does not mean merely that there was "great" wisdom, but that the wisdom shown was diversified and varied; like changing, Variegated colors. There was a "beautiful and well-ordered variety of dispensations" toward that church, all of which tended to evince the wisdom of God."

Ephesians 3:12 BSB In Him and through faith in Him we may enter God's presence with boldness and confidence.

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil which divided the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in the temple, was torn in two. That which separated us from God Himself was taken away and we now have access to God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Mark 15:38 NKJV Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Barnes Notes explain: "The word used here - παρρησίαν parrēsia - means, properly, boldness of speaking; 2 Corinthians 7:4 NIV I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.; Here it seems to mean "freedom of utterance;" and the idea is, that we may come to God now in prayer with confidence through the Lord Jesus;

Hebrews 4:16 NIV Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.. ... Boldness is not rashness; and faith is not presumption; but we may come without hesitating, and with an assurance that our prayers will be heard."

My question is, where would we be if God had not intentionally planned for the redemption of all who call upon Him? Not only can we call upon Him, but we may enter His presence with boldness and confidence; as His children. Then, we may boldly and confidently proclaim His truths. We need not fear! Praise God, for He is worthy of ALL PRAISE!!!!

Ephesians 3:13 NIV I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Paul was no doubt aware that the Ephesians might be distressed over his sufferings. Perhaps they were in fear for his life and perhaps the effect on their own. Or perhaps they were just discouraged or weary of the circumstances. Paul, however, encourages them that it is ultimately for their good that he suffers. He encourages them to hold fast to what they have been taught by him.

Barnes concludes his thoughts as follows: "You have occasion to rejoice that you have a friend who is willing thus to suffer for you; you have occasion to rejoice in all the benefits which will result to you from his trials in your behalf."

Ephesians 3:14-15 NIV For this reason I kneel before the Father,



from whom every family in heaven  
and on earth derives its name.

For what reason? That the work that he has started may continue and that the purpose for his sufferings might be fulfilled to their benefit. He also is concerned that they don't become discouraged and faint. He kneels before the Father, an act of humility and reverence. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown's commentary says, "Posture affects the mind, and is not therefore unimportant."

Every family probably refers to God's whole family, since God is referred to as Father. The name by which our name is derived is Jesus Christ. Hence we are called Christians, whether in heaven or on earth. All who have accepted Jesus' sacrifice for their salvation, no matter where they come from (any nation, Jew, Gentile etc.) are known by the name of Christian.

Ephesians 3:16 NLT I pray that from his glorious,  
unlimited resources  
he will empower you  
with inner strength through his Spirit.

Here, Paul is acknowledging and reminding the Ephesians that God has all resources available to Him, glorious and unlimited! He is God, the creator. With Him all things are possible including the impartation of His strength and power through His Holy Spirit to all believers. This is His will. Do we recognize this and receive from Him?

According to Ellicott, Paul is praying regarding the Spirit of God."From the Father, as the source of all life and being, St. Paul passes on to the Spirit, "proceeding from the Father," as the giver of life to men." In Ephesians 1:16 he is praying for wisdom and revelation (understanding). In 1:18 He mentioned the "eyes of your heart may be enlightened ". Here, he is referring to "Inner strength". Ellicott says, "we hear of the "inner man" in his entirety, including all faculties—intellectual, emotional, moral—which make up his spiritual nature." All power and glory comes from God; from the absolute, unlimited, measureless, "glory of His divine nature". That man would stand tall, not in his own strength, but empowered to stand differently because of what God, through His Spirit, has imparted into the inner man."

Ephesians 3:17 NLT Then Christ will make his home in your hearts  
as you trust in him.  
Your roots will grow down into God's love  
and keep you strong.

Ellicott says that “here, he is praying for power, ‘strength to grasp the mystery, to be rooted in love, and be filled up to the fulness of God.’ “

This is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory”. The indwelling of Jesus. In this way the Holy Spirit works to bring us into Christ-likeness. This is a growing process, whereby we are led, instructed, corrected, comforted and helped (according to our needs) and drawn into the presence of God. Indeed, our roots will grow deep; deep into God’s love, and we will be kept strong in Him. We are built up in His love and all of this is by FAITH. We believe and take God at His word, trusting that what He says, He will do. Thereby, we give Him praise and glory!

Ephesians 3:18 NLT And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

Do we think about the need for “power” in order to “understand”? When I consider God’s all encompassing love, I don’t get it! How could God love one such as I? How could He allow His Son to die in my place? How could He bless me over and over again? It’s beyond my comprehension. How could I begin to understand such love? Surely, I need “power” to understand this kind of love. Agape love! God’s love!

It occurs to me also, that often we are blind to that which is evident all around us. When I look back at my life before Jesus, I recognize so many times that God was there, watching over me, protecting me, leading and guiding me (as I allowed and didn’t rebel). I am drawn to tears to see the love of God affecting my life before I gave myself to my Savior and Lord. He was there all the time, but I didn’t see nor recognize it then.

MacLaren’s Expositions explains the following: “The two former petitions have been for inward strength communicated by a Divine Spirit, in order that Christ may dwell in our hearts, and so we may be rooted and grounded in love.”

He explains that the first petitions might be more intellectual in nature. He asserts that there are many who have great head knowledge of Jesus, but do not have love in their heart for Him. ...

“If you want to know the blessedness of the love of Christ, love Him, and open your hearts for the entrance of His love to you. Love is the parent of deep, true knowledge.” MacLaren continues: “The understanding has its part to play in leading the heart to love, and then the heart becomes the true teacher. He that loveth, knoweth God, for God is love. He that is rooted and grounded in love because Christ dwells in his heart, will be strengthened to know the love in which he is rooted. The Christ within us will know the love of Christ. We must first ‘taste,’ and then we shall ‘see’ that the Lord is good, as the Psalmist puts it with deep truth.”

He also asserts that if we want to “know” the love of Christ, we must “purify our souls”. We must be sanctified and keep ourselves pure. “only the single eye is full of light,”

The bottom line is that Paul desires the Christian to know how large, vast and great God’s love is. No matter how elevated one might become, nor the lowest circumstance one faces, nothing can separate us from the love of God. How GREAT is God’s LOVE!!!!

Ephesians 3:19 NLT May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

The ‘love of Christ’ is how much He loves us and is the motive for His sacrifice for our salvation. As we look at this subject, we very early come to the conclusion that it is an ever-expanding subject. There seems no end to what is incorporated in this love, which indeed, “is too great to understand fully.” (Ellicott)

Ellicott explains:

“till we all come . . . to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” It is simply perfect conformation to the image of Him in whom “dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9), and whose fulness is therefore the “fulness of God,” manifesting all the attributes of the divine nature.”

2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

John 1:16 AMP For out of His fullness [the superabundance of His grace and truth] we have all received grace upon grace [spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing, favor upon favor, and gift heaped upon gift].

Colossians 2:9-10 AMP For in Him all the fullness of Deity (the Godhead) dwells in bodily form [completely expressing the divine essence of God]. And in Him you have been made complete [achieving spiritual stature through Christ], and He is the head over all rule and authority [of every angelic and earthly power].

Wow~ Complete ~ in HIM!

Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV Now to him who is able to do

immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

1 Corinthians 2:9 NIT That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”

MacLaren says: “The measure, then, of the gift that we may hope to receive is the measure of God’s own fulness. The ‘riches of His glory’ can be nothing less than the whole uncounted abundance of that majestic and far-shining Nature, as it pours itself forth in the dazzling perfectness of its own Self-manifestation. And nothing less than this great treasure is to be the limit and standard of His gift to us.”

He goes on to say that the result of this gift to us is absolute perfectness, as we are transformed into the reflection of His likeness. God is perfect and He has said that we, too, are to be perfect. How can that happen?

“So we have a right to enlarge our desires and stretch our confidence of what we may possess and become to this, His boundless bound-’The riches of glory.’ “ ...  
“The Lord, in the glory of His risen life, and in the riches of the gifts which He received when He ascended up on high, is the pattern for us, and the power which fulfils its own pattern. In Him we see what man may become, and what His followers must become. The limits of that power will not be reached until every Christian soul is perfectly assimilated to that likeness, and bears all its beauty in its face, nor till every Christian soul is raised to participation in Christ’s dignity and sits on His throne.” ...  
‘According to the power that worketh in us.’

What power is that but the power of the Spirit of God dwelling in us. And thus we have the measure, or standard, set forth in terms respectively applying to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” MacLaren

Do we truly realize that the power of the Spirit of God is dwelling in us?  
What does that mean to you?

Benson says that this benediction is so written to strengthen our faith and that we won’t “stagger at the great things” Paul has been praying for. He further expresses, so beautifully the extent, if you will, of God’s ability to give us as follows:

“Here is a most beautiful gradation. When God has given us abundant, yea, exceeding abundant blessings, still we may ask for more, and he is able to give, or do for us, what we ask. But we may think of more even than we have asked, and he is able to do this also; yea, and above all this; above all we ask, above all we can think, nay, exceeding abundantly above all that we can either ask or think: according to the power that worketh in us —”

As to the “power that is at work within us”, they (the Ephesians) have already seen firsthand how God has been at work in them, changing their attitude, heart and behavior toward Him and others. They, too, have been taught regarding the Holy Spirit’s work in them. That same power is “more than they can conceive”.

So we pray, 1. To be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit,  
2. To have “power” to a) grasp the love of Christ and b) to know this love that surpasses knowledge and c) to be filled with the measure of all the fullness of God.

Knowing what we know about God and His working in us, we are drawn to praise Him and give Him glory! We praise and worship in Christ Jesus and in the Church through all generations, forever and ever. As this ‘good news’ spreads from generation to generation, so is praise and glory raised to Him. How awesome is our God!! He truly is worthy of all of our praise and worship!!! “To God be the glory, great things He has done!”

Romans 16:25-27 ESV Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

## Chapter Four

Ephesians 4:1 ESV I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

Paul describes himself as "a prisoner for the Lord", a low estate. After having described all we are in Christ, which he knows full well and would have a right to boast, he claims his "unworthiness", as he states elsewhere, that one should "boast in the Lord", not in anything man alone has done. Paul asserts his position in Christ Jesus as prisoner for the Lord and essentially implores the Ephesians to "walk worthy of the calling" to which they've been called.

And what is that calling? MacLaren explains 'calling' in terms of "summons", which he says more fully conveys "the notion of the urgency and authority of the voice which speaks to us. ... One of the other apostles speaks of God as calling us 'by His own glory and virtue', that is to say, wherever God reveals Himself in any fashion and by any medium, to man, the man fails to understand the deepest meaning of the revelation unless his purged ear hears in it the great voice saying, 'come hither'."

My thought is of one summoned to appear in court or of one being summoned by the King!. He goes on to say that however god has manifested or revealed Himself to man, "throughout the history of the world, all these revelations of God bear in them the summons to us that hear and see them to draw near to Him and mold ourselves to His likeness."

While, in one sense, we are not worthy of our calling, we are encouraged to live a life worthy of that calling. Just what does that entail? All that he has been saying and more. MacLaren further states, " For in Jesus Christ we see the possibilities of humanity realized, and we have the pattern of what ought to be, and are called thereby to be." The life that is worthy will be a life freed from 'selfishness', 'pride' and 'arrogance' and "changed into the sweetness of gentleness and the royalties of love." Paul then further describes these characteristics of this kind of unity of body, mind and spirit, both in the individual and in the body, the church.

Surely that would mean, among other things, no boasting or lifting of self, for it is 'Christ in me' that accomplishes anything of worth. No pride for the same reason. Love! It is God's love that saved them/us and His love must work through them/us to others. Love your neighbor, love your enemy! Walk humbly without causing strife because of arrogance or self-indulgence. Think more highly of others than yourself. These and others are taught throughout the New Testament, but are relevant here. Surely they/we have heard in the first three chapters, sufficient to understand what Paul is asking. Now Paul is telling the church to be the church, a corporate unified body.

He then proceeds to bring forth the main emphasis of unity and maturity of the church. Ellicott says that the grounds for that unity is, "The spiritual communion of each soul with the 'one Spirit', the 'one Lord'. And the one God and Father of all'." Paul says to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". Is it difficult to 'keep the peace'? Sometimes, but it certainly requires an element of humility and unselfishness. To be otherwise inclined causes dissensions and fighting (even wars).

Therefore we must see the oneness of it all. The ultimate is that there is one God over, through and in us all.

To each one grace has been given. We are saved by grace and we are expected to extend grace outward as well.

Jesus provided apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip His people for works of service in order to build up the body of Christ until WE ALL reach UNITY in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and become MATURE and achieve the WHOLE (FULL) MEASURE of the fullness of Christ. If that is the goal of each one of us and thus the whole, there will be UNITY!

Ephesians 4:2 NLT Always be humble and gentle.

Be patient with each other,  
making allowance for each other's faults  
because of your love.

And there it is, and he carries it further:

Ephesians 4:3 NLT Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Matthew Henry explains the following:

“Nothing is pressed more earnestly in the Scriptures, than to walk as becomes those called to Christ's kingdom and glory. By lowliness, understand humility, which is opposed to pride. By meekness, that excellent disposition of soul, which makes men unwilling to provoke, and not easily to be provoked or offended. We find much in ourselves for which we can hardly forgive ourselves; therefore we must not be surprised if we find in others that which we think it hard to forgive. There is one Christ in whom all believers hope, and one heaven they are all hoping for; therefore they should be of one heart.”

Barnes adds, “It means that Christians should be united in temper and affection, and not be split up into factions and parties.”

Think about the things that divide the church/assembly. ( It's too hot/cold, the music is too loud/modern, where are the hymns, the carpet/seats, it's not like it used to be, etc.). Think about what separates the church at large. (They don't worship the way I like, they don't sing the songs I know, look who goes there, it's too modern/old fashioned, it's all old/young,) and on and on it goes. What really matters? Even as there are differences of many of these things and more, is there a way we can love each other and recognize that we are family? What unifies us? Can we dwell on that and love one another?



Psalm 133:1 KJV A Song of degrees of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Ephesians 4:4 NIV There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;

Paul is talking about Jesus Christ's body, the church. He's been instructing them that this body is whole and although it is made up of many different parts, it is still one whole, united body. The term catholic has been used to describe this body because it means comprehensive or universal; a church undivided.

Ellicott says,

"The "one body" is the Body of Christ, "from whom it is fitly framed, joined together, and compacted," so that in every part "it grows up into Him."

1 Corinthians 12:12 NLT The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

Romans 12:4-5 NIV For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

One Spirit, the Holy Spirit whom Jesus said He would send, and we experienced His entrance at Pentecost. It is only by the Holy Spirit that one can say that Jesus is Lord. (see 1 Corinthians 12:3)

John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 14:16-17 ESV And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

It is the Holy Spirit by whom one is gifted in order to do the work that God has for each one to do.

To quote Wave Nunnally, "In all areas of service to God, His representatives are not called to perform in their own strength alone; rather the early church understood that the only way to truly fulfill God's callings upon our lives is to be empowered to do so by His Spirit."

1 Corinthians 12: 7 NIV Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Called to one hope This is so well expressed in Ellicott's Commentary

“Even as ye are (or rather, were) called in one hope of your calling.—The connection, though not at first obvious, is clear on consideration. Since the grace of the Holy Spirit is not only the “seal” of regeneration, but also the “earnest” (Ephesians 1:14) of future perfection, the mention of the one Spirit suggests naturally the “hope of our calling” (i.e., the perfect unity of heaven). In this, in spite of all natural and spiritual inequalities, and in spite even of our divisions and strifes upon earth, all Christians are still actually one.”

Ephesians 4:5 NLT There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

1 Corinthians 1:13 NIV Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

No, the Lord Jesus Christ is not divided and there is no other name by which one may be saved! Our faith is indeed misplaced if we place it on anyone or anything but our triune God, (His Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit of promise).

MacLaren states,

“The one Lord, in the fulness of His nature and the perfectness of His work, is the all-inclusive object of faith.” He also says, “Hope and faith are human acts by which men are joined to God; Baptism is the visible symbol of their incorporation into the one body. ... Baptism is the expression and consequence of the faith which precedes it. Surely there is here a most distinct implication that it is a declaration of personal faith.”

Galatians 3:27 NLT And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.

Baptism: In looking into this act, I am amazed at how many beliefs are considered with this subject. Talk about a potential for divisiveness! On this matter, which is so important to all Christians, we may differ as to the meaning and the method of baptism. Here are a few of the points of view. The bottom line is that we seek for unity, not winning an argument!

John's baptism: John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. This was mainly for the Jews in preparation for the coming of the Lord, since Jesus had not yet come on the scene.

Jesus' baptism: This was not the baptism of repentance, for Jesus was sinless. His was "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)

Christian baptism: Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 28:19 NIV Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

The meaning of baptism is very controversial. Many hold to Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." See also Mark 1:4.

Others, Acts 22:16 Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Or, Ephesians 5:26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Some view the water as a means of sanctifying one, a sacrament, "A means whereby men are made disciples of Christ, sanctified and cleansed by Him who has redeemed them, giving Himself as a ransom for all." (Dickson Bible Dictionary - Baptism)

Others view baptism as a seal of a work already done. Then we come to the mode of baptism: sprinkled or 'dunked'. We could go on and on, but one thing is sure, Jesus said to Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19) You would greatly be blessed to study this subject and understand what it means to be baptized. For me, it was a public profession of my faith in Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, I was buried with Him (under the water) and raised to new life in Him. It was a public reaffirmation of my faith in Him.

It is important to follow through your profession of faith in Jesus, with baptism, because that is what Jesus said to do. Understand what this means and if you have never been baptized, please do so. It is such a joy when you walk in obedience by faith!

Ephesians 4:6 NIV one God and Father of all,  
who is over all and through all and in all.

Truly there is but ONE God. If He were divided (or there were other gods as well) there could be no unity. Rather, we understand that, like the body has many parts, God is triune, meaning Father, Son and Holy Spirit. [ the union of three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) in one Godhead, or the threefold personality of the one Divine Being.\*] Together, (as with our arms, legs and body, etc) He is One God. He created us and has

called us His children. [\*Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, © 2010 K Dictionaries Ltd. Copyright 2005, 1997, 1991 by Random House, Inc. All rights reserved.]

1 Corinthians 12:6 NLT God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

Malachi 2:10 NIV Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us?

Romans 8:16 NIV The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Romans 11:36 NLT For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

Need we say more?

Ephesians 4:7 KJV But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

AMP Yet grace [God's undeserved favor] was given to each one of us [not indiscriminately, but in different ways] in proportion to the measure of Christ's [rich and abundant] gift.

Ellicott makes it clear,

"...that is, given in the Divine purpose in the regeneration of the whole body, although it has to be received and made our own, separately in each soul, and gradually in the course of life. It was and is given "according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

There is a current song with the lyrics, "God only knows", (But there's a kind of love that God only knows) and it is with His wisdom and knowledge of each person, intimately, that He gives anything. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." It is suggested by MacLaren that the ultimate purpose of His giving to the church is, " that it attains to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. "Ellicott further states , Acts 2:33, that "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this. Our Lord, as the Head of humanity, receives only in order to give."

We must remember that it is by faith that we receive from God, both individually and corporately as the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:8 ESV Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,  
and he gave gifts to men.”

The “it” here is a reference to scriptures or to God, as: ‘scripture says’, or ‘God says’. A reference for this passage, regarding leading a host of captives, is found as follows:

Psalm 68:18 NIV When you ascended on high, you took many captives; {ESV: leading a host of captives in your train} you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious—that you, LORD God, might dwell there.

Colossians 2:15 BSB In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

Ellicott clarifies:

“St. Paul’s use of it here is probably best interpreted by Colossians 2:15, where it is said of the “principalities and powers”—the powers of sin and death...”

Jamieson-Faussett-Brown says,

“captivity—that is, a band of captives. In the Psalm, the captive foes of David. In the antitypical meaning, the foes of Christ the Son of David, the devil, death, the curse, and sin (Col 2:15; 2Pe 2:4), led as it were in triumphal procession as a sign of the destruction of the foe.”

This would be as a victor leads all his captives in a march to show his authority over them. Perhaps, bragging rights.

Ellicott says,

“The modern use of these words as describing our Lord’s triumph over the power of evil, hitherto triumphant over man, and so giving freedom by leading captive the power of captivity,”

He further states that the truth of this thought was not supported in the original use. He explains that,

“it is simply used for “a body of captives.” Paul’s use of it here is probably best interpreted by Colossians 2:15, where it is said of the “principalities and powers”—the powers of sin and death—that “He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross.”

Then Paul says that “He gave gifts to men”. This is probably referring to the gifts that He gives to the church, as expressed in Ephesians 4:11, which we will discuss later. (apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,) He may also be

referring to the promise of the Holy Spirit, who could only be sent after Christ's resurrection. Then, the Holy Spirit confers gifts to believers.

Jamieson-Faussett-Brown expresses it as follows:

“gave gifts unto men—in the Psalm, "received gifts for men," Hebrew, "among men," that is, "thou hast received gifts" to distribute among men. As a conqueror distributes in token of his triumph the spoils of foes as gifts among his people. The impartation of the gifts and graces of the Spirit depended on Christ's ascension.

John 7:38-39 NIV “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Ephesians 4:9-10 NLT Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

In reading several of the commentaries there seems a simple interpretation of this verse. Jesus ascended to heaven and because He ascended, He must have first descended or come down to earth. There were expressions of rising to the highest point in Heaven and coming down to the lowest part of earth or beneath the earth.

Ellicott explains his thoughts as,  
“Paul’s manner to introduce thus a fresh idea beyond the simple idea of descent, which is sufficient for his argument: “He descended—yea, even to the realms below.” For this idea is most apposite [highly pertinent or appropriate] to that frequent reference to spiritual powers of evil found in this Epistle, and it may be thought to correspond by antithesis to the “far above all heavens” of the next verse.”

Another commentator suggested that Jesus came from His high position in Heaven and humbled himself to the lowliest estate here on earth. Barnes calls it.”To the lowest state of humiliation. ... he stooped to the most humble condition of humanity here.”

Jamieson-Faussett-Brown explains it this way: “However, all we surely know is, that His soul at death descended to Hades, that is, underwent the ordinary condition of departed spirits of men.”

The Dickson Bible Dictionary refers the definition of Hades to Hell as follows. "A word meaning the place of the dead. It is a frequent translation of the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek words hades and gehenna. The early Hebrews regarded it merely as the place to which the dead go but later the word comes to mean a place of punishment." In further explanation that dictionary pointed out Jesus' reference in His parable as a place where "good and evil people lived close together, but were separated by a chasm."

Gill tells us that the papists (Catholics) consider this to mean that Christ descended into Hell,

"where they say the patriarchs were detained till Christ's coming; and that he went thither to deliver them out of it; and that these are the captivity he led captive; all which is fictitious and fabulous:"

This is also exemplified by the Apostles Creed, a portion quoted here:

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

He goes on to explain that because Jesus took our sins upon Himself, He was obedient even unto His death on the cross. He then took the punishment for our sins. I include this thinking only because you may have heard or been taught this type of narrative, as I have years ago. May God, Himself, clarify our understanding!

so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

The consensus here is that, in His glorified body, he is able to be everywhere at all times. "That He might fill all things by His influence, and direct and overrule by His wisdom and power." (Doddridge) "His presence and sovereignty extends, by whatever means and over whatever beings He wills." (Ellicott)

Gill, in his Exposition rather extensively states: "particularly that he might fill each and everyone of his people with his grace and righteousness, with his Spirit, and the fruits of it, with spiritual knowledge and understanding, with food and gladness, with peace, joy



and comfort; and all his churches with his gracious presence, and with officers and members, and all with gifts and graces suitable to their several stations and work.

Ephesians 4:11-12 NLT Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

So, what is the meaning and purpose of the church? According to the Dickson dictionary, by the Greek word it is, "to denote the body of Christian people, a Christian community, the followers of Christ, and the place of assembly for purposes of worship. ... Those truly united to Christ by saving faith in Him are of the invisible church..."

The fellowship of believers, after pentecost: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)

Colossians 3:16 NIV Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

1 Timothy 5:16 NIV If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

Corporately, the purpose of the church is to worship God, give witness to the truth of the gospel throughout the world (local area, county, state, world), Teach the Word, walk in faith and obedience to God as He leads and opens doors for His purpose. [Listen, Learn, Obey, Go] This is best exemplified by Christ Himself.

Mark 16:15 NIV He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

The workings of the church are accomplished through its leadership which consists of:

Apostles: One who is sent forth, a messenger. "The name applied to the Twelve selected by Jesus to be with Him, receive His training, be witnesses of the events of His life, and to preach the Gospel." (Dickson Bible Dictionary) Acts 1:21-22 "In a vision Christ directed him (Paul) to leave Jerusalem and commissioned him the apostle to the Gentiles. (Dickson Bible, Outline of the Acts,) Jesus called them "fishers of men".

Ellicott clarifies, “ In direct charge from the Lord, universal scope of mission, special inspiration and power of miracle, which are “the signs of an apostle”

Acts 5:12 NIV The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade.

1 Corinthians 9:1 NLT Am I (Paul) not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven’t I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn’t it because of my work that you belong to the Lord?

An apostle is one who is “sent forth” and originally was considered to be one of the 12 disciples and one who had been with or seen Jesus and was thus “sent forth”.

Prophets: A divinely inspired minister of Jehovah (God). (Dickson Bible Dictionary)

Deuteronomy 18:18 NIV I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.

Numbers 12:6 NIV

He (the Lord) said, “Listen to my words: “When there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams.

Deuteronomy 18:22 NIV If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.

A prophet was also a leader (of Israel) like Moses and Deborah. Others were Elijah, Samuel, Isaiah, all of whom were highly regarded by God and some anointed kings. There were many others as well.

2 Kings 17:13 NIV The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: “Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.”

1 Chronicles 29:29 NIV As for the events of King David’s reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer,

Note: Prophets were originally called seers according to the Dickson Bible Dictionary.

Isaiah 30:10 NIV They (God's rebellious children) say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions."

These rebellious ones didn't want any part of God or what He had to say to them. They didn't want His correction but only wanted "fluff", pleasant things, things to satisfy their lusts and desires, dreams.

Jeremiah 42:4 NIV "I have heard you," replied Jeremiah the prophet. "I will certainly pray to the Lord your God as you have requested; I will tell you everything the Lord says and will keep nothing back from you." This was spoken with regard to the request of the Israelite remnant, for Jeremiah to pray to God asking, "where we should go and what we should do." This is in contrast to those with a rebellious spirit.

Hosea 12:13 NIV The Lord used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him.

In the New Testament, we are reminded of what God said and did through His prophets of old. For example, this referring to John the Baptist:

Matthew 3:3 NIV This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Isaiah 40:3)

Matthew 10:41 NIV Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.

Jesus was considered by many to be a prophet. He, himself, seemed to make that assertion.

Matthew 21:10-11 NIV When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Luke 13:33 ESV Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

Who was John the baptist they questioned.

Mark 11:32 NIV But if we say, 'Of human origin' ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

Evangelists: “Messenger of good tidings. In the early church a class of men who went from place to place preaching the Gospel. ... Philip, who was instrumental in the conversion of the eunuch, was an evangelist.” (as was Timothy) Dickson Bible Dictionary

Acts 21:8 NLT The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food.

2 Timothy 4:5 ESV As for you, (Timothy) always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Pastors: minister, shepherd “ A Christian minister or priest having spiritual charge over a congregation or other group.” [American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.]

Jeremiah 3:15 ESV And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Ellicott states the purpose of the Pastor is: “ to fulfill our Lord’s pastoral charge (John 21:15-17) of feeding and shepherding those who are already His sheep.”

He further states that the same person may be working within two different offices at the same time, such as Pastor and Evangelist, as Timothy, when in pastoral charge at Ephesus, is bidden “to do the work of an evangelist” (2Timothy 4:5 (since a Pastor may also be speaking to the unsaved within the congregation).”

I find it so powerful that, in the Jeremiah scripture, God says that these shepherds are “after my own heart”. Surely this presents an important distinction for one called to become a pastor; that their heart is like David, whom God said was “after His own heart.” It’s interesting also, that pastors in Jeremiah’s time were not only Ecclesiastical but also princes and leaders such as David.

Benson says:

“Those are pastors after God’s own heart,” says Henry, “that make it their business to feed the flock; not to feed themselves and fleece the flock, but to do all they can for the good of those that are under their charge; that feed them with wisdom and understanding — That is, wisely and understandingly, as David fed them, in the integrity of his heart and by the skilfulness of his hands, Psalm 78:72.”

I'm not sure who the Henry is that Benson quoted, but Matthew Henry's comments on Ephesians 4:11 state:

"The more a man finds himself drawn out to improve in his station, and according to his measure, all that he has received, to the spiritual good of others, he may the more certainly believe that he has the grace of sincere love and charity rooted in his heart."

This certainly sounds worthy of striving for, whether a pastor or a layman.

Teachers: instructor

Jesus was thought of as a teacher.

John 3:2 NIV He (Nicodemus) came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

In Romans 2 Paul admonishes those who teach, who have knowledge.

Romans 2:20 NLT You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

And he goes on to tell them that they should teach themselves, because they don't walk out what they teach others to do. He says that they are so proud of knowing the law, and yet they break it. I believe that is called being hypocritical! It appears that those who teach are held to a higher accountability! God help us! We need the Holy Spirit to empower us, give us wisdom and direct us that we teach only what is true, God's Word!

Titus 2:1-3 NLT As for you, Titus, promote the kind of living that reflects wholesome teaching. Teach the older men to exercise self-control, to be worthy of respect, and to live wisely. They must have sound faith and be filled with love and patience.

Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that honors God. ...

Acts 5:42 NLT And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: "Jesus is the Messiah."

1 Corinthians 4:17 NLT That's why I (Paul) have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.

Colossians 1:28 NLT So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God,

perfect in their relationship to Christ. That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

Paul's instructions to Timothy are to essentially teach all people how to live godly lives.

1 Timothy 6:2c-4a NIV These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing.

Parents are expected to teach their children, in the Old Testament, the Law, and in the New Testament, the Gospel and godly living. We also teach our children about God's faithfulness and love, as they see throughout all of scripture. What does God expect of us? We learn from history; 'the good, the bad and the ugly', as the saying goes.

Hopefully we learn from it all!

Deuteronomy 11:19 NIV Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

All of this is to do as Ephesians 4:12 says, "Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."

Ephesians 4:13 NIV 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.

[NLT: This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.]

"The full grasp of that faith by each and all is the first object of all the ministries of the Church," states Ellicott. He goes on to say that faith goes on to knowledge (of whom we believe). We are reminded that scripture also says to add to your faith, virtue and to virtue, knowledge. "This knowledge (see Ephesians 3:17-19) is gained mainly through the love in which faith is made perfect."

The ministry of the church includes "not only the production of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, but the formation of Christ in the soul, as "dwelling in the heart through faith." " We all participate in this, to grow into the "fullness of Christ".

MacLaren says, "We have here a threefold expression of the true unity, as consisting in a oneness of relation to Christ, a consequent maturity of manhood and a perfect possession of all which is in Christ."

The maturity that we shall have is that "All which He is and has is to be poured into His servants, and when all this is communicated to them the goal will be reached. ... We shall be full-grown men, and more wonderful still, we all shall make one perfect man, and individual completenesses will blend into that which is more complete than any of these, the one body, which corresponds to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." MacLaren

Matthew Henry gives a further clarification, “There is a fulness in Christ, and a measure of that fulness given in the counsel of God to every believer; but we never come to the perfect measure till we come to heaven.”

Out of this comes a unity of the body. As we begin to look at the scriptures from 4:14-18, we will see what this kind of unity looks like. This mature Christian will be confident, knowing the truth of the word and not swayed this way or that, able to speak the truth to others through love. Then the whole body grows, each doing its part and working.

A body in which each member is not doing its part makes me think of a body with one arm shorter than the other (withered), or one who is lame, or unable to speak and such, incomplete or immature; like a baby needing to be fed and cared for. Fortunately and thankfully, babies grow up and so must the body of Christ (the Church) to the FULLNESS OF CHRIST, in no way incomplete.

We will continue to grow and to bring glory to God. Our hearts are ever reaching upward with the desire to be more and more like Christ as the Holy Spirit leads and guides us along the way.

Ephesians 4:14 NLT Then we will no longer be immature like children.

We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching.

We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

Does a kid always want to remain a kid? I don't suppose they think about it while they are very young, but as they become older, I see that they yearn to “move on” to be on their own, independent, to become adults and find their place in the world.

Perhaps this is what I see as a Christian. As a babe in Christ I simply wanted to learn! I had so much I needed to know. I continually desired to be in church and in the presence of other Christians. As I got older, I realized how lacking I was and I yearned for God to change me into what He wanted me to be. Each day I ask the Holy Spirit to show me what needs to change and I depend on God (Jesus/the Holy Spirit), to help me to make those changes. I desire to become mature! I desire to be Christ-like!

When I first got saved, I would stop everywhere I thought Christians congregated (tent revivals and such). As I grew in my faith I began to discern truth from “false teaching” and as I became more cognizant, I made wiser choices in whom and to what I listened and believed and allowed to enter my mind. I find that Satan still has a way of whispering his lies and, if I'm not careful, I may be swayed by them. However, God is faithful and He does not allow me to be deceived. So,” I take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

We no longer need to be running to every new teaching that comes out, to be tossed about in confusion. We know whom we have believed! We study to show ourselves approved. We learn the truth from His word. We believe and obey it!



The Ephesians were not immune to such confusing teaching which is why Paul is warning them to watch out and not to be deceived, to become mature in their faith. We need to take heed as well! There are still all kinds of deceit and trickery in the world, and the enemy of our soul is ever at work to steal, kill and destroy any way he can. When we know the truth, we will not be deceived by those who wish to turn us astray. These are false teachers/preachers who make their speech sound so good, yet in truth they are lies. (Also the thought of many politicians comes to mind. Who should we believe?)

Ephesians 4:15 NLT Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

The word "instead" relates back to not being deceived and drawn in many directions. The word in John 8:32 says, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Knowing (spending time in, meditating on) God's word is the key! When you know the word, the next step is to speak the word. Speak the truth, not with a critical spirit nor with an aggressive attitude to expose error or weakness or with a haughty spirit, but in love, which is gentle and kind. We really get no where when we are pushy, argumentative, or insensitive to the one to whom we speak! "Let your light shine!" So we speak the truth from the word. Barnes states, "The truth is "to be spoken" - the simple, unvarnished truth. This is the way to avoid error, and this is the way to preserve others from error. In opposition to all trick, and art, and cunning, and fraud, and deception, Christians are to speak the simple truth, and nothing but the truth. ..."Truth is the representation of things as they are;" and there is no virtue that is more valuable in a Christian than the love of simple truth."

There is no need to embellish the truth. One could so easily be drawn into error or the message might miss the mark for the receiver, being misunderstood. The Holy Spirit not only guides us in all truth, but He also will give us the words to speak in truth. As we depend on Jesus to lead us, and take the time to listen and/or wait before we speak, we shall continue to grow more and more like Him.

I'd like to say here that I have tried to bring the truth to light through the use of many confirming scriptures. I have also presented the thoughts of several learned scholars through their commentaries, some of whom may have differing opinions. It is my hope that through these as well as my humble thoughts, we all might be led by the Holy Spirit to a deeper understanding of God's precious word, His truth, and be drawn closer to Him.

From Matthew Poole's Commentary: "Into him which is the head, even Christ; our growth must be with respect to Christ our Head, as the end of it; we must grow in our acknowledgment of him, and dependence on him, as he by whom we are influenced,

and from whom all our proficiency and strength proceeds; so that whatever increase we make, must tend not to the magnifying ourselves, but exalting our Head.”

Hallelujah! We lift up Christ Jesus, not ourselves. We point the way that others may follow. We give an answer for our faith; truth from the word. We exalt and glorify God, who deserves all the glory!

Ephesians 4:16 NIV From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

[NLT: He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

It is indeed from Christ that we are joined together in unity and held together by the working of each of our parts. (What is it that binds us together? Matthew Poole says that it's the 'Spirit of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit and LOVE'.) This is the church, and it's the same as with the physical body. It takes all the parts working together for growth to take place. The purpose of the church is to encourage, support, and grow (edify - build up) each other in love and show love to the lost.

In thinking about the human body, I began to look at how it is held together and how each of the parts work. I particularly thought about ligaments - Connecting bones to other bones; maintaining position of organs. That alone makes my head spin! How amazing the thoughts! I also looked up "The Human Body - an Orientation"\* (I highly recommend) because it brought me once again, to magnify our amazing God and Father - to think how intricately we are put together! So many parts, so many details, all working together! It is absolutely amazing! And this is an example of how the body of Christ works. Many parts, all working together!

\*[https://www.jkaser.com/resources/Anatomy\\_and\\_Physiology/PowerPoints/Chapter%201%20jk.pdf](https://www.jkaser.com/resources/Anatomy_and_Physiology/PowerPoints/Chapter%201%20jk.pdf)

The English Standard Version puts it this way: from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, It is this that Ellicott makes this statement: "By that which every joint supplieth.(ESV)—A paraphrastic and inaccurate rendering. It should be, by every contact with the supply (of nutriment) from the head." This seems to be more accurate based on the fact that the first phrase of this verse says that it's: "from Him" meaning Christ Jesus, who supplies all the needs of the body and the church.

He (Ellicott) goes on to explain that the effectiveness of every part "comes from direct contact with the central energy. ... Here, lastly, we have the function of the body itself. It

is knit together by its divine organisation; it is sustained by the supply from the head; its several parts are kept in life by that supply; but it grows as a whole and builds itself up by the uniting and vivifying (life giving) power of love, which is the “bond of perfectness.”

By direct contact! This is the means by which we, as individuals, as well as the whole body of Christ, grow. We must maintain direct contact with our heavenly Father daily; both from His word and through prayer and worship. This is done individually and corporately. (Forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together. Hebrews 10:25) Note that the early church was encouraged to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Colossians 3:16 ESV

Again, Ellicott adds this: “Truth is, no doubt, the basis of unity; but love is its vital power, at once keeping together all who are united, and drawing in those who are as yet separated.”

What happens if each member does not do its part? With regard to the physical body, it comes down to ill health or death. If the kidneys fail to function as they should, it's a problem. If the heart pumps insufficiently, it's a problem. If I break an arm or a leg, my effectiveness is somewhat diminished. It takes all parts working together efficiently for the “body” to grow and to be effective.

In the scriptures from 17-19, Paul sternly tells the Ephesians that they are lacking because of the hardening of their heart, causing their ignorance. They are “darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God”. This happens when one pays more attention to doing what ‘feels good’, indulging in every kind of impurity and they are full of greed.

Ephesians 4:17 NIV So I tell you this,  
and insist on it in the Lord,  
that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do,  
in the futility of their thinking.

This section of the scripture begins as basic instruction for Christian living. Paul sternly tells the Ephesians that they are lacking because of the hardening of their heart causing their ignorance. This verse seems to indicate the separation of thought and behavior between the Christian and the Gentile (unsaved). Before I was saved, I really didn't know what I believed! I embraced many thoughts and philosophies and behaviors. As this scripture says, futile thinking.

Benson sees the behavior as follows: “Amused with the empty trifles of this world, and enslaved to low and mean pursuits, utterly unworthy of their rational and immortal nature;”

Ellicott puts it this way. “A striking contrast of the past and the present—the life of the heathen in its “vanity,” with the two-fold result of blindness and callousness of soul; and the Christian life, which has in learning Christ found the secret of regeneration.”

Ephesians 4:18 NIV They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.[NLT Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.]

It is an act of the will to harden one’s heart against God. This began due to ignorance, but because of that hardness of their heart, it causes this great gulf of separation from the very God who can save them. This happens when one pays more attention to doing what “feels good”, indulging in every kind of impurity. One is full of greed.

Before I was saved, I remember going to a church to please a friend, but when it was time for the altar call, I chose to leave, to get as far away as possible because I wanted no part in “that”! I surely didn’t need religious stuff! How lost I was! Yet, today’s rebellion is even more devastating. Such darkness is so prevalent and how painful it is to see and know the state of those so affected. Their state is brought about by their choice of indulgence in sin. Such hardness of heart and demeanor! We truly need to bend our knees in fervent prayer.

Let’s take a few moments to pray.

Ellicott says, “So far as the understanding is concerned, this alienation signifies the loss of the central light of Truth in God, and with it the loss, partial or complete, of the vision of other truths in their right proportion and harmony.”

They do not know nor understand what “alienation from God” means to and for them. The saying ‘ignorance is bliss’, just doesn’t cut it! They, in their ignorance, ignore the consequences of their choices. They are not only ‘missing out’ on the blessings of a loving and merciful God, whom they choose not to embrace, but they are doomed to eternal punishment, the likes of which none have ever known.

Ephesians 4:19 BSB Having lost all sense of shame, they have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity, with a craving for more.

This reminds me of the situation with Lot in Genesis 19, when the 2 angels came to his house. The men of Sodom surrounded the house in an attempt to get at the visitors. Lot even offered his daughters instead. Utter depravity! Look what is happening today! The acceptance of depravity and all sorts of evil. Laws are being made to protect the “rights” of one to do what he/she pleases. You don’t like the sex to which you were born? Then choose to have surgery and simply change your sex! Don’t like the pronoun with which one is referred? Change it! Let the government make changes in the law for all! Disregard purity.

I look at the greed for more, more, more. One is not satisfied with what he has, and instead of working harder or being satisfied and thankful, he steals and, if necessary, kills to get what he wants. Today we live in an “entitlement” mentality. I need it because I deserve it! I’m entitled to it! If the law says otherwise, change the law! Oh God, we need You so!!!! And yet, none of this surprises You! You’ve told us in Your word!

Ellicott says: “They are (he says) “past feeling”; or, literally, carrying on the metaphor of callousness, they have lost the capacity of pain—the moral pain which is the natural and healthful consequence of sin against our true natures. Consequently, losing in this their true humanity, they give themselves over to “lasciviousness.” “

Barnes calls it: “Wholly hardened in sin. There is a total want of all emotion on moral subjects.”

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown puts it this way: “past feeling—senseless, shameless, hopeless; the ultimate result of a long process of “hardening,” or habit of sin.” Further, he says: “given themselves over—In Ro 1:24 it is, “God gave them up to uncleanness.” Their giving themselves to it was punished in kind, God giving them up to it by withdrawing His preventing grace; their sin thus was made their punishment. They gave themselves up of their own accord to the slavery of their lust, to do all its pleasure, as captives who have ceased to strive with the foe. God gave them up to it, but not against their will; for they give themselves up to it [Zanchius].”

In verses 20-24 Paul reminds them about when they heard about Jesus and were taught to “put off your old self” and to “be made new in the attitude of your minds”. They are to “put on the new self”, which is characterized by righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:20-21 NIV That, however,  
is not the way of life you learned  
when you heard about Christ  
and were taught in him  
in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.  
[ NLT But that isn’t what you learned about Christ.

Since you have heard about Jesus  
and have learned the truth that comes from him,]

The evidence here is that one hears the gospel of truth, then one believes and receives. After this, one must be taught. This is part of what Paul has been doing in the first three chapters. He is reminding them of what they have been taught probably by Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila. Later, Timothy and others continue to lead and teach.

Acts 18:25-25 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Benson writes: "Teaching you inwardly by his Spirit, as well as outwardly by his word;"

What have they/we been taught?

Ephesians 4:22 NIV You were taught,  
with regard to your former way of life,  
to put off your old self,  
which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

In other words, stop sinning! What sin?

MacLaren says, "Christ alone can venture to tell men what they are, because Christ alone can radically change their whole nature and being."

Paul then reminds them about when they heard about Jesus and were taught to 'put off your old self' and to "be made new in the attitude of your minds". They are to "put on the new self", which is characterized by righteousness and holiness.

He tells us that the old man is "being corrupted by its deceitful desires". He also tells us that we can choose to put that old man to death. Not a physical death, but, through Christ, we choose to die to self.

MacLaren further explains, "And then there dawns on us the blessed hope and possibility of the fulfilment of the injunction, when we learn that 'the truth in Jesus' is, that we put off the old man with his deeds. ... The old man is set over against the new. One is created, the other is corrupted, as the word might be properly rendered. The one is created after God, the other is rotting to pieces under the influence of its lusts (strong desire of any kind). The one (man) consists of righteousness and holiness, which have

their root in truth; the other is under the dominion of passions and desires, which, in themselves evil, are the instruments of and are characterised by deceit.”

He uses several areas as examples of being deceived to “lust” after such as: strong drink, sex, food etc. He says that we eat our evening meal and yet wake up in the morning ravenous. That in itself is natural, however, the overindulgence of any food falls into this category of “lust” (gluttony). I also thought of Samson’s desire for Delilah to the point that he was so deceived by her.

MacLaren says that, “nothing is more certain than that no man will get the satisfaction that his ruling passions promise him, by indulging them. It is very sure that the way never to get what you need and desire is always to do what you like.”

Ephesians 4:23 NLT Instead,  
let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Praise God that He has provided a way out! The renewal of our thoughts and attitudes comes as a result of our “putting off”. We choose to turn around and allow God through His Holy Spirit to do the work of renewal or being made new. It’s not like just mending a torn garment, but it’s a brand new garment!

Philippians 2:13 NIV says: for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Therefore, when we choose to “put off the old man”, we give God the “permission” to make changes in His loved one (you and me). We make the choice to do this, but the power and strength to do so comes from God Himself. It truly begins with our thoughts and attitudes through which we are renewed! This is by the working of the Holy Spirit who is in us and who works in, with, and through us.

Ephesians 4:24 NLT Put on your new nature,  
created to be like God—  
truly righteous and holy.

Galatians 3:27 NLT And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.

Romans 13:14 NIV Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.



Colossians 3:10 NLT Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

Scripture is so apt at letting us know what is expected of us. As I meditated on these scriptures I thought about dressing ourselves. When we rise in the morning, we take off our bedclothes and lay them aside. We shower/bathe and put on fresh, new, clean clothes to start our day. When I received Jesus as my Savior and Lord, I took off my old self. I was cleansed as I asked for forgiveness and I walked away fresh and clean, new in Christ Jesus. I had put off my old life of sin and put on my new life determined to walk with Jesus, learn about Him and become more and more like Him all my days.

Paul then goes on for the rest of this chapter specifically reminding the believers what they must do, how they should live as Christ followers. These changes must be evident in our temperament, in what we say and how we act. We make these choices daily. Obviously, some of the things they are dealing with now include: speaking falsehood, anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, grieving the Holy Spirit, bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and every form of malice. That is quite a list! The opposite of such is as follows: speak truthfully to all, don't let the sun go down while you are angry and don't give the devil a foothold. (He takes every opportunity opened for him!) Don't steal but work, do something useful with your hands, share with those in need. Speak "what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. Get rid of the bad (listed above) by being "kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you".

Ephesians 4:25 NLT So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.

Are there occasions where lying is acceptable? I think not, because it catches up with you and you must tell another lie and then another. Or, you can't remember what you said. Even worse, it becomes too easy to try to get out of something with a lie; to make excuses.

Barnes lists several examples to clarify:

"He who is in the habit of concealing the defects of an article in trade, or of commending it for more than its real value - "let him put away lying."

He, or she, who instructs a servant to say that they are not at home, when they are at home: or that they are sick, when they are not sick or that they are engaged, when they are not engaged - "let them put away lying."

He that is in the habit of giving a coloring to his narratives; of conveying a false impression by the introduction or the suppression of circumstances that are important to the right understanding of an account - "let him put away lying."

He is in the habit of making promises only to disregard them - "let him put away lying."

The idea is, that falsehood tends to loosen the bonds of brotherhood. In the "human body" harmony is observed. The eye never deceives the hand, nor the hand the foot, nor the heart the lungs. The whole move harmoniously as if the one could put the utmost confidence in the other - and falsehood in the church is as ruinous to its interests as it would be to the body if one member was perpetually practicing a deception on another."

I believe that this is well spoken! In our day of "Covid", what would be the consequence of hiding the fact that you woke up with a fever, sore throat etc. and still went out among a crowd of people, say, at a party? Put away deception of all sorts!

Ephesians 4:26 NLT And "don't sin by letting anger control you."  
Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry,

Anger itself is not sin and we see that Jesus was angry at times. God certainly has expressed anger and these rightfully so. The distinction is that they did not sin in their righteous indignation. Anger can consume one and therein is the danger and why the next phrase is so important. We do not let anger fester and grow and cause greater destruction than that for which we were angry. That is called sin.

Ellicott says, "It is that "nursing of wrath to keep it warm," which can be checked even by those who cannot control the first outburst, and which constantly corrupts righteous indignation into selfish personal anger, if not into malignity."

The dictionary describes malignity as: Intense ill will or hatred; great malice. An act or a feeling of great malice. (The free dictionary by Farlex)

Look at uncontrolled anger in the incidences of "road rage". It can be deadly.

What happens to our testimony if we are seen as constantly angry? Anger can destroy us if it is not brought under control and often that means we take our anger to God and ask Him to help us to deal with it. We let go of it. We turn it over to Him and feast on His word instead. The Holy Spirit will be with us and give us wisdom and strength to overcome!

Psalm 4:4 NLT Don't sin by letting anger control you. Think about it overnight and remain silent.

Ephesians 4:27 NIV and do not give the devil a foothold.  
[NLT for anger gives a foothold to the devil.]

The devil is out to “steal, kill and destroy”, and he will take every opportunity to put division between the believer and God. Anything that “controls us”, puts division between us and our Heavenly Father. Matthew Henry says, “we are to resist it, keeping from all appearance of evil.”

Regarding a ‘foothold’, I once had a dream that I have never forgotten. I was sitting in my car, waiting, when I noticed a huge lion prowling around. I was frightened, but glad that I was safe in the car. He came closer and closer. When he came to my side of the car, he just looked at me, but when he got to the other side of the car, I became aware that the window was not shut all the way. There was about a 2 inch opening and I realized that he could insert his great claws and get into the car. The dream ended with that realization and I was deeply convinced of the fact that this was an example of giving the devil a foothold!

Ephesians 4:28 NIV Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Today we have many, who, when the Covid pandemic struck and they could not go to work, were often subsidized in some way from home. After Covid, many did not wish to return to work. Many felt that they could make as much from the government as they could from going to a job, so why work! Many businesses were ‘screaming’ for help, for employees. The way they did business changed because they didn’t have enough employees. People just didn’t want to work!

Ellicott says that this kind of selfishness often “exhibits itself in dishonesty” He further says that, “unity will always exhibit itself in working what is “good,” that is, gracious, for the sake of “him that needs.” “ That sounds like being generous to those in need. I would add, don’t be lazy, preferring to steal than to work. (looting)

Ephesians 4:29 NLT Don't use foul or abusive (unwholesome) language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

Benson calls it, “speech offensive to the hearers,” He further details other aspects of this speech. “The apostle does not merely include in this expression obscene discourse of every kind, but also all flattery, calumny, (A false statement maliciously made to injure another’s reputation. slander) railing, (Harsh, often insulting language:) boasting, tale-bearing, backbiting, commendations of vice and impiety (any lack of proper respect), profane jestings on religion, its ministers and professors, trifling conversation; and, indeed, all discourse that is not either about necessary business, or, as the next clause expresses it, is not good to the use of edifying (building up). Calculated to instruct, direct, reprove, encourage, excite to duty, comfort, or in some way edify and minister grace to the hearers.”

I must add, what are you listening to or watching on tv or the movies? Have you become insensitive to what is being said around you. When my mother and grandfather were alive, I was very aware that almost every other word out of their mouths would be a “cuss word” or a “bleep” word. They weren’t even aware of it themselves, it just was the way it was. Consequently, before I was saved, I found myself using some of those same words. After Jesus came into my life, most of that changed, however, there were a few stubborn words that took a bit longer to eradicate from my vocabulary. Now when I hear others talk that way, it makes me cringe! But it’s not just single words here and there. Good, clean comedy is hard to find. So, the admonition is to speak words that are good and helpful and encourage others.

Ephesians 4:30 NLT And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live.

Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved (sealed) on (for) the day of redemption.

I think that we recognize that our sins grieve God, but do we realize and acknowledge our relationship with the Holy Spirit and the fact that we can grieve Him? Other scriptures also attest to the importance of understanding this relationship.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 NIV Do not quench the Spirit.

To quench is to put out, as a fire; to suppress; squelch. This would be like a snarling dog walked into a room where everyone was laughing and talking and having a good time, only for the awareness of its presence caused them all to stop what they were doing and freeze. (Note that the Holy Spirit is not a snarling dog! I only used that example because that presence would cause them to notice.)

Acts 7:51 NIV “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

Where would we be if the Holy Spirit withdrew His presence among us and no longer influenced our lives? Barnes says, “Do not act toward the Holy Spirit in a manner which would produce pain in the bosom of a friend who loves you.” The Spirit loves us as God does and He was sent to be our comfort and our helper.

There will come a time when God does remove His Holy Spirit from this earth, at which time, all manner of chaos, evil, sin and destruction take place. See 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8.

Ephesians 4:31 NLT Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

This list is a descent from the emotional temperament of bitterness downward to “all types of evil behavior”. Be careful! That which seems insignificant at first, leads to something a bit worse and on it goes.

Hebrews 12:15 NIV See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

When one is weeding a garden, he must pull the weed from its root or it will continue to come back again.

Acts 8:23 NIV For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.

Romans 3:14 NIV “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

Colossians 3:8 NIV But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

When left to fester and grow within, this is where it leads for those who stubbornly refuse to acknowledge God and abandon His truth. He leaves them to their sin. Ellicott says that bitterness kindles into flame.

Romans 1:29 Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.

1 Peter 2:1 NIV So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.

James 1:21 NLT So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

Paul is admonishing the Ephesian believers to not allow the root of bitterness to take hold because it just leads one down a destructive path. Therefore if you find yourself in this situation, take hold of it and get rid of it! Confess the situation and ask God to help you to overcome it. Jesus died to save us from the consequence of our sin and He sent back the Holy Spirit to help us to overcome and to lead us into righteousness. So ask for His help!

While these descriptive words look ominous (and they are), they don't sound like something we would entertain. The problem is that if we let the little things go, they lead us, subtly or not, into deeper issues, so we cut them off before they have a chance to metastasize (\*To be changed or transformed, especially dangerously). \*American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

Regarding verses 25-32: Obviously, some of the things they are dealing with now include these: speaking falsehood, anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, grieving the Holy Spirit, bitterness, rage, brawling, slander and every form of malice. That is quite a list! The opposite of such is as follows: speak truthfully to all, don't let the sun go down while you are angry and don't give the devil a foothold, don't steal but work, do something useful with your hands, share with those in need, speak "what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. Get rid of the bad (listed above) by being kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you".

Instead, look to God's word, receive it, as James says, "it has the power to save your souls."

Ephesians 4:32 NLT Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

This is the way we turn our attention. We turn away from those things that lead to sin and turn toward Jesus. Kindness seems to be a lost art in much of our world today. Many people are so intent on their own business, schedule or such. For example, my daughter travels on the interstate, every day, to get to work. Often she is cut off on the ramp by someone who is so intent on "getting where he is going". Others are speeding past. Every day there are traffic holdups because of accidents. I'm sure that you can relate and think of many other examples of this kind of selfish attitude. In contrast, at

church, we find most people who are leaving the parking lot, will wait and let someone into the line ahead of them. So what, exactly, does it mean to be kind?

Having or showing a friendly, generous, sympathetic, or warm-hearted nature, having or showing a tender, considerate, and helping nature.

(<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/kind>)

What is tenderhearted? Easily moved by another's distress; compassionate. having a compassionate, kindly, or sensitive disposition, loving - feeling or showing love and affection; (Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014)

Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 NIV But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

This should be evident in all Christians. Pastor Russ Hurst (First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida) has said that kindness is a beautiful word that expresses a beautiful grace. It is given for our benefit and expressed for the benefit of others - from the overflow. He said that it is an outward expression of love, joy, peace and patience. It is always to help, always to encourage. (from his sermon 10/16/2022)

1 Peter 3:8 NIV Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

I see that in our world today the opposite attitude is becoming more and more prevalent. It's more "dog eat dog". "I deserve..." "I want..." and on and on it goes. God help us!

We need You so desperately Lord!!! Let us not become fearful nor discouraged, but may we look to You more and more and trust that You are in control. And, You are not finished yet, so we must continue to be active where You have placed us, doing what You have called us to do. We must be careful to check ourselves, hear from You and, for example, heed the following scripture, for unforgiveness can slip in if we are not careful!

Matthew 6:14 NIV For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Mark 11:25 NIV And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.



I was taught that unforgiveness leads to bitterness, and we just encountered what happens if that is not overcome. Paul is making it clear how to handle different attitudes or behaviors that may come up, even in a devoted Christian's life. He is giving a clear teaching on how to be an overcomer, dealing with the sin that confronts us daily. We are overcomers!

## Chapter Five

Ephesians 5:1 NIV Follow God's example, therefore,  
as dearly loved children  
[NLT Imitate God, therefore,  
in everything you do,  
because you are his dear children.]

Matthew 5:48 NIV Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

These scriptures indicate that the emphasis is on God's "lavish" love and mercy. According to Ellicott, "Here the two parts of this idea are divided; and there is put before us, first, the free universal love of God as our Father, and next, the self-sacrificing love of Christ, as the Son of God and man."

Ellicott explains: "The idea of perfection implied in the word here is that of the attainment of the end or ideal completeness of our being. In us that attainment implies growth, and the word is used (e.g., in 1Corinthians 2:6; Hebrews 5:14) of men of full age as contrasted with infants. In God the perfection is not something attained, but exists eternally, but we draw near to it and become partakers of the divine nature when we love as He loves:"

Ephesians 5:2 NIV and walk in the way of love,  
just as Christ loved us  
and gave himself up for us  
as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.  
NLT Live a life filled with love,  
following the example of Christ.  
He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us,

a pleasing aroma to God.

I see that this directive is a choice that we must make. If we/they were walking in love, would Paul have needed to tell them to do so? Is he merely reminding them to do this because they had “slipped”? Or does one become dull in the repetition as he walks. Or, do we need to continuously remind or check ourselves as a part of the maturing process? Will there be a time in which we need not be reminded any more? I believe that if we read Paul’s other epistles, we can find that he commends some for doing these things and encourages them in other areas. (Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) After the flood, Noah offered burnt offerings to the Lord. When God smelled the pleasing aroma, He said that He would never again “curse the ground” because of man because He knew that “the intentions of man’s heart is evil from his youth”. It was because of this that God gave His Son, Jesus, who love us and gave Himself up for us “as a fragrant offering and sacrifice (blood offering) to God.

According to Ellicott “the word “offering” signifies simply a gift offered to God, and is applied especially, though not exclusively, to unbloody sacrifices; while the word “sacrifice” distinctly implies the shedding of blood.” According to the Pulpit Commentary: God was satisfied, and accepted the sacrificial offering.

Jesus, His whole life, willingly gave himself up as an offering, for us, and ultimately He chose to become a sacrifice - for us! This sacrifice “pleased God”

We love God because He first loved us, and therefore we love others as we are loved! This is how we walk in the way of love. Jesus showed His love for us by sacrificing Himself on the cross. While most of us are not required to become sacrifices, as noted above, we should willingly give ourselves to Christ. Others would see our love for the Lord and for one another, and be drawn to the Lord themselves.

John 13:35 NLT “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

John 15:12-13, “This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

The King James version puts the last phrase of 5:2 in this way: a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. [Savour - the quality in a substance that is perceived by the sense of taste or smell; o taste or smell, esp appreciatively; to relish or enjoy] Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014

With regard to the “sweet smelling” or “pleasing” aroma to God, this sacrifice of self is received and pleases God. That is our desire; to please God.

Gill explains: “a sweet savour unto the Lord: he accepting of it, and smelling a sweet savour of rest in it, as an atonement for sin, typical of the sacrifice of Christ, which is to God for a sweet smelling savour, ...”

Initially, the sacrifice consisted of an animal which was offered to God as a sin offering, which was then burned on the brazen altar. I don't know about that “sweet-smelling”, but I can say that when I smell someone barbecuing, I find that sweet-smelling. How much more important to God is the sacrifice offered to Him! This, not in the sense of a ‘burnt offering’, but rather, a sacrifice of yourself to Him.

My thoughts are drawn to the expressions of love, unexpectedly lavished on me and how sweet it is. How God must take pleasure as we return our self-sacrificing love to Him and freely give our love to others in His name.

Ephesians 5:3 NIV But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Paul now begins, in verses 3-14, to exhort the Ephesians more specifically regarding sin. He addresses sexual immorality, impurity and greed or covetousness with regard to the extreme importance of this type of behavior, both to God, who is holy, and to their witness to others. There is to be no hint of impropriety.

1 Corinthians 6:18 NLT Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.

We are to be “clean vessels” for God's use! Barnes notes the following: “Perhaps no single sin has done so much to produce the most painful and dreadful diseases, to weaken the constitution, and to shorten life as this. Other vices, as gluttony and drunkenness, do this also, and all sin has some effect in destroying the body, but it is true of this sin in an eminent degree.”

Since God created us, He cares how we take care of the body that He gave us. We must recognize the gift of our body and choose to take care of it in order to present it to God as holy, which pleases Him. Ellicott says that impure or unclean is sin against our own body. Greed is sin against our neighbor.

Romans 6:11-13 NIV In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

Therefore, there is to be “no hint” of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed. This tells me that one who comes as close as possible to “sin” is putting themselves in a very bad place. This displeases God; telling off-color jokes, for example. How close to the edge of the cliff can I come without falling off? This seems insane to me! In the same way, our intent is not to come close to the edge, in relation to right living and pleasing God! He wants our wholehearted love and choice to live rightly. Not mentioned here, but important as well, is the idea of giving a “foothold” for the devil to come in and lead one further astray!

What is impurity? “The quality or condition of being impure, especially: a. Contamination or pollution.” (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

There were so many legalities listed in the old testament regarding things that were impure. Examples such as: a woman’s cycle, a dead body (animal or human), lewdness, sexual impurity, and the like.

Ezra 9:11 NIV ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other.

Colossians 3:5 NIV Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

What about greed? “An excessive desire to acquire or possess more than what one needs or deserves, especially with respect to material wealth.” (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

Also: “1. excessive consumption of or desire for food; gluttony  
2. excessive desire, as for wealth or power.” (Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014)

It seems that today's world is full of greed when we consider these definitions. I was taken back by the second definition with regard to food and gluttony, something which I have fought most of my life! I never equated it with greed, nor recognized just how God felt about it. Although I knew He was not pleased, it seemed to be an area in which we could overlook as not of the greatest importance. In today's context, I see it in a different light! How destructive is greed!!!

Philippians 3:19 ESV Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

Psalms 102:2-3 NIV In his arrogance the wicked man ... boasts about the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.

Proverbs 15:27 NIV The greedy bring ruin to their households

Proverbs 28:25 NIV The greedy stir up conflict

Ezekiel 33:31 NIV Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.

Luke 12:15 NIV Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

1 Thessalonians 2:5 NIV You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

Truly, God cares about even a hint of sin in His HOLY people! It requires our diligence to be aware and to refrain from anything that would cloud our integrity and our witness. We shall not be hypocrites nor shall we chance God's displeasure. It is truly serious! Not that we should be fearful, but that we maintain an open and active relationship with the King of kings and the Lord of lords! A LOVE relationship! A DEPENDANT relationship! A LOVE relationship that desires to please God!

Ephesians 5:4 NIV Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

There is a reference here to Matthew 12:35 NIV which says: A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

The distinction is between what is in the heart, and what comes out of the mouth. Ellicott says, "He is passing from impurity of the inward soul to impurity in outward expression." Let's look at some definitions of what is mentioned in verse 4.

Obscenity- "Indecency, lewdness, or offensiveness in behavior, expression, or appearance.

something, such as a word, act, or expression, that is indecent or lewd. Something that is offensive or repulsive to the senses:" [Lewd: Preoccupied with sex and sexual desire; lustful].(Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014)

Foolish talk - Lacking or exhibiting a lack of good sense or judgment; silly: Capable of arousing laughter; absurd or ridiculous: Embarrassed; abashed: 4. Insignificant; trivial: (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

Coarse joking - lacking delicacy or refinement; crude; harsh; rough; boorish; gross: His language was coarse and unsuitable for children to hear. (Abused, Confused, & Misused Words by Mary Embree Copyright © 2007, 2013 by Mary Embree) vulgar, indecent.

I have found that one must pay close attention to one's thoughts before speaking. The expression, "Think before you speak" is most apropos here.

James 3:5-6, 8 NIV 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. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ...but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

This is why we are also instructed to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ"! If we are not careful, we may find our conversation slowly drifting and becoming careless in that we are no longer edifying and building up. It becomes idle or foolish talk. Instead, we are to be thankful, express thanksgiving. I have a blessed neighbor who is 90, and out of whose mouth always comes blessing and edification. Another friend and neighbor, regardless of the circumstances, (she has a most aggressive cancer) does nothing but praise God and give testimony of His goodness! She too, is an encourager. These are examples I wish to follow. Too often, I find myself complaining or choosing to discuss the negative situation rather than speak something that edifies and builds up. I need the Lord so desperately! How about you?

Ellicott says: “The opposition is striking. “The foolish talking and jesting” aim at mirth and play of mind; St. Paul will not austere condemn, such light-heartedness, but he finds a wholesome and spiritual vent for it in the habitual expression of thankfulness to God, which proceeds from a natural and childlike cheerfulness. . . . being “filled with the Spirit . . . giving thanks always for all things.” ”

Ephesians 5:5 NLT You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

Paul is telling us that this is something that we already know, but need to be reminded of. I was drawn to those three descriptive words; immoral (does not adhere to principles of right and wrong), impure (mixed, combined with something else) contaminated, and greedy (excessive desire for more - money, things, possessions, food, drink, activity or pursuits). Idolatry is something that we set our mind/heart on and desire, love or worship above all else. This is not us! This has no place for the Christian.

Ephesians 5:6-7 NIV Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. [NLT Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. Don't participate in the things these people do.]

1 John 3:7 NIV Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Barnes explains what the Ephesians may be exposed to, based on their past. “We may suppose that they would be under strong temptations to mingle in the “happy” and festive scenes where these vices were not frowned on, or where they were practiced; or that they might be tempted to commit them by some of the plausible arguments which were then used for their indulgence. Many of their friends may have been in these circles; and they would endeavor to convince them that such were the customs which had been long practiced, and that there could be no harm still in their indulgence.”

Paul has just enumerated many things for which God is NOT pleased and His wrath comes upon those who are disobedient. It is so easy to be deceived when someone tries to rectify what you have done by saying that “it’s not so bad”, “it’s natural”, “don’t



worry about that"! They may go on to make all manner of excuses for it, but we know in our heart (Holy Spirit conviction) the truth and we should not allow ourselves to be deceived and thus become a partner with them.

If we listen, we can hear those kinds of enticements all around us today. People who see no harm in various indulgences and they try to encourage everyone else to come along with them. As our days darken here and now, the arguments become stronger and stronger and the behavior darker and darker. The legalization of such things as various drugs, or abortion, come to mind. Little by little, change comes. Not beneficial! BEWARE!!

The consequences are deadly. God's wrath comes on the disobedient. That should deter everyone!

Romans 1:18 NLT But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Ephesians 5:8 NIV For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.  
Live as children of light

1 Thessalonians 5:4 NLT But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

1 John 1:6-7 NASB If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 2:9-11 NASB The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Light and darkness are expressed in somewhat different fashion here. The first part of the verse states that we "were in darkness", as if we only existed at night, when all was dark. Such is the state of sin. Nothing but darkness surrounding us... no good. On the other hand, now we "are light in the Lord". Actually, we aren't the Light, but the reflection of the Light, and yet we have the Light within us! Therefore, we bring Light to the world.

Matthew 5:16 NIV In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Ellicott adds, “So, on the other hand, they who walk in darkness are said to be themselves darkness—new sources, so to speak, of the darkness which hates and quenches light, both to themselves and to others.”

It hurts my heart to see this in our world today! How God must grieve!

Matthew 6:23 NIV But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

John 12:36 NIV Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.”

1 Thessalonians 5:5 NIV You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

Ellicott continues, ““Children of light” are they who not only love the light, but also manifest the likeness of the one true Light, “the Father of Lights” (James 1:17), being His children in Jesus Christ.”

MacLaren makes this comment: “Union with Him makes light, just as the bit of carbon will glow as long as it is in contact with the electric force, and subsides again into darkness when that is switched off.”

He continues, regarding living as children of light: “‘Walk as children of light.’ Be true to your truest, deepest self. Manifest what you are. Let the sweet, sacred secrets of inward communion come out in the trivialities of ordinary conduct; make of your every thought a deed, and see to it that every deed be vitalised and purified by its contact with the great truths and thoughts that lie in this name. ...

Ephesians 5:9 NIV (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

Ellicott says that light has its fruit, but darkness is unfruitful. Indeed, plants need light in which to grow and produce fruit.

MacLaren states: “To be true to the light that is in you is the sum of duty, and the condition of perfectness, ‘for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth’ .”

In his discussion of the light breaking forth within us, I am reminded of the day in which I was “saved”. As they were praying for me to receive the Holy Spirit, I became aware of a light that seemed to come inside me and it began to glow and grow. I surely didn’t understand it then, but now, as I pursue this study, I am much more aware that this was an actual experience, not one I imagined. How even more beautiful that experience becomes!

MacLaren goes on to say: “so, when we talk about the light being fruitful, we are setting, in a striking image, the great Christian thought that, if you want to get right conduct, you must have renewed character; and that if you have renewed character you will get right conduct. This is the principle of my text. The light has in it a productive power; and the true way to adorn a life with all things beautiful, solemn, lovely, is to open the heart to the entrance of Jesus Christ.”

With regard to fruit he says, “They consist, says he, in all goodness and righteousness and truth. . . . the specific excellence of kindness, amiability, or the like. ‘Righteousness’ again, is that which rigidly adheres to the strict law of duty, and carefully desires to give to every man what belongs to him, and to every relation of life what it requires. And ‘truth’ is rather the truth of sincerity, as opposed to hypocrisy and lies and shams, than the intellectual truth as opposed to error.”

The following two comments are simply for clarification of interpretation of the fruit. This is not meant to lead us off track, but to help us in our understanding of the subject here discussed.

{Ellicott says: “9) For the fruit . . .—The true reading is, of the Light, for which the easier phrase, “the fruit of the Spirit,” has been substituted, to the great detriment of the force and coherency of the whole passage.

MacLaren feels the same and says, “This is one of the cases in which the Revised Version has done service by giving currency to an unmistakably accurate and improved reading. That which stands in our Authorised Version, ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ seems to have been a correction made by some one who took offence at the violent metaphor, as he conceived it, that ‘light’ should bear ‘fruit’ and desired to tinker the text so as to bring it into verbal correspondence with another passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, where ‘the fruits of the Spirit’ are enumerated. But the reading, ‘the fruit of the light,’ has not only the preponderance of manuscript authority in its favour, but is preferable because it preserves a striking image, and is in harmony with the whole context.”

Ephesians 5:10 NLT Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.

Because of WHO WE ARE we are admonished to FIND OUT WHAT PLEASURES THE LORD.

Paul has told us to live as children of the Light and has indicated that the fruit of that is goodness, righteousness and truth. We saw in Matthew 5:16 that we are to let our light shine before others “that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” How can we do that unless we seek what pleases the Lord? We seek to do His will and be led by Him through His Holy Spirit, and not run out enthusiastically, in our own wisdom, which accounts for little in God’s scheme of things.

The King James translation says to “prove what is acceptable unto the Lord”. Ellicott says, ““To prove” is to try in each case, by the full light of God, what is accordant to His will; it is a work partly of thought, partly of practical experience; and it always implies a searching examination of heart and action by the touchstone of God’s word.”

Paul has given a multitude of instructions throughout Ephesians as to how to live in such a way as to please God. Understanding of His will for us entails not only our conduct/behavior as a Christian, but also our outreach to others, which needs to be guided by seeking God’s will and walking in obedience. This is how some are called to preach, teach, become missionaries or to work in various other capacities. God will use us wherever He sends us if we remain close to Him and follow His lead. In this way we let our light shine and He gets the glory!

Romans 12:2 NLT Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Ephesians 5:11 NIV Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

It is said that the Ephesians had a great deal of difficulty avoiding the darkness around them since their society consisted of that which caused their shame. (seen in the temple of Diana or Artemis - immorality)

Romans 6:21 NIV What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

2 Thessalonians 3:14 AMP Now if anyone [in the church] does not obey what we say in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be ashamed and repent.

The apostle Paul would ask: “ ‘What fruit had ye then’-when ye were doing them-’in the things whereof ye are now ashamed?’ And the answer is ‘None!’ Of course it is true that men do bad things because they like them better than good. Of course, it is true that the misery of mankind is that they have no appetite in the general for the only real satisfaction. But it is also true that no man who feeds his heart and mind on anything short of God is really at rest in anything that he does or possesses.” (MacLaren)

What about fruit? What has the one who has embraced only the darkness have to show for it when he is faced with eternity? All that he has or does is left behind and becomes valueless. Fruitless for the kingdom of God.

So what happens if one exposes the deeds of darkness? Ellicott pointed out that there may be one of two results. Either to “convince” them to change or to “convict” them of their wrong doing. Benson says, “but rather reprove them — Show your disapprobation [Moral disapproval; condemnation.\*] of them by seasonable and suitable reproof, and especially by the holiness of your conversation.” \*American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

Leviticus 19:17b NIV Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.

Matthew 18:15 NIV If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

Ephesians 5:12-13 NLT It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.

But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them,

Certainly, this is not a joking matter!

When I first became a Christian, unfortunately I was quite knowledgeable of many sinful things of which I, as well as others, had been guilty of participating in. After I gave my life over to Christ, I chose to become ignorant of such things, especially of a sexual nature. This included certain terminology of which I chose to become ignorant. My friends began to change (for the better) and I longed to be with other Christians and to

be in the word, studying the word, walking out the things I was learning and in the directions that the Holy Spirit was directing me.

Over time, I still hold to that attitude, although from time to time I have been distracted from my quality time in the word or with the Lord, I remain seeking fellowship with other believers and walking in obedience as I am directed. When I realize that I have been distracted, I turn back. I seek God, His forgiveness and fellowship with Him through His word and prayer.

MacLaren helps us see that, “There are three groups of practical exhortations in this passage, of which the first deals with the Christian as a reproving light in darkness; ... The Apostle has just been saying that Christians were ‘darkness, but are now light in the Lord,’ and thence drawing the law for their life, to walk as ‘children of light.’ A very important part of such walk is recoiling from all share in ‘the unfruitful works of darkness,’ -a significant expression branding such deeds as being both bad in their source and in their results.

The agent of reproof is ‘the light,’ which here is the designation of character as transformed by Jesus,” [ I just gave an example of in my own experience] “and the process of reproof or conviction is simply the manifestation of the evil in its true nature, which comes from setting it in the beams of the light.”

MacLaren gave an example of the darkness of a thunderstorm. We, in Southwest Florida, are accustomed to a thundering rainy season and the warnings are clear as we see the clouds forming. Most interesting is the very darkness of the thunder-clouds as seen when the sun is shining, especially in their direction. Boy, they are dark and ominous!

And so it is when the light of a Christ follower enters the room. Have you been there? Very often the conversation changes and there may ensue a poignant silence for a time. Then, care is taken regarding the conversation. At least, in this scenario, this may happen as ‘friends’ recognize the change in you, and they are respectful of the change. But what about entering into the space of unbelievers that you do not know. Is it time to run? Or, pray? Or be prayed up and ready to be led by the Holy Spirit and perhaps be the bringer of a few seeds? What we do know is that we are not to participate in their deeds or conversation. Nor are we to set ourselves up as their judge.

An example of this scenario is the ministry to trafficked women, or prostitutes. I am aware of a lady who goes into the bars and places where these women may be found and there the Lord leads her to minister to them. She is not one of them, nor is she scarred by being in their presence. God leads her and keeps her safe! Her ministry is very productive for the Kingdom of God!

MacLaren says, “To show sin as it is, is to condemn it; ‘for everything that is made manifest is light.’ “ This is what this lady’s ministry (Second Chance) does as she shows

the ladies love, and as they get to respect her not to “harm them”, she shows ‘sin as it is’. She gives them the truth of the word. She loves them!

Ephesians 5:14 BLB Therefore it says:

"Awake you, the one sleeping,  
and rise up out from the dead,  
and Christ will shine upon you."

MacLaren: “The second extortion is related to the first. “Because the Christian is to shake himself free from complicity with works of darkness, and to be their living condemnation, he must take heed to his goings. ... A great element in that heedfulness is a quick insight into the special duty and opportunity of the moment, for life is not merely made up of hours, but each has its own particular errand for us, and has some possibility in it which, neglected, may be lost for ever.”

Matthew Henry says, “After the example of prophets and apostles, we should call on those asleep and dead in sin, to awake and arise, that Christ may give them light.” This would probably be the ‘errand’ that MacLaren just talked about. This was our directive by the Lord Himself when He said that we are to:

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

James 5:19-20 NIV My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Ephesians 5:15-16 NIV Be very careful, then, how you live—  
not as unwise but as wise  
making the most of every opportunity,  
because the days are evil.

Colossians 4:5 NLT Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity.

Benson says, “Embracing and improving every opportunity of doing good, and particularly of gaining souls to Christ.”



Galatians 6:10 NIV Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

With regard to “opportunity” Ellicott says, “using it to the utmost, whether by silence or by speech, by facing or avoiding danger, by yielding to a crisis (see Romans 12:11) or conquering it. The reason given that “the days are evil” must be taken in the widest sense, of all that induces temptation to swerve out of the “strictness” of the right way.”

Herein I see that there is a time for speaking and a time to be quiet. Sometimes we forget that, thinking that we must always have something to say!

Not only are we to use this time wisely, but we must also be very aware of the evil of the days; the wickedness around us. There are so many temptations out there that are determined to draw us away from using our time wisely. Two examples come to mind.

1. Just now my sister posted something on facebook and I found that, without thought, I went to check it out! But I am to be in my Bible - not facebook!

2. As we walked our dogs this morning, I was aware of 2 things. A. After Smokey finished his business, he was drawn to every scent imaginable and continually had to stop, smell, and sometimes drip. B. My husband likes us to walk the dogs together, but sometimes he gets ahead of me. His thoughts keep him from hearing or paying attention to whether we're together or not. It is at this point that my mind takes over and I start “stewing” that he doesn't pay attention, doesn't care.....

I eventually realized that this would be a good time for praise and worship and prayer instead of stewing, so I began doing that when he got farther ahead of me. (It's unfortunate that I need a reminder!) Never the less, that old thought process would interrupt and I would find myself “stewing” again. Were my thoughts true? Probably not. But I was distracted. These are such mild and simple examples, but think about how the enemy's plan is to steal, kill and destroy! If he can sneak in with little things, he has a foothold for much more! Unfortunately, our world today is ripe with much evil, all around us. God help us to stay connected and obedient to and seeking God's truth!

One last thought, making the most of every opportunity also tells us to be careful of how we use our time. Time is more precious than we realize and to waste it is folly! We will be accountable as to how we have used our time. Have we been about our Master's business?

Ephesians 5:17 NIV Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

NLT Don't act thoughtlessly,

but understand what the Lord wants you to do.

This is God's answer to that which I expressed above. Discerning the truly important things and to not be foolishly distracted following various "scents".

I have a German neighbor who is 93 years old and is in remarkably good health. She is a Menonite and has always done things for herself. She works hard. One day she was outside with a strong broom in her hand and a bucket of soapy water, scrubbing her driveway. Her comment, "I am a Mennonite, I can work and do things myself. That's the way I was brought up!" She says that when she goes into the grocery store, she talks with the little children, and she tells the parents to teach them about the Lord. She says, "The Lord will not forsake His own!"

I have heard her say many times that she was praying that God would take her home because she's now old and just wants to go "home". One day she came to my door, and with tears in her eyes, she said, "Linda, I want you to pray to God to take me now. I can't go on!" She mentioned that she couldn't commit suicide because that is a sin. Needless to say, I was greatly disturbed! How do I help this woman who has so much life in her? She has a remarkable memory and often shares, with whoever will listen, of her life in Germany and elsewhere during Hitler's reign, the incredible history of her family and so much more!!! She could write books and it's fascinating.

My answer lies in scripture! That is the only thing that could help her along with my presence as a friend. I recognize that scriptures are a HUGE part of knowing God's will and making use of every opportunity. This is where God has planted me for this time, so I must remain alert and ready to follow His lead! The same goes for you, wherever you are and at whatever stage of life you find yourself, understand what God wants you to do.

Proverbs 9:10 NIV The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Paul explains, to be wise is to understand what the will of the Lord is. Gill's Exposition\* makes such a pertinent comment: "Wherefore be ye not unwise,.... No one would be thought to be unwise, but such are, who do not redeem time, and are ignorant of the will of the Lord; believers should not act the unwise part, neither in their talk, nor in their walk and conversation, nor in their use of time: but understanding what the will of the Lord is..." \*<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/Gill/Eph.5:17>

Ephesians 5:18 NLT Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life\*.

Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,

\*The Berean Study Bible uses the phrase: which leads to reckless indiscretion.

Ellicott addresses drunkenness as: “not (like gluttony) which is primarily gratification of the appetite, but as a reckless pursuit of excitement at all costs- ... Paul emphatically brands drunkenness as “excess,” a word properly signifying “recklessness”—“incapable of saving,” or denying itself anything, and naturally passing through this want of self-restraint into profligacy—rightly translated “riot” in Titus 1:6, 1Peter 4:4, as the corresponding adverb is rendered “riotous living” in Luke 15:13. For drunkenness is at once the effect and cause of utter recklessness. It is the effect of a self-abandonment, by which the sensual or passionate elements of the nature are stimulated to frenzy, while the self-controlling judgment is drugged to sleep.”

Drunkenness is also used as a means of escape! When one is unable to face things, such as my mother. She was divorced, with 4 children to raise. We moved from New York state and a very large house, to Florida where my grandparents had just retired. I'm very sure that her life was very overwhelming at times, however, she rejected the Lord at every step. She never was able to discover His faithfulness and love for her, and His undergirding strength. She never realized that “nothing is impossible with God”!

Benson describes being filled with the Spirit: “But be ye filled with the Spirit — In all his graces, which gives a joy unspeakably more delightful, exhilarating, and permanent, than that which is produced by the fumes of wine. The antithesis is beautiful. ... there is this remarkable propriety, that our Lord had represented the influences of the Spirit, (which he invited all who thirsted for them, to come to him and receive,) under the emblem of rivers of living water, which he commanded believers to drink plentifully,”

In meditating on this scripture, I am reminded that, in Acts 2 we find this:

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:

“Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’[c]

Being filled with the Spirit is so much more than getting drunk!

Galatians 5:16 NLT So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

John 16:13 NIV But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 14:17 NLT He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges most aptly expresses our last thought: "yet seek instead not a dead level of feeling, but the sacred heights of spiritual joy and power, in that Divine Love which (Song of Solomon 1:2) 'is better than wine'."

Ephesians 5:19 NKJV speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

This is so much more profitable, indeed we are directed to do so, than the conversations of verse 4.

Nehemiah 12:46 NIV For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Psalms 100:2 NIV Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Ellicott makes a distinction between these. "the "psalms" and "hymns" are easily distinguished. The "psalm," as the word itself implies, is music with instrumental accompaniment, and can hardly fail to refer to the Old Testament psalms, familiar in Jewish worship," He goes on to say that hymns are simply vocal music, ...more especially directed to praise of God, and probably designating the new utterances of the Christian Church itself." (Most equate Psalms with the Psalms of David "familiar in Jewish worship".)

Barnes explains a hymn as follows: "A "hymn" is properly a song or ode in honor of God. Among the pagan it was a song in honor of some deity. With us now it denotes a short poem, composed for religious service, and sung in praise to God."

When going through hymnals, we find that the hymns are filled with the gospel, the words of truth, and speak to that truth as a reminder and/or a means of declaring that truth in praise, worship and thanksgiving. Many of the great hymn writers declare God's word so well! We can read through many hymnals and find ourselves worshipping God and being blessed!

Spiritual songs refer to songs or odes related to spiritual things. An ode is a short poem or song set to music. References state that it's not sure how these were sung; by a choir, with or without instruments, by a soloist, etc. The bottom line is that music was and still is a highly important part in worship. Interestingly, even the pagans used music/singing to worship their deities.

In today's culture, I suspect spiritual songs would be new songs, composed to lift up worship to our God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to tell of His greatness. They would honor Him and give Him glory, as well as remind us of who He is and what He has done. They would be apt to teach and to edify, comfort and encourage. They can be prophetic or be a prayer and bring peace but, above all, we pour out our heart full of praise and love to our loving, faithful, and living God.

Psalm 33:3 NIV Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

Psalm 40:3 NIV He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.

Some of the most intense times of worship come as we, individually or corporately, "sing and make melody in our heart to the Lord"! Whether this is called 'singing in the Spirit' or simply singing familiar songs to our Lord, God is delighted and pleased with our fellowship with Him.

I feel compelled to explain what I mean by 'singing in the Spirit'. Earlier in my experience as a Spirit-filled Christian, our fellowship would move from corporately singing songs and hymns unto the Lord, to moving into voicing our praise to Him, singing in a different way. This would be called, 'singing in the Spirit'. Many would sing in their new prayer language, others would sing words of praise and exultation in their heart language, all of which would be blended together (not in chaos) but rather in the most beautiful heavenly tune. This would begin softly, rise to a crescendo and return to a soft close. What peace and joy would follow such an experience! In some worship services lately, we seem to be drawing closer to the Lord in a very similar way. It still is about worship and relationship.

A note here: While I remember this time with a tender heart, I am reminded that we do not look to repeat an experience or a feeling, but we seek to be wholly led by the Holy

Spirit! I trust that He can lead us to greater heights of worship as we get our eyes off of things of the present or past, and put them on the only One worthy of our worship and praise.

Ephesians 5:20 NIV always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Daniel 6:10 NIV Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (emphasis mine)

Psalms 50:14 NIV Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the vows you made to the Most High.

Psalms 100:4 NIV Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Psalms 147:7 NIV Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; ...

Romans 14:6 NLT Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.

1 Corinthians 15:57 ESV But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:15 NIV Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

1 Thessalonians 3:9 NIV How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Romans 1:8 NIV First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

Colossians 3:17 NIV And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 NLT Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing.

Colossians 2:7 NLT Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Psalms 34:1 NIV I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise will always be on my lips.

When we are thankful, we bless God, and He blesses us!

Need I say more?

Ephesians 5:21 NIV Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

1 Peter 5:5-6 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Hebrews 13:17 NLT Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

James 4:7 NLT Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 2:13-14 NLT For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

In all of these scriptures there is a sense of order. God's way is orderly and not disorderly or disorganized. Barnes says "The general meaning here is, that Christianity does not break up the relations of life, and produce disorder, lawlessness, and insubordination; but that it will confirm every proper authority, and make every just yoke lighter. Infidelity is always disorganizing; Christianity, never."



Matthew Henry explains the act of submission as follows: "God keeps believers from sinning against him, and engages them to submit one to another in all he has commanded, to promote his glory, and to fulfil their duties to each other."

Jamieson-Faussett- Brown Commentary says this: "Here he passes from our relations to God, to those which concern our fellow men. ...The believer passes from under the bondage of the law as a letter, to be "the servant of Christ" (1Co 7:22), which, through the instinct of love to Him, is really to be "the Lord's freeman"; for he is "under the law to Christ" ... Thus reverential fear of displeasing Him is the motive for discharging our relative duties as Christians."

Human nature seems to be rebellious against any authority. We have seen this in today's culture and can see it as it grows from disobedience to parents, to full-blown disregard of any and all authority. How this must not only hurt but also greatly anger our holy God! Submission is seen as a dirty word today, one not to be recognized because it takes away "my rights", my ability to do as I please. There is a commercial that talks about money from a "settlement" and the key phrase is: "IT'S MY MONEY AND I WANT IT NOW!" The angry shouting of that phrase so aptly describes the nature of entitlement that we see today. "I deserve it so I want it now!"

God has designed a better way and in following His way, He receives the glory and respect due Him. '

In Gill's Exposition we find this: "submission should be on account of the fear of God, and so far as is consistent with it; and indeed, the fear of God is that which should influence and engage to every duty; and which should be before our eyes, and in exercise in our hearts, in all concerns, civil and religious: ... "in the fear of Christ"; who is the head of the church, and King of saints, and as such to be feared and revered; and for his sake there should be a submission to one another; the Syriac version reads, in the love of Christ, which should constrain the saints to this duty."

This kind of fear is not that of being afraid or terrified, but rather it concerns a deep awe, respect and love for God. When you love someone totally, it is a pleasure to do anything that will please them. I do recognize, however, that it may not always be easy!

It should also be noted that Ephesians 5:21 is introductory to Ephesians 5:22 through the remainder of the chapter. He now proceeds "to the next section, which treats the three-fold submission of wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves to masters". (Ellicott)

Ephesians 5:22 NLT For wives,  
this means submit to your husbands  
as to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:13 NLT But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

John 14:10 NIV So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. (emphasis mine)

John 12:49-50 ESV For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

John 8:28-29 NIV So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” (emphasis mine)

I, personally, have struggled with submission. It has been difficult to “die to self”. It begins with learning to obey parents and then authorities on many levels. Oh, how I could make excuses... but, learning to obey is crucial! Learning to love is also crucial! God has given us 47 years of marriage thus far, and it has only been recently that I found this scripture (meaning that it really spoke to me) in Genesis 3:16 NIV To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” God said this after Adam and Eve sinned against God by disobedience. He dealt with Eve in this way, since she took the fruit and gave it to Adam. as well. Then He dealt with Adam. He spoke these words to me to express the position of my husband to me. In the New Testament, God clarified the husband’s role; mine is still to ‘submit’ to my husband as to the Lord!

Ephesians 5:23 NLT For a husband is the head of his wife  
as Christ is the head of the church.  
He is the Savior of his body, the church.

When we consider the headship (1 Corinthians 11:13) we recognize that this leads to spiritual unity, “involving self-sacrifice in the head, as well as obedience to the head” (Ellicott).

As I contemplated this, a lot of things fell into place for me. I didn't like being 'ruled over' by anyone! In the New Testament, God adds a very important aspect that doesn't really sound like a tyrant ruling over someone.

Ellicott explains: “The subjection of the Church of Christ is a free subjection, arising out of faith in His absolute wisdom and goodness, and of love; for His unspeakable love. Hence we gather (1) that the subordination of the wife is not that of the slave, by compulsion and fear, but one which arises from and preserves freedom; next (2), that it can exist, or at any rate can endure, only on condition of superior wisdom and goodness and love in the husband;”

Matthew Henry adds, “The duty of wives is, submission to their husbands in the Lord, which includes honouring and obeying them, from a principle of love to them. The duty of husbands is to love their wives. The love of Christ to the church is an example, which is sincere, pure, and constant, notwithstanding her failures. Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next, that he might bestow on all his members a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin, by those influences of the Holy Spirit, of which baptismal water was the outward sign. The church and believers will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. But those only who are sanctified now, shall be glorified hereafter. ”

Barnes says, “ The idea here seems to be, that as Christ gave himself to save his body, the church; as he practiced self-denial and made it an object of intense solicitude (care or concern, as for the well-being of another) to preserve that church, so ought the husband to manifest a similar solicitude to make his wife happy, and to save her from want, affliction, and pain. He ought to regard himself as her natural protector; as bound to anticipate and provide for her needs; as under obligation to comfort her in trial, even as Christ does the church.

Ephesians 5:24 NIV Now as the church submits to Christ,  
so also wives should submit to their husbands  
in everything.

Barnes clarifies: “In everything which is not contrary to the will of God;”

Colossians 3:18 NIV Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (emphasis mine)

Jamiesson, Faussett, Brown - in every thing—appertaining to a husband's legitimate authority; "in the Lord" (Col 3:18); everything not contrary to God.

Matthew Poole's Commentary

As the church is subject to Christ, viz. with cheerfulness, chastity, humility, obedience, &c.

So let the wives be to their own husbands; in imitation of the church's subjection to Christ, as a pattern of their subjection to their husbands.

In every thing; understand, to which the authority of the husband extends itself.

I believe that we have ample examples from which to see that God is gracious, wise, and good and He has designed everything for our benefit and for His glory. Let's look at the definition of Unity: The state or quality of being one or united into a whole: The state or quality of being in accord; harmony: Singleness or constancy of purpose or action; continuity: (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

Given this perspective, all of our lives, to be productive and pleasing to God, centers around unity. We agree in function and purpose. How much good is accomplished in discord and chaos, where everyone wants their own way and there is no unity? It's the same in the home, the church, and the government. How is this discord or chaos avoided? We esteem others as better than ourselves and we submit to those who have authority over us; God given authority. God has a plan for tyrants and that is not what He is talking about here. This conversation is for the church family.

Ephesians 5:25 NIV For husbands,  
this means love your wives,  
just as Christ loved the church.  
He gave up his life for her

Did you see the KEY?

LOVE

Agape love - selfless love of one person for another

Ellicott spares no directness in telling exactly what he feels God is saying here. “The love of Christ for His Church is such that He counts Himself incomplete without her (Ephesians 1:23), and raises her to be one with Himself; that He bears with her weakness and frailty; that He draws her on by the cords of love; and that He gives up Himself for her. Only so far as the husband shows the like love in perfect sympathy, in chivalrous forbearance, in abhorrence of tyranny, in willingness to self-sacrifice, has he any right to claim lordship.

The husband may be said to give himself for his wife, but it cannot be in any higher sense than as taking the chief share of the burden, and if possible the pain, of life for her. ”

Ellicott goes on to equate this relationship of husband to wife with the three stages of salvation: justification, sanctification and glorification. “Justification in His “giving Himself for us”, sanctification in the “cleansing by water in the Word,” glorification in the final “presentation” to Christ in glory.”

What a beautiful thought! If a marriage were truly lived in this way, how could there be disunity or a lack of love? It is because of LOVE that the wife is able to willingly submit to her husband. Makes me also think of the scripture: We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Benson further clarifies: “The apostle now proceeds to speak of the duty of husbands to their wives, the principal of which consists in their loving them, without which they would abuse their power to tyranny and oppression. But how are they to love them? The apostle says, as Christ loved the church — Namely, with a love that is sincere, pure, ardent, constant, and persevering, and notwithstanding the imperfections and failures that they are chargeable with.”

Do we get a clearer picture of Christ with His church? We are all imperfect, prone to err, yet we are loved beyond measure and forgiven!

Thank you Jesus! Thank you for showing us the way! Thank you for setting an example for us to follow. Thank you for showing us how to love and to live. Thank you for your forgiveness and for salvation. Thank you that because of your sacrifice, we have a personal relationship with the Father through you. Thank you God for your perfect plan!

Benson makes a further comment worth considering. “The love which God requires from the husband toward his wife, compensates for that subjection which he demands from her to her husband: and the prescribed subjection of the wife is an abundant return for that love of the husband which God hath made her due.”

Again, how could there be disunity if married life was lived this way? Disagreements, yes, but worked out harmoniously, each thinking more highly of the other in the love of Christ.

Jamieson-Faussett-Brown brings another thought to this scripture. Jesus died for a church/people who spurned His love; who turned against Him and hated Him. Yet He loved! He loved the church with all its weaknesses and failures and the individuals likewise. He gave Himself, that they might live and turn to Him and grow in Him. He did so "by much tenderness of regard, not by threats, insults, and terror:" He did so by LOVE.

Ephesians 5:26 BSV to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

This is the greater purpose for this teaching, that she (the wife and the church) may be sanctified and cleansed, whereby she is presented to Himself "without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless." Hallelujah!

Some of the commentaries likened this cleansing to the preparations made for a bride before her wedding, with the example of Esther. In some instances, this process took up to a year of preparation. This would include "Six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors, and with other things for the purifying of women;" Barnes

Barnes further says, "As such a virgin was purified and prepared for her husband by washing and by anointing, so the church is to be prepared for Christ. It is to be made pure and holy. Outwardly there is to be the application of water - the symbol of purity; and within there is to be holiness of heart. ...

By that truth they were to be sanctified John 17:17; and in accordance with that the whole work from the commencement to the close was to be accomplished. It was not by external ceremonies, and not by any miraculous power on the heart, but by the faithful application of truth to the heart."

The Jamieson, Faussett, Brown Commentary brings this understanding to the "washing with water".

As the bride passed through a purifying bath before marriage, so the Church (compare Re 21:2). He speaks of baptism according to its high ideal and design, as if the inward grace accompanied the outward rite; hence he asserts of outward baptism whatever is involved in a believing appropriation of the divine truths it symbolizes, and says that Christ, by baptism, has purified the Church [Neander] (1Pe 3:21).

Gill has this opinion: “for this sanctifying and cleansing does not so much refer to the inward work of sanctification of the Spirit, though that is a fruit and effect of the death of Christ, and is brought about by the following means, as to the justification of them by the blood and righteousness of Christ: which is said to be, with the washing of water; not baptism, which is never expressed by washing; nor does it purify or cleanse from sin; nor is it the means of sanctification and regeneration, which ought to be before it; nor the grace of the Spirit, though that is often compared to water, and regeneration and sanctification are owing to it; yet the saints are not so cleansed from sin by it, as to be without spot or wrinkle; but the blood of Christ, which is the fountain to wash in, and which cleanses from all sin:”

Matthew Poole clarifies this point: “the external washing represents seals, and exhibits the internal cleansing from both the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood of Christ,

“Through the word”

Matthew Poole: the word of the gospel, especially the promise of free justification and sanctification by Christ, which received by faith is a means of this sanctification, and without which the external washing is ineffectual; the sign, without the word whereof it is a seal, being no sacrament.

Gill puts it this way. “not the form of words in baptism; but either the Gospel, which brings the good news and glad tidings of peace, pardon, atonement, and justification by Christ; or the sentence of justification pronounced upon the conscience by him;”

Above all, we see the significance of God’s Holy Word. We are taught “the Word” and the truth of the gospel is revealed through “the Word”. Indeed, Jesus was described as “the Word”. Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Ephesians 5:27 BSV

and to present her to Himself as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.

Matthew 5:20 NIV For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 7:21 NIV Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.



Acts 26:18 NIV \*"to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." \*(Paul was chosen by God)

Can you imagine being presented to God by our Lord and Savior, Jesus? We truly have been redeemed!!! It's all about Jesus and He came to seek and to save! "He, as Bridegroom, receives her (the church) in His heavenly home." (Ellicott)

A glorious church - A church full of honor, splendor, beauty. ...as a bride "adorned for her husband" (Barnes)

Holiness and glory are inseparable. "Cleansing" is the necessary preliminary to both. Holiness is glory internal; glory is holiness shining forth outwardly. ... It is Christ that prepares the Church with the necessary ornaments of grace, for presentation to Himself, as the Bridegroom at His coming again. (Jamieson-Faussett-Brown)

Ephesians 5:28 NLT In the same way,  
husbands ought to love their wives  
as they love their own bodies.  
For a man who loves his wife  
actually shows love for himself.

Barnes explains it this way: "He that loveth his wife loveth himself -  
(1) Because she is one with him, and their interests are identified.  
(2) because, by this, he really promotes his own welfare, as much as he does when he takes care of his own body. A man's kindness to his wife will be more than repaid by the happiness which she imparts; and all the real solicitude which he shows to make her happy, will come to more than it costs. If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effectual way, he had better begin by showing kindness to his wife.

Ephesians 5:29-30 NLT After all, no one ever hated their own body,  
but they feed and care for their body,  
just as Christ does the church—  
And we are members of his body.

no one ever hated their own body, "none in his right senses; or no man hates his flesh absolutely, but the diseases or miseries of it." (Matthew Poole)

Here Paul is expressing how one cares for his body. Barnes says: "A sentiment similar to this is found in the classic writers. Thus, Curtius (lib. vii.) says, "Corporibus nostris quoque utique non odimus" - "We do not hate those things that pertain to our own bodies."

So Seneca (Epis. 14), "Fateor insitam nobis esse corporis nostri charitatem" - "I confess that there is implanted in us the love of our own body."

Jesus has a love and concern for His church (His body) and His example is one of nourishing and caring for it. We see how He loves and cares for us, since we are members of His body.

Romans 12:5 NIV so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

1 Corinthians 6:15a NIV Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?

1 Corinthians 12:27 NLT All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

Genesis 2:23-24 "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'" (emphasis mine)

This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

Matthew 19:4-6 ESV He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (emphasis mine)

Mark 10:6-9 But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.' (emphasis mine)

"For this cause; because the woman was formed of the flesh and bones of the man." (Matthew Poole)

Ellicott explains: “In exactly the same way our Lord quotes the same verse of Genesis (Genesis 2:24) to show the indissoluble character of the marriage tie. Here the similarity of connection with that of the original passage is even stronger. Because a man’s wife is as his own body, ... The relation of parentage is one of common flesh and blood, and stands at the head of those natural relations which we do not make, but into which we are born. The relation of marriage is the most sacred of all the ties into which we are not born, and which we do make for ourselves, in accordance with a true or supposed harmony of nature. It becomes, says Holy Scripture, a relation, not of common flesh and blood, but of “one flesh.” Itself originally voluntary, it supersedes all natural ties. Our Lord therefore adds, “They are no more twain, but one flesh. What God hath joined together let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). Hence it strikingly represents that unity with Christ—voluntarily initiated by Him, voluntarily accepted by us—which yet so supersedes all natural ties that it is said to oblige a man to “hate his father and mother . . . and his own life also” (Luke 14:26).”

This is rather lengthy, but I feel that he so aptly discusses this scripture. I could not do better. In my opinion, it also gives credence to praying concerning whom one marries!

Ephesians 5:32 NLT This is a great mystery,  
but it is an illustration  
of the way Christ and the church are one.

Ellicott goes on to explain that the inseparable aspect in marriage is sacred and a great mystery and is “a secret of God’s law, fully revealed in Christ alone.” Paul uses this example of marriage to speak of Christ and the church. “He has constantly dwelt on points which suit only Christ’s relation to the Church, and to that relation he has, by an irresistible gravitation of thought, been brought back again and again.”

Ephesians 5:33 NLT So again I say,  
each man must love his wife  
as he loves himself,  
and the wife must respect her husband.

Ellicott points out that it is typical of Paul to return to the practical aspect regarding husband and wife, after his application of the nature of Christ and His church.

“This was the main topic, from which he had been diverted by the discussion respecting the love which the Redeemer had shown for his church.” (Barnes)

Barnes continues: "The word rendered "reverence," is that which usually denotes "fear" - φοβῆται phobētai. She is to fear; i. e., to honor, respect, obey the will of her husband. It is, of course, not implied that it is not also her duty to love her husband, but that there should be no usurping of authority; no disregard of the arrangement which God has made; and that order and peace should be secured in a family by regarding the husband as the source of law."

Benson says, " That she entertain a high esteem for him, be desirous of pleasing him in all things lawful, reasonable, and proper, and fear to give him unnecessarily any just offence in any thing, persuaded that it is the will of God, and the law of the relation in which she stands to him, that she should thus conduct herself toward him."

I must say that I have found this portion of the study most difficult. In my resources I find many different interpretations that I consider were influenced by the thoughts of the times. Because of this, and various other influences, I must trust the Holy Spirit to clarify any confusion that may arise. The bottom line that I see is this: God is a God of order. He has established a hierarchy of leadership, all of which promotes unity and peace. To look elsewhere, because we're uncomfortable with His ways is to open the door to disunity, chaos and rebellion and such. To follow His way, His plan, leads to unity, peace, joy, comfort, happiness, blessing and more. In following His plan, we see love in such a different way! In no way is it self-centered or self-serving and it is the centerpiece of God's plan.

God so loved the world that He sent His Son to live and to die for us. There is no greater love! That love is described for us individually and corporately as the CHURCH.

## Chapter 6

Ephesians 6:1 NIV Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

AMP Children, obey your parents in the Lord

[that is, accept their guidance and discipline as His representatives],

for this is right

[for obedience teaches wisdom and self-discipline].

After such an incredible teaching on the relationship of husband and wife as it relates to Christ and His church, we come to children and parents (family). There is a simple similarity, and there is a hierarchy of authority.

“It is to be thought of as existing “in the Lord,” i.e., within the unity binding all to Christ, in virtue of which the parental authority and the right freedom of the child are both hallowed. ... It is, in fact, a brief indication of their great subject—unity with and in Christ. Here to “obey in the Lord” is to obey under the light and grace of that unity, as already belonging both to parents and children, and transfiguring all natural relations to a diviner glory.” (Ellicott)

Proverbs 23:22 NIV Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Colossians 3:20 NIV Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

If unity is to be upheld and authority is to be established and understood, we are given the directives of Ephesians 5:21- 6:9, regarding submission to those who have authority and those under authority.

“Children, obey your parents — Even your unbelieving parents, in every thing consistent with your duty to the Lord. In all things lawful, the will of the parent is a law to the child: for this is right — Manifestly just and reasonable.” (Benson) Mallard\* says that “The goal of parents is to give children roots and wings, but while they are at home they are under parental direction.” \*Mallard, Paul, “Ephesians, His glorious Riches” You Version Plan.

Ephesians 6:2-3 ESV Honor your father and mother”  
(this is the first commandment with a promise),  
“that it may go well with you  
and that you may live long in the land.

Exodus 20:12 NIV “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 5:16 NLT “Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God commanded you. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Matthew 15:4 NASB For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'THE ONE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.'

Do you think that God is serious when He makes a statement? This Matthew scripture makes it very clear that God is not giving a suggestion but is very serious about what He requires! Thank God that He is a merciful God and is very patient, and not willing that any should die, but that all would come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) He wants all to come to the knowledge of God; His mercy and grace, forgiveness, love!

Paul Mallard states that there are 3 reasons to do this: "1. It is right. 2. It is commanded. 3. It is wise. God promises to bless those who follow the wise and loving direction of godly parents."

Ephesians 6:4 NLT Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them.

Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

(4) Provoke not your children to wrath.—The word is the same as in Ephesians 4:26. It denotes the exasperation produced by arbitrary and unsympathetic rule. (Ellicott)

Authoritarian: Tending to tell other people what to do in a peremptory or arrogant manner. (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.)

Matthew Henry says to "Bring them up well; under proper and compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of the duty God requires."

Ellicott says further: "Nurture and admonition of the Lord.—In this phrase we have the two elements of education. "Nurture" is a word signifying generally "the treatment due to a child," but by usage appropriated to practical training, or teaching by discipline; while "admonition" is the "putting children in mind" by word of instruction. "

He further states that "The "nurture" of this passage is the same as the "chastening" of the famous passage in Hebrews 12:5-11.[ "And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the LORD's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.”]

How full of love and care is to be the rearing of children, when done under the love, leadership, wisdom and authority of the word of God. I pray that all would come to understand this! I was not brought up this way and neither was my husband. That did not hinder God from teaching us His ways! Thus, we did the best that we knew how and I believe that God honored that and as our adult children reminisced their upbringing, we were able to discuss the motivation behind why we did as we did. I know that we were far from the perfect parent, but God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we think or ask! Hallelujah!

Ephesians 6:5-6 NLT

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear.

Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.

Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you.

As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart.

“Paul was speaking into a culture where slavery was the norm.” (Paul Mallard) Paul expresses the truth that both the slave and his master are still under Christ. “ The slave is the servant of Christ in obeying his master, the master is a fellow-servant with his slave to the same Divine Lord.” (Ellicott) Paul has a unique situation in that he has been served by the ‘runaway’ slave Onesimus, whom he led to the Lord.

Ellicott points out an incongruity in the slave/master relationship: “Accordingly St. Paul's general attitude towards slavery will be best considered in the Epistle to Philemon ... . Here it will be sufficient to note that while the institution, unnatural as it is, is left untouched, the declaration of a common fellowship in Christ enunciates a principle absolutely incompatible with slavery, and destined to destroy it.”

He explains that this relationship “belongs only to the visible life of this world, not to the world to come.” The master/slave relationship is under compulsion and under law. Obedience to it is rather from fear; fear of harsh treatment/death from their master, or rather, fear of God.



1 Peter 2:18 NIV Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

Philippians 2:12 NLT Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.

“It (fear of God) is applied to the condition of man as man under the weight of solemn responsibility before God.” (Ellicott)

Colossians 3:23 KJV And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

The admonition to pleasing your master all the time and not just when someone is watching is an admonition to all people at all times. Do your work on the job in the same way. Be eager to please (not to be men pleasers) all the time, whether the boss is around or not. We are ultimately doing this to please God, not man.

Ephesians 6:7-8 NIV  
Serve wholeheartedly,  
as if you were serving the Lord, not people,  
because you know that the Lord will reward each one  
for whatever good they do,  
whether they are slave or free.

I must ask myself this question from time to time: Do I have the proper attitude for what I am doing? Am I doing this as unto Jesus or for some other motivation? I choose to do things with the motivation to please my Lord, Jesus and for no other reason. But what do some of the commentators have to say about this issue?

Ellicott says, “To do service “with good will,” that is, gladly and cheerfully, “counting it joy to spend and to be spent” in the service, is really to serve, not as a slave, but as a freeman.” He goes on to say that when a slave turns his life over to Jesus, he is essentially a ‘freeman’. We see this in Onesimus’ situation. After he received Jesus as his Lord and Savior, he was concerned about the fact that he had run away from his master and desired to return to him, to do the right thing, not under the compulsion of slavery but of his free will.

A master may not reward the servant appropriately, however, one can be assured that God’s reward will more than compensate for whatever circumstances he faced on this earth.

A further aspect of the slavery issue is expressed by Barnes as follows:

“No one under the proper influence of religion ever yet made a man a slave; there is no one under its proper influence who would not desire that all should be free; and just in proportion as true religion spreads over the world, will universal freedom be its attendant. But Christianity would lighten the evils of slavery even while it exists, and would comfort those who are doomed to so hard a lot, by assuring them that there they may render acceptable service to God, and that they soon will be admitted to a world where galling servitude will be known no more.”

Ephesians 6:9 NIV

And masters, treat your slaves in the same way.

Do not threaten them,

since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven,

and there is no favoritism with him.

Both masters and slaves are under the same authority of a loving, compassionate Father in heaven and He rewards or corrects all as He sees fit. He sees all and He knows all. He knows the motivation behind the acts and thoughts and, indeed, in Him there is no favoritism!

Luke 6:31 NIV Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Colossians 4:1 NIV Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Ellicott describes a master's treatment of his slaves as follows: His “threatening implies at every moment compulsion and coercion from a position of tyrannical superiority; dealing with the slave as one who has in him no free energy and no sense of duty, and who must be driven like a brute-beast, not led or guided as a man.”

Thus, such treatment should not be tolerated. Rather, they should treat their slaves, “with gentleness and humanity, not in a harsh or domineering way;” (Benson)

How beautiful it is when all men treat each other with love, respect and dignity and live their lives seeking to walk in obedience to God; above all else, seeking to please Him.

Ephesians 6:10 NLT A final word:

Be strong in the Lord

and in his mighty power.

Paul Mallard in his Devotions through the book of Ephesians\* sums up where we've been and where we are now:

"Paul is coming to the end of this magnificent letter. He has dealt with the believer's wealth (Eph. 1–3) and walk (Eph. 4–6). In the last section (6:10–20) he deals with the believer's warfare. We are seated with Christ (2:6), we must live in a way that pleases Him (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) and we must stand firm against the attacks of the devil (vv. 11, 13–14). We must therefore know our enemy." (\*Mallard, Paul, "Ephesians, His glorious Riches" You Version Plan.)

Indeed, how are we to live victoriously on this earth without the Lord; knowing and appropriating His strength and power in our lives? How also, are we to live victoriously without knowing our enemy and his ways? We are certainly aware of our struggles and difficulties with regard to our walk with the Lord. We know that we need the Lord desperately. But we are empowered and need to know the truth and how to use that which we have been given!

The first step in this warfare is to understand that we can be strong, but it's in the Lord, His strength, and through His "mighty power"!

Ephesians 1:18-20 NIV I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

Ephesians 3:16 NLT I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.

Colossians 1:11 ESV (you) being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;

Philippians 4:13 NLT For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

"Be strong.—Properly, be strengthened in the inner man; go on from strength to strength. there (In Ephesians 3:16 the idea is rather of passive strength and firmness, here (Ephesians 6:10) of active power to fight "in the power of God's might," working in us, because it works in our Master." (Ellicott)

I am drawn to consider the inner man. In looking up that phrase, "inner man", I found no references in my resources. So I looked for the term inner, and found this:

Hebrews 6:19 NIV We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,

As I meditate on this thought, I am amazed at what comes to mind. See if God speaks a truth to you as I share a thought from my meditation. Please indulge me in this excursion.

The word says that we are the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) We know that God's temple on earth had 3 main components: The outer courtyard called the vestibule or porch, The inner court or the Holy place, called the sanctuary, and the most inner place called the Holy of Holies. We know that the innermost place, the Holy of Holies, could only be entered once a year and only by the High Priest. It was here that God, Himself, dwelled between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. It was after Jesus died on the cross that we were given access to the Holy of Holies. (Full access to God without any go-betweens)

Consider this, We are the Temple of God and Christ dwells in us and Paul prayed "that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit." Could that be like the Holy of Holies? The inner place where God dwells? In us! Because we are humans and not man made buildings, we need to understand Christ in us. We need to recognize that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. We have access to all that God is and has for us! What if we recognized that the Holy of Holies that we now have authority to enter is within us? God in us. His temple. Does that make a difference in how you think, act, believe, pray?

Just thinking!

Ephesians 6:11 NIV Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (NLT ~ stand firm against all strategies of the devil.)

Hebrews 13:11-12 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Paul's ministry was done, in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; (2 Corinthians 6:7 NIV)

1 Thessalonians 5:8 NIV But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. [But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation. NLT

We are admonished to recognize the signs of the times and to be prepared. It's been important since Jesus came to earth. He has taught us how to live and how to fight the good fight. We learn how to stand as we focus on Him, His example in life and His message through His messengers. We've been told to stand since Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today." Exodus 14:13 Stand firm in what? God's truth! His Word! His Character! His directions! His Son! His example!

We are told to put on the "whole armor of God". God has provided all that we need and every element of the armor is vastly important in this fight against the enemy of our soul. Nothing should be unguarded! Essentially, we put on Jesus Christ. (Romans 13:14)

Barnes says, "A man needs "all" that armor if he is about to fight the battles of the Lord; and if he lacks "one" of the weapons which God has appointed, defeat may be the consequence."

Matthew Henry explains: "The Christian armour is made to be worn; and there is no putting off our armour till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. The combat is not against human enemies, nor against our own corrupt nature only; we have to do with an enemy who has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls. The devils assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts."

We know that the Devil's purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. He is desperate! This is no light skirmish! Our very lives are at stake! Yet our loving heavenly Father has prepared ALL that we need to be victorious! We must recognize the ways of this enemy. He is fighting a battle that he cannot win, but he is going to do all that he can to defeat God's kids! BUT GOD!

Barnes helps us to see how our enemy confronts us.

"The idea here is, that Satan does not carry on an open warfare. He does not meet the Christian soldier face to face. He advances covertly; makes his approaches in darkness; employs cunning rather than power, and seeks rather to delude and betray than to vanquish by mere force. Hence, the necessity of being constantly armed to meet him whenever the attack is made. "

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,  
but against the rulers, against the authorities,  
against the powers of this dark world  
and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

According to Benson: “our struggle is not; against flesh and blood — Not merely against human adversaries, however powerful, subtle, and cruel, nor against fleshly appetites;”

Nor is our battle against one alone. Satan has his minions who are also working on his behalf. (fallen angels, demons) “This is a power real, but limited and transitory, able only to enslave those who “yield themselves” to it, and destined to be overcome; and it seems to refer especially to the concrete power of evil, exercised through physical and human agency.” (Ellicott)

Priscilla Shirer puts it this way. “Everything that occurs in the visible, physical world is directly connected to the wrestling match being waged in the invisible, spiritual world. Your real enemy—the devil—wants you to ignore the spiritual reality behind the physical one. Because as long as you’re focused on what you can see with your physical eyes, he can continue to run rampant underneath the surface. The more you disregard him, the more damage he is free to do. The enemy may be invisible, but he is not fictional. He is very real, and very persistent, waging war against us constantly.”

Benson gives a further description of this enemy. ““Evil spirits,” Macknight thinks, “are called rulers of this world, because the dominion which, by the permission of God, they exercise, is limited to the darkness of this world; that is, this world darkened by ignorance, wickedness, and misery, and which is the habitation or prison assigned them, until the judgment of the great day, ... wickedness, properly signifies malice joined with cunning, and is fitly mentioned as the characteristic of those wicked spirits with whom we are at war; and it is a quality so much the more dangerous, in that it exists in beings whose natural faculties are very great. And it must be observed, that they continually oppose faith, love, holiness, either by force or fraud, and labour to infuse unbelief, pride, idolatry, malice, envy, anger, hatred.

MacLaren points out that this battle is going on constantly during our Christian life. There are times in which, “there will be, as in some prolonged siege, periods of comparative quiet;” Then there will be times when the battle is fierce and intense. He adds, “for to Paul the ‘evil day’ is that which especially threatens moral and spiritual character, ... They may also arise, without any such change in circumstances, from some temptation coming with more than ordinary force, and directed with terrible accuracy to our weakest point.”

The battle is real!

Our hope is in our loving heavenly Father, for He has provided a way to victory.

Romans 8:38 NLT And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

Colossians 3:15 NIV And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

And because He triumphed over them, He shows us the way and the means to be victorious over them as well. He provides for the needs of His children!

Ephesians 6:13 NLT Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

We wouldn't go out in the morning half dressed, so it is even more important that we put on the Whole Armor of God. Each piece has a special designation and purpose to protect us Fully! Beware, however, forgetfulness to do so is a hindrance to our walk in victory. We open a foothold for the enemy to tamper, should we forget to clothe ourselves daily. I say this from experience. Are there times in which we take off elements of our armor? Just asking!

2 Corinthians 10:4 ESV For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. [NLT We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.]

Ephesians 6:14 NIV Stand firm then,  
with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,  
with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

Remember this: Ephesians 1:18-21 18I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

As we go through the pieces of armor, may God help us to see and to understand what each piece represents and how it is used to protect us.



STAND - maintaining our ground, not yielding or fleeing, (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown)

The first piece of armor is the belt of truth. King James says, having your loins girt about with truth,

I chose pictures that seemed to express what I am understanding about the belt of the Roman soldier. It was functional on several levels. As I researched this subject, I came upon a site called, Destiny Image. I do not know who wrote the commentary, but the perception and depth of understanding was so good that I chose to quote much of it here.

He begins by explaining why the first mention of the protective armor is the belt.

“Modern warriors understand how important the belt is as they dress for battle. It carries the essential equipment they will need to succeed. In addition to my .40 caliber Smith and Wesson, my police belt carried extra magazines of ammunition, handcuffs, pepper spray, rubber gloves, a radio, as well as my PR-24 nightstick.” He goes on to express the fact that modern warriors truly understand the importance of the belt as part of their armor.

He said that Paul understood the gear of the Roman soldiers since, day after day he was guarded by them. He must have thought about this and in his meditation, God brought to mind some spiritual truth.

“His mind flashed back to Isaiah 59:17: “For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head....” The eyes of his understanding were opened to see the reality of Jesus our warrior King. He is our Shield, our Sword, the Helmet of our Salvation, our Breastplate of Righteousness. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul made the connection that the Roman soldier’s armor is a picture of our spiritual armor—the armor of God. He put pen to paper and wrote in Ephesians 6:13-14.

He goes on to explain, “Loins are simply the strongest part of your body from which you can generate the most power.” I don’t know anything about lifting weights, but I have seen how one does not just bend over and pull up the heavy weight. They squat down and, as this author said, use the strength in their legs to lift the weight. He said that a Roman soldier learned to fight from the strongest part of their body, their hips.

“Paul is saying when you have belted your waist with truth, you have never been stronger in all of your life.”

As we can see in the pictures, this belt wasn’t a little two or three-inches,” it was a four to six-inch wide leather belt. ... Consider the analogy Paul is making. There are several purposes for this belt. First of all, it was for support. Roman armor was heavy. ... Roman soldiers had a very thick belt to give them back support. Paul calls our belt the belt of truth because when we have anchored our lives to the truth, it gives us back support. We need a strong backbone if we’re going to stand against the enemy. ”

What about the tassels we see in the front? This author says, “They were weighted tassels meant to give him some protection from the low blows all men hate by softening the blow or deflecting it altogether. Think about it, whether you’re a man or a woman, most of us have received a low blow in life from the devil. ...to protect them from those cheap shots, those hits below the belt—just as the belt of truth protects you from the devil’s below-the-belt cheap shots. “

MacLaren states: “It is best to regard the phrase ‘with {literally "in"} truth’ here as having its ordinary meaning, of which we may take as examples the phrases, ‘the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth’; ‘love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth’; ‘whom I love in truth.’ Absolute sincerity and transparent truthfulness may well be regarded as the girdle which encloses and keeps secure every other Christian grace and virtue.”

The second piece of armor is the Breastplate of Righteousness.

I must say here that, as I have meditated on the armor of God, I soon came to the realization that, with every piece of armor, I am putting on Christ! The only way that I can put on righteousness is through Jesus' blood, the sacrifice of His life for my salvation, my righteousness. This is further confirmed by Ellicott as follows.

“Again, since “to put on the armour of light” is to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” it follows that the various parts of the defensive armour are the various parts of the image of the Lord Jesus Christ; hence they are properly His, and are through His gift appropriated by us. Thus the “righteousness” is clearly the righteousness of Christ, realised in us”

Philippians 3:9 NIV and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

I recognize that the breastplate is a piece of protective armor. It protects what is already there. I see that one is righteous or not. Romans 3:10 says that “None are righteous, not even one”. This would be on our own, however, when we accept Jesus sacrifice on our behalf, we have the righteous Christ inside of us, in our heart, and when God looks at us, He sees Jesus. The breastplate of righteousness protects our heart.

Ellicott goes on to say that truth and righteousness are inseparable. In that way, there is great strength in the belt and the breastplate which cover the torso of the body with protection. “But it is in the two together that men stand “armed strong in honesty.” “

MacLaren adds, "This righteousness is manifested in character and in conduct, and as the breastplate guards the vital organs from assault, it will keep the heart unwounded. ... Paul thinks of righteousness as existent before the Christian soldier puts it on. In this thought we are ...bringing it into accord with the whole tone of New Testament teaching, which knows of only one way in which any soul that has been living to self, and therefore to sin, can attain to living to God, and therefore can be righteous. We must receive, if we are ever to possess, the righteousness which is of God, and which becomes ours through Jesus Christ. The righteousness which shines as a fair but unattainable vision before sinful men, has a real existence, and may be theirs. It is not to be self-elaborated, but to be received."

Ephesians 6:15 NIV and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Of all the pieces of armor, I have found that my understanding of this has been the most illusive. I didn't know if it meant that I was ready because I had received the gospel of peace. Or if I was to understand the gospel of peace. Ellicott said that this passage was one that "even to the Greek interpreters ...was obscure." He went on to say,

"The context certainly suggests that we should explain the word here... as signifying simply the "footing" or "basis." The caligæ, or sandals, of the Roman soldiers were heavy sandals studded with hobnails, to give a secure foothold to those who would stand firm. St. Paul identifies these with the firm "footing of the gospel of peace." Clearly the word "peace" is here emphatic. The gospel is looked upon as the declaration of "peace on earth, goodwill towards men." The firm stand on this message is the firm assurance of God's love. In this, and this alone, we stand."

I find this is a foundation upon which we stand. FIRM! God's sacrificial gift of His Son, who chose to die in our place to take away our sins. He then rose from the dead, the first of many, our hope of redemption to those having received Him. God's promises are true and He is faithful as He has said. In this way we have peace with God. But, what else do we know about peace?

Peace - calm, repose, (quiet) [Dickson Bible Dictionary] absence of war

Numbers 6:26 BSB'... may the LORD lift up His countenance toward you and give you peace.'

Psalms 34:14 NIV Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Isaiah 26:3 ESV You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Isaiah 48:18 NIV If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea.

Jeremiah 6:14 NIV They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.

John 14:27 NIV (Jesus said) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 16:33 NIV (Jesus said) "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

I have covered only a few of the scriptures on peace and I would say that peace is very important, to be desired. In the old testament, the peace referred to was an outward peace, as in free from conflict and battles. The peace that Jesus refers to is an inner peace that can only come from Him. This peace is born of love, the love of God. For me, life without peace is a life without God!

MacLaren gives further understanding in the following.

"That condition of being ready comes from the good news of Christ. ... the result ... The good news of Christ gives peace. So, taking the whole clause, we may paraphrase it by saying that the preparedness of spirit, the alacrity (cheerful readiness, promptness,) which comes from the possession of a Gospel that sheds a calm over the heart and brings a man into peace with God, is what the Apostle thinks is like the heavy hob-nailed boots that the legionaries wore, by which they could stand firm, whatever came against them.

Let's take a moment to think about shoes. I have flat feet. My whole life I've had to wear bulky, heavy tie shoes with arch supports inside. There have been many times that I chose to wear "other" types of shoes. In my older years, this has led to not so pleasant results. It matters what we put on our feet!

MacLaren talked about the soldier's boots and how they were prepared so that they would not break down in the midst of conflict. They had to have "strong soles", with the strength of "iron on the heels and the toes". In this way they were ready for battle, confident that their 'foundational support' would not easily break down.

So what had Paul intended? The peace on earth comes from the good news of Christ. Standing firm on this message is the assurance of God's love and it's upon this

message alone we stand. We are ready for whatever comes. There is power in that proclamation and Jesus is our peace.

Ephesians 6:16 NLT In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

I particularly appreciate this translation because, for me, the difference between taking up and holding up is HUGE! I have discovered that when one takes up something they simply pick it up. That does not necessarily mean that they then use it properly. They just have it. When one holds up, as in the shield, the thought is that it is put in the defensive position necessary to protect. I found myself, whether through weariness, or laziness, to simply be carrying my shield. I had it because I “put on the armor”. One day the Lord made me very consciously aware that I needed to hold it up. In other words, it’s not just saying that I have put on the shield of faith, but I must actively, attentively, purposefully, hold up my shield! I must be aware of the power of the weapons that I have been given! It has a real purpose. I remember, also, when the Lord led me to understand that God is my shield. It is He whom I hold up before me...He comes between me and the enemy to thwart the fiery darts being thrown in my way!

Genesis 15:1 NIV After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

Psalms 33:20 NLT We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.

Psalms 91:4 NIV He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart (A means of protection or defense).

Proverbs 30:5 NIV Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

What a difference it made as I thought about the fact that God was between me and the fiery darts or flaming arrows that came my way. What peace that gave me to see Him separating me from the taunts of the enemy of my soul! What joy and comfort. I must also recognize what I am protecting myself/being protected from. The “fiery darts”, “flaming arrows” come in obvious ways and sometimes subtly or suddenly. Our enemy not only seeks to “steal, kill and destroy”, but he also desires to distract us from fulfilling what God has called us to do!

I read that the enemy would shoot flaming arrows and start fires that the soldiers had to extinguish so they did not lose all their supplies. Then while they were busy doing that, the enemy could easily overtake them. Sounds like some things we all, perhaps, have experienced in a way. I don't know how often, especially in this study, I have been working diligently in my study, and distraction after distraction would come up (notices on the computer, my husband needing something, remembering something that must get done, etc.). These and any other, attempt to draw me/us away.

Hold up the SHIELD OF FAITH!

FAITH - Confident or unquestioning belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing. [American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.]

Do we truly understand faith? How would you describe it?

When I think of faith, I think of unconditional trust, complete confidence in someone, especially if they have proved themselves to be faithful. Who could evoke our complete trust/faith, but God, Himself and His children who learn from their Heavenly Father. The Dickson Bible Concordance defines faith as: "loyalty, belief, reliance."

Hebrews 11:1 BSB Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see.

Habakkuk 2:4 NLT Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.

Concerning the Centurion who told Jesus to 'just say the word' and his servant would be healed, Jesus said:

Matthew 8:10 NIV When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

Matthew 9:22 NLT Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, "Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed at that moment.

This He said to the woman with the issue of blood and she thought, "If only I could touch His garment, I will be healed."

Matthew 21:21 NIV Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.

Acts 3:16 NIV By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

Acts 15: 8-9 NIV God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them (Gentiles) by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

One is sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:1 NLT Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

2 Corinthians 1:24 NLT But that does not mean we want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm.

Can you see how it is that we live by faith? I see also a connection with faith and peace. Great faith brings great peace. The peace that can only come from a loving God.

2 Corinthians 5:7 NIV For we live by faith, not by sight.

Philippians 1:25 says that there is joy in faith. We have all been given a measure of faith and that does not just sit and stagnate! Our faith should be growing as we grow more and more like Jesus. The more we know Him, the more our faith grows. We learn over and over of His faithfulness and we humans learn to trust Him more and more. Great faith is shown in those who are able to believe and trust sooner than later. Examples of great faith are the woman with the issue of blood and the Centurian. I think of the example of Thomas. It definitely seemed to take him longer than the other disciples, all of whom saw the works of Jesus over and over, yet some still had doubts. Jesus said to Thomas: “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:29 It thus seems that our ability to believe is closely related to faith. One with great faith believes that, “...with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26



Hebrews 12:2 NLT We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Though our faith is tried many times, may we all be able to say:

2 Timothy 4:7 NIV I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

1 Peter 1:9 NIV for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

All I can say is:  
HALLELUJAH

Ephesians 6:17 NIV Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Isaiah 59:17 NIV He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head;

The helmet protects the head, the brain, where our thoughts come from. All that we 'know' is in the brain. We study to learn and to know, to remember and that great storage unit is in our brain. Our life functions cease to exist if the brain is 'dead'. Do you think that it needs protecting? If Satan is trying to deceive, distract, confuse and whatever else he can do, he is aiming for our brain.

So, the hope and confidence of our salvation comes from the word of God. God has told us: For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life. Since God does not lie, we have this confidence. We must protect that which we know, hence, we must 'take the helmet of salvation'.

Ellicott said: "We are said not to put on, but to "take" (or rather, receive)—a word specially appropriate to "salvation." "

See how MacLaren describes the armor as follows.

"Roughly speaking, they are in three divisions. There are first our graces of truth, righteousness, preparedness, which, though they are all conceived as given by God, are yet the exercises of our own powers. There is next, standing alone, as befits its

all-comprehensive character, faith which is able to ward against and overcome not merely this and that temptation, but all forms of evil.”

“From the root of faith come the first three “graces” spoken of above. He then proceeds to ...” faith which is able to ward against and overcome not merely this and that temptation, but all forms of evil. That faith is the root of the three preceding graces, and makes the transition to the two which follow, because it is the hand by which we lay hold of God’s gifts. The two final parts of the Christian armour are God’s gifts, pure and simple-salvation and the word of God. So the progress is from circumference to centre, from man to God.”

I find it so ‘cool’ that God, in His infinite wisdom, leaves nothing to chance or to a less orderly process. Everything comes with regard to what comes first,(in this case Faith). Then what follows is in a magnificent order.

“God’s helmet of salvation is His own purpose; man’s helmet of salvation is God’s gift. He is strong to save because He wills to save; we are strong and safe when we take (receive) the salvation which He gives.”

1 Thessalonians 5:8 AMP But since we [believers] belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope and confident assurance of salvation.

It is to be further noticed that the same image appears in Paul’s rough draft of the Christian armour in Thessalonians, with the significant difference that there the helmet is ‘the hope of salvation,’ and here it is the salvation itself. This double representation is in full accord with all Scripture teaching, according to which we both possess and hope for salvation, and our possession determines the measure of our hope.

John 3:17 ESV For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

So, when we think of salvation, what are we saved from? Before I was saved, I was steeped in sin, sinful behavior. The kind of behavior (sin) that would bring on the wrath of God, because God hates sin! But God really doesn’t want to condemn us, because He loves us, and He desires that we receive His plan of redemption in order to save us from His wrath. I truly would not like to face God’s wrath!

Matthew 1:21 NIV She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

His salvation from sin also involves the guilt and the power of sin in a life. We know the power of sin and how it felt to be freed from it! Absolutely life-changing. So that would be in the past. "As past it is once for all received by initial faith in Christ;" (MacLaren) Now in the present, "There will be a daily growing deliverance from evil and a daily growing appropriation and manifestation of the salvation which we have received." (MacLaren) Since we were saved in the past and we are living in the present, we are therefore 'being saved'. Obviously, we are not there yet, and as long as we live on this earth, we need the teaching, help, covering and interceding of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hebrews 7:25 BSB Therefore He is able to save completely those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them. (emphasis mine)

Hebrews 9:24 NLT For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. (emphasis mine)

Romans 8:34 NIV Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (emphasis mine)

1 Timothy 2:5 NIV For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, (emphasis mine)

1 John 2:1 NLT My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

What peace it gives us to realize that, while we are 'being saved', we have an advocate, one who intercedes, defends and pleads for us. Our 'hope' is that Heaven is the future home of the redeemed, those who have been saved. Salvation: past, present, future.

The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Matthew 10:34 NIV "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Hebrews 4:12 NIV For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Revelation 19:15 NIV Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (emphasis mine)

Deuteronomy 30:14 NIV No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. (emphasis mine)

Isaiah 50:4 NIV The Sovereign LORD has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know how to comfort the weary. Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will. (emphasis mine)

Matthew 4:4 NIV Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (emphasis mine)

Matthew 24:35 NIV Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (emphasis mine)

The Bible, the word, is sown in the hearts of mankind. It is the Word of eternal life, the word of wisdom, the word of reconciliation, the word of truth, the word of faith. We are to preach the word, be doers of the word, hold forth the word and recognize that the word is our offensive weapon.

The word of God, the sword of the spirit, this is the Truth upon which we stand. Throughout this study I have tried to be careful to use the scriptures that will illuminate God’s truths as we work our way through this amazing book. As I have stated the scripture in Ephesians, and then support them up with other scriptures from God’s Holy Word, I am left with such comfort, peace, and amazing joy to see how awesome God is. His plans are incredible and His love for us is amazing! To think that He did all this, from Genesis to Revelation is so humbling, exciting, amazing ... I can’t even come up with enough words to express how thankful I am. What joy it is to praise and magnify our Heavenly Father! Almighty God!

I’m including some additional commentary here so that we can see all dimensions of this subject for our understanding.

Ellicott says, “the original word is the larger and deeper word (Logos), signifying the truth of God in itself, and gradually leading up to the ultimate sense in which our Lord Himself is the “Word of God,” revealing the Godhead to man. Accordingly the work of the Word there, is that of the “engrafted Word,” “to divide asunder the soul and the spirit” within. Here, on the contrary, we have another expression (Rhema), signifying the Word as spoken; “

1 Peter 1:25 NLT But the word of the Lord remains forever.” And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

2 Timothy 4:2 NIV Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

We are to speak the word. This is not something that we keep to ourselves! We must be prepared.

2 Timothy 2:15 NIV Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

KJV Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

To God be the glory, great things He has done!

An interesting thought was brought to my attention regarding the armor of God and its use.

“And here's a lesson that lasts through the centuries. There are fights to be fought, false teaching to be tested. We can enter the struggle to uphold God's truth, wearing his armor, wielding the sword of the Spirit. But all too often that embattled attitude has a side-effect. We neglect the other theme of Ephesus: love.

This is Ephesus. Is it also true that this is us?”

Randy Peterson, “2 Lessons from the Ephesian Church: Love and Struggle” Tracing a biblical story through the generations, March 1st, 2017

Ephesians 6:18 NIV And pray in the Spirit

on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

[with specific requests - Amp.B]

With this in mind,

be alert

and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Prayer: a personal communication or petition addressed to a deity, esp in the form of supplication, adoration, praise, contrition, or thanksgiving {Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014} Supplication, request. To entreat, implore (Dickson Bible Dictionary)

1 Samuel 7:5 NIV Then Samuel said, “Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you.”

Psalm 55:17 NIV Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

Psalm 122:6 ESV Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they be secure who love you!

Matthew 26:41 ESV Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (NLT Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation)

Romans 12:12 BSB Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer.

Colosians 4:2 NLT Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 BSB Pray without ceasing.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 NLT I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

I believe that scripture is quite clear on this matter of prayer. An of course, the Lord taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9-13.

Barnes commentary gives us good concluding thoughts on the subject of prayer.

"Prayer crowns all lawful efforts with success and gives a victory when nothing else would. No matter how complete the armor; no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of a triumph. This prayer is not to be intermitted. It is to be always. In every temptation and spiritual conflict we are to pray;"

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Ephesians 6:19 NLT And pray for me, too.  
Ask God to give me the right words  
so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan

that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike.  
{and also for me, that in the opening of my mouth,  
divine utterance may be given to me  
to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,}

Notice that Paul does not ask God to protect him from persecution, keep him healthy etc., but rather, his concern is that he is able to boldly continue the ministry that God has called him to.

Acts 4:29 NLT And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.

2 Corinthians 3:12 NIV Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

Colossians 4:3 NLT Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains.

2 Thessalonians 3:1 NIV As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

1 Corinthians 12:8 NIV To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

Matthew 10:19-20 NLT (Jesus speaking) When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. 20For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Acts 4:20 NLT (Peter and John said) We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

Ellicott points out that, “to make known a mystery in simplicity needs not only boldness to speak, but also the knowledge of the true word of God.” This mystery is the fact that the gospel is now available to all, Jew and Gentile alike. “This was “made known to him;” he desires inspiration “to make it known” to others.” Paul prays that there be no hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel of truth, either in himself as he speaks nor in the reception of the message.

Matthew Henry said: “The gospel was a mystery till made known by Divine revelation; and it is the work of Christ's ministers to declare it.”



When Paul spoke to the Corinthians, he said that he spoke to them with great boldness. We should be very aware of our need of God's power and support when we are talking with someone. The urgency with which we speak is imperative as we are aware of the consequences of our failure to do so. Paul knew, and so he sought prayer support. Can we do any less?

Ephesians 6:20 NIV for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

(NLT I am in chains now,

still preaching this message as God's ambassador.

So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.)

Another aspect that concerned Paul was that there be no inward or outward hindrance and that he be able to deliver the whole truth without any base fear, shame or diffidence, considering how important it is to the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. (Barnes)

God has given us open doors to spread the gospel without persecution in America. We will have many who oppose this, but their boldness of resistance has not risen to the point of facing death as there are in other countries. May we use our time wisely for the glory of God! We, too, are God's ambassadors, but not in chains! May our prayer for ourselves be the same as Paul's, to speak boldly for Him, without fear.

Ephesians 6:21-22 ESV So that you also may know

how I am and what I am doing,

Tychicus the beloved brother

and faithful minister in the Lord

will tell you everything.

I have sent him to you for this very purpose,

that you may know how we are,

and that he may encourage your hearts.

Tychicus labored with Paul and went to Troas to wait for him at the end of the third journey. (Acts 20:4) It was Tychicus who delivered Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. (Colossians 4:7) Paul recognized that others would be concerned as to his wellbeing and the work that he was able to do in prison.

Benson's Commentary says it this way, "The apostle means that he wished the Ephesians, as well as the Philippians and Colossians, to know what success he had

had in preaching at Rome, what opposition he had met with, what comfort he had enjoyed under his sufferings, what converts he had made to Christ, and in what manner the evidences of the gospel affected the minds of the inhabitants of Rome. These, and such like things, he sent Tychicus to make known to them.”

Barnes further describes Tychicus as follows: “Paul also proposed to send him to Crete to succeed Titus; Titus 3:12. He was high in the confidence of: Paul, but it is not known when he was converted, or why he was now at Rome. The Greeks speak of him as one of the seventy disciples, and make him bishop of Colophon, in the province of Asia.

Gill gives expression to what Paul was letting them know.

“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do,.... Both his temporal and spiritual affairs; as that he was in bonds, and how he was supported under them, and of what use they were to others; how that he preached in his own hired house, and with what success; and what ministering brethren he had with him to assist him; and in what condition was the church at Rome where he now was: the apostle's life and actions would bear the light, and what he did was worthy of imitation, and must be both delightful and useful to know; and the account he sends, by a messenger hereafter named, of whom he gives the following character, that credit might be the more readily given to his relation:”

What an encouragement! He never bemoaned the facts of his imprisonment, but rather sought to enlighten them and encourage them so as not to worry, but rather to follow his example. We see how much he was able to accomplish in spite of the fact that he was in chains and in prison! Paul used every opportunity open to him by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 6:23 NIV Peace to the brothers and sisters,  
and love with faith from God the Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters here refers to all the believers, both men and women. The family of God. It should be noted that Paul does not include here, a list of personal greetings to individuals as he does in other of his epistles (letters). Paul's blessing on them at the end, is the same as that with which he greeted them in the beginning. (Ephesians 1:2) The Greek Dictionary from Strong's Concordance defines peace as: “harmony, tranquility, safety, welfare, health, often with an emphasis on lack of strife or reconciliation in a relation, as when one has “peace with God”. It may also follow the meaning of the Hebrew word meaning “quietness, rest, set at one.”

This is a comforting blessing to give someone or a group. These are the things one would want all people to have. It appears to be all inclusive of the things you desire for

others, especially peace with God, which he spent much time referring to in this letter. Then he adds “love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. He also spent time praying that they would better understand this love and thus, know God better. Now, to stand on and to believe, by faith, all that he has been speaking to them regarding how God cares for them and how they are to live.

MacLaren says, “...this trinity of inward graces is Paul’s highest and best wish for his friends. He has no earthly prosperity to wish for them. His ambition soars higher than that; he desires for them peace, love, faith.”

Ephesians 6:24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ  
with love incorruptible.

Grace, God’s kindness and favor, which is unmerited, yet freely given. We, who are recipients of God’s grace, are eternally grateful, thankful and appreciative of this love so expressed. Gratitude with praise and worship follows. Surely, those who read this letter followed with the same.

Ellicott explains that this love is “applied to human character on earth. Here it evidently means “with a love immortal and imperishable,” incapable either of corruption or of decay, a foretaste of the eternal communion in heaven.”

There has been discussion among various commentators regarding whether this letter was specifically written to the Ephesians or whether it was meant as a circular letter to be passed around to other churches as well. Isn’t it funny that now, this letter, as with others writings included in our Bible, is passed around and read by all believers and available to unbelievers as well. The specifics are here for all of us and it is by them that we are reaching to become mature, believers in the faith, apt to give testimony to all around us of the love of God, His provision for His children, and the hope for eternity that we have in Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I pray that all who have read this study will find truth and encouragement, and that your faith has been increased as you draw closer to the God who loves you so, and desires that you become mature in the faith.

Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his 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.

May God richly bless you as you continue to grow in Him!

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