

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## EPHESIANS 3-4

The Apostle Paul is in a Roman prison as he pens this letter... *chains dangle from his wrists as he writes to the Ephesians of his freedom in Christ... he's outfitted in prison stripes as he declares the righteousness he wears... a string of Roman numerals are stitched across his shirt, while he records the innumerable blessings that are his in Christ Jesus...*

Rather than see himself *in prison*, Paul chooses to see himself *in Christ*. And this is the choice we all make... *do we get lost in our physical surroundings or do we stay focused on our spiritual blessings?* In your heart of hearts, where do you abide? Are you *in pain* or *in Christ*?... *In hock* or *in Christ*?... *In the hot seat* or *in Christ*?.. *In fear* or *in Christ*?... *In distress* or *in Christ*?

Chapter 3 begins, <sup>3:1</sup> **“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus...”** Notice, he could've said he was *the prisoner of Rome, or Caesar, or the Jews...* but he's <sup>3:1</sup> **“the prisoner of Christ...”** He belongs to Jesus!

A Christian is never **“a victim of circumstance.”** God is sovereign. Nothing can get to you, but that it doesn't first pass through Him! If you belong to Jesus, He has a plan for you. And don't interpret disappointment as a derailment of His plan. Paul was a <sup>3:1</sup> **“prisoner of Christ.”**

*And why was Paul in prison?* He tells us, <sup>3:1</sup> **“for you Gentiles.”** He had stood up for our freedom in Christ.

In the face of Jewish prejudice and legalism, Paul stood strong for pig-eating, bacon-loving, pork chop munching Gentiles. **He preached grace for every race!**

Paul knew God isn't just for the well-bred. The blessings of Christ come apart from heredity or heritage. The religious outcast finds a home *in Christ!*

Paul had spent two years in Ephesus. It's funny that in verse 2, he asks if they've heard of his ministry... <sup>3:2</sup> **“If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you...”** Of course the Ephesians had heard... Perhaps, Paul is really asking, *did you understand the implications of God's grace?* And if he were writing to us, Paul would ask, **“Do we?”**

When you think of a <sup>3:2</sup> **“dispensation of grace”** think of a **“distributorship.”** The Jews knew of God's grace, so God sent Paul to distribute salvation to the gentiles.

God is an entrepreneur! He's not afraid of branching out and opening up new

channels of distribution for His amazing grace. He wants us to move into all segments of the market - *every age, race, language, and culture*.

I guess when it comes to marketing and distribution no one has been better at it than McDonalds. Did you know that at one time, a new McDonalds opened up somewhere in the world every four hours? Today, there are 38,000 McDonalds stores in 100 countries.

And as Christians we should be as effective distributing the Gospel as McDonalds is with Big Macs!

*Perhaps your office has never had a strong witness for Jesus... The same could be said for your tennis team, or neighborhood, or hunting club. God has given you the distribution rights in that market. **Get busy.** It's said, "There's enough Bread of Life to supply the whole world, but are there enough volunteers to distribute it?"*

Paul continues talking about his <sup>3:2</sup> "*dispensation of grace*" - <sup>3:3</sup> "*how that by revelation He (i.e. Christ) made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, <sup>3:4</sup> by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), <sup>3:5</sup> which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: <sup>3:6</sup> that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel...*" Notice, Paul refers to the Gospel of God's grace as "*a mystery.*"

Usually when we hear the word "*mystery*" we think of an Agatha Christie or Sherlock Holmes novel... *a suspense-filled, smoking gun, who-done-it thriller.*

But that's not what Paul means when he uses the term. *A biblical mystery* is simply a truth that's known only to God - **a sacred secret.** And the great mystery in the OT was *how would God save the Gentiles!*

There were OT prophecies predicting the Gentiles salvation, but it remained unclear to everyone but God, as to how it would come to pass. The privilege of explaining this great mystery was finally given to Paul.

And it was *through Christ* that God would bring together Jews and non-Jews as one new group, *the Church*. When Paul first preached the Gospel of Jesus to Gentiles he was resolving this age-old mystery.

And I'm afraid one of the reasons people today take the Gospel of grace for granted is we no longer see it as a mystery. *Oh, when we first heard and grasped its implications it was an unexpected discovery...*

We were *overwhelmed* by the lavishness of God's generosity... *surprised* by love we didn't deserve... but lose the wonder and amazement, and what was once an *unexpected discovery* soon becomes a *worn-out doctrine*. If the Gospel of God's grace has gotten boring to you it's time **to rediscover it as a mystery**.

Take your marriage for example. After a few years you and your spouse become familiar territory. Thus, to keep love fresh you have to create some mystique. You approach each other from different angles. **A husband** splurges on an evening out - **a wife** impresses him with a new outfit. You risk dining at a new restaurant, *somewhere other than McDonalds*.

You realize there are aspects of your spouse's specialness you've yet to discover. Puzzles you've yet to figure out. Here's my point, **the way to beat boredom is by reintroducing into the relationship some mystery!**

And the same is true in our relationship with God. I once heard it said, "**It's what you learn after you know it all that counts.**" And that's true, especially with the Bible! There's always more there than we've realized.

So forget the fact that you've read the Bible all your life. Pick it up a fresh and look for something new. *It's there!* Focus on reading the passage before you as if you'd never read it before. *And let God surprise you!*

Paul is speaking of the Gospel, verse 7, **3:7 "of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. 3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given..."** For Paul, sharing the Gospel was not a duty at all. It was an honor he didn't deserve.

The Apostle Paul was Christianity's greatest minister, yet notice he considered himself **3:8 "less than the least of the saints..."** Before he *dispensed* grace, he'd *received* grace. Now God had called him to share its secrets!

And for me there's only one thing more fun than keeping a secret, *and that's spilling the beans*. Hey, I'm the person in my family most prone to blow a secret. Nobody tells me anything for fear of my letting it slip.

And Paul had **the honor** of traveling the world letting the cat out of the bag - telling the Gentiles of God's grace. He was having a ball! *And we can join the fun!*

Notice, how he describes his ministry, **3:8 "That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..."** Paul refers to the blessings of Christ as **3:8 "unsearchable"** or **"untraceable."** It's not man who finds God. It's God who initiates and reveals to man. Left to our devices - without His Word - we're all in the dark.

But it was Paul's privilege to preach **3:9 "and to make all see what is the fellowship of**

the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; <sup>3:10</sup> to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places..." Notice, God's <sup>3:10</sup> "manifold" or "multi-faceted" wisdom is revealed in His church.

Even angels - <sup>3:10</sup> "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" - learn what God is up to in the world by looking at us, *the Church*. How Jesus forgives, saves, blesses, and unites us is a lesson to the angels. It blows their minds to see what He's doing in us!

And this is why a healthy church is so vital! We're the prism through which the inhabitants of both *this world* and *the spirit world* behold God's <sup>3:10</sup> "manifold wisdom."

Verse 11, <sup>3:11</sup> "According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>3:12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." Here's another blessing in Christ - **access to God**. This is what the OT saints knew nothing about.

No one but the Hebrew High Priest - and only once a year - was allowed into God's presence. But in Christ Jesus we can boldly approach God's throne for help.

And with this access Paul exhorts them, <sup>2:13</sup> "Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." Paul doesn't want his imprisonment to discourage the believers in Ephesus.

That's why he's praying for them. Verse 14, <sup>3:14</sup> "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>3:15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>3:16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory..." And his first request is that they may <sup>3:16</sup> "be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man..." Notice Paul doesn't pray for their outer man, but for their inner man - their spirit.

When we pray for a friend we usually focus on their external status - their physical healthy or the money they make. *That's ok*, but quickly we need to direct our prayers toward their inner man and spiritual health.

The outer man is destined to wither and die. *There is no fountain of youth in this life*. But the inner person is rechargeable. We can plug into God, and He'll re-energize us spiritually. Paul prays with the right priority!

And he adds, <sup>3:17</sup> "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." Paul wants us to allow Jesus to <sup>3:17</sup> "dwell," or literally **to make Himself at home in our hearts!**

Jesus is King! And where He moves in He renovates. He removes old fixtures, and

installs new amenities. Wherever Jesus dwells He's now King of the castle.

And Paul prays that the Ephesians will give the Lord full control of their hearts - that they'll trust Him enough to make the changes He thinks are best for their lives.

And verse 17, <sup>3:17</sup> "that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>3:18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - <sup>3:19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Paul asks God to enlarge their spiritual capacity, and help them grasp the full volume of His love for them!...

*Any chocolate lovers here?* Once, a guy jumped into a vat of sweet, delicious chocolate. He prayed, "Lord, make my capacity equal to my opportunity." God's love is a like vat of chocolate. You can take in all you want.

Our only limitation is our appetite! Paul prays that our heart expands, and is <sup>3:19</sup> "filled with the fullness of God."

Paul closes His prayer for the Ephesians with a praise! <sup>3:20</sup> "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, <sup>3:21</sup> to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Imagine, God will not only meet every need we bring Him, but He'll do <sup>3:20</sup> "above all that we ask or think!" His grace is always greater than our needs!

Never forget, God can do <sup>3:20</sup> "exceedingly abundantly."

Paul begins Chapter 4 - *and again he mentions his incarceration* - <sup>4:1</sup> "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord..."

I've heard it said, "Jesus promised three things to His disciples: **First**, they would be *ridiculously happy*. **Second**, they would be *completely fearless*. And **third**, they would be *constantly in trouble*..." That was Paul. He was *blessed in Christ* and *troubled in this world*.

I've been to the cave Paul occupied in the heart of Rome. The Mamertine prison is a small, subterranean holding cell. And I envision Paul pacing back and forth. *He's worried*, but not about his imprisonment. *It's not where he walks that concerns him, it's how we walk...*

Paul writes to the Ephesians, <sup>4:1</sup> "(I) beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..."

In Ephesians 1-3 the emphasis is on **where we sit...** *in heavenly places in Christ...*

But now that we're somebody in Christ Jesus we should live like it! And in Chapter 4 Paul's emphasis shifts to **how we walk**.

We should walk worthy of our calling. Membership in God's family is not only a privilege, it's a responsibility.

As a pint-sized princess growing up in Buckingham Palace, little Victoria was sheltered from the fact she was next in line to be England's monarch. Her handlers didn't want to spoil the future Queen. But one day Victoria saw the genealogical records of the royal family, and noticed she was next in line to the throne.

Initially, Victoria was overcome with emotion. But once she had gained her composure the future Queen looked at her tutor, and said, **"Then I must be good."**

This is the reaction Paul hopes hits us. In Christ, we also have a high calling. *President, or prime minister, or premier* - pale in comparison to being a **Christian**. In light of our calling, **we too "must be good."**

And the first observation Paul makes about our *high calling* is that it requires a *lowly walk*. In verse 2 Paul says, we should walk <sup>4:2</sup> **"with all lowliness"** or *humility*.

Harry Truman once said, **"There are no limits to how much can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit."** That's true in church. Let's walk in humility.

And also <sup>4:2</sup> **"gentleness."** When you look around at the people here today imagine them with stickers stuck all over their bodies that read, **"fragile, handle with care."** We need to be sensitive, tender with one another.

Let's also walk <sup>4:2</sup> **"with longsuffering..."** or **patience**. <sup>4:2</sup> **"Bearing with one another in love."** We should put up with each other's quirkiness and idiosyncrasies, *for we all have them, don't we?* **"Christian discipleship is teaching the intolerant to tolerate the intolerable."**

*Since people get down*, let's walk lowly and help lift them up. *Since their fragile*, let's be gentle. *Since they take time*, let's have patience. And *since everyone is just a little bit weird*, let's bear with each other in love.

Verse 3, <sup>4:3</sup> **"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."** Realize, <sup>4:3</sup> **the unity of the Spirit** is a gift from God. It's a spiritual affinity that exists among all true believers. But understand what it is not...

*The unity of the Spirit* is not **the unity of faith**. We won't all agree on every detail of doctrine... Neither is it **the unity of format**. We can enjoy different worship styles and music... And it's not **the unity of friendship**. We can have spiritual unity and not all be close friends.

**The unity of the Spirit** doesn't negate our diversity, but it creates a bond, a commonality, that's greater than our differences. We can't manufacture the unity of the Spirit. It's the work of God's Spirit among us. But once we've receive it, we can <sup>4:3</sup> *"endeavor to keep"* it.

And this word <sup>4:3</sup> *"endeavor"* means *"to aggressively and actively do whatever it takes to preserve our unity."*

The Spirit creates a <sup>4:3</sup> *"bond of peace"* between us, but it'll get broken if we don't protect it. *Misunderstandings, hurt feelings, jealousies* threaten the unity of the Spirit.

Once, a visitor to an insane asylum was astonished to see only three guards in charge of hundreds of dangerous patients. He asked one of the guards, *"Aren't you afraid these people will overpower you and escape?"* The guard replied, *"No, lunatics never unite."*

God has created a wonderful family at CCSM. You can sense *the unity of the Spirit*. But it's up to us to walk in lowliness, gentleness, patience, and tolerance toward one another. Differences will arise, but we can work through them, and make it our goal to stay united.

And there're several other reasons we should be concerned about our togetherness... Verse 4, <sup>4:4</sup> *"There is one body..."* When God looks on CalvaryCSM He sees us not just as individual believers, but as <sup>4:4</sup> *"one body!"*

And there is just <sup>4:4</sup> *"one Spirit..."* The same Spirit who dwells in you, dwells in me! <sup>4:4</sup> *"Just as you were called in one hope of your calling..."* There's only one *heaven*. There's not a *Baptist* heaven, or *Methodist* heaven, or *Presbyterian* heaven, or a *Calvary Chapel* heaven.

And there's <sup>4:5</sup> *"one Lord..."* We all say, *"Yes, Sir"* to the same person. Our goal is to please and glorify Jesus!

There's also <sup>4:5</sup> *"one faith..."* There's one body of truth. Theology isn't arbitrary or ambiguous. Somebody is right and somebody is wrong. There's only <sup>4:5</sup> *"one faith."*

As well as, <sup>4:5</sup> *"one baptism..."* When a person comes to Christ they are baptized into the Body of Christ, not a particular church. Thus, it's arrogant and bigoted for one church not to accept another church's baptism.

And finally there's <sup>4:6</sup> *"one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* Recall on the night before His crucifixion Jesus prayed not only for our *orthodoxy*, but for our *unity*. He *prayed for it* that night, then Jesus *paid for it* the next day on the cross. The least we can do is endeavor to keep it intact!

4:7 “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.” God floods us with grace.

And here's when, verse 8, 4:8 “Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” Part of His grace toward us are spiritual gifts. As a conquering general Jesus took us as His captives. But He did so, to bestow on us gifts.

Verse 9, 4:9 (Now this, "He ascended" what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) Here was Jesus' itinerary between His death and resurrection - what His Spirit did for those three days. He first 4:9 “descended into the lower parts of the earth.” Lower than the valley - the earth's crust - its mantle - even the earth's core... lower spiritually, takes you to Hades. And Luke 16 describes this place...

Hades was a duplex. It was divided into two sides - a pleasant side and torturous side - separated by a huge gulf. Those who died believing God's promises went to Paradise. Unbelievers went to the place of torment.

In the OT, before Jesus died on the cross the door to God's presence was closed. Animal sacrifices covered man's sin, but they didn't erase them. Thus, Hades served as a *holding tank for heaven*; until Jesus, the Lamb of God, would come and offer the sacrifice to end all sacrifices - sin's permanent solution.

And as soon as Jesus conquered sin, He descended to Hades to gather up all the OT believers who had trusted in God's salvation. They became the Savior's captives. General Jesus led these those captives into the halls of heaven... And to His followers left on earth, He gave gifts - spiritual gifts - to build up His church.

Thus today, when a believer dies, he no longer goes to Hades. He or she follows Jesus straight into God's presence. As Paul said to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 5:8 “To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

And Jesus still gives spiritual gifts to His Church, *four of which are actually people with unique callings...*

Ephesians 4:11 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles...” The original twelve apostles had a one-of-a-kind calling, but there were others. The word 4:11 “*apostle*” means, “*sent out one.*” A missionary who crosses cultures with the Gospel - or breaks new ground and plants churches where there were none - can be called an 4:11 “*apostle.*”

There are also 4:11 “*some prophets...*” These are people God uses to give special



instruction at special times.

Then Paul mentions, 4:11 “**some evangelists...**” This is a person effective at leading people to Jesus. We’re all called to be a *witness*, but some folks are *evangelists*.

4:11 “**And some pastors and teachers...**” The word 4:11 “*pastor*” is Latin for “*shepherd*.” And a pastor is a spiritual shepherd who nurtures and cares for God’s flock. Shepherds retrieve strays, mend bruises, protect the sheep from wild animals, and find suitable pasture.

A shepherd’s most important job is to feed the sheep. Which means a pastor must also be a gifted teacher. That’s why 4:11 “*pastors and teachers*” go together.

And the ultimate purpose of all four gifts is 4:12 “**for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...**” A pastor's job isn't to do all the witnessing, and visiting, and counseling. My job is to equip you to minister to the people around you. In most churches there're two categories of people: **the laity** and **the ministers**. The laity just lay around and the ministers do all the ministering. That shouldn't be, *God wants ever member a minister*.

I grew up in a church where every week the pastor preached a sermon on salvation. The problem was that 98% of the congregation was already saved. He ended up speaking to the 2%, while ignoring the vast majority. And as a result no one grew - no one became bolder, stronger, more equipped to impact people for Jesus.

But what if the pastor had fed His flock the meat of God’s Word, and built up their faith - then eventually, rather than one person preaching on Sundays, you would’ve had hundreds of people preaching the Gospel throughout the week, in hundreds of different places.

This is our goal at CalvaryCSM. We believe healthy sheep reproduce. Thus, we want you to grow in your faith so you’ll bring Jesus to the world in which you live!

It’s the pastor's job is to equip the saints, verse 13, 4:13 “**till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...**” Notice how Paul phrases this, 4:13 “*till we all come to the unity of the faith.*” Realize, when it comes to **the unity of the faith** I'm not moving toward you - and you're not moving toward me. We're all coming toward God. Evidently, none of us have arrived. No one has flawless doctrine, or a monopoly on the truth - we are all growing, and learning, and moving toward 4:13 “*the unity of the faith.*”

Into 4:13 “**a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...**” Here's the goal of Christian growth, *to be as fully like Jesus as we can possibly be.*

4:14 “**That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with**

every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...” Sadly, this describes today’s church. When believers aren’t taught the Bible they don’t know what to believe, so they end up vulnerable to every smooth-sounding doctrine that blows through.

This is why we teach the Bible verse by verse - in a systematic way - so you can truly learn this book.

In contrast to teaching that’s described as <sup>4:14</sup> “trickery... cunning craftiness... deceitful plotting...” Paul tells us in verse 15, <sup>4:15</sup> “but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ...”

When a person teaches *the truth of God in the love of God* believers grow, and become more like Jesus.

Paul mentions Christ who is the head of the church, <sup>4:16</sup> “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

*What is Jesus up to today?* He’s a bodybuilder. He’s building up His body - one believer at a time. We all have a place and everyone’s growth is crucial!

Verse 17 continues with the theme “*how to walk worthy*” by contrasting how we shouldn’t walk, <sup>4:17</sup> “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.”

Several years ago, Skidmore College did research that showed how our walk reflects our personality. Did you know a **waddle** means *independence*. A **drag** shows *frustration*. A **stride** indicates *confidence*. **Tiptoes** is a sign of *insecurity*. A **shuffle** means *laziness*. You can tell a lot by how a person walks!

*And Paul agrees.* Unbelievers and Christians have a distinctive way they carry themselves in the world.

And Paul describes how the pagans walk, verse 17, first, <sup>4:17</sup> “in the futility of their mind...” or “**empty-headed.**” They don’t think through the consequences of their actions... <sup>4:18</sup> “Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...” *Without Christ* they’re cut off from God’s light and truth. They live in darkness.

And how do people get cut off from God... <sup>4:18</sup> “**Because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...**” They don’t have to become ignorant - they’re born ignorant of God and His truth. It’s only when we’re born again does the light turn on.

Paul continues to speak of the person separated from God, 4:19 “who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” When you consistently resist God you deaden your conscience, and grow numb to truth and morality. You’ll try anything to end your emptiness.

CS Lewis once described the world without Christ, as “A land where it’s winter all year long, but never Christmas.” Today’s world is a dark and lonely place.

In contrast, verse 20 tells us we need *to dress for success - spiritual success - that is...* 4:20 “But you have not so learned Christ, 4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 4:22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 4:23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 4:24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

If you’re running a race you dress in *light-weight clothes and sturdy shoes*. And likewise, if you’re running a spiritual race it’s also necessary that you wear the appropriate attire. You **put off** and **put on**.

Paul says strip-off any selfish attitudes, ditch the sinful behaviors, stop rehearsing old thoughts. **Put off** the junk that characterized your life before you came to Jesus... And **put on** a new attitude! Renew your mind and harmonize your thoughts with God's Word. Learn to see yourself and all of life from God's perspective.

You should **put off** and **put on!**

And here’s what this looks like... The next few verses list examples of the changes you’ll make... 4:25 “Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.” Christians should be truth-tellers.

Verse 26, 4:26 “Be angry, and do not sin...” It’s not always wrong to be angry. There's a lot of evil in this world that should rile our anger - just don't let anger lead to sin.

I read where the average person drives 20 mph faster when he or she is angry. Anger is a powerful force. Get control of it, before it takes control of you.

And one way to control anger is 4:26 “do not let the sun go down on your wrath...” Keep short accounts with people you love. If you have a conflict with a friend or spouse deal with it that day - as quickly as possible.

Verse 27, 4:27 “nor give place to the devil.” In other words, don't give the devil an opportunity to tempt you.

Often I hear people say, “I've got a terrible problem with pornography. Every time I log onto the internet I stumble...” or “Every time I enter a bar I get drunk...”

*Come on, man!* If you're serious about walking with God; stop walking headfirst into

temptation. Don't stumble into the devil's snare and give him opportunity.

4:28 "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." Here's the effect Jesus has on a person. He doesn't just stop him from stealing, but He encourages him to be generous.

Jesus doesn't just eliminate sin, but He installs love.

4:29 "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." When I speak in another area of the country it doesn't take my audience long to identify me as a Southerner - *I'm told I have an accent.*

And likewise a Christian should be identified by what comes out of his or her mouth!... Not just that we refrain from gossip or profanity, but that grace colors all of our speech. *Do your words build up or tear down?*

Verse 30, 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

*Quenching the Spirit* is to avoid doing what the Holy Spirit prompts you to do. Whereas, *grieving the Spirit* is the opposite - it's doing what God told you **not** to do.

Chapter 4 closes, 4:31 "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another..." And there would be no problem if the verse ended here. *O we should forgive!*

*But look at Paul's qualifier...* 4:32 "just as God in Christ forgave you." That ups the ante! We should forgive one another as fully and freely as Jesus has forgiven us.

Once, two husbands were talking. One says to his buddy, "*when my wife is mad she gets historical.*" His friend corrects him, "*you mean hysterical*". He says, "*No, I mean historical. She dredges up the past.*"

Hey, Jesus forgive and forgets. He holds no grudges. Let us forgive each other just as Christ has forgiven us. And if you have never asked Jesus to forgive you for your sin, understand how easy it is... you just ask...