

“To the Faithful Saints in Christ Jesus”

(The book of Ephesians ~ Part 2)

Introduction

- As we saw last week, the biblical book that we call “Ephesians” was originally a letter written by the apostle Paul – words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God (2Tim.3:15-17; 2Pet.1:21) – to the church in the city of Ephesus: *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus”* (Eph.1:1). It is believed that Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians during his first Roman imprisonment (c. 60-62 A.D.), along with the other “prison epistles” of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon (see Acts 28:16-31; Eph.3:1; 4:1; 6:19-20).
- While the city of Ephesus was grossly immoral and idolatrous, the church in Ephesus was pure and faithful. It was a relatively young church (when Paul wrote this letter to them) as it was established by Paul, and Priscilla and Aquila, less than a decade later. In this letter, Paul is writing to encourage them in their faith in Christ, and to exhort them to remain faithful to Christ.
- The central theme of the book of Ephesians is the Christian’s union with Christ – as Christians, we are “in Christ” and Christ is “in us.” Variations of the phrase *“in Christ”* are used over 30 (as many as 38) times in this letter [*“in Christ”* (13x), *“in Him”* (10x), *“in the Lord”* (7x), *“in whom”* (2x), *“in Jesus”* (1x), *“in the Beloved”* (1x); e.g., 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, etc.].

To be *“in Christ”* is much more than merely calling yourself a Christian, or being a Christian in name only. It is much more than attending church or wearing clothing or jewelry with a cross on it. It is much more than going to church when it’s convenient, reading your bible when you want to be encouraged, or praying when you need something. It is much more acting like a Christian whenever it seems beneficial.

To be *“in Christ”* is to be completely forgiven of all sin, and gloriously dressed in the righteousness of Christ. To be *“in Christ”* is to be eternally secure in your salvation, chosen by God before the foundation of the world. To be *“in Christ”* is to be loved by God with a sovereign and sacred and everlasting love. To be *“in Christ”* is to be adopted into the family of God, forever identified as a child of God. To be *“in Christ”* is to be a new creation, created to worship God alone and to love Him above all. To be *“in Christ”* is to desire to serve Him, to obey Him, and to submit to Him in everything – to see Him pleased and glorified in everything you say and do. To be *“in Christ”* is to be in a living, sacred, union with the one and only Son of God!

This is both an awesome reality, and a profound mystery.

Gal 2:20 ~ “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

- The book of Ephesians elaborates on both the theological realities of that union, and the practical realities from that union. In fact, with our added numbering system, the book is perfectly divided between “The Christian’s Position” (ch.1-3) and “The Christian’s Practice” (ch.4-6). This is a great illustration as to why we need to rightly understand biblical doctrine (orthodoxy) before we can rightly apply the Bible (orthopraxy).

Belief determines behavior! Far too many Christians ignore “theology” in pursuit of that which they deem to be more practical. The truth is, Christian doctrine is what informs and guides our Christian practice. Unbiblical thinking leads to unbiblical living.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS		
Reference	1:1 – 3:21	4:1 – 6:24
Focus	The Christian's position	The Christian's practice
Key verses	<i>"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"</i> (1:4) <i>"by grace you have been saved through faith ... this is not your own doing"</i> (2:8) <i>"that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"</i> (3:19)	<i>"walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"</i> (4:1) <i>"walk in love"</i> , <i>"Walk as children of light"</i> , <i>"walk ... as wise"</i> (5:2, 8, 15) <i>"put on the whole armor of God"</i> (6:11)
Topic	Belief Doctrine The blessings of the Christian	Behavior Duty The responsibilities of the Christian
Author	The apostle Paul	
Location	While in prison in Rome	
Time	A.D. 60 – 62	
Recipients	To Christians living in the city of Ephesus	

➤ The book of Ephesians is loaded with theological and practical Christian truths. Lord willing, we will be going through this book verse-by-verse in the coming months (years), but to get us started I thought it would be helpful to look at the book as a whole – to look at the forest (bird's eye) before we walk among the trees (worm's eye).

Since Ephesians is easily divided into two distinct parts, I have chosen to preach the entire book in two sermons. Last week we looked at the first three chapters (the Christian doctrine), and this morning we are going to look at the last three chapters (the Christian's duty). The first half (ch.1-3) is doctrine (what we believe), and the second half (ch.4-6) is duty (how we ought to behave).

A. Doctrine: Our standing in Christ (1:3-3:21)

- As Christians, our standing in Christ is neither superficial nor merely symbolic. Because of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, and His subsequent burial and resurrection, Christians spiritually stand before God as holy and righteous – as Christ bore the full penalty of their sin and imputed the full measure of His righteousness for all who would ever believe (Is.53:4-6; 2Cor.5:21). Through the crucifixion, God treated Jesus as if He lived your life so that, through the resurrection, God could treat you as if you lived His life. Through Christ's atoning blood, shed on the cross, everyone who truly receives Him as Lord and Savior stands before God as *"saints"* (1:1). This is referred to as "Positional Holiness" (or positional sanctification).
- Those who are truly "in Christ" – that is, those who are truly Christians – are blessed beyond merit and beyond measure. In just the first few chapters of the book of Ephesians, the apostle elaborates on several spiritual realities that affect every true believer in Christ.

1. The spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3-22)

- This first spiritual reality is gloriously mysterious and comprehensive. Through Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God, God has blessed every Christians with *"every spiritual blessing"* (1:3). While the ultimate meaning of this is incomprehensible to us, we know for sure that God has not withheld any spiritual blessing from His children (*"every"*). We also know that these blessings are *"spiritual"*, not physical (i.e., material possessions, wealth, good health, etc.). Lastly, we know that these blessings are not earthly but are *"in the heavenly places"* (i.e., not relegated or limited to the things on earth).

➤ To put it another way, the blessings that God has lavished upon His children – those whom He has saved – begins with their salvation (“*chosen in Him before the foundation of the world*”; 1:4) and culminates in their eternal glorification. In essence, Ephesians chapter one gives us the past, present, and future realities (blessings) of God’s salvific plan (see Rom.8:28-29).

2. The spiritual life in Christ (2:1-10)

➤ Apart from Christ, every person is spiritually dead – “*dead in the trespasses and sins*” (2:1), and justly condemned as “*children of [God’s] wrath*” (Eph.2:3; see Jn.3:18, 36). Only God can give spiritual life to the spiritually dead (the dead cannot revive themselves). Everyone is spiritually dead, and eternally condemned, apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ. No one deserves salvation; no one is worthy of salvation; no one can repay God for His salvation. For everyone has “*sinned and [fallen] short of the glory of God*” (Rom.3:23; see Rom.3:10-12).

➤ The unbeliever (the unrepentant sinner) is absolutely unable to save him/herself. We all are desperately dependent on divine intervention. Thankfully, God – who is “*rich mercy*” (2:4) and “*because of the great love with which He loved us*” (2:4) – gave us spiritual life, salvation, in Christ (2:5; Rom.5:8; 6:23). Salvation is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – “*by grace ... through faith ... not a result of works*” (Eph.2:8-9; see Rom.3:20; Gal.2:16; 2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:5).

3. The spiritual union in Christ (2:11-22)

➤ Not only are Christians one with Christ (“in Christ”), they are also one with each other in Christ. For in Christ, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal.3:26-29). This was an important truth for the Jews to hear (a truth that many of the Jewish leaders rejected), but also an important truth for all Gentiles to hear. Salvation is not just for the Jews but offered to everyone no matter their ethnicity, race, class, or gender – “*but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ*” (2:13).

➤ By God’s sovereign plan, salvation would come through the Jews but would not be only for the Jews. (Rom.1:16; 9:24; 11:11). Through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross, God fulfilled His divine promise to save all who would come to Him in faith. All true Christians are adopted into the eternal family of God – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Eph.3:6; Rom.8:16-17; Gal.3:29; 4:4-7; 6:10).

4. The unsearchable riches of Christ (3:1-21)

➤ The “*riches*” (*ploutos*; abundance) that Christians have in Christ are as mysterious as they are abundant. The riches of Christ are too numerous and too great to fully comprehend. As Christians, we must never think of God as withholding or oppressive; we must never think that God has wronged or deprived us; we must never think that God has forgotten or forsaken us; we must never think that God has been anything but good and kind, gracious and merciful, loving and generous. For He has lavished on us all good things – good things that we did not deserve and could not attain on our own.

➤ The book of Ephesians is a great – and much needed – reminder of spiritual riches we have in Christ. They are anchored to the nature and character of God (“*according to the riches of His glory*”; 3:16), established by the working of God’s Holy Spirit (“*through His Spirit in your inner being*”; 3:16), and accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ (“*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*”; 3:17).

Such spiritual riches are ultimately “*unsearchable*” (vs.8; unfathomable, incomprehensible), as the “*the love of Christ ... surpasses knowledge*” (Eph.3:19), and yet it is our duty and delight to be ever-pursuing such things. We must never be indolent in such pursuits, and we must never be arrogant to think we do not need to pursue such knowledge. We must never tire of growing in our knowledge of God and the things of God; to understand more of that which surpasses knowledge, to comprehend more of that which is ultimately incomprehensible, to know God more and more.

B. Duty: Our ABIDING in Christ (4:1-6:20)

- While the Christian's standing (or position) is completely perfect and eternally secure in Christ, their walk with Christ is progressive. That is, Christians do not live perfectly in this life – “*For we all stumble in many ways*” (Jms.3:2; see 1Jn.1:8-10).

The Christian's “*walk*” (*peripateō*; 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17^{2x}, 5:2, 8, 15). To say that the Christian life is a “walk” is a great analogy. For we are called, not to a sprint, but to walk with Christ all day and every day. We are called to walk stride for stride – putting one foot in front of the other – in the fellowship, obedience, and worship of Jesus Christ. The Christian's walk is to be progressively holy, always growing and never stagnant or backsliding.

- In the final three chapters of the book of Ephesians, Paul gives many instructions and exhortations to the Ephesian Christians. While there are no imperatives in the first three chapters, there are as many as thirty-five directives in the final three chapters.

1 John 2:6 ~ “whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked”

- For our purposes this morning, I have categorized them into seven major headings.

1. We are to walk in UNITY (4:1-16)

- As Christian's share a spiritual union together in Christ – as brothers and sisters in Christ – so too they should walk in unity together. That is, they should be for each other and not against each other.

Eph 4:1-7 ~ “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

- There should be no division or factions in the church. And when discord arises, it is to be dealt with quickly and thoroughly (1Cor.1:10; Gal.5:20; Tit.3:10).

Eph 4:11-16 ~ “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

- It is a sad commentary on the church, and a poor reflection on Christ, when Christians fight and when churches split over non-essential issues. Christians are called to love one another (not just seek to be loved); they are called to serve one another (not just want to be served by others); they are called to forgive one another (not just expect others to forgive them); they are called to encourage one another (not be critical or discouraging to others).

Gal 6:10 ~ “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

John 13:34-35 ~ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

2. We are to walk in PURITY (4:17-32)

- As we have seen, Christians are “*saints*” (*hagios*; “holy ones”; 1:1) – saved and sanctified in Christ. That spiritual reality ought to be evidence in every Christian’s life. While Christians are not perfect, they should be always striving to be holy – wanting to be more godly and Christlike (see Rom.8:29; 1Pet.1:15-16; 1Jn.2:6).

Eph 4:17-24 ~ “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ! – ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

- God is working in and through those whom He has saved, enabling them to walk and grow in holiness. While sanctification is always a work of God, it is not always a work of God alone. God commands that Christians pursue, and grow in, holiness. They certainly cannot do this without God’s wisdom (enlightenment) and strength (enablement), but God wants Christians to personally strive to be holy in Him (Jn.15:4-5). The Christian is saved by grace alone, but not sanctified by grace alone.
 - ✓ Illust: “Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in us whereby our inner being is progressively changed, freeing us more and more from sinful traits and developing within us over time the virtues of Christlike character.” “As we grow in holiness, we grow in hatred of sin; and God, being infinitely holy, has an infinite hatred of sin” (Jerry Bridges).
 - ✓ Illust: “Holiness is not something we are called upon to do in order that we may become something; it is something we are to do because of what we already are” (M. Lloyd Jones).
- Sanctification is the process by which the Spirit of God makes the child of God like the Son of God. So, paradoxically, the true church is made up of Christians who are perfect in Christ and yet imperfect in their walk with Christ – saints who are being sanctified.

Heb 10:14 ~ “For by a single offering he has perfected [*teleioō*] for all time those who are being sanctified [*hagiazō*].”

- God commands that we pursue holiness, and He will work – through instruction, conviction, and discipline – to make us more and more holy (see Heb.12:11-10). The Christian is one who can honestly say, “I’m not as sinful as I used to be, but I’m not as sinless as I want to be.” This is often called “progressive sanctification” as the Christian becomes (practically) more holy – more and more like Christ – in daily life (see Eph.4:25-32).

3. We are to walk in LOVE (5:1-6)

- Contrary to popular opinion, God’s love is neither permissive nor pampering – it is a perfecting love. As Christians, we demonstrate godly when we live like Christ and help others to live like Christ. Ignoring sin, or tolerating sin, is neither loving nor Christlike. It is not loving to watch a fellow Christian stumble into (or struggle with) sin and do nothing about it. Likewise, but more importantly, it is not loving to Christ to indolently or apathetically allow people to create disunity in His church. Christians who truly love one another, and love Christ, will pursue holiness and unity in the church.

Eph 5:1-2 ~ “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

➤ We are to love others as we have been loved by Christ. This “*love*” (*agapē*) is a sacred, sacrificial, and selfless love. First and foremost, Christians are to walk with a supreme love for God. Secondly, we are to love others with a godly/Christlike love (1Cor.13:4-8).

Matt 22:37-39 ~ “And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (see Lk.10:25-37)

John 13:34-35 ~ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (see 1Jn.4:7-8)

➤ This love is not theoretical or emotional – it is real and active (1Cor.13:1-3; Rom.5:8; 13:8-10). Notice that, in the context of Ephesians, love is contrasted with immorality, impurity, and idolatry.

Eph 5:3-5 ~ “But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

4. We are to walk in LIGHT (5:7-14)

➤ In the Bible, the symbol of light refers to truth and/or purity. Both are the meaning of our identity as “*light in the Lord*” (vs.8). Again, the reason why we are called to walk in truth and purity is because we belong to Him who is Pure and True – who we are defines how we live (1Jn.2:6). As children of God – who “*is light*” and in whom there “*is no darkness at all*” (1Jn.1:5) – we are called to live “*as children of light*” (vs.8).

Eph 5:8-11 ~ “for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”

➤ We do this by staying clear of impurity and falsity. To walk in the light of Christ is to walk in obedience. It is to live a life that is holy and pleasing to God. It is to forsake worldliness and ungodliness.

John 8:12 ~ “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

1 Peter 2:9-10 ~ “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Col 1:12-14 ~ “... [God] has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

➤ To walk in darkness is to live in opposition to, or rejection of, God. It is to live a sinful, hypocritical, and/or deceived life. It is to live a life of impurity, a life wallowing in false teaching and/or idolatry.

5. We are to walk in WISDOM (5:15-21)

- Unfortunately, knowledge and wisdom are often contrasted against one another – knowledge is unspiritual (and bad) and wisdom is spiritual (and good). Some Christians minimize, or ridicule, the importance of knowledge claiming that it is carnal and even anti-spiritual. But in His Word, God repeatedly exhorts us to gain wisdom and knowledge (see Prov.1:7; 2:6; 4:5, 7).

Eph 1:17-18 ~ “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom [*sophia*] and of revelation [*apokalypsis*] in the knowledge [*epignōsis*] of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened [*phōtizō*], that you may know [*oida*] what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”

- In the Bible, we see that both knowledge and wisdom can be either good or bad; that is, godly or ungodly (worldly; see Jms.3:15). By simple definition, “knowledge” is what you know, and “wisdom” is the application of what you know. Any knowledge or wisdom that is from the world – in that it rejects God or God’s truth – is worldly. All knowledge and wisdom that is from God and seeks to honor God.

Eph 5:15-17 ~ “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

- Obviously, Christians are called to walk in the knowledge and wisdom of God. This means that we are to know (pursue) the truth about God, and His commands/will, and rightly apply those truths to our lives. The ultimate goal is not just to know (facts) about God, but to know God; not just to know Christian doctrine, but to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

6. We are to walk in OBEDIENCE (5:22-6:9)

- While these themes overlap, there are important distinctions worth noting. From Ephesians 5:22-6:9 Paul gave practical applications to what he had been teaching. Specifically with regard to personal relationships – husband/wife (5:22-33), parents/children (6:1-4), slaves/masters (6:5-9).

The largest portion of this teaching is concerning marriage, where Paul gave one simple (not easy) command for wives and husbands each:

Eph 5:22, 25 ~ “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” ²⁵“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”

- These commands are not exclusive to husbands and wives, as every Christian is called to be submissive and loving. Rather, these are specific ways in which wives and husbands can walk in obedience to the Lord.

It is important to note that this passage – while it is the most extensive teaching on marriage in all of the Bible – is an illustration of the church’s relationship with Jesus Christ.

Eph 5:22-33 ~ “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ...

³¹‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

- A Christian marriage is to be an earthly (physical) picture of the heavenly (spiritual) relationship between Christ and His church. The ultimate purpose of marriage – and all relationships – is not personal fulfillment or happiness, but the display what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ. The Christian should view every relationship as an opportunity to showcase the glories of Christ.

7. We are to stand in VICTORY (6:10-20)

- The Bible reveals that every Christian – everyone who is truly “*in Christ*” – is, and will forever be, victorious in Christ. We are not called to win the battle, but to remain faithful to Christ who has won the battle. We are not called to “bind Satan” or to go “demon hunting.” We are called to “*Put on the whole amor of God*” (vs.10) so that we will not be defeated.

It is no coincidence that of the six pieces of armor listed in Ephesians six, are all primarily defensive weapons. Only one, the sword of the Spirit (God’s Word), is also used offensively in battle. As Christian’s we are to be dressed in the amor of God so that we can stand firm in the faith.

Eph 6:10-19 ~ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand [*histēmi*] against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand [*anthistēmi*] in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm [*histēmi*]. ¹⁴Stand [*histēmi*] therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints”

James 4:7-10 ~ “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist [*anthistēmi*; stand against/withstand] the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

1 Peter 5:8-9 ~ “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist [*anthistēmi*; stand against/withstand] him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”

- This command to “*put on*” (vs.11; *endyō*) the amor of God carries the idea of permanence – never to be taken off. This is similar to the commands to “*put on the new self*” (Eph.4:24), to “*put on the armor of light*” (Rom.13:12), to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom.13:14), and to be “*filled with the Spirit*” (Eph.5:18). The command is to persevere in these things, not to keep putting them on and taking them off.

Conclusion

- When Paul wrote this letter, the church at Ephesus was a relatively young and healthy church. But there is another letter written to this church in the Bible. A letter dictated by Jesus Christ Himself. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, there were no glaring problems or conflicts – there were no divisions, no tolerance of sin, no acceptance of false teaching or a false gospel (unlike the Corinthian church). But this does not mean that the church in Ephesus was perfect or impervious to sin.

Approximately thirty-years later, the resurrected and glorified Christ tasked the apostle John to write this letter to the Ephesian church:

Rev 2:1-7 ~ “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.

⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’”

➤ Here’s is the warning that we all must heed: a mere profession of faith, a mere confession of great doctrinal truths, does guarantee one’s salvation. For a person can call themselves a Christian, and not be one; a person can attend or even join a church, and not be saved; a person can even engage in Christian ministry and service, and not be a true follower of Jesus Christ.

Matt 7:21-23 ~ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

➤ A true saving faith begins – first and foremost – with a sincere and supreme love for Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And, then, a true saving faith expresses itself in worship and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:15 ~ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Matt 10:37-39 ~ “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Matt 12:50 ~ “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

1 John 2:6 ~ “whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked”

➤ The best assurance of one’s salvation does not come from a past “Christian” experience but a present-day obedience that is driven by a sincere and supreme love for Jesus Christ. A sincere and supreme love for Christ will be evident in how the “Christian” lives. We must guard against any form or degree of Christianity that does not originate from, or is motivated by, a supreme and sacred love for Jesus Christ. May we never attempt to turn Christianity into a heartless or mindless religion. May we never attempt to reduce Christianity into a list of “do’s” and “don’ts.” May we never love anything equal to or more than we love Jesus Christ.