

EPHESIANS

Lesson 1: “Introduction & Salutation”

INTRODUCTION: I can imagine the apostle Paul today quietly hidden away in some rented room in San Francisco wearing a house arrest ankle bracelet with a GPS signal monitoring his whereabouts because of his speaking out for the cause of the gospel that goes against the current cultural grid. In this room he writes emails, blogs, and e-books teaching and proclaiming to others who God is in Christ. His writings are addressed to the churches both locally and global exhorting them to live what they believe about Christ and making clear the gospel of Christ.

Being the cosmopolitan city that it is, San Francisco has a total population of around 800,000 people and is one of the great global connecting points on the American west coast. It's a city of commerce and trade with various cultures that collide vying for a voice, presence, space and rights. These voices are political, cultural, social, ethnic, and religious. They are American, Asian, European, Jewish and a melting pot of other people groups. Their religious backgrounds range from the New Age cults, Hedonism, Atheism, Christian, Catholic, Jewish, Islamic and others.

Cities like San Francisco can be strategic not only for commerce, but also for the gospel. As hundreds of thousands come and go from the city whether for business or recreation. The city is placed perfectly at the crossroads of life that touches the four corners of the world today.

ANCIENT EPHESUS: Paul's experience in Ephesus would not have been that much different. Ephesus (Izmir, modern Turkey) during Paul's time of AD 60 would have been a city of about 200,000 people or more. Some estimates say it could have been 300,000 - 400,000. The city stood at the gateway to the worlds of the east and west from its seaport and highways that connected Europe to Asia. It was a city busied with commerce and trade. It was one of the greatest seaports of the ancient world. It was a provincial Roman city that has been influenced by its people in the past and present. Throughout the centuries, this city has seen many changes both in its location and those who would rule it.

According to city myth, Ephesus was established as an Ionian settlement by Androclus at the foot of Mount Pion around 1300 BC. Through the centuries it has been moved, conquered by Cyrus of the Persians and Alexander the Great who defeated the Persians and then returned the city back to Greek leadership. Eventually, the city was handed over to the Romans who ruled the world during Paul's day by Attalus III in 133 BC. The city then became a prominent administrative center and later a capital in the Roman province. It was located about five miles inland from the Aegean sea at the mouth of the Cayster River which is on the edge of western modern day Turkey. One of the benefits of Roman rule would have been that the city enjoyed all the modern infrastructure of the Roman times with gymnasiums, stadiums, theaters, and a major central market place.

Because of its influences of the past, the Asian and Greek ways of life often conflicted with each other along with the various religious groups between the worship of the goddess “Artemis” (Diana in the Roman system), the Jews, Christians, magicians and emperor cult worship. This made Ephesus a strategic city for the Apostle Paul and the planting of churches locally and abroad because of its cosmopolitan center. The spreading of the gospel would be

more efficient and taken to the seaports to other places around the world and by the highways that flowed from the city, east to west.

THE APOSTLE PAUL: Most scholars hold to the tradition that the apostle Paul wrote Ephesians (1.1) along with other letters such as Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians which were probably written as “Prison Epistles (letters)” during his first Roman imprisonment around AD 60-62 (3.1; 4.1; 6.20; cf Acts 28.16-31). Paul, whose name used to be Saul was a significant Hebrew Pharisee (Col. 3.5) and was the one who led the way in persecuting Christians when the movement first began in Jerusalem. He was responsible for the consent of putting Stephen to death (Acts 7.54-8.2). On his way to Damascus “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9.1) he sent letters to synagogues at Damascus stating that if any found belonging to the Way (as Christians were known then) that they were to arrest them so he might come and receive them and take them to Jerusalem (Acts 9.2). While on his way to Damascus, the Lord apprehended, blinded, spoke to, and instructed him to go and wait in Damascus for further instructions (Acts 9.3-6). Those instructions would be given and delivered by a man named Ananias who obediently, yet cautiously delivered the Lord’s message to Saul (Paul) personally (Acts 9.13-17). The message was Paul’s ministry agenda from the Lord to be His messenger to the gentiles and one who will suffer much for the name of Christ (Acts 9.15-16).

From there, the apostle Paul would meet Barnabas in Jerusalem who introduced him to the apostles (Acts 9.27) and after some years of training Paul met up with Barnabas once again and they were sent out by the Holy Spirit for their first missionary journey from Antioch (Acts 13.3). It wouldn’t be until Paul’s second missionary journey that he would come to Ephesus but he did not stay long after speaking there and left Priscilla and Aquila as he returned to Antioch (Acts 18.20). On his third missionary journey, Paul would return to Ephesus and would remain and set up his head quarters for about three years teaching, appointing elders, performing miracles. (Acts 19). As people came to Christ they set aside their practices of magic which created a great disturbance because the conversions to Christ were cutting into the business of the silver smiths who crafted shrines for those who worshiped “Artemis” (Acts 19. 24). This led to the city clerk stepping in to settle the matter lawfully (Acts 19.39) after which Paul took leave to Macedonia and after a period of time came back to Ephesus and met with the elders of the church in Ephesus to say farewell and testified how he “did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20.20). Paul’s missionary journeys were coming to a close and a new ministry from prisons in Rome would begin, the unhindered ministry of preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about Christ, writing letters to encourage and strengthen churches such as the Ephesians (Acts 28.30-31). The Bible does not say how Paul died, but we can assume he died declaring the gospel of Christ (2 Tim. 4.6-8).

THE CHURCH: The church in Ephesus has its beginning about AD 50 when at the close of his second missionary journey, Paul left Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla and came to Ephesus and left them there on his way back to Antioch, but he promised to return if the Lord willed it (Acts 18.18-20). On his third missionary journey, in AD 52, Paul returned to Ephesus and made

his head quarters there for about three years (Acts 20.31). While there, he wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16.8). It was from Ephesus that Acts records that all of Asia heard about the gospel of Christ (Acts 19.10) and Paul himself had gone to every believer's home teaching them about Christ (Acts 20.20). The legacy of Paul's ministry was handed to Timothy to combat false teachers (1 Tim. 1.3; 2 Tim. 4.3; Acts 20.29). Church traditions tells us that the apostle John lived in Ephesus towards the end of the first century. He mentions the church in his vision from the island of Patmos (Rev. 2.1-7) citing the glorified Christ's commendation for their confronting false teachers, but condemned them for losing their first love. Historically, the Roman emperor Justinian (AD 527-565) built a beautiful church to John's memory in Ephesus. The church in Ephesus also played a prominent role in the development of the early church. In AD 431, the Council of Ephesus officially condemned the Nestorian heresy, which taught that there were two separate persons, one divine and one human, in the person of Jesus Christ.¹

THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER: The purpose of Paul's letter was to speak to the "mystery" (divine secret) to the church, that is, our position and responsibility in Christ (1.9; 3.3-4, 9; 5.32; 6.19). He emphasized the church as the body of Christ in which both Jews and Gentile believers are unified in one faith. He stresses the importance of love in which one-sixth of Paul's references to "love" in his 13 epistles occur in Ephesians. Thus, the central message of this letter is God's grand purpose for those He came to save and that everything centers in Christ (Eph. 4.13).

AUDIENCE: Even though the letter is traditionally connected with the church in Ephesus (1.1), the phrase "at (in) Ephesus" is missing in three early greek manuscripts. It could be that Paul had intended the letter to have a larger audience than the church in Ephesus (1.15; 3.2, 6. 21-24). It could have been a letter intended to be a circular letter to several churches in Asia Minor, with each church filling in the blank in the greeting as the letter is read publicly.²

THEOLOGICAL VALUE: The Expositor's Bible Commentary calls Ephesians the "hymn of unity." Paul speaks about oneness in Christ that goes beyond the church and includes all creation. Meaning, that God's ultimate purpose is "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (1.10). In the contemporary issues that were important during Paul's days, Stoic philosophers saw the importance of orderliness in the universe which they attributed to cosmic reason and logic (the logos). During this time, governmental polity was unified under the imperial headship of Rome. Mystery cults were also on the rise and were being considered as the norm as conventional religions declined. This had a unifying sense of oneness among those seeking deliverance from demonic forces and personal achievement.

Paul speaks to this as he demonstrates that this insatiable desire to search for unity can only be found in Christ alone. Paul declares that Christ represents the one unifying principle in life that coordinates all things in heaven and on earth throughout all creation. He declares that humans can be liberated from the battles of spiritual warfare (1.21; 2.2; 3.10-11; 6.12-13; cf.

¹ Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, "Ephesus" pp. 406-407.

² Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook, Ephesians, Who is Paul's Audience? 3rd paragraph, Olive Tree Bible Study.

2.15). Therefore, the value of the theological content of this letter speaks to the concerns that deeply divided the world in Paul’s day and is still a relevant word from God today.

KEY WORDS: “in Him (Christ),” “our walk,” and “love.”

KEY VERSES: 1.3; 2.8-10, 4.1-6; (4.11-14), 5.21; 6.10-11

STRUCTURE: There are two main parts in this letter separated by “therefore” (4.1). The first part appeals to the believer’s belief and the second part appeals to the believer’s walk.

EPHESIANS CHART					
BELIEF (Theology) What the church should know. (1.1-3.21)			BEHAVIOR (Service) What the church should do. (4.1-6.24)		
CH. 1	CH. 2	CH. 3	CH. 4.1-5.20	CH. 5.21-6.9	CH. 6.10-20
Theology			Ecclesiology		
Redemption (1.7)	Reconciliation (2.16)	Revelation (3.10)	Conduct (4.1)	Connections (5.21)	Conflict (6.12)
Redeeming Work of the Trinity: 1. Chosen and adopted by God (vv. 4-6) 2. Redeemed in Christ (vv. 7-12) 3. Sealed by the Spirit (vv. 13-14)	Reconciling Grace through the Son: 1. Dead in sin (vv. 1-3) 2. Alive in Christ (vv. 4-10) 3. Fellow Citizens (vv. 11-20)	Revealing Stewardship of the Gospel: 1. The Revelation of the Gospel (vv. 1-6) 2. The Administration of the Gospel (vv. 7-10) 3. The Purpose of the Gospel (vv. 8-13)	The Conduct of the Church is to: 1. Walk in Unity (vv. 1-16) 2. Walk in Holiness (vv. 17-32) 3. Walk in Love (5.1-6) 4. Walk in Light (vv. 7-14) 5. Walk in Wisdom (vv. 15-20)	The Connections of the Church are: 1. To Christ (v.21) 2. To Husbands and Wives (vv.22-33) 3. To Parents and Children (6.1-4) 4. To Employers to Employees (vv. 5-9)	The Conflict of the Church: 1. Is Spiritual Warfare (vv. 10-12) 2. Fought with Spiritual Armor (vv. 13-17) 3. Spiritual and Unceasing Prayer (vv.18-20)
Paul’s first prayer (1.15-23)		Paul’s second prayer (3.14-21)			Paul’s closing comments (6.21-24)

STUDY OUTLINE:

I. The Belief of the Church: What the church should know.

- A. The Redeeming Work of the Trinity (1:1-23)
- B. The Reconciling Grace through the Son (2:1-22)
- C. The Revealing Stewardship of the Gospel (3:1-21)

II. The Behavior of the Church: What the church should do.

- A. The Conduct of the Church (4.1-5.20)
- B. The Connections of the Church (5.21-6.9)
- C. The Conflict of the Church (6.10-24)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT: “SALUTATION” - Ephesians 1.1-2

INTRODUCTION: Paul began most of his letters by setting forth foundational truth and then concluded by applying that truth to the lives of his readers. This pattern is very obvious in Ephesians where the first three chapters deal with doctrinal belief (teaching what the believer should know) and the final three chapters with practical behavior or application (what the believer should do). This letter, like most start with a “salutation” of Paul introducing himself as he addresses his recipients.

What is a “salutation?” - Nelson’s Bible Dictionary defines it this way: A salutation is an expression of greeting or the word or phrase of greeting with which a letter begins. The people in the Old Testament would often greet one another with “God be gracious to you” (Gen. 43.29). Sometimes the greeting would be over the top, something Jesus Himself criticized the scribes and Pharisees in doing (Mark 12.38). Even the Rabbis desired such public recognition that when Jesus sent out the 70 He told them “Greet no one along the road” (Luke 10.4). Their work as disciples was so important that it had no time for endless and idle ceremonies of prolonged greetings. This was not about small talk or idle gossip. This was flattery speech to puff up the recipient.

Paul’s use of the word “salutation” in three of his letters (1 Cor. 16.20-21; Col. 4.18; 2 Thes. 3.17) were to indicate that he had written the greeting with his own hand for most of his letters were transcribed by a secretary or scribe. Paul’s greetings are usually just a few words to add his personal touch and to establish that the letter was from him.

I. THE APOSTLE (v.1a)

- A. *The Title:*** “*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus*” - Paul usually refers to his apostleship at the opening of his letters. This title stressed the authority of the sender and the accountability of the recipient. An “apostle” is one who bears the New Testament message. The term was applied first to the original disciples (Mat. 10.2; Acts 1.2) and then to Barnabas and Paul by Luke (Acts 14.14). Paul defends his position as an apostle like that of the original twelve based on the claim that his commission came directly from Christ (Acts 26.16-18; 1 Cor. 9.1). When Paul uses this title, he used it humbly in order not to draw attention to himself and status, but to remind himself that he possessed no qualifications because he, as he would describe himself, was the chief of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).
- B. *The Calling:*** “*by the will of God to the saints*” - In the background material above concerning Paul, you will read about how he was called by Christ to be His servant to the gentiles (Acts 9.15-16). To be called “by the will of God” means this was not Paul’s own choosing or decision. It was the Lord who commissioned Paul. Now, scripture gives some indication that some men may aspire to become an elder (1 Tim. 3.1). There is a difference in aspiring to be something verses being called to something. Some men aspired to be pastors, and that might be ok, but some are called by God. The difference is that it is not a vocation of their choosing. It was not their first, second or third choice to vocationally pursue the ministry. Paul was perfectly content in ravaging the new born

way of the Christian church finding and binding believers up and persecuting them even to the point of death. Christ apprehended him on the way to Damascus and by His own divine will and purpose calls Paul to be His apostle to the gentiles.

II. THE SAINTS (v. 1b) - *“to the saints who are at Ephesus”* - These are the recipients of Paul’s letter. While Paul was called to be an apostle, these believers in the church in Ephesus were called out by God to be His “saints.” The word “saints” is (hagios-grk) which means “holy ones.” These are people who the Lord has set apart for His use. This means everyone of us who have surrendered to the call of Christ by His Word and Spirit have been separated by God from the world and who are to yield themselves in a consecrated fashion to worship and serve the Lord exclusively. Paul defines this as our “spiritual service of worship” in Romans 12.1-2 where he states: *“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”* We are the church, the called out ones. That’s what the church means in the greek. This is where we get the word “ecclesia.” We have been called out from among the world to be God’s holy ones in Christ so that we may be His royal priesthood that declares the wonderful truth concerning Christ Jesus and how He has rescued us from the bondage of sin and death and brought us into His glorious light (1 Pet. 2.9-10). Thus, as saints of God, we are to serve the Lord and serve one another (Acts 2.45-47) walking in the way that best mimics the attributes and person of Christ as Christ did for the Father guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14; Eph. 4-6). As saints, we are His disciples who are to “deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Him” (Luke 9.23).

III. THE GREETING (v.2) - *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ”* - Paul’s greeting here is similar to his other letters. What did this greeting express?

- A. *Grace:*** (charis-grk) - this reminds the believer of God’s unmerited favor and divine enablement which is given lavishly on every believer (1.3b). Later in this letter Paul clearly states how a person is saved for he writes: *“For by (GRACE) you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as the result of works, that no one should boast”* (Eph. 2.8-9). The reason this is so important is because we are all sinners (Rom. 3.23), but God being rich in mercy gifted us grace because what we deserve for our sin is death, but God gift to us is eternal life through His only Son, Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6.23). He does this because of His own love for us. Even when we were His enemy, Christ died for us (Jn. 3.16; Rom. 5.8; 1 Jn. 4). So then, that any one who receives and believes in Him alone, they will be saved (Jn. 1.12-13; Rom. 10.9-10, 13).
- B. *Peace:*** (eirene-grk) - Is translated in Hebrew as “shalom.” This expresses our condition resulting from God’s grace to us. Because of what Christ did on the cross and our receiving this truth by faith, we have “peace” with God (Rom. 5.1). Many in the world are not at peace with themselves, the world or with God. To be at peace with God is the greatest gift anyone could hope for. For that person no longer has to be anxious about the concerns of this world, or life and death, for they know that their is laid up in heaven for

them the glorious hope of Christ. No more condemnation (Rom. 3.1) never separated by God (Jn. 10.27; Rom. 8) - only the welcome into His paradise when He calls home to be with Him for all eternity (1 Cor. 15; 1 Thes. 4.13-17). This is the greatest gift anyone could ever have in this world. To be called and adopted by God is the greatest peace and assurance one can have.

APPLICATION:

The church is more than buildings, denominations, preachers, musicians and the like. God is not interested in a organization. He does not find beauty or grace in programs or formal liturgy. What the Lord find beauty in is His bride whom He chose for Himself (Eph. 5.21-33). He loves her (the church) and sacrificed Himself for her and desires to present her washed, cleaned, and purified in that great and blessed day of the Lord.

If we begin to see ourselves as the bride rather than an institution, unified under one great purpose of God to serve Him only instead of our own wills, imagine what the Lord could do through us. Paul's great truth in this greeting is that we are God's temple. His church, set a part as His holy ones whom He personally called out for the works of service He has created before the foundation of the world (Eph. 2.10).

Let us remind ourselves then, the gift of "grace" given and live in the "peace" of God daily with one common purpose to please Him as we glorify Him in word and deed (Col. 3.16-17) walking as wise men in His Spirit, making the most of our time because the days are evil, not forgetting what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5.15-17).

LESSON ONE: “EPHESIANS 1.1-2: Introduction & Salutation”**Study Questions****-PREVIEW-**

1. Read through the whole letter of Ephesians in one sitting as if it was personally addressed to you.

-REFLECT-

2. As you read the letter, go back and note the personal activity of God in what He wants you to know and what He wants you to do.
3. Read through the introduction note to learn as much as you can about Ephesus, Paul, the Church, and the Theological value this letter has for us today. How would you compare Ephesus in Paul’s day with the times you live now?
4. In meditating on (1.1) what is the significance of your identification in being a “saint” and what relation does “Grace and Peace” have with us being the “saints” of God, his church.

-REVEAL-

5. Do you know who you are in Christ? Do you sense unity with Him, His church, and the works of service He has called you to? Use this opportunity jot down some thoughts concerning these things and then at the end of this study in the coming weeks, compare what you know now verses what you will learn about being a saint of God.

EPHESIANS 1.3-23
Lesson 2: “To the Praise of His Glorious Grace”

INTRODUCTION: Theology is simply defined as the study of God. Sometimes this word gets a bad rap because some feel that Christianity is a life, not a doctrine. This may be true that Christianity is a life, but it is based upon doctrine. It is based upon and the pursuit of truth. What is the truth? Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Knowing this truth will set you free (Jn. 8.32; 20.31). The saints in Christ will do well to know and understand the essential truths to biblical Christianity because we have a common enemy who is seeking to devour, deceive, to steal, kill and destroy. His name is Satan, the Devil. Satan’s desire is to keep you from the truth so that you may not know the vast wealth you have in Christ, to know that you are secured in Him for all eternity, to know how to save your marriage, relate to your kids, be a good employer and employee, and how to combat the spiritual forces of the evil one and the importance of prayer. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a letter of Theology.

Paul’s letter is also about Ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is simply defined as the study of the church. It clearly defines who we are. Ecclesia in the greek is from two words (ek - out of) and (kaleo - called). Putting them together you get the phrase, “called out from among.” In this sense every person in Christ has been “called out from among the world” by God, “set apart” to be His church. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians sets out to explain what the church is and how it is to behave in the world.

The Mount Morgan gold mine in Queensland, Australia, is one of the richest in the world. For many years, though, the original landowners lived in deep poverty on the mountain’s barren surface. Even though the vast wealth was out-of-sight, it was beneath their feet all the time. Many Christians live their lives in similar fashion. They plod along and struggle through their spiritual lives, laboring every step of the way. They are unaware of the vast riches God has promised them, and therefore do not walk in them.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians brings to the surface of the Christian life the knowledge concerning “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1.3) that God has blessed us with. The great Scottish Bible expositor Alexander MacLaren once wrote concerning this: “We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor?”

According to Paul’s message in chapter one of Ephesians, every believer is blessed with all the spiritual wealth of heaven. His prayer is that *“the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”* (v. 18)

OVERVIEW: Paul greeted the saints (1.1-2) and then explains the richness of God’s grace in how God the Father (vv.3-6), the Son (vv.7-12), and the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14) chose to save us in Christ before the foundation of the world and sealed us with His Holy Spirit. Paul then praises God (vv.15-16) and prayed for the Ephesians (vv. 17-19) and exalts Christ who is the head of the church (vv. 20-23).

SURVEY OF THE TEXT

THEOLOGY 101:

I. The Trinity: Unity is one of the key ideas in Ephesians. The greatest example of unity is found in the relationship of the Triune Godhead, the Trinity. The Trinity means that there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is God in one in essence and three in person. This means that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, each are fully God, but there is only one God. This truth concerning the Trinity is foundational to the Christian life and faith. Understanding the Trinity is to help us understand what God is like, how he relates to us, and how we should relate to Him. Paul explains our salvation by what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit did to redeem us to Himself. The spiritual blessings that have come to us are the work of all three members of the Trinity. God Himself is the basis of these blessings.

A. God the Father (1.3-6):

1. *“Blessed be the God and Father...” - (v.3)* - Paul’s focus on the work of the Father is to praise Him for the work He has done in Christ. The word “blessed or blessing” is used three times in verse 3. In the greek it is the same word we get “eulogy,” which means, “good words.” At a memorial service, the one who gives the eulogy is saying good words about the deceased. In a sense they are praising them for the good they have done. Paul’s focus concerning the work of the Father should always be our focus - to praise the Lord for the great things He has done. What is He doing, “blessing” us “in the heavenly places in Christ.” The “blessings” from the Father are exclusively spiritual and are from the “heavenly places in Christ.” But, one key word that we might miss is the word “every.” Paul points out that believers lack nothing from the Father. He doesn’t give us a partial gift or some of the good things from heaven, but “every spiritual good thing from heaven in Christ.” What is that blessing? Look to Christ on the cross and His resurrection. There can be no greater blessing for any person. The sealing and enablement of the Holy Spirit. The gifts that assist us to accomplish His will working in us. James reminds us this: *“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” - James 1.16-17*

2. *“just as He chose us in Him...to be holy and blameless before Him” (v.4)* - Paul outlines the spiritual blessings of the believer by revealing their ultimate source in the eternal purpose of God. Christians have been selected in Christ before the work of creation. This election in Christ has a moral purpose by God that we are to be “holy” and “blameless.” Therefore, the first blessing is election. God has sovereignly “chosen” some for salvation (cf. v.11; Rom. 8.30; 1 Thes. 1.4; 2 Thess. 2.13; Titus 1.1). Thus, the blessing of salvation is ultimately God’s own doing, not man’s (Eph. 2.8-9).

3. *“He predestined us to adoption...according to the kind intention of His will” - (v.5) -* If election is God’s sovereign will to set apart a “holy” and “blameless” people for Himself by His own choosing and doing, then “predestination” is the means by which God chose us (cf. Rom. 8.30). “Predestination” means to “predetermine” in the greek. This means that God chose us by marking us out beforehand. It is more about the “how” than the “who” of election. Election (chose) emphasizes the people and predestination the means (cf. v.11; Acts 4.25-28; Rom. 8.29-30). The wonderful truth concerning predestination is that God predetermines the destiny of His elect (Rom. 8.15, 23; Gal. 4.4-7). How does He do this? He “adopted us as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.” Jesus becomes the agent who made the “adoption” possible by His death. One who was adopted in the Roman culture received the same rights and privileges as children born into the family. It is not an inferior status in relation to God, but a blessed status that He predestined us to adoption. This of course was done “according to the kind intention of His will.” Instead of looking at election or predestination as something that is unfair and unkind, Paul sees it as God exercising the kindness of His will and praises God for it because He “freely bestowed” this on the beloved (the church).

APPLICATION: Some reading this today are fully at peace with the doctrine of predestination, yet some reading this may resent the idea and may be offended by it. This is because predestination is closely debated with the doctrine of free will. The two historical figures whose names and teachings that have been largely used in this debate are John Calvin and Jacob Arminius. We must remember that these debates are based upon the beliefs of two men’s teachings. My objective is not to prove which teaching is correct inasmuch what was God the Father teaching the Ephesians through Paul concerning how He, Himself, sovereignly goes about bringing salvation to those He Himself has chosen, according to the kindness of His will.

The belief of election is threaded throughout scripture. Consider God’s choosing of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, the prophets, the nation of Israel, the disciples, Paul, Timothy, and all those listed in the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11, all the way down to you and I. In chapter two of Ephesian we will learn that God is the One who gives us the ability to believe so that we can not boast about what we did because we did not choose to be saved, God chose and enabled us to be save so that we may walk in the works He prepared beforehand, because we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2.8-10).

The belief of freewill is also threaded through out scripture, but not in a positive way. For by the freewill of man, man chose to disobey God in the garden, man chose to murder (Cain and Able), man chose to sin so grossly that God was sorry that He created man (Gen. 6). Man chose to denounce the worship of God in the wilderness over the worship of the golden calf. Man in his freewill, chose freely to break covenant with the Lord (Rehoboam I) and set up idol worship and temples over the worship of God at His temple in Jerusalem. Man by his own choosing, elected to crucify the Son of God, and as Romans 3 clearly states that because of mans freewill, man does not naturally or

spiritually seek for God (cf Rom. 3.10-18) and as Paul will remind us in Ephesians 2.1, we were all dead in our sin because of not only of our nature to sin, but because of our own freewill to sin.

Therefore, if it was left up to me - I would not have the will (though free it may be) to choose the God of my salvation. I am so glad that He, the God of the universe and all creation, according to His kind sovereign will chose to elect me before the world began and adopted me by the means of predestination, determining the outcome of my destiny through His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

For, if it was up to me then God the Father would not have accomplished it Himself. If it was up to me, then Jesus did not paid it all. If it was up to me, then God is not all power (omnipotent), therefore He is false and regulated like the gods of the earth who cannot fully accomplish salvation if it was left up to me.

But, Praise God! He is the God of the Bible, the all omnipotent, immortal God of creation. He is the God that paid it all. He is the God who worked salvation, reconciling us to Himself through His Son. Predetermining our destiny by His choosing because HE IS GOD THE FATHER!

B. God the Son (1.7-12): God the Father poured out His sovereign grace on us only because of what Christ had done. In Christ alone, we have “redemption” (v. 7) and “an inheritance” (v. 11).

1. *“In Him we have redemption”* - (v. 7) - The word “redemption” (Gr. apolytroisin) means release from slavery (cf. v. 14; 4.30; Lk. 21.28; Rom. 3.24; 8.23; 1 Cor. 1.30; Col. 1.14; Heb. 9.15; 11.35). It is the buying back and setting free by paying a ransom price.
 - a) What did Jesus redeem us from? Sin (Heb. 9.15).
 - b) How did Jesus do this? *“Through His blood”* (v.7) - The blood, representation of the life, of the perfect Sacrifice, had to flow out of Him for this to happen (Rom 3.24-25; cf. Heb. 9.22).
 - c) What did His death accomplish? *“The forgiveness of our trespasses.”* - The believer is accepted eternally into the family of the redeemed because the blood of Christ was imputed on us, thus accomplishing our redemption and restoring us to God, forgiving us of all our sin (1 Jn. 1.9).
2. *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance”* - (v.11) - Because God the Father predestined us to adoption through Christ (v. 5), we have been chosen as heirs. This heirship is not a replacement of Israel’s portion. His church is made up of not only Jewish believers, but also Gentile believers. We see this in Paul’s use of the pronouns “we” (referring the Jewish Christians - v.11) and “you” (referring to Gentile Christians - v. 13). In this verse we see the strongest statement found in Scripture that God is sovereign (cf. Ps. 115:3; Prov. 16.9, 33; Dan. 4.34-35). In this verse we see that God is sovereign over all things by the counsel of His will so that we may bring praise and glory to Him in Christ.

APPLICATION: The work of the Son in salvation was: setting the sinner free from his or her sin and revealing God's plan to head up "all things in Christ" at the end of the ages. When we are redeemed in Christ, adopted by God, we further the praise of His glorious grace. Our inheritance reveals the character of God. It will shine out through the Son and will invite praise from the whole universe (3.10).

C. God the Holy Spirit (1.13-14): God's spiritual blessings for believers are based not only on the sovereign election of the Father (vv. 3-6) and the redemptive work of the Son (vv. 7-12), but also on the seal of the Holy Spirit.

1. *"In Him...you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" - (v. 13)* - Paul reminds us that the Jews were the "first to hope in Christ (v.12), but God also saved Gentiles. The vehicle that God uses to bring His elect to faith is the "gospel." The good news of salvation. When they both heard the message, listened to it, and believed it, this resulted in their salvation and their sealing by the Holy Spirit. This seal by the Holy Spirit provided a guarantee of their eternal security. Seals during Paul's time indicated security (Matt. 27.66; Eph. 4.30). It authenticated and approved (Jn. 6.27) the ownership (2 Cor. 1.22; Rev. 7.2; 9.4) of one whom the seal belonged. God seals the believer by giving him or her the indwelling Holy Spirit who keeps the Christian in Christ. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would permanently indwell believers (Lk. 24.49; Jn. 14.16; 15.26; 16.13; Acts 1.5). This is why Paul referred to Him as the Holy Spirit of promise.
2. *"given as a pledge of our inheritance" - (v.14)* - The Holy Spirit not only seals all believers, but He is a "pledge" of all that God will give us as His children (our inheritance). This pledge is not just a promise, but the down payment of our inheritance. Because we possess the Spirit now assures us that the rest of our salvation will inevitably follow. Like an engagement ring, it is a pledge that gives believers a foretaste of the glory divine. It is life in heaven with God.

APPLICATION: As saints, you and I are Christ's living church. As His church we have the promise of His Holy Spirit indwelling in us (His living temple). Because of the Holy Spirit we have the mark of divine ownership. We are not only pledged to God, we are also His possession. This is our guarantee of our future in God. Therefore, we are to walk in the Spirit who enables us to live so that we may become the praise of His glorious grace.

II. THE PRAYER: (1.15-23) - Paul closes this chapter with a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession. NOTE: That verses 15-23 are one complete sentence in the Greek text. It's one thing to have intellectual understanding about how we were saved, we must also use this knowledge to come into intimate relationship with God. John Stott has this to say:

"For a healthy Christian life today it is of the utmost importance to follow Paul's example and keep Christian praise and Christian prayer together. Yet many do not manage to preserve this balance. Some Christians seem to do little but pray for new spiritual blessings, apparently oblivious of the fact that God has already blessed them in Christ with every spiritual blessing. Others lay such emphasis on the undoubted truth that everything is already

theirs in Christ, that they become complacent and appear to have no appetite to know or experience their Christian privileges more deeply.”

A. Christian Praise (1.15-17): Paul commends his readers for what they were doing well. Paul, gives endless thanks to God for the faith the Ephesians have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. **Paul’s Commendation:** *“Do not cease giving thanks for you” - (v.15-16) -*

- a) First, notice Paul commends them for their faith in Christ, something Christ Himself does in Revelation 2. The reason Paul is able to commend them is because he, himself is a personal witness of their faith. Now, he is receiving reports given to him in prison concerning their faith in Christ. Faith is the expression of the believer’s trust in God, our vertical relationship.
 - b) Secondly, Paul commends them for the “love for all the saints.” Love is the evidence of ones relationship with other people, our horizontal relationship (cf. 6.23; Col. 1.14; 2 Thess. 1.3). This expresses in action the two greatest commandments summarized by Christ (Matt. 22.36-40).
2. **Paul’s Request:** *“may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him” - (v. 17) -* Paul turns to God and ask that He may give the Ephesians a “spirit of wisdom and revelation.”
- a) The “spirit” here is not referencing the Holy Spirit, but refers to an attitude. They have already received the Holy Spirit, they now needed the attitude of the Holy Spirit (cf Isa. 11.2).
 - b) “Wisdom” (Gr. sophia) enables one to perceive with discernment reality accurately. The Lord must have answered Paul’s prayer for again, Jesus commends the Ephesians in Revelation 2 for their deeds and toils for pointing our heresy among them from who Jesus describes as *“evil men...and those who call themselves apostles...and you found them out to be false” (Rev. 2.2).*

B. Christian Prayer (1.18-19): Paul’s prayer here for the Ephesians is for spiritual enlightenment. This enlightenment is to help them in their understanding. He uses a figurative expression to denote their inner awareness (the eyes of your heart). Paul’s prayer is three-fold:

1. First, he wanted them to know “the hope” that was theirs because God had called them to salvation through election.
2. Second, the readers needed to realize that they themselves would be an “inheritance” that God would receive when they went to be with Him.
3. Thirdly, Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the great “power” of God (surpassing greatness of His power) that impacts the Christian. “Power” (Gr. dynamis) refers to a spiritually dynamic living force. Working strength and might to overcome resistance.

C. Christian’s Headship (1.20-23)

1. *“Far above all authority” - (v. 20-23) -* The church is not to be measured by its own strength, but by its head. The power and authority of God raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand (v.20). This demonstration of power tells us the

place of Christ's present rule. Where is He now, seated at the right hand of the Father overseeing His church. This is not the same as David's throne over David's kingdom. The first is present and heavenly, the second is future and earthly. This divine power is available to us now, and is indispensable for us in order to live lives pleasing to God (cf. Phil 3.10; Col. 1.11).

2. Christ power is also seen in how the Father will subject all things under Christ (v.22). The first Adam of Genesis lost his headship over creation when he sinned, but Jesus gained His Lordship over creation by His obedience (1.10; Rom. 5.12-21). His lordship over creation will be obvious in the future when He reigns during the Millennium (Ps. 8.6; 1 Cor. 15.27; Heb. 2.6-8).
3. Finally, God's power in Christ is the Son's appointment as head over the church (v. 23, cf. 4.15; 5.23; Col. 1.18). This aspect of His Lordship is evident now. The church is the body of Christ (all true believers). The church is the fullness of Christ. The church could not come into existence until Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven to become her head.

APPLICATION: Lordship in many places around the world is not a foreign practice, because not everyone in the world live autonomous lives like you and I do in America. Ours is a life of entitlement or a life of our own choosing. We can choose where we want to live. We can choose who we want to live with. We can choose where to receive an education. We can choose with some marketing where we want to work. We can choose how to use our money and etc. We do not fully understand what it means to have a Lord over us. To have your lives, family, jobs, home, education, money and etc in the control of one person who is your Lord, your king who owns all that you have and are. Lordship in Christ is to yield and submit to Christ all that we are and have because all that we are and have already belongs to Him. He the Lord of our lives, soul, faith, and the church.

Therefore, as the Lord and head of our lives we must acknowledge and bow down before Him in humble worship and service. We must fear the One who not only conceived us in our mother's womb and knows the number of our days, our coming and going, and who not only can kill the body, but also determines the destiny of our soul. This is what we should know and be reminded of that you and I are not the keeper of our lives and soul, Christ Jesus, our Lord is. We are not a Christian just because we like Jesus. We are a Christian because we have claimed and live as if He is the Lord of all our life.

LESSON TWO: “EPHESIANS 1.3-23: To the Praise of His Glorious Grace”**Study Questions****-PREVIEW-**

1. After reading through Ephesians several times this past week, what is the one message that God taught you about Himself and you?

-REFLECT-

2. How has God the Father blessed you and what is His blessing on your life? (1.3-14)
3. By what means and result did God the Son redeem you? (1.7-12)
4. What is the purpose of God the Spirit? What is the significance of His work upon the life of the christian? (1.13-15)

-REVEAL-

5. The greatest conflict between God and us is the will. Read verse 5, 9 and 11. What do these verses say about God’s will in our lives? How does God’s will impact our lives and what is it’s implication for salvation?

EPHESIANS 2.1-22
Lesson 3: “Made Alive in Christ”

INTRODUCTION: I am amazed by those who are able to salvage items and restore them to beauty for others to appreciate. For instance, one of my wife’s favorite T.V. program is “Fixer Upper.” The couple, Chip and Joanna Gaines, transform dated old homes that most would condemn, much less purchase, and give it redemptive value as they refurbish not only the outside, but the inside of the home too. They literally “make” the broken and deteriorating house come to life so that a new family may dwell in it for years to come. This is what I think of when I come to Ephesians 2. Paul first states what the condition our lives were like before Christ transformed us: “*and you were dead in your trespasses and sins*” (v.1), but He transformed us “*even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)*” (v.5).

The apostle Paul reminds his readers what they once were. Dead in sin and separated from Christ and the promises of God. But, God knowing their depraved condition - broken, dead, sinful, refuse to and in the world - still chooses to redeem and made them come to life with Christ.

OVERVIEW: In this chapter we see that God chose sinful and spiritually dead human beings (2.1-3) and made them come to life spiritually in Christ and called us to good works so that His grace might be displayed (vv.4-10). Then, Paul reminds the church how they are brought together in peace and united in Christ (Jew and Gentile) by His blood and built on the foundation of His apostles and prophets , with Christ as the chief cornerstone (vv.11-22).

THEME: God’s grace is truly amazing when you consider what He had to work to make us into His church.

SURVEY OF THE TEXT

I. BEFORE CHRIST...MAN’S PROBLEM

- A. You were dead in sin (vv. 1-3) - “*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*” - (v.1)**
- 1. *The Reality of Death:*** “Death” has been since the fall the demise of man. Steve J. Cole states: “You cannot live the Christian life properly unless you understand the Christian perspective on death. Our views of death must be based on the truthfulness of God’s revelation to us in His Word, not on the speculations of people devoid of God’s Word.”
 - a)** God’s Word tells us that death exist because of sin and the whole world is subject to death because all have sinned (Rom. 6.23). What is “sin”? Sin (gr - hamartiais) is the failure to hit the target at which life is aimed. That aim is God’s perfect law. The failure to meet up to the standards of God’s law (any part of it) is to sin against God, for “*everyone who practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness*” (1 Jn. 3.4).

- b) The Bible also tells us that *“just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (Rom. 5.12). The first man, Adam, was warned by God that the penalty for disobedience would be death if he took from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said, *“You shall surely die”* (Gen. 2.17). This death was not only spiritual, but eventually be physical, for Adam eventually died a physical death.
2. ***The Sense of Death:*** Just as the physical body decays, the blood stops pumping and the heart gives out, the body loses all its senses. Once dead, the body can no longer hear, taste, see, touch, or smell. It’s dead. It has no life. It cannot sense life nor react to it. It is no longer animated towards the things of life. The same is true spiritually. The spiritually dead become infested with all sorts of corruption. The spiritually dead cannot sense the goodness of God because their soul is dead to the Spiritual applications of God’s ways, will, and Spirit. Because of this, the spiritually dead *“walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience”* (v.2).
3. ***The Desires of Death:*** Because the spiritually dead walk according to course of this world, they “trespass” in sin by *“indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind”* (v.3). Notice, not only is the person’s soul dead in sin, but their heart, mind, flesh, and all their being is dead. Man’s problem is simply not just sin, it’s how they view sin with their mind which leads them to depraved behaviors by “indulging” or “doing” sin. This is man’s nature and desire. Man, naturally does not want to indulge in the righteous behavior that mimics our Holy God. Look at any toddler and you will see the natural tendencies of man is to be disobedient not submissive to authority. Thus, the Bible tells us that: *“God gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and serve the creature rather than the Creator”* (Rom. 1.24-25).
- B. You were separate from Christ (vv. 11-12)** - *“remember that you were at that time separate from Christ”* (v.12). The verses above speak to man’s sinful condition. Jumping ahead to verses 11-12 we see that man’s condition effects not only his spiritual life, but his spiritual relationships. Paul is communicating solely to gentile believers by calling them to *“remember”* twice that *“formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh”* (meaning in a literal sense, the body, rather than sinful nature) were missing out on privileges they could not enjoy with Jewish believers did before the cross. The reason for this was because they were “separated” - meaning that they were “without.” The privileges the Gentiles were separated from in verses 11-12 were:
1. Gentile believers were “separate from Christ,” Messiah. They had no corporate national hope centered in a Messiah, as the Jews did.
 2. They were “excluded” by God as a people from citizenship in “the commonwealth of Israel.” Individual Gentiles could become members of the nation of Israel, but as a

whole, the Gentiles had no part in what God planned to do in and through Israel. The Gentiles were aliens from Israel in this sense.

3. Gentiles had no direct part in the promises of God to Israel which were contained in the biblical “covenants” (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic).
4. Gentiles as a race of people had no corporate future promised by God, to which they could look and in which they could “hope” as Israel did.
5. Gentiles were separate from God (“without God”). They were godless and without God’s special help.

APPLICATION: Every believer should be reminded what they once were before Christ. This reminder should always serve as a marker that *“formerly...at that time separated from Christ... His people...His promise...without hope and God”* - (v.12). So that when you look at the cross and the resurrection of Christ there is complete joy in knowing that God still chose you despite the sinful and lifeless condition of your soul. This is the blessing of God the Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ (1.1). This brings us to the gospel conjunction....”but God...” (v.4)

II. WITH CHRIST...GOD’S GRACE

- A. ***You are made alive (vv. 4-9)*** - In verse 4, we have what could be called, “the gospel conjunction” - “but.” This conjunction compares and contrast what we were to God and what He made us be. Though *“you were dead in your trespasses and sins (v.1)...BUT God, being rich in mercy (v.4) made us alive together with Christ”* (v.5). The saints of God, His church, were once dead (past tense) spiritually, but now (present tense) are made alive (aorist tense). Meaning this, in one simple occurrence, being “made alive” is God’s regenerating work that results in continual and ongoing eternal life in Christ. The result? The once dead person now can have fellowship with the living God, this is new life (Rom. 4.17). If God can make the universe out of nothing and create us in His image out of nothing but dust, this God can make us alive through His only Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. This is done by the power of God (1.19-20). God does this for several reasons:
1. ***Because of God’s rich mercy (v.4a)***. The “richness” of God’s mercy comes from the vast wealth in heaven (1.3). The richness of God’s mercy is expressed by God’s undeserved kindness. The Hebrew translates this word from the greek as being God’s (loyal love).
 2. ***Because of God’s great love (v.4b-5a)***. The love of God is the word (gr-agape). His love sought the highest good in the objects of His choice even though we were rebellious sinners.
 3. ***Because of God’s grace (v. 5b-9)***. God’s mercy and love is His gift of eternal salvation. You are saved, not because you earned it or deserved to be saved, but simply because God chose to save you despite of your sinful and dead condition. Paul explains on what the implications of this gift are:
 - a) **This gift saves us in Christ (5)**. Meaning as Paul explains to the Corinthians, *“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”* (2 Cor. 5.17). He “made us alive.” This is

what God has done for every Christian. Those who were spiritually dead in transgressions, God gave new life together “with Christ.”

- b) This gift raises us up with Christ (6).** Not only are Christians made alive in Christ, God has also “raised us up” with Christ (Col. 2.12). Where does He raise us up to? “In the heavenly realms” “seated with Him” to display for the “*ages to come*” the “*surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.*” This gift reveals the believer’s future anticipation of their own resurrection and glorification in Christ that was demonstrated by Christ when He arose from the dead with a glorified body that ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 1.6-11; 20-21).
- c) This gift is through faith (vv.8-9).** Now we come to one of the greatest verses in the Bible that describes how God saved us in Christ. Every believer owes their salvation to God because of the underserved favor of God. Because of God’s “grace,” He enables every believer with “faith” to believe in Christ. This is to remind us that because everything is a “gift of God,” we can not receive any credit for choosing to be saved, saving ourselves, or deserving to be saved. This Divine enablement (Rom. 3.22,25; Gal. 2.16; 1 Pet. 1.5) of “faith” is God’s instrument by which we receive salvation. Faith is not an act or work that earns merit with God, faith is the gift by God that is credited to the person who receives Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. A good example of this is from Abraham who “*believed God (by faith), and it was reckoned (credited) to him as righteousness*” (Rom. 4.3; Gen. 15.6). He believed that God would raise His son (Isaac) from the dead because of God’s covenant to Him and his future descendants, the people of Israel and the nations of the world.

B. You are His Workmanship (vv.10). If verse 9 is the how, then verse 10 is the why.

1. Why would God do this? Because “*we are His workmanship.*”
2. What does “workmanship” mean? It means, that we are God’s product of grace.
3. What were we created to do? We were created in Christ to do good works that He sovereignly design for us to walk in accordance to His will. We are in a sense, His living sacrifice that He has called us to be (Rom. 12.1-2). We were never created to be conformers to this world but to be transformed that we may give ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice in that we might know, understand, and walk in accordance of His good and acceptable will. This is our reasonable act of service and/or worship (Rom. 12.2).

APPLICATION: Christ, who as the Son of God, walking on this earth understood what it meant to do the good and acceptable will of the Father. On a number of occasions Christ pointed out that the work He does, He does because He sees the Father doing (Jn. 5.19) even when it took Him to the cross. The resurrected Christ revealed to Paul (Saul at the time) what kind of good works He would be involved in when He told him, “*Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of*

Mine, to bear My name for the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9.15). But, Jesus adds though - “for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake” (v. 16).

Being God’s workmanship again means that we are the product of His grace, chosen to be used according to and for His will to serve Him in such a way that pleases Him and bring glory to Him alone.

III. IN CHRIST...CHRIST’S PEACE

This section speaks to our corporate calling as His church. This new spiritual life of regeneration is not just something individually, but it additionally it is the work of the One who brings every Christian into union together with each other, both for the Jew and Gentile believers. There is a solidarity in Christ with other believers as well as solidarity with God. In verse 11, Paul reminds the Gentiles that they were “formerly called” Gentiles. Meaning, they no longer should consider themselves something different than the Jews. During Paul’s time, the Old Testament was a barrier of sort between Gentiles and Jews. That barrier created hostility: anti-semitism led to frequent riots in ancient cities, and ancient Jews did look with contempt on Gentile neighbors. But, because of Jesus death, and as a sign by the tearing of the veil at the temple, His death brought an end to this hostility, Jew and Gentile now can approach the throne of God with confidence (Heb. 4.16) through faith because both now have direct access to God the Father. Therefore, in Christ there is no longer any partiality. Peter came to realize this in Acts 10:34-35 when he witnessed the good news being received by the Gentiles and states: *“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him.”* How was this accomplished?

A. You have been brought near by His blood (vv. 13-18) - *“but now in Christ Jesus you... have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (v.13) -* Again, we another gospel conjunction in this verse. Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross (1.7; 2.15-17) fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy concerning God’s work of peace between Jews and Gentiles (Isa. 57.19).

1. The two were characterized as being “far off” are now “brought near” by Christ’ atoning work through His blood. Now that the hostility has been “abolished” by “His flesh”, there is now “peace” (v.15). This peace in Christ “reconciled” them into a union as “one body to God through the cross.”
2. This aspect of “unity” is critical in Paul’s message especially to the Gentiles of Grecian heritage. Unity in the Roman world was important to maintain civility. As stated in the first lesson, the only true peace and unity is not found in the “PAX ROMANA” but through the One who is both God, Creator, Savior, and sovereign Lord of all.

B. You are fellow citizens with the saints and of God’s household (v. 19-22) -

1. *“no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints” (v.19a) -* This now becomes Paul’s concluding conclusion. Paul uses several keywords to describe the people of God, His church, as the result of yet another gospel conjunction. The compare and contrast is seen as “strangers and aliens” vs “fellow citizens.” Foreigners in the New Testament time were known as short-term transients

or “aliens.” These sojourners received protection and legal status by paying a small tax, though they had no special rights. This was the Gentile’s relation to the kingdom of God before coming to Christ. But, now because of their faith in Christ, they are now united with the saints of the past (1.18) as well with the saints of the present (vv. 21-22) thus members of God’s household.

2. *“and are of God’s household” - (19b)* - To be part of God’s household is to be of His universal church. The church that was established by Christ is built upon the truth and “firm” foundation of *“the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone”* (v.20) If you recall Peter’s confession of Christ when he was asked by Jesus, *“But who do you say I am?”* and Peter replies, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (Matt. 16.15-16). When Peter made this great confession, Jesus made this statement about His church: *“...upon this rock I will build My church”* (Matt. 16.18). If you have ever been to Jerusalem and visited the temple mount, you would see at the southwest corner, a large cornerstone for the foundation for what remains of the temple. Paul is sharing the significance of the truth by which the church of Christ is built upon. That truth will function as the very cornerstone (v. 20) that “fits together” (v.21) the *“growing...holy temple”* of the Lord, *“built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit”* (v.22).

APPLICATION: There is a lot that can divide God’s people. Denominations, race, social status, tradition and nationality. These things are relevant to man, but it is irrelevant to the gospel and the true Church of Christ. Whatever brings barriers and hostilities should be reconciled by faith in Christ and His forming us into a new man, new creature so that we are no longer conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds in Christ Jesus (Rom. 12.1). It is the responsibility of all believers to set aside their own interest for the sake of others and strive for the peace of Christ that is given to us and enabled by His Holy Spirit. Be at peace with one another for you who were dead in your sin have been made alive with Christ.

LESSON THREE: “EPHESIANS 2.1-22: Made Alive in Christ”**Study Questions****-REVIEW-**

1. In reviewing Ephesians 1, list how God worked salvation in your life. (1.4-14)

-REFLECT-

2. What was the condition of your soul before Christ? (2.1-3, 11-12)
3. Find the conjunctions, “but” and compare and contrast who you were verses what Christ did in Ephesians 2.
4. What is the significance of verses 11-18 and how did He reconcile the problem of corporate relationships?
5. What are the two significant things we are now known as in relationship to Christ? (2.19-22)

-REVEAL-

6. What have you learned today about your identity in Christ? Who and what are you and why?

EPHESIANS 3.1-21
Lesson 4: “Stewardship of God’s Grace”

INTRO: “*oikonomia*” is the greek word for “stewardship” in the New Testament. It’s basic definition is “administration and management.” It is made up of two words in the greek: “*oikos*” which is translated as “a house or dwelling made up of families or household. The other word is “*nemo*” which is to be the manager of or treasurer. It is only used four times in the New Testament: (1 Cor. 9.17; Col. 1.25 and twice in our chapter today, Eph. 3.1-2). In all four occurrences, Paul uses the word as a reference to the responsibility entrusted to him by Christ concerning the mystery of God’s grace. Paul was called to be a minister by God to preach that mystery for the benefit of the church. A mystery that has been hidden from the past generations, but is now made available and manifested to the saints, making known the riches of God in Christ and the hope of glory (Col. 1.25-27).

Kenneth Boa shares this idea of what stewardship means. “Consider for a moment that everyone on earth has the same amount of time in every day. President or paper boy, housewife or executive, farmer or financier – they all have exactly 24 hours in each day, 168 hours in each week, 525,600 minutes in each year. Some people take that time and build relationships, dream dreams and make plans, cultivate their walk with God, develop new skills and live lives of adventure. Some people watch a lot of TV.

What differentiates people isn’t the amount of time available to them, but the manner in which they exercise their gifts and talents within the available time. We can waste time; we can spend time; or we can invest our time wisely. That’s what stewardship is about: faithfully developing and using our gifts, talents and resources within the amount of time God has allotted to us.”

I believe this is why later in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he would state: “*Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*” - (Eph. 5.15-17).

Paul’s motivation to press on towards the upward call of Christ was not built on anything other than the call of God and the truth concerning Jesus Christ. This was Paul’s focus. This was Paul’s calling. This was Paul’s ministry to the church and nothing but death would keep him from communicating this glorious and marvelous mystery from God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We too are called to be stewards of God’s grace and are accountable to the Lord for all that we do with it as seen with Jesus’s teaching on the parable of the talents (Matt. 25.14-30).

OVERVIEW: Paul is a prisoner and steward of the mystery of Gods grace to the Gentiles (3.1-7). His ministry to the Gentiles is to preach the riches of Christ and bring light to its mystery that God’s wisdom might be made known to the church and not to loose heart concerning his imprisonment (vv.8-13). For this reason Paul prays a second time for the church so they might know the fullness and knowledge of God in Christ (vv. 14-19) and closes with a doxology, giving glory to Christ (vv.20-21).

THEME: As a steward of God's grace, Paul helps his readers to understand the mystery of God's grace and its implication for the church and prays that they will be filled with the fullness of God in Christ.

SURVEY OF THE TEXT

I. Stewardship of God's grace from prison (3.1-2) - *"For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus" (v.1)* - Paul begins praying for his readers (vv.1, 14) and then interrupts himself to tell them more about the church. What he writes in this section gives some background concerning the church as a mystery. NOTE: Ephesians is one of four prison epistles. The others are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul referenced himself in being a prisoner for Christ. The word "prisoner" refers to "one held in bonds" (Eph. 6.20).

A. *A Prisoner for Christ:* At the time Paul is writing to the Ephesians, he had already been in prison for five years. He was arrested based on false charges by the Jews at the end of his third missionary journey for taking a gentile into a forbidden area of the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 21). Obviously Paul did not do this and they tried to kill him, however he came under the protection of the Roman soldiers. Though the Jews wanted him dead, they could not because Paul was not only a Jew, he was also a Roman citizen and thus would be tried as a Roman citizen. Paul was eventually sent to Caesarea and spent two years in prison there. He was examined by the Sanhedrin, Roman governors Felix and Festus, and before King Agrippa. If Paul had not appealed to Caesar, Agrippa would have released him. However, since he made his appeal, Paul was sent to Rome by ship. This voyage took nearly a year to complete and when he arrived, he remained under house arrest for the next two years. This house arrest took place sometime around A.D. 60-62. This would be Paul's first imprisonment in Rome as he lived in a rented house and was allowed to move freely in it about during the day, but at night he was chained to Roman soldiers to prevent him from escaping.

B. *A Prisoner with a Purpose:* In his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul described himself as an "ambassador in chains" (Eph. 6.20; Acts 21.33; 28.16, 30-31). While under house arrest, Paul minister to the church in such a way he was not able to do so before. Paul saw this as an opportunity to further the cause of Christ and did not waste his time as a good steward "of God's grace" which was given to him for the Gentiles (v.2). As a good steward, Paul welcomed all who came to visit him "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered" (Acts 28.31).

APPLICATION: Every believer is given the opportunity to show how they would manage God's grace in their lives. This is part of being a good steward with what the Lord has entrusted to us. But, let's say, in being a steward of God's grace, would you pick the easy path that avoids trials and tribulations knowing that it would result in fewer people coming to Christ, or would

you choose the path that would lead you to trials, persecution and/or eventually death by execution, knowing that by picking this path it would result in more people coming to the saving knowledge of Christ? I am sure most of us would not know what we would do.

I think of the young lady during the Columbine Colorado shooting when she was asked with a gun pointing at her head denounce Christ and live or confess Christ and die. Her faith inspired many to believe and those who already believed, their faith was strengthened and encouraged.

What lengths would you go through in getting the gospel out to the world? What would you be willing to give up? Would you give up your job? Your home? Your family? Your life?

Christian stewardship is more about managing the faith God has given you so that others may come to know Him rather than managing all the things you have accumulated in this life and declaring it was because of God's blessing. If you struggle now in being a steward of God's grace in this time of peace, how would you fair under persecution and tribulation?

II. Stewardship of God's grace in letters (3.3-6) - "as I wrote before in brief" (v.3). As a steward of God's grace, Paul used his time in prison writing to the churches concerning the "mystery of Christ" (v.4).

A. *The Mystery - (vv.3-4):* As an apostle, Paul received "revelation" to "bring insight" to what was not clear or understood before. Paul is not saying that he and other apostles are revealing something new, but clarifying, by bringing it to light so that which was a mystery might be better understood. What was needing better insight? Gentiles being equal partners with the Jews in the church (2.16; 3.6). Paul wrote about this earlier in his letter (1.9-10; 2.11-22). Even though Paul received this mystery, he was clear that he was not the only one receiving it, other apostles and prophets were receiving the same "mystery" (v.5). In being a good manager (steward), Paul shared his insight through previous letters so that his audience could gain "insight" into this "mystery of Christ" (v. 4).

B. *The Specifics of this Mystery - (vv.5-6):* It was commonly accepted by the Jews that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were exclusively for the Jews, however, the prophets did revealed that Gentiles would be saved (cf. Isa. 11.10; 42.6; 60.3; Zech. 2.11; Mal. 1.11). Thus, through the Old Testament prophets, we see God's promise in awarding to the Gentiles nations through the Jews the same blessings from His covenant (Gen. 12.3; 22.18; 26.4; 28.14; Acts 3.25). For instance, Paul writes to the Galatians: "*The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'*" (Gal. 3.8). More specifically concerning this "mystery"? (v.6)

1. *Gentiles are fellow heirs* - meaning that if they are of Christ, then they are Abraham's offspring (Gal. 3.29). Jews and Gentiles are "fellow heirs" of God's riches that He presently bestows on believers (cf. 1.13-14; 2.19; Gal 4.7).
2. *Gentiles are fellow members of the body* - meaning Jews and Gentiles are "fellow members of the body" of Christ, which is the church (Col. 1.18).
3. *Gentiles are fellow partakers of the promise in Christ* - meaning that both Jews and Gentiles are "fellow partakers" of eternal life (Jn. 3.16).

This means that Gentiles would enjoy the same rights and privileges of God's promises along with Israel as long as both believe in Christ. What God did for the Gentiles was that He grafted them into the vine of Israel. In Romans 11.11-24, Paul compares Israel to the natural branches of a cultivated olive tree and the Gentiles believers to the branches of a wild olive tree. The natural branches (Israel) were broken off, and the wild branches (Gentiles) were grafted in (v.17). The Gentiles, then, have been made partakers of the promises and inherit the blessings of God's salvation.

What this does not mean: The Gentiles are not a step-child to the promises of God. In that, they as God fearers do not have to become Jews first in order to be a saved Christian as some Christian Jews and leaders believed at first, especially the Judiazers. This also does not mean that the church (Gentiles) replaced the Jews since they rejected Christ at His first advent. Replacement theology is very popular today. This is also called "supersessionism" which is the view that the Christian church succeeded the Israelites as the definitive people of God. They also hold that the New Covenant replaced or superseded the Mosaic Covenant.

APPLICATION: In the economy of God's grace there is no partiality. When God sees His church, He sees those who are saved and covered by the atoning blood of His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, He also sees one church. He sees those who are His own. Those whom He chose, predestined and adopted (1.4-5). God is not concerned with denominations or the race of the believer as long as they believe in His Son and His Word. God sees His children who will one day be called up to heaven and will serve Him as priest and reign with Him for eternity. If only our mortal eyes and hearts on earth could see beyond the color and nationality and worship and serve together as one family under God. For we who believe in Christ are together for the Gospel as one body, partakers of one promise and eternal life.

III. Stewardship of God's grace in preaching (3.7-13) - "of which I was made a minister" (v.7)

- The Lord commissioned Paul to be His "minister" (gr - diakonos/deacon) by "gifting" Paul "according to His power."

A. *Super Natural Minister* - (v.7) - What enabled Paul to do his work as a minister and steward of God's grace was the empowerment he received from the Lord. Paul was supernaturally gifted by God to serve (diakonos/deacon) as one who lives and works in the service of another. "Servant" here pictures a table waiter who is always at the bidding of his customers. This ability to serve others does not come naturally, and for Paul, there must have been a special empowerment to minister to the church from house arrest.

B. *Humble Minister* - (v.8) - Paul would be the first one to admit that he, himself is the "least" worthy of all the saints (1.1) to have received such a privilege. Paul never thought that God owed him anything, but that Paul regarded God's entrusting him with the gospel as pure grace of unmerited favor (cf. 2 Cor. 12.11).

1. *A Preacher to the Gentiles:* One of the things that Paul was entrusted with as a minister, was to "*preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.*" What

was that message? Read what Paul writes to the Romans: *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For ‘who has know the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?’ or ‘who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?’ For from His and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11.33-36).*

2. **A Preacher of light:** *“and to bring light...”* (v.9) - As a minister of the gospel, Paul’s calling was to make the mystery that had been hidden in God plain for all to understand. Through his preaching, Paul was to make plain “the manifold wisdom of God.” The purpose of any communicator of God’s Word is to make it plain. Easier to understand. The picture is like turning the light on so you can see what is in the room. There were some things in the Old Testament that God kept in darkness until the coming of Christ. But now, because of His advent and the guidance of His Word and Spirit, Paul’s primary purpose in serving God was to be a preacher to Gentiles and to reveal the “unfathomable” riches of Christ and bring to light that which was hidden by God. Why? So that the “manifold wisdom of God” may be understood.
 - a) **The “manifold wisdom of God” (v.10)** - *“the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places”* (v.10). The word “manifold” means variegated or made up of many different kinds, as in many different colors. This is not about individual redemption, but the church composed of people of many different types, from two different groups (Jews and Gentiles). God’s “manifold wisdom” is also reflected in the church’s variegated construction. This wisdom is to be made known to every person, ruler, authorities in the heavenly places. As one theologian is quoted as saying, “...the church is to be an audio-visual display of Gods reconciling work. In this primary way she testifies to God’s grace and wisdom. So Paul encouraged living life in Christ in such a way that reconciliation is the dominant feature of church life.”³
 - b) **God’s eternal purposes (v.11-12)** - All this was part of God’s plan and eternal purpose (1.11). God carried out His purpose through His only Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. The result? Now, the both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus have “boldness and access” through Christ because of their “faith in Him.” Now as a unified body in Christ, we have the freedom and openness to come to Christ without having to go through any other priest or mediator. We can as the Paul previously wrote: *“For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...”* (2.18).

C. Encouraging Minister - (v. 13) - Paul began this chapter identifying himself as “the prisoner of Christ Jesus” (3.1). Paul is returning to his thought in that the church should not be discouraged by his present imprisonment. If God had entrusted Paul with this

³ a quote used by Don Thomas’s notes on Ephesians, citing “Bock”

mystery of the church, and the ministry of evangelizing the Gentiles, his imprisonment is just part of God's enabling ministry. His ministry in prison is for their "glory" therefore they should view his "trials" as part of God's good will for him and for them (cf. Phil. 1.7).

APPLICATION: What do churches look for in a pastor? Some want a super-hero who can do everything in the church. Some want a great communicator with a dynamic personality so he may attract many people to their church. Some want a great evangelist like Billy Graham. Some churches want an academic person who has theological and philosophical degrees. The list could go on. Fewer churches actually desire a pastor who will preach the Word and one who is humble before God and His people. Someone who will bring to light and understanding the full counsel of God's Word so that the saints of God might be equip for the works of service (Eph. 4.11-12). Churches need guys in the pulpit who are willing to stand up against the worldly crowd no matter what tribulation it may bring his way. We need pastors who are willing to speak the truth in love so that some may come to know Christ fully by His grace and not by the latest program or fad. We also need pastors who are willing to reach across any race near or far with the gospel and disciple them to be like Christ in the world.

IV. Stewardship of God's grace in prayer (3.14-21) - *"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father"* (v.14). - Paul now returns to his prayer. After explaining that Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ and share equality in Him (2.15), he now prays that they might experience the unity that was theirs spiritually in their relations with one another. Verses 14-19 are one sentence of thought in the Greek text. This would make sense since it is a prayer. As stated earlier, this is Paul's second prayer. The first prayer (1.15-23) emphasized the knowledge of God in Christ. This prayer focuses on the love in body through the power of Christ.

A. *The Posture of Prayer:* I am humbled, very humbled by Paul's posture in prayer. Not only his, but others in the Bible. There must be something said about this. This posture before the Holy God, the Omnipotent God honors His greatness and Paul's humility before the Holy throne of the Lord. This is not a rare occurrence for Paul. Praying was a regular ongoing and unceasing activity in his life. James, the half brother of Jesus, leader of the church in Jerusalem, and author to the letter that bears his name is known by church tradition as old camel knees because he spent so much time on his knees in prayer.

B. *The Prayer Request:* Paul prayed that God would strengthen his readers "in the inner man" (v.16). Along with this request, Paul petitions the Father (v.14-15) that He would provide His "power" (Gr. *dynamis*) "according to" His vast resources ("riches" cf. 1.18). We know of the power of the atom. We have seen its destructive abilities and all its other applications. But, the atom or any other created or man made source does not even come close to the "power" and "strength" of God by His Spirit. The source of power that Paul is praying for is from God. This is the power that created the heavens and the earth. The billions upon billions of galaxies across the universe. This is the power and strength that was demonstrated before Pharaoh and the children of Israel during the exodus. This is the

power and strength that raised Jesus from the dead and now Paul desires that God bestow on his readers the same enablement he has known by the Spirit of God to empower them in their "inner man."

- C. *The Holy Spirit:*** Every believer in Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12.13). This indwelling comes on them at the moment they receive and believe Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God who died and rose again. The Holy Spirit is especially at home in those believers who let Him be first in their attitudes and activities (Jn 15.14). Paul is praying that his readers would enjoy intimate fellowship with their Lord (cf. 1 Jn. 1.1-4). The result of this intimate fellowship with His Spirit is to be "*rooted and grounded in love*" (v.17). It is then no surprise that the first spiritual gift listed is "love" (Gal. 5.22) and that one of the greatest relational verses in scripture is the love passage in (1 Cor. 13.8ff) and that the greatest expression of love is demonstrated by Christ even though we were yet sinners (Rom. 5.8). This is yet another reference of the Trinity in verses 14-17: Father (v.14), the Son (v.17) and the Spirit (v.16).
- D. *Comprehending God's love (v.18)*** - "*may be able to comprehend with all the saints*" - When believers understand the mystery of the church, they are able to comprehend that God's love is broad enough (breadth) to embrace both Jews and Gentiles in the church. Again, when we say Gentile, we mean all other peoples. We then can appreciate the "length" of this love to see how far it reaches out from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the utter most part of the world. The love of God is not just long in its reach to the world near and far, but it is also eternal in scope of its duration. The "height" of His love is to raise both Jews and Gentiles up to the heavenly places and it reaches deep "depth" down into the depravity of man to rescue both kinds of people from sin's degradation and from Satan's grip (*Barclay and McGee*).
- E. *A love that surpasses knowledge (v.19)*** - "*and to know the love of Christ...*" - To be "filled up to all the fulness of God" is more of an ideal than real. Meaning, Paul knows that it would be impossible for mortal man to be able to know with full comprehension the great love of God. Because no matter how much we know about the love of God in Christ, there always more to know. The thrust of his request is that he so desires his readers to have such relationship with Christ that he does so that they may not only appreciate the relationship but might allow Christ to control them in word and deed more fully (4.13).
- F. *The Doxology (v.20-21)*** - "*Now to Him who is able...*" - Paul concludes this second prayer with a doxology. This doxology actually becomes the climax of the first half of his letter to the Ephesians. This doxology recognizes that we the church could never out ask or think God the Father. We as mortals could never out imagine God. So, we should never be surprised then when we see something marvelous in the works of God, because He is always at work doing marvelous things to great for us to even comprehend. All we can do is praise Him with a doxology with words that fall way short of the glory that He alone deserves. This doxology by His church will never cease to end because His church,

His bride will live forever and as long as His church lives eternally, she will never cease from praising the One who is our Christ, the Lamb, the God and Father of all for all time. And all God's people said? Amen!

APPLICATION: The prayers by Paul are great examples for Christians. Most of our prayers are for physical needs of people rather than their spiritual needs. When was the last time you prayed humbly on your knees to the Father in heaven that your Christian brother or sister would be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit. When was the last time you prayed that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith and that they may be rooted and grounded in His love. Have you ever prayed that a fellow believer be able to comprehend the fullness of God? Perhaps Christians should be praying this way for each other rather than the physical needs so that we might see the strength, power, love and fullness of God at work among us today in our churches, community, nation and the world.

LESSON Four: “EPHESIANS 3.1-21: Stewardship of God’s Grace”**Study Questions****-REVIEW-**

1. In reviewing, how does Ephesians 2 explain how you came to saving faith in Christ?

-REFLECT-

2. Paul describes himself as what and for what purpose? (Eph. 3.1-5)
3. What three things do the Gentile believers have in common with Jewish believers and what are the implications for both groups? (Eph. 3.6)
4. In verses 8-13, Paul was given something to do by God and for the what reason?
5. In Paul's second prayer (vv. 14-19) who is he praying for and what are his four requests?

-REVEAL-

6. In studying today's passage, what is it that God wants you to know the most? What will you do with that knowledge or gift?

EPHESIANS 4.1-32
Lesson 5: “The Christian’s Walk: Part 1”

INTRODUCTION: If you recall in lesson one, I had mention that one of the theological values of Ephesians was “unity.” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary called this letter the “hymn of unity.” Paul speaks about the oneness in Christ that goes beyond the church and includes all creation. Meaning, that God’s ultimate purpose is “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (1.10). This was a contemporary issue during Paul’s time. Orderliness in the universe which was taught by the Stoic philosophers, was based upon cosmic reason and logic (the logos). Because of this, governmental polity was unified under the imperial headship of Rome. The mystery cults were many and considered as the norm as conventional religions declined. This seemed to play into the the cosmic reasoning of peace and had a unifying sense of oneness among those seeking deliverance from demonic forces and personal achievement.

As stated in that lesson, Paul speaks to this and teaches his readers that the insatiable desire to search for unity can only be found in Christ alone. Christ represents the one unifying principle in life that coordinates all things in heaven and on earth throughout all creation.

OVERVIEW: Paul exhorts his readers to walk in one Spirit by preserving the unity of the Spirit (vv.1-16) and by walking in holiness by putting off the old man (vv.17-19) and put on the new man (vv. 20-24). He then gives several practical applications of what this new walk in Christ is like (vv. 25-32).

THEME: Christians are to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called.”

SURVEY OF THE TEXT

This section of Paul’s letter stresses the importance of walking in unity. Paul spent the first half of his letter teaching believers what they should know about their faith in Christ. Meaning, what they should know about God’s work of redemption through Christ as they are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Paul also reminded them that before Christ they were all dead in their sin, but that God made them alive in Christ Jesus and now because of God’s grace both the Jew and the Gentile believers share in the richness of God’s grace together, thus the urgent message to walk in unity together.

I. WALK IN UNITY (4.1-16)

A. Spiritual Unity: (vv. 1-6)

Paul begins by exhorting his readers to “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*” (v.1). Because of the diversity among the Ephesian believers (Jews and Gentiles) being of one mind in Christ would be an essential part of their witness to a pagan Roman-Grecian culture. Paul is calling on the believers to balance or harmonize one’s conduct with his or her calling.

What is that “calling”? The “calling” that Paul is referring to is God’s calling the Jew and the Gentile in the church to live in unity (2.13-16). That unity begins with walking in a “worthy manner.” In order for Jews and Gentile believers to walk in such a way, as brethren they would need to live as one, with no pretense of segregation, divisive religious or racial tension. Now, because they are one in Christ, fellow heirs, members of one body, and partakers of the promise in Christ (3.6), they are to “diligently” preserve that unity spiritually “in the bond of peace” (v.3).

In what “manner” are they to walk? Paul points to three virtues that contributes to unity in the church: “Humility, Gentleness, and Patience.”

- *Humility* is not a natural trait among people. In some asian cultures it is considered a weakness. In the Greek mind, humility was a vice of nature that was inconsistent with self-respect and the mindset of a slave. Both Jew and a Gentile would have regarded his counterpart as equal with himself, never inferior or superior to himself. But, here is Paul imploring the Ephesian believers to have a “lowliness of mind.”
- *Gentleness* is expressed as being considerate and meek. It is the opposite of self-assertion. A gentle person is one whose emotions are under control.
- *Patience* is endurance even under affliction. Even when a believer is wronged they must not retaliate (cf. Gal. 5.22; Col. 1.11; 3.12; 2 Tim. 4.2).

With these virtues the Christian must preserve the unity in the fellowship with all diligence. The word “diligent” means to make hast, or be eager to make every effort. When my two daughters ended up bickering over things, I had a catch phrase that expressed my desire for peace and unity in the home. The phrase was this: “get it right girls!” What did that mean? My daughters knew what it meant. It meant that if you are not right with one another, then you are not right with me. Thus, we are not at peace. Getting it right meant they were to put aside their bickering and to be quick by making every effort in being at peace with one another. The last verse in this chapter was one of our family’s key verse in the home and which expresses Paul’s desire of believers being “diligent” in preserving unity - “*And be kind to one another*” (v.32).

Unity in the church takes more than just having certain virtues, they must also be united on the essential doctrines of the faith. Paul points out seven essential doctrines that should unite believers in the church.

1. “*There is one body*” (v. 4) - The “one body” is the church. That is, the universal body of believers in the present age (1.23; 2.16; 3.6).
2. “*...one Spirit*” (v.4) - The “one Spirit” is the Holy Spirit, who indwells the church as a whole, as well as every individual believer in the church (2.22; 1 Cor. 12.13).
3. “*...one hope*” - (v. 4) - The “one hope” is the hope of the future that each Christian has in Christ. This hope began at salvation when God called and enlightened us to salvation (1.4, 18; 2.7; 4.1)
4. “*...one Lord*” - (v. 5) - The “one Lord” is Christ Jesus, the Head of the church (1.22-23; Col. 1.18). This is Lordship. Jesus as Lord and Head of the church is our master to whom all Christians owe their allegiance to.

5. “...*one faith*” - (v. 5) - “One faith” is what each Christian and the whole church have placed and exercised in Christ. This oneness of faith unites all true believers. This faith is expressed when a person places their personal commitment to Christ. It should involve the recognition that Jesus is the Son of God and Saving Lord of all who trust in Him alone for salvation.
6. “...*one baptism*” - (v.5) - “One baptism” is the external symbol of an inward change. Because “baptism” here follows after ones faith in Christ, rather than following the “one Spirit,” it appears that this indicates water baptism, rather than the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism by water symbolizes the death and resurrection of Christ. Since we confess Jesus as Lord and place our faith in Him alone, baptism identifies us with Christ as a sign of our confession of Him.
7. “...*one God and Father of all*” - (v.6) - The “one God and Father of all” speaks of God’s sovereignty as He reigns over all. He is personal, yet transcendent.

B. Preserving Unity (vv. 7-16)

The affirmations above are not only essential for unity in the church, but they also became the foundation of historic affirmations and confessions of faiths that were developed. Now, Paul turns from these affirmations to the diverse gifts that are distributed to believers to help preserve the unity as each believer grows towards spiritual maturity and exercises his or hers particular abilities in service. These gifts are given and distributed by Christ.

1. ***The Victorious Gift:*** “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift*” - (v. 7) - Verses 7-9 is not without its difficulties and speculations. Yet, James Boice states that “it is not all difficult to know what he (Paul) has in mind as he describes Jesus apportioning these gifts.”⁴ Paul is quoting from memory Psalm 68.18. Psalm 68 is a psalm of triumph, possibly celebrating the Ark of God (which symbolizes the presence of God) coming into Jerusalem. It’s a victorious Psalm as it pictures God conquering His enemies and now is ascending His throne to receive gifts and praise from all men. When using this Psalm, Paul affirms Christ’s deity and acknowledges His victory on the cross when He defeated the enemy and now sits on the throne of heaven at the right hand of the Father from where He now distributes gifts. These few verses speak to Christ’s rule, authority, and power in the Christian church.⁵
2. ***The Various Gifts:*** “*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers*” (v.11) - These gifts distributed by Christ are also called the gifts of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts are listed in four separate chapters in the New Testament (1 Cor. 12.8-10, 28-30; Rom. 12.6-8; Eph. 4.11 and 1 Pet. 4.11).
 - *Apostles:* An apostle means someone sent as an authoritative delegate. The New Testament recognizes these as the twelve disciples plus Paul. Each of these men had seen the risen Christ and received personal appointment from Christ. Now there were other

⁴ James Boice, Boice Expository Commentary Series: Ephesians, Eph. 4.7, “To Each a Gift” second paragraph, Olive Tree Bible Study.

⁵ *ibid*

men who functioned as and were called apostles, but they were limited in their function. The duty of the apostle was to establish churches and describes one who is sent on a mission by his master. Our modern equivalent might be missionaries today not in office, but according to their giftedness.

- *Prophets*: A prophet in the New Testament sense is one who speaks forth. He provides edification, exhortation, and comfort to the church (1 Cor. 14.3). These prophets do not function as the Old Testament prophets because we now get our spiritual knowledge immediately from God's Word and the Holy Spirit who teaches the Word of God (John 14.16-31; 16.5-15)⁶
- *Evangelists*: Evangelists preached the gospel locally and abroad (Acts 21.8; 8.6-40; 2 Tim. 4.5). Their primary purpose is leading people to faith in Christ.
- *Pastor-teachers*: The greek language suggest one person rather than two. This gift describes the role of those who oversee the local church who both shepherds the body as a pastor and feeds the body by teaching God's Word to them (cf. 1 Tim. 3.2; Tit. 1.9; 1 Pet. 5.1-3).

3. *The Vision for the Gifts*: "...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service" (v.12). Paul's vision for the gifts in the church is complete unity in Christ as each member of the body is equip to serve, building each other up to maturity in all aspects of Christ so that the church might not be conformed to this world, but preserving the truth in love. Verses 12-16 points out Paul's vision.

1. "*equipping of the saints for the work of service*" (v.12) - The primary role of leaders in the church are to minister the Word of God to the saints in the church, so that the saints can minister the Word in the world (cf. 1 Tim. 3.15). The word "service" is (Gr. diakonia) which is where we get the word "deacon or deaconess." The picture then is that every believer is to be trained to serve and care for one another as deacons.
2. "*to the building up of the body of Christ*" (v.12) - The gifts that Christ gives are not to be spent on ourselves or lie dormant, we are to use them to build up the body. The leaders are to use their gifts to "equip" while God's people in the church are to use their gifts to "build" each other up. Equipping should result in the building up. Therefore, like Paul is a steward of God's grace, the church ought to be stewards of God's gifts given by Christ.
3. "*until we all attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God*" (v.13) - The end result of "equipping" and "building" is to increase the "unity in faith and knowledge." When the church is unified in what it believes. Exercising their gifts from Christ, the church becomes one in mind in the truth it believes so that it is not blown about by every wind of doctrine and by deceptive teaching (v.14).
4. "*from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies*" (v.16) - Spiritual growth promotes spiritual discernment, which results in spiritual maturity as we "grow up in all aspects into Him (Christ), who is the head, even

⁶ Wiersbe, a citation by Don Constable from his notes on Ephesians 4.11.

Christ” (v.15) preserving the unity of faith as the church is “fitted and held together” in love.

SUMMARY & APPLICATION: Every believer is to walk in a worthy manner because they have been called by God in Christ. As they walk, they are to diligently preserve the unity as they affirm the essential doctrines of faith and by exercising their diverse gifts given by Christ so they may be equipped to build up the body of Christ and grow in spiritual maturity that they may not be conformed by this world, but instead, transform their world as they serve under the headship of Christ with vitality of heart for the glory of His grace.

Jesus has been more than generous to us as believers. As He dispenses His gifts let us equip and build each other up for the purpose of kingdom building as we continue to walk with Him in holiness.

II. WALK IN HOLINESS (4.17-24) -

In the first part of this chapter (vv. 1-16), Paul exhorts his readers in how to walk in unity. Now, in this second part he tells them how to walk in holiness as he compares and contrast the old self with the new self. He begins with an affirmation with the Lord by saying: “*walk no longer just as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind*” (v.17). The word “futility” which means “vanity” or “emptiness” reminds me of Solomon’s book of “Ecclesiastes” when after giving himself to all that the world had to offer, in the end he summarizes: “*‘Vanities of vanities’ says the Preacher, ‘All is vanity’*” (Eccl. 12.8). In conclusion he writes then: “*when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil*” (Eccl. 12.13-14). So Paul also speaks to the vanity of the old self.

A. The old self (vv. 17-19)

1. ***The Old Self is Estranged in Darkness (v.18).*** Paul tells us that the reason that the Gentiles walk in the way they do is because they lack understanding. They do not have spiritual light because their souls are not alive. Their souls are not alive because they are “ignorant” and “hard of heart” towards the “life of God” which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord. The word “excluded” in verse 18 means “alienated” or “estranged.” Perhaps you know someone who has been “alienated” or “estranged” in their relationship. At the heart of this - they are “excluded” from the life that comes from God. This exclusion comes from the natural ignorance of God which turns within itself and is hard to God and His ways.
2. ***The Old Self is Engrossed in Sin (v.19).*** Because their hearts are harden to God and His ways the old self is callous and gives itself to the practice of “sensuality” for one purpose and practice “every kind of impurity with greediness.” Every attention and intention of their heart is to sin. In Genesis 6, the Lord “*was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart*” because “*every intent of the thoughts of his (man’s) heart was only evil continually*” (Gen. 6.5-6). This is how

Paul describes our old self. In chapter two (2.1) Paul described us as being “*dead in your trespasses and sins.*”

To contrast this, Paul tells the believers, “*but you did not learn Christ in this way.*” Here again is the gospel conjunction. The old verses the new. Paul now proceeds to explain then how the believer should act and walk.

B. The new self (vv. 20-24)

1. ***The New Self Lives Because of the Gospel (vv. 20-22).*** In contrast to unsaved Gentiles, Christian minds are no longer dark and they are no longer estranged (excluded) from God. Their hearts are no longer hard and impure because they did not “learn” to follow “Christ” by natural mental means that have led to depravity and degradation of the unsaved. They learned to follow Christ from the gospel (v.21). Therefore, Paul tells them to “*lay aside the old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit*” (v.22). Instead of experiencing progressive (continually worsening) corruption without Christ for the ongoing regeneration of sanctification in Christ. To lay something aside is like taking something off. It is like taking off the old garment to put on something new.

2. ***The New Self Lives for God (vv. 23-24).*** “*and put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth*” (v. 24). A person can only put on the new self if they believed the truth of the gospel and allow their minds be “renewed in Spirit” (v.23). This means rather than being futile, darkened, and ignorant (vv. 18-19), the Christian has taken on a new attitude. This renewing is the ongoing process in the life of the Christian (progressive sanctification). As we put on the new self daily, God will be at work in us (cf. Rom. 12.2).

APPLICATION: There is a crucial examination of self here in this passage. If you find yourself indifferent to the ways of Christ and still commit yourself to wanton pleasure of worldly sin and care not about the things of Christ and His Word, then it could be that you are still dead in your sins, estranged (excluded) from the life that God offers in Christ. If this is true, then allow the Holy Spirit God to soften your heart with His Word and power so that you may step into the light and life of God through Christ so that you may become a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5.17) and walk in the newness of life putting on the new self. The gospel truly does change everything. It changes our heart, mind, and being.

III. WALK TOGETHER (4.25-32)

Finally, Paul brings this all together with practical application in what walking in a worthy manner looks like. This is the practice of walking together because we are “members of one another” (v.25). Since the practice of the old man follows his sinful condition (vv. 17-19), then it makes sense that the practice of the new man (vv. 25-32) follow his new condition.

- A. *In truth (v. 25)*** - *“Speak truth, each one of you”* - Stop deceiving one another (falsehood). Deception is a mask that false teacher (v. 14) and the old man (v.22) wear. So then, the new man (Christian) should “speak truth.” In order to have unity in the body, believers ought to be truthful with one another.
- B. *In peace (vv. 26-27)*** - *“Be angry, and do not sin”* - God wants His people to live peacefully. If we allow anger to brood it creates an opportunity for us to sin. Anger in itself is not sin (cf. John 2.13-16). There is righteous anger (cf. 5.6; Mark 3.5). Yet, it is easy for us to loose control and allow our anger to control us rather than we controlling it. “Self-Control” is one of the fruits of the Spirit given to us to walk in (Gal. 5.23). There is only one way to deal with anger and that is confess it as sin (1 Jn. 1.9). I met with a man once who did not consider his anger as being sin. He would not confess that he was wrong by being angry and bursting out at others in the church. He was not at peace with others and was not walking in the Spirit. To be at peace, we need to deal with it before the sun goes down so we may be at peace with one another.
- C. *In integrity (v. 28)*** - *“Let him who steals steal no longer”* - Stealing is definitely not the trait of the new man. Stealing (Gr. klepton) covers all forms of misappropriation. This verse reaffirms the seventh commandment (Ex. 20.15; Deut. 5.19). Instead, Paul have some integrity by getting a job. Work so that you will have something to share, rather than stealing from someone.
- D. *In graceful speech (v. 29-31)*** - *“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth”* - One of the things that causes disunity in the body is how we talk about one another and the way we speak to one another. Our tongue and speech is probably the most explosive weapon we have on our person. James describes our tongue as fire when he writes: *“So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!” (Jms.3.5)*. Did you catch the exclamation point at the end of the verse. James is very serious about this. Notice what Jesus says about our words: *“...and whoever shall say, ‘You fool (moron), shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.’” (Matt. 5.22b)*. I wonder if anyone ever considered that their speech could damn them to the fiery pits of hell. Our speech then, should be graceful. When we speak to people, it should not be to tear down, but to lift up the person. For *“edification according to the need of the moment” (v.29)*. The reason, *“so it may give grace to those who hear.”* I am shock at times what I hear from Christian brothers speaking to one another, or what I hear Christian parents say to their kids. Even worse, what parents may say in front of their kids about their church and/or their pastor. What we should be hearing from each other are those words which build each other up. C.J. Mahaney from Sovereign Grace Ministries is a master at this. So much so, that his churches makes this a purposeful practice with a genuine heart. When we tear each other down and create strife in the body of Christ, we “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” which Paul commands us not to do (v. 30). So then, Paul exhorts us to “put away” all the hate speech and “malice” from among us.
- E. *In kindness (v. 32)*** - *“And be kind to one another”* - This was our family’s theme verse at home. We show kindness towards one another when we say or do what is helpful and fitting for our neighbor. This comes from a generous and sweet disposition. We are

“tender-hearted” when we feel affection for someone else. When we are “tender-hearted” we are not defensive, but forgiving. The reason we should practice forgiveness is because God has freely forgiven us in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the Lord’s prayer (Disciple’s prayer) we find that if we are not able to forgive men for their trespasses and sins then our heavenly Father “will not forgive your transgressions” (Matt. 6.15). So, be kind and generous towards one another.

APPLICATION: Walking together in the Spirit of unity in the bond of peace is not easy because the natural self does not want to walk in that way. Believers need to put off the old self, but remember to replace that old self with the new self. For if we do not exchange bad habits with good ones, then the bad ones come back again and control us. Use these five areas of your walk that Paul places before you to once again examine yourself.

- Do you speak the truth?
- Are you at peace with others or are you more characterized by your anger?
- Do you use your wealth to share with others or are you a taker?
- Does your speech edify another person or are you constantly speaking unkind things about someone in front of others.
- Lastly, are you kind and forgiving towards others.

These are the things that Paul instructed the church in Ephesus concerning “walking in worthy manner.” The walk of the believer is not to be trivial for it takes much “diligence” to keep the unity within the body of Christ. As long as believers keep Christ as the head of the church, His Word as our guide and His Spirit as our enabler, there will be peace as each one submits to Him.

LESSON FIVE: “EPHESIANS 4.1-32: “The Christian’s Walk: Part 1”**Study Questions****-REVIEW-**

1. In reviewing Ephesians 3, Paul says that he is a “minister of God’s grace” to “preach to the Gentiles,” what was his specific message and for what purpose? (Hint: verse 6 and verse 9-10)

-REFLECT-

2. In what manner is the Christian to walk and what are the three virtues that accompany that walk? (Eph. 4.1-2)
3. Preserving the unity in the church take diligence. What are the essential doctrines that believers should be diligent to preserve to maintain unity in the church? (Eph. 4.4-6)
4. Christ gives gifts to believers (leaders and lay people), what are believers to do with these gifts. List what the leaders are to do and what the lay people are to do. (Eph. 4.11-16)
5. The walk of the believer requires that we stop doing one and begin doing what? What are the five ways Paul describe what the walk of a believer looks like? (Eph. 4.17-24; 25-32).

-REVEAL-

6. The Christian walk always involves self-examination. In studying this chapter, how would you examine yourself. Are you walking more like the old self or the new self?

EPHESIANS 5.1-6.9
Lesson 6: “The Christian’s Walk: Part 2”

INTRODUCTION: For some reason, human beings can't walk in a straight line. There's just something about our inner orientation that causes us to walk in a crooked or warped way. That's the conclusion of Robert Krulwich, science correspondent for NPR. In an interview on Morning Edition, Krulwich cites a study from Jan Souman, a scientist from Germany, who blindfolded his subjects and then asked them to walk for an hour in a straight line. Without exception, people couldn't do it. Of course everybody thinks they're walking in a straight line, until they remove the blindfolds and see their crooked path.

According to this research, there's only one way we can walk in a straight line: by focusing on something ahead of us—like a building, a landmark, or a mountain. If we can fix our eyes on something ahead of us, we can make ourselves avoid our normal crooked course. Krulwich concludes, "Without external cues, there's apparently something in us that makes us turn [from a straight path]."⁷

OVERVIEW: Paul exhorts the Ephesians to imitate God by walking in His love (5.1-6), walk in His light (vv. 7-14) and walking in His wisdom that comes from His Spirit with a thankful and submissive heart (vv. 15-21)

THEME: Christians are to imitate God by walking in His love, light, and wisdom.

SURVEY OF THE TEXT

The aim that Paul places before his readers is God. If you are going to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (4.1), then your aim is to “be imitators of God” (5.1). There is no better aim. No better standard. There is no better aim than for children to imitate their father. Jesus sets the precedent of imitation when He says, “*you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt. 5.48) or “*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*” (Luke 6.36). Christians are to be imitators of God’s gracious attitude and generous actions towards us. The first step in imitating God is love.

I. Christians Imitate God when they Walk in His Love (5.1-6)

- A. Sacrificially (vv.1-2)** - “*walk in love just as Christ also loved you*” (v.2) - How did Christ love you? “Sacrificially.” The measure and model of Godly love is demonstrated in Christ. Christ loved us to the extent of dying for us (cf. Rom. 4.25; 5.8; Gal 2.20). His self-sacrifice was pleasing and acceptable to God, “*as a fragrant aroma.*” How do we do this? We demonstrate God’s love through Christ when we lay down our lives for those we love, particularly for God (1 John 3.16). So then, just as Christ demonstrates God’s love for us (John 3.16), we must demonstrate that love too (1 John 3.16).

⁷ Steve Inskeep, “Mystery: Why WE Can’t Walk Straight?” NPR: Morning Edition (11.22.10)

- B. Selflessly (v. 3-5)** - *“no immoral or impure person or covetous man...has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (v.5)*. One does not imitate God when they practice self-centeredness and indulge themselves in the perversions of life. Self-indulgence is the opposite of self-sacrifice. Paul gives a warning that there should be no hint (*“even be named among you”*). This not only includes our actions, but also our speech. Paul points out that *“there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting” (v.4)*. Our conversations should be in the *“giving of thanks.”* Jesus warns about our speech when He says *“and whoever shall say, ‘you fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell” (Matt. 5.22)*. Therefore the warning by Paul is an exhortation against improper conduct. If one practices such things forfeits *“an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (v.5)*. Paul doesn’t mean one could lose their inheritance, he’s simply pointing out that the kingdom of God in eternity is not made up of such people. If this is how your behavior and conduct is characterized, then perhaps you are not a true believer. If you are a true believer, then Paul’s exhortation is *“stop acting like unsaved pagans.”*
- C. Sensibly (v.6)** - *“Let no one deceive you with empty words...”* - This verse Paul stresses further the urgency of living lives of love rather than selfishness. The “empty words” in view would be words teaching that living a moral Christian life is unimportant. They are “empty” because they are void of content, containing no truth. Paul is saying, “you can take this to the bank - God will deal with sin wherever He finds it: in unbelievers or believers alike.” Have some sense and show you have wisdom as you imitate God’s love.

II. Christians Imitate God when they Walk in His Light (5.7-14)

Paul now takes us from walking in love to walking in light. It is inconsistent for God’s children who are the objects of His love (v.2) and “fellow partakers” of His inheritance (3.6) to indulge themselves with the objects of God’s wrath (5.6) by demonstrating selfish, immoral, impure conduct. The conduct of the child of God ought to produce Christlike fruit (v.9).

- A. Light that produces Christlike fruit (vv.7-10)** - *“walk as children of light” (v.8)*.
- 1. Good Fruit:** The opposite of sinful conduct is the *“fruit of light”* which *“consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (v.9)*. These are the qualities that characterize God’s life (for instance, the fruit of the Spirit produces - cf. Gal. 5.22-23). The reason Christians should not partake in the behavior of unbelievers is because we were “formerly darkness” (cf. 4.17-19). But now, we are “light in the Lord,” having trusted in Christ for salvation (cf. 2.1-3; 3.17-24; cf. Matt. 5.14; Col. 1.12-13).
 - 2. Pleasing Fruit:** The goal for all Christians is *“trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (v.10)*. We cannot please God if we are conforming ourselves to this world. We should be imitating God by being holy as He is holy and by being transformed into His image so that we may come to know what is His good and acceptable will (cf. Rom. 12.1-2; 1 Pet. 1.15). Seeking to please God is one of the greatest Biblical counsel you give to one who is struggling in their walk. So many of us are self and

people pleasers. The only person a Christian needs to please is God. This is your life's goal.

- B. *Light that exposes unfruitful deeds (vv. 11-14)*** - *“and do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (v.11)* - The word “expose” means to reprove or rebuke.
1. ***Dark Deeds:*** Not only should children of light abstain from joining the sons of disobedience, they should also “expose” believers who do them, because these deeds are “unfruitful” (v.9). Listen, it is the deeds of unbelievers that Christians must shun, not the unbelievers who do them. If you see a fellow Christian who is indulging in perverted behavior of darkness, reprove them. Point it out. This will expose them for what they are. Bring light to their sin so they may repent and practice the fruit of righteousness.
 2. ***Disgraceful Deeds:*** Not only should children of light “expose” dark deeds, but they should be careful as to not draw too much attention to them by speaking *“of the things which are done by them in secret” (v.12)*. Paul says this is “disgraceful.” Meaning, that it is “shameful” and/or “improper” to do so. Meaning, you do not need to know all the gory details, because when light shines on evil deeds, other people will see them for what they are, namely, evil as the light of Christ shines on them (vv. 13-14). The quote by Paul here in verse 14 seems to have been an early Christian poem or hymn based on Isaiah 60.1.

III. Christians Imitate God when they Walk in His Wisdom (5.15-6.9)

Paul now introduces a new thought with the repetition of a third “therefore” (5.1, 7, 15). So far he has pointed out four ways a Christian should walk: in unity (4.1) and holiness (4.17), in love (5.2) from evil (5.3-6) and now he adds a fifth, to walk wisely by letting the Holy Spirit control our lives.

- A. *Making the most of your time (vv. 15-21)*** - *“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time” (v. 15)*. Solomon begins proverbs by writing, *“To know wisdom and instruction...the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”* and then he writes, *“Hear, my son, your father's instruction” (Prov. 1.2, 7, 8)*. What the Lord is teaching us through these Godly men is this... “see to it that you live carefully (wisely).” The wise person is the one who views and sees things the way God does. Why is this important for the believer?
1. ***Spiritual Control:*** *“Because the days are evil” (v.16)* - Every believer should live each day for the Lord. Paul writes in Colossians 3:17 *“and whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”* At the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes, *“The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Eccl. 12.13-14)*. So Paul's point is “don't act like a fool” (v.17). He then gives an example by not intoxicating yourself with wine

because it only leads to “dissipation.” This means, that drunkenness only leads to uncontrollable behavior. Instead, one ought to be filled with the Holy Spirit (v.18). Now, Paul could have used a number of illustrations to make his point. Paul uses “wine” here because the issue is about what controls you. Wine influences your thinking, speech, driving, perception, and etc. Not so when one is controlled by the Holy Spirit. The believer who allows the Spirit to influence and direct their thinking and behavior will experience the Spirit’s control as long as the believer maintains his or hers relationship to the Spirit (cf. Luke 1.15; Acts 2.12-21).

2. ***Spiritual Praise:*** One of the outward expressions of being controlled by the Spirit is by how we speak and communicate to God (v.19). Paul likens this to “*singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.*” The Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs all deal with praise in public rather than private. This is how we should communicate to God with Christians “singing” and “*always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father*” (v.20).
3. ***Spiritual Submission:*** Another result in being Spirit controlled and walking wisely is the willingness to submit (be subject) to other people, especially believers. What is the opposite of this? To dominate others and exalt self over others. The attitude of submission is from a respectful reverence for Christ. When God controls us, we have submissive spirits (v.21).

B. Making the most of your relationships (vv. 5.22-6.9)

Paul admonishes Christians to make the most of their time by being controlled by the Holy Spirit. An application of that control is lived out in the various relationships that Christians have in this life. Paul addresses six groups of people who should live out what it means to have a submissive and obedient spirit.

1. ***as a wife (5.22-24)*** - “*wives, be subject to your own husbands*” - This passage is often misunderstood and somewhat offensive to the world in regards to a wife’s role and relationship to her husband. The focus of this misunderstanding is on the word “submit.” It has been misinterpreted in the past as being “wives, obey your husbands.” This is not the meaning and application of “submission.” “Submit” is not a harsh or negative word, to the contrast, it is a positive and helpful verb. It is a loving word. It means to respond to your husband as you would to the Lord. Love your husband as you would love the Lord Jesus Christ. We love the Lord because He first loved us. It is a very personal word in regards to a very personal relationship. A loving relationship is the ground for submission. Verse 21 points to this, for everyone is to be “subject” or “submissive” to one another “in the fear of Christ.” What should motivate a wife to be “subject” to her husband? Not her earthly husband, but her heavenly husband, Christ Jesus our Lord, Who is the head of the church. Paul says then, just as Christ is the head of the church and the church is subject to Christ, so then the wife ought to be subject to her husband “in everything.” James Boice comments that the verb translated “submit” is actually connected to the other verbs that come before it because they describe what it means to be filled with the Spirit. For instance: “speaking to one another with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.”

“singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord,” and “giving thanks to God the Father for everything” (vv.19-20). These he says, “are the very things every Spirit-filled Christian should do, and “submitting” is likewise one of those things.”⁸ Paul points out the wife’s responsibility to “submit” particularly because it is something that does not come naturally for women to do. It is difficult for women to be submissive to their husband. That is why the Lord told Eve after the fall that: “*Yet your desire shall be for your husband*” (Gen. 3.16). This kind of ‘desire’ is not “submissive” but an envious desire to rule over him. Thus, Paul remind wives to work on being lovingly submissive to your husbands as you would to Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. **as a husband (5.25-33)** - “*husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her*” (v. 25) - Just as much as the wife is to be “subject” to her husband, the husband has the duty to “love” his wife. Just because the wife is to submit does not give the husband the right to be a dominant brute in the marriage relationship. If anything, the role of the husband to “love” his own wife is a much greater responsibility than “submission” because it includes unconditional “sacrifice.” Just as the wife is to “submit” to Christ as the church should because of Christ’s love for her, so then is the husband’s duty to “love” his wife as Christ gave Himself up for the church. The word “love” here is “agape.” It is different than the other two words in the greek (eros and philos). “Eros” is not used in the New Testament, but it is a word in the greek for love. Our english equivalent is “erotic” which is a fleshly love and often perverted. “Philos” is where we get the word “philadelphia” or “brotherly love.” This love is based on conditions. I will love you if. I love you because we are family and so on. “Agape” has no conditions. It is sacrificial. Just like Paul pointed out to the wives to “submit” to their husbands because it is harder for them to do, so with husbands “loving” their wives. “Agape” love does not come naturally for husbands, therefore, since they are the head of their house as Christ is the head of the Church, the heavy responsibility for the husband to love, protect, watch over, not disgracing his wife, but always presenting her to the community as the sanctify bride she is in all her glory (v.26-27). He is to never crush her or frustrate her from being herself. He is to care for her so that she is to be without “blemish.” Just as Christ will present the church (His bride) to the Father in the last days, so ought the husband present his bride to Christ and others as one who is beautiful and completely herself. The reason this is important is because since Paul uses the imagery of the Christ and the church in relation to marriage, we know that we in the church are fellows members of one body. Since we are all to be “filled with the Spirit,” then we all should strive to submit and love one another that best represent Christ and His church (v.30).
3. **as a child (6.1-3)** - “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*” - Children express their submission by “obeying” their parents. It is interesting that one of the characteristics of the “last days” is that children will NOT obey their parents

⁸ Boice Expository Commentary Series: Ephesians (5.21).

(cf. 1.30; 2 Tim. 3.2). Now, there are conditions in this obedience. For instance, a child is to “obey” their parents “in the Lord.” This means if the parent tells the child to disobey the Lord, then the child can disobey their parents because “obedience” to the Lord “is right” in that it is in harmony with God’s will for children (cf. 3.20). How long should a child “obey” their parents - as long as they are still children living under their parents’ authority. But, when the child becomes an adult and leaves the home they still have the responsibility to continue to honor his mother and father (v. 2). This “obedience” comes with a “promise.” Not only is it “right in the Lord” to obey your parents and “honor” them all their lives, there is a “promise” for children who obey their parents. This “promise” more likely is that they would avoid certain obstacles and perils that would otherwise shorten their lives. For instance, a child who is constantly disobeying his or her parents might get into trouble as a teen with the wrong crowd, drugs, sex, and all that comes with the world. A good illustration of this was with one of my cousins who was told by her parents that she could not ride with friends to go to a out of town football game. She disobeyed and she and her friends were hit head on by a drunk driver and she eventually died at the hospital. Her life was cut short because she disobeyed her parents. For those adults who have aging parents, your responsibility is to honor your parents, to respect them, care for them in their health begins to decline. You are to honor their wishes and their role as being the patriarchs and matriarchs of the family community.

4. **as a father (6.4)** - *“and fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”* - Not only is the husband to “love” his wife, but this “love” also extends to His children. Again, Paul focuses on the husband/father here because it is natural for the wife/mom to look after and love and care for her children. This is not natural for men. Often times, fathers tend to be too hard on their kids, lacking affection, and being unfair with discipline and instruction to the point they “provoke” their children. The word “provoke” (Gr. *parorgizete*) means to “exasperate” (cf. Rom. 10.19; Col. 3.21). Exasperating provocation can enflame the child’s anger unnecessarily (cf. 4.31). Teens are more likely to demonstrate rage in the home because there has not been proper instruction and discipline. Paul is saying that fathers need to be involved in child-raising. Fathers should lovingly bring their child up “in the Lord.” Fathers should provide the physical and spiritual needs of their children (cf. 5.29). Fathers can accomplish this through proper godly “discipline” and “training” which means to direct and correct the child (2 Tim. 3.16). This training is to be fair and consistent. It is done by word of mouth, including advice and encouragement (cf. 1 Cor. 10.11; Titus 3.10). All this is to be done with the Lord at the center of the relationship and training.
5. **as an employee/slave (6.5-8)** - *“Slaves be obedient to those who are your masters...”* - Paul now steps out of the family unit and addresses the social relationship in the employment area of ones life. Even though we do not have slaves today, we apply this verse by being good Christian employees. Again, the instruction and admonition of being “subject” still applies here. Paul says, fear your employer as you would the Lord with a sincere heart. The application here would be that whatever you do in

word and deed, do it in such a way that it glorifies the Lord (Col. 3.17). There is probably no better testimony than a Christian in the work place who with integrity, honesty, good work ethics, and who understands authority, seeks to serve their employer well in order to demonstrate their testimony of Christ in their lives. The reading of the story of Joseph is a classic example of this (Gen 37-50). Now, Paul does provide a warning to be aware of, “*Not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers*” (v.6). What Paul means here is that whether the master was watching or not, this should not matter in the quality of your work. You work not to please man, but to please and glorify the Lord, for He watches you at all times.

6. ***as a employer/master (6.9)*** - “*masters, do the same things to them*” - The role of the master/employer is not to threaten his employees, but to keep in mind that your true master is in heaven. Instead of being harsh and threatening to your employees, imitate God by being gracious, just and fair. God doesn’t show favoritism and neither should they. Our God is not partial and the Lord will judge Christian employee by the same stand that they have used to judge others (Matt. 7.1-5).

APPLICATION: In review, this section of our Christian duties and relationships towards one another, only a spirit-filled believer will be able to fulfill them (5.15-20). Paul urges humility that expresses itself in loving submissiveness to others, rather than arrogant self-assertiveness. Paul states this more clearly in Philippians when he writes: “*Do nothing from selflessness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself*” (Phil 2.3).

LESSON SIX: “EPHESIANS 5.1-6.9: “The Christian’s Walk: Pt. 2”**Study Questions****-REVIEW-**

1. In reviewing Ephesians 4, how important to church unity is it that Christians believe and agree concerning the basic doctrines of faith?

-REFLECT-

2. Paul already pointed out two ways Christians are to walk in Ephesians 4 (Walk in unity, Walk in holiness) - what are the remaining three ways Christians are to walk in a worthy manner? (Eph. 5.1-21)
3. List some warnings that Paul points out in Ephesians 5 in how not to walk.
4. What should influence and control the believer’s walk and with what attitude and disposition?
5. List the relationships we are to manage in our Christian walk and list some characteristics or duties of these relationships. (Eph. 5.21-6.9)

-REVEAL-

6. I will ask this question once more: The Christian walk always involves self-examination. In studying this chapter, how would you examine yourself. Are you walking more like the old self or the new self?

EPHESIANS 6.10-24
Lesson 7: “Be Strong in the Lord”

INTRO: One of the struggles in the christian’s walk is knowing who the real enemy is and how to engage them. During the Iraq war, the result of the military superiority of the American forces was not just in having better tanks, aircraft, soldiers and morale, but in having better knowledge of their enemy. The American forces had special units behind the enemy territory, satellite surveillance, manned aircraft and drone surveillance and AWAC surveillance. The Iraq forces could not even sneeze without the US knowing what was going on.

Christians are engaged in war everyday of their lives. Another implication of maintaining unity among christians is having the knowledge on who is the real enemy is and how to engage them.

OVERVIEW: In Paul’s final words to the Ephesians, he points out to them they need to be “strong in the Lord” by “taking up the full armor of God” (6.10-17) which includes being “alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” praying “at all times” so that the gospel may be boldly preached (vv. 18-20). Finally, to comfort and sustain one another in the peace, love, faith and grace in Christ (vv. 21-24).

THEME: Christians must put on the full armor of God, be watchful in prayer and sustain and comfort one another.

SURVEY OF THE TEXT

Paul had just written on the importance of mutual submission out of fear (reverence) of Christ (5.21) that the family of God must have for one another. This submission demonstrates the unified and loving disposition that christians have for one another in the Lord. Obeying Christ’s command to love and serve one another (Jn. 13.34). Now, Paul turns from the inside relationships in the church to the world it faces outside the church. It’s one thing to practice selfless love towards one another, believers now needed to know the strength that only the Lord could give them to live and minister to the world they engage.

I. Be Strong in the Lord (6.10-12)

Paul begins this portion with a clear exhortation that christians need to “*be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might*” (v.10). This would mean that they would need to “put on the full armor of God” so that they may “stand firm” with Him as He disarms “the rulers and authorities, (when) He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them though Him” (Col. 2.15).

A. Put on the full armor of God (vv.10-12)

1. Standing firm in His victorious might (vv.10-11) -

- a) The Strength of God:** Paul’s command to be strong in the Lord is a passive command. Meaning, christians are to allow the Lord to strengthen them. When I see this command I think of Joshua when he was called by the Lord to replace Moses as the leader of the children of Israel. If you recall the Lord’s words: “*No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been*

with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and courageous” (Josh. 1.5-7a). Later we see that as long as Joshua obeyed the Lord’s command, God gave the children of Israel victory over their enemies. The battle of Jericho is a great example as the people of God had only needed to march around the city and at the appointed time, the Lord exercised His might and strength and fought and won the battle for them because as Joshua and later King Jehoshaphat learned, “the battle belongs to the Lord” (Jos. 6; 1 Sam. 17.47; 2 Chron. 20.15). Therefore, Christians are to “stand firm” not charge into battle because the battle has been won by Christ on the cross and we are to simply stand in that victory.

- b) The Schemes of the Devil:** But in doing so, Christians will need to “put on the full armor of God.” Putting on the full armor of God is to accept the necessary equipment provided by God to withstand against all of Satan’s attacks. Satan is always on the offensive against God’s people. He comes to us as a very intelligent and experience strategist and his schemes are deceptive (cf. 4.14) and as our “adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5.8). Satan is relentless in his attacks at getting people to doubt, deny, disregard and disobey the Lord (cf. Gen. 3; Matt. 4). He uses various forces such as “rulers,” “powers,” “world forces of this darkness,” and “spiritual forces of wickedness” (v. 12b). The goal of the devil’s scheme is to get people to believe that they do not need God, and can get along very well without him (1 Jn. 2). Our flesh feeds on this and thinks we can find satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment on the physical and material things of life alone (Rom. 7).⁹
- c) The Struggle in Relationships:** Though it may appear that our struggle or wrestling (fighting) primarily takes place on the physical level (flesh and blood), though most of our sins involve certain physical behaviors, it is essentially a warfare struggle on the spiritual level. Our enemy has four different kinds of characteristics and they operate in the heavenly realms (v. 12b)
- (1) Rulers: which speaks to their authority
 - (2) Powers - their strength
 - (3) World forces of darkness - their wide influence in the world
 - (4) Spiritual forces of wickedness - their evil character.

Satan and His hosts have access to God, in the sense they can communicate with Him, but not coexist in fellowship with Him (cf. Job. 1-2). We know that certain demons have special authority over certain geopolitical territories (Dan. 10.13) and pagans who are held in their grip have no hope but to resign themselves in them. But, Christians can fight against such forces by resisting evil in its’ day

⁹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Your Adversary the Devil*, and C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

because of the victory we have in Christ because He has already defeated them on the cross (4.9).

APPLICATION: Therefore, all that the christian is to do is to stand firm, submit to God and resist the devil and he will flee (6.11; James 4.7).

B. Take up the full armor of God (vv. 13-17)

Paul gives his readers now two ways to be strong in the Lord, by taking up “the full armor of God” and to be watchful in prayer.

1. **Pieces of the armor (vv. 13-17)** - As the christian is to “put on” by accepting God’s provision for standing against the devil in spiritual warfare, the christian is also to “take up” by taking advantage of the “full armor of God.” The word, “take up” is to “assume.” By “assuming” or “taking up” this armor, the christian will be able to hold their line against the most determined attack in the “evil day.” By doing so, they will find that not one inch of territory has been yielded. This is what it means to “stand firm.” Imagine being the soldier who is on the front line (whether ancient warfare or modern) it is crucial that the soldier not flee, but hold their ground. Paul uses the common armor worn by Roman infantrymen to describe the sense of urgency and readiness of christians engaged on the front lines of spiritual warfare. Perhaps he got his inspiration from the soldier standing next to him as he penned this letter.
 - a) *“Stand firm therefore having girded your loins with truth”* (v 14a) - This represent the belt that was wrapped around the soldiers tunic. A soldier only loosened his belt when off duty, but Paul indicates we are never off duty and we must always ready with the belt of truth wrapped tightly around us. This truth is the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus. That He is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14.6). That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Jn. 20.31).
 - b) *“having put on the breast plate of righteousness”* (v. 14b) - The breastplate covered the body from neck to thighs. It was usually made of bronze. Isaiah 57.17 tells us that the Lord himself put on righteousness like a breastplate. This righteousness stands for uprightness and integrity of character. It describes a person with a clear conscience and can face the enemy without fear.
 - c) *“having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace”* (v. 15) - Roman infantrymen wore sandals with sharp, thick nails on the bottoms to increase traction. The gospel is like the sandals that gives us the assurance and peace to enable us to stand firm against temptation. It also allows us to move forward so we do not slip when sharing the gospel (cf. 1 Pet. 3.15). The gospel of peace is the good news of the gospel. It’s not in knowing how to become a christian, it’s the peace in knowing that you are in Christ.
 - d) *“taking up the shield of faith”* (v.16) - The soldier’s shield was wooden, covered with leather to make it flame retardant. This allow him to be able to “extinguish all the flaming missiles.” It was large enough to protect his whole body. Those “flaming missiles” that bombarded christians are the satanic assaults. The soldier used the shield in faithful defense. Our “faith” provides such a defense for the

christian in his or her spiritual warfare. Our faith is first to trust in all that God has revealed and promised. Secondly, the application of this faith is trust at the moment of spiritual attack to get behind our faith in Him for divine defense.

- e) *“take the helmet of salvation” (v. 17)* - Christians are to receive or accept Christ who saved and delivered us. Paul uses the soldier’s helmet to illustrate this. Salvation is similar to the helmet in that when one receives Christ they are making a conscious decision that He is the Christ the Son of God, and that by believing and calling on Him alone they are saved (Jn 1.12-13; 3.16; Roms 10.8-9, 13). Confidence in Christ becomes our “salvation” that protects our thinking while we are under attack.
- f) *“the sword of the Spirit” (v. 17b)* - The sword that is carried by the Roman soldier was sharp and double edged. The soldier would use it to thrust and cut in hand-to-hand combat. Paul uses the sword imagery as a way to describe the believers only offensive weapon. This offensive weapon for the christian is the “word of God.” It is the speaking or preaching of the Word that people are saved. We use the Word of God to counteract particular temptations as Jesus did in the wilderness (Matt. 4.4, 6, 10). Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit to guide and teach them, to bring to remembrance all the things Jesus taught them (Jn. 14). The Holy Spirit both gives us the Word and empowers us to use it as His sword (cf. Isa. 49.2).

2. Persistent in prayer (vv. 18-20) - *“with all prayer and petition pray at all times” (v. 18)* is Paul’s second exhortation to be strong in the Lord. Where as the command to “stand firm” (v.11, 13) is more of a passive command, “pray at all times” is active. But how, when, for whom, what should we pray for? First Paul instructs christians to:

- a) *“with all prayer and petition” (v.18)* - Paul tells christians that they are to pray with all kinds of prayers, with all kinds of request. Prayers can be both general and specific. When christians pray, they are engaged in humble worship before the Lord because they realize something that God is able to do that they themselves are not. It is also a personal time with the Lord, in that you need not to go through any other human to pray to God. Christians can approach the throne of God through Christ, our High Priest with confidence (Heb. 4.16). How does one pray in such a way? A simple way is to remember A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). You can begin your prayer with adoration by worshiping and praising God for who He is - i.e. the way Jesus taught us in the disciples prayer, by recognizing who God is, what He has done and what He wants to accomplish (“our Father, who is in Heaven, how holy is your name, Your kingdom come and Your will be done.” - Matt. 6ff). Prayer should also include our confession of sin. When we bow before the holy God, like Isaiah (Isa. 6) we acknowledge He is holy and we are not (we are sinful). Confess your sin to him, clear your conscience, let there be nothing that would quench the Spirit of God in your life as you face the battles of the day. This requires not only humility in worship, but in confession before His throne. Next,

give thanks to the Lord for not only saving you (reminding yourself of the Gospel, as Christ died for your sin and bringing salvation to you), but also for the works He has done in other areas. Look for ways to praise and give thanks to Him. For your family, your church, pastor, job, provision of home, Spiritual life, heaven, etc.. You will never exhaust the opportunities to give thanks to the Lord once you start looking at what He has been doing in your life and others. Finally, Supplication. This is where you provide before the Lord names and situations. Just as much Christians should be specific in adoration, confession, and thanksgiving, they should also be specific by name, what is the problem, what you hope the Lord would “will” to do and be at peace with the results the Lord chooses.

- b)** *“pray at all times” (v.18)* - Christians should be constant in prayer so we may be prepared for our spiritual battles. As I write this now I am reminded to pray for a meeting I am about to have in less than an hour. I am praying for reconciliation and that there will be a peaceful resolve in the ministry. I have been praying constantly for wisdom, humility, direction, counsel, the gospel, etc. Because, even though this person sees their struggle as being against flesh and blood (people and the church), it really is spiritual in nature. Thus it can only be handle on the spiritual plain by...
- c)** *Praying in the Spirit (v.18a)* - You, under your own strength can not win the battle of spiritual warfare, but you can participate in that warfare by praying “at all times in the Spirit.” It is when we pray that the Spirit prays for us (Rom. 8.26) and enables us to pray, as He enables us to do everything else. “Praying in the Spirit” involves praying for God’s help along with the Spirit’s desires with the Spirit’s enablement, and by His grace (cf. Rom. 8.26-27; 1 Cor. 12.3; Gal. 4.6; Jude 20).
- d)** *“pray with alertness and perseverance” (v.18)* - Like good soldiers, we should always be on alert and watchful. Christians should pray in such a way as to look out for the interest of other and keep praying for situations with perseverance.
- e)** *Pray for the saints (v.18b)* - Who do we pray for? We are to pray for all the saints. When you look at the prayers of Paul, he speaks of praying for everyone in the church. Some of these were by name, some in general. I know of a man in our congregation who prays for every person in our church by using the church directory. I pray for those by name who are on my ministry list and most times on their birthdays or anniversaries. The point is, pray, pray, pray for the body of Christ, the saints of God.
- f)** *Pray for bold preaching (vv. 19-20)* - Finally, Paul submits his request by writing, *“pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me...to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (v. 19)*. Paul’s request is specific. He is asking for divine appointments by which he may share the gospel, to have a boldness and freedom of speech to make known the gospel, and along with that boldness to “speak as I ought to speak.” Meaning, to be faithful in the preaching of the Good News without hindrance and with clarity.

APPLICATION: Christians need to be strong in the Lord and strong in prayer and to trust in the sovereign hand and power of God's will. The victory has already been one, therefore, as Paul states in Romans "...we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8.37). The problem with disunity in the church is that Christians fight the wrong battle (flesh and blood) instead of the real battle that is spiritual. Trust in the Lord who has already given us victory and stand firm, resist the devil, and submit yourself to the Lord.

II. Be Encouraged and Comfort One Another (6.21-22)

Now we come to the final words of Paul to the church. What hangs over Paul is the anticipation of his defense before Nero. This is why he opted to be sent to Rome rather than be set free by Agrippa (Acts 26.32). Paul had already presented the mystery of the church to his readers, the need for unity and godly conduct in view of their calling, now he shares with them some personal information and to pray God's blessing on them.

- A. *Personal comfort (vv. 21-22)*** - Paul wanted to comfort his readers concerning how he was doing. As he awaits his trial he sends "Tychicus" (lit. chance) this letter to the church in Ephesus to give them further information about Paul with the express desire to comfort and encourage them. Leaders in charge tend to be aloof. They tend to build walls so that those below them do not see their weakness or the hard a trials they face. Paul, wanted his readers to know what he was going through so he may be an example of suffering and to have them pray for him. We draw courage from those who go before us, paving the way so that we may follow them. Part of that encouragement is for his readers to remain steadfast and to stand firm. Do not allow your spiritual battles detour you from the goal and upward call of Christ. Fight the good fight by remaining strong in the Lord and prayer.
- B. *Personal blessing (vv. 23-24)*** - Paul concludes his letter with a benediction of peace, love and faith. Peace was necessary in this benediction because of the Jewish Gentile problems Paul wrote about. Mutual "love" is the key to peace. Mutual "love" rests on common "faith" from God through Christ. The Lord is the ultimate source of these three essential qualities. Without them there is no unity. With them there is fellowship and perfect equality. Finally as Paul opened his letter referring to God's grace, he ends it (1.2). God's "grace" is the key to both the calling of the Christian and the creation of the church. "Grace" is also "essential" to the conduct of the believer. What Paul wishes for in his benediction is for God's unmerited favor of "incorruptible love." This love is void of wrong motives and secret disloyalties. So as God has lavished on his church His marvelous grace, so must we pour out our love to Him in purity.

CONCLUSION: There are a number of key thoughts Christians should employ in their walk from Ephesians:

1. God has richly blessed the church to experience blessing in Christ.
2. God chose for Himself a new community (the church) that is able to honor Him and resist evil.
3. God reconciled and unified Jews and Gentiles into one identity, that being in Christ.

4. God enables the church to be equipped to serve Him, fitted in the building itself up in love.
5. God raised up and seated the members of the church to be heavenly citizens who represent Him here on earth.
6. God fought the battle we could not win ourselves through Christ so that we may stand firm in His spiritual armor and prayer against evil.
7. God desires His church to be persistent in prayer for the body and for the preaching of the gospel.

Obviously, you might come up with other conclusions. But these are ones that can help us focus on who we are as a church and what our role is as heavenly citizens and witnesses in this world.

Do not loose your first love, fight the good fight and maintain the unity of faith in the body of Christ.

Grace and Peace to All in Christ Jesus our Lord.

LESSON SEVEN: “EPHESIANS 6.10-24: “Be Strong in the Lord”**Study Questions****-REVIEW-**

1. In reviewing Ephesians 5, how important is our christian conduct, especially among our relationships? Why?

-REFLECT-

2. Paul commands the church to be strong in the Lord and His might, why? (Eph. 6.10-12)
3. What source has God provided us to stand firm in spiritual warfare? List the pieces of the armor of God and what they are. (Eph. 6.13-17)
4. Besides the armor of God, what other source does the Lord provide so that we might stand firm and resist evil in the church? (Eph. 6.18-20) Using the who, what, when, where, how, and why - answer those questions in regards to prayer in those verses.
5. What was Paul’s reason for sending Tychicus? (Eph. 6.21-22)

-REVEAL-

6. Reviewing the full letter of Ephesians, what would you say you learned most about yourself as a christian, the church, salvation, the world, and the will of God?