

Bowman's Notes--

EPHESIANS

Studies in the Pauline Epistles

“The truth so often left out of current teaching is that Jesus, the Man who lived, died, and was raised from the grave by the Father, is now at the Father's right hand and we (every individual believer) are now irreversibly joined to Him where He is!”

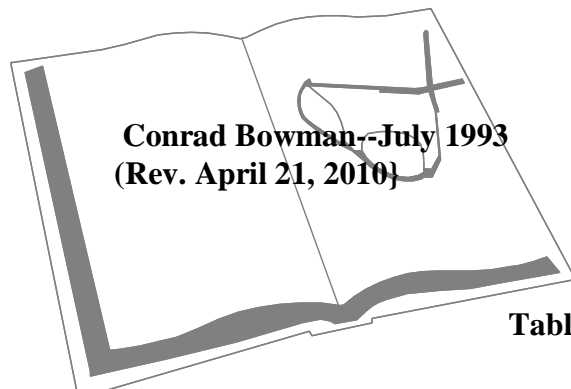


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Preface

Please allow me to take just a few minutes and explain several things before you begin your journey through this book. I claim no grand talent or special understanding regarding the things that are commented on in these pages. Anything that I know, I have learned from others and it is mostly their thoughts, now contaminated by my own understandings, which I attempt to share with you. At 59², I am acutely aware that my life is a composite of impressions, both good and bad, made on me by circumstances to which God in His infinitely complex plan has chosen to subject me. It is clear to me that every event was for my benefit and personal enlightenment and all results, I am certain, will redound to His Glory.

As with other brief commentaries in this series, the outline is based largely upon F. W. Grant's *Numerical Bible*³. In that work, Samuel Rideout and Grant identified a specific order in which information was apparently arranged in the text of each book of the Bible. That divine intention became obvious to them in the course of their studies and since the common sense of it is so simple, the structure they identified has come to be truth to me as well. I am profoundly grateful to God for having brought their work into my path. Their conclusion is that the structure and organization of the Bible is an easily overlooked primary key to our understanding its messages. For example, it really helps us get a grip on the application of Biblical principles specific to the Church, if we concentrate on the Pauline Epistles. These letters of Paul *are our instructions* for living as Grace-Age Believers. The indices, which Grant and Rideout inserted, appear as marginal and outline notes in *The Numerical Bible*, currently available from Loizeaux Brothers Publishers. Those notes can be enormously helpful in your personal Bible studies as they increase your ability to follow the flow of doctrinal information. You want it as it was received by first generation Christians from divinely inspired authors of the letters and accounts now compiled as The Bible.

Please note: **This study is by no means intended as an exercise in numerology.** It is an examination of God's written message to man in light of what many men, F.W. Grant and Samuel Rideout included, found throughout the text of the Bible. They noted a consistent flow (1) in the presentation of principles and (2) in the revelation of God's work in man. Both are too systematic to be coincidental. Every student of scripture is encouraged to consider this observation carefully and in much greater detail than is presented here, by using the fuller treatment given in *The Numerical Bible*. You will find an extensive commentary contained in eight volumes--a rich and rewarding resource and a very cogent exercise in discovering a dispensational interpretation of Scripture.

² November 22, 1993

³ F.W. Grant, *THE NUMERICAL BIBLE*, published by Loizeaux Brothers, copyright 1901 and printed in 1978

EPHESIANS

Introduction:

Ephesus

The clackety-clack of stone masons' hammers ring from every direction. The air is pungent with roasting lamb basted with oil, spices and garlic. Walls as white as alabaster, capped with intricate carvings, tower over the throng that moves with purpose through the marble-paved streets and alleyways. Sounds of music, commerce, and debate drift out of ornate entrances and echo from polished facades. The many languages spoken here meld into a single harmony as they ricochet across stone surfaces polished to a mirror finish. Cooling breezes wash away the day's heat trapped in the massive artistic structures. This is Ephesus--bastion of humanism, focused on the adoration of beauty. The city barely lifts itself out of the sea, splaying across the beach and lowlands on the coast of the Roman province of Asia Minor in what is now Western Turkey. It had been a large and important center of religious activities for the Greeks and continued so under Roman rule. The wondrous temple dedicated to Artemis (Greek), or Diana (Roman), was declared by the ancients to be one of the 7 wonders of the world. Ruins of that site in our times were found standing in stagnant pools surrounded by scraps of stone, fading remnants of fine art, works produced in honor of the goddess Diana. 127 columns, each one dedicated to Diana by a significant political ruler of the period and offered as a lasting masterpiece of the most renowned sculptors, once flanked the main entrance to this palatial structure. Ephesus was a center of culture, philosophy and the arts. The broad, paved, avenue which ran from the center of Ephesus to the harbor, is still identifiable, bordered by the remaining foundation stones of shops and residences. There, as you might imagine, in a place where men celebrated their human accomplishments, the early Christian Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ had a lot of competition for the hearts, minds and souls of men. Immediately, it brings to mind modern San Francisco, Paris, Los Angeles, London, Houston, Manila, Boston, Mexico City, New York, Stockholm, Chicago, Miami, Phoenix, Atlanta, and a thousand other metropolitan centers across the world. Man is consistent in his adoration of men's accomplishments.

In Acts chapter 19, Luke tells us that Paul came to Ephesus (v.1) **"...through the upper coasts"** and searched out **"certain disciples."** His concern for them was whether they had **"...received the Holy Ghost"** (v.3). Paul understood that this all-transforming experience was a defining mark of the newly reborn Christian. It was the common evidence of having been claimed by God as His own, visited first on Israelites at Pentecost (Acts 2), then to Samaritans (Acts 8), and last to Gentiles (Acts 10). This mixed band of Ephesians had accepted the Gospel of repentance as taught by (v.4) John the Baptist. That separated them from Israel, *but it did not define that unto which they were in fact separated.* Learning that the Holy Spirit had not visited them, Paul baptized them (v.5) **"...in the name of the Lord Jesus."** This meant that they were no longer disciples of John looking forward to that One Coming who is "greater" than John, but men, now redeemed, and placed *into* Jesus as Lord. To signify that event, (v.6) Paul **"Laid his hands upon them"** and when this was done, they were infused by **"the Holy Ghost and they began to speak other languages and prophesied."**

This was a very dramatic beginning for the young church in Ephesus and it caused quite a lot of division between people as they wrestled with their individual responses to Paul's Gospel--some believed and some did not. This dispute over the souls of men (v.10) raged for over two years. During that time, Paul's reputation as an evangelist and spread of the name of Jesus Christ touched virtually all who lived in or passed through Ephesus and the surrounding province of Asia Minor. As a result, many who had paid homage to the Gods and Goddesses of the temples by dedication of works of gold and silver (Acts 19:24-29), were converted into believers and abandoned those previous practices. This cut off a serious source of revenue for the (v.24-28) silversmiths and craftsmen associated with the temple of Diana.

One outspoken craftsman, Demetrius, gathered others around him and incited them to seize those who were obvious leaders of the Christians. They caught Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonian traveling companions of Paul, and (v.29) took them captive into the theater. It was only through intervention by the town clerk (v.35) that the mob was prevented from seriously harming those two Christians. The crowd was angry and offended that any inhabitant of Ephesus would not acknowledge and worship their goddess Diana. Ephesus was a beautiful city, trendy and growing in influence, but it was not benign in its attitude towards those who professed Christianity. For believers, it was a very openly hostile place to worship and witness.

The Apostle Paul's Letter

As you gain an understanding of this letter and the principles the Apostle is teaching, you will clearly see the grand and essential difference between Christians and unbelievers. Christians are *united with God*; they have a "*position*" in Him. Unbelievers are limited to their earthly existence with no claim on either eternity or a relationship to God.

Paul's letter to the company of believers in Ephesus was written about 62 A.D. during his first Roman imprisonment.⁴ The letter centers on the doctrine of *Positional Truth*. In it, Paul answers several questions regarding our heavenly citizenship and the assets that are ours as joint-heirs with Jesus of all that the Father has laid in store for His Son. Those new believers in Ephesus needed to hear and understand this truth and they desperately needed assurance of their relationship to God in Christ because they were under constant duress.

Positional Truth, as a doctrinal principle, is the definition of all that the Christian has now obtained because of *where he/she stands before God*

Positional Truth, the Central Doctrine, the Grand Difference

Positional Truth, as a doctrinal principle, is the definition of all that the Christian has now

⁴ Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were also written at this time.

obtained because of *where he/she stands before God*. Is the believer royalty or commoner, forgiven or condemned, rich or impoverished? Are we working to achieve something of value to give God, or are we depending on Him for everything, time, energy, assets, that we spend? Well, some of the answers to these questions may help in your own daily walk--

Every true believer is solidly planted by the Holy Spirit on the ground of grace and is, as a result, at peace with God.--cb

Every true believer is solidly planted on the ground of grace and is, as a result, *at peace* with God. Many things are packaged with that condition of “peace”--We are “*accepted*” by the Father--We are “*heirs*” of His Kingdom--“*Trophies*” of His Grace--“*Objects*” of His affection--“*Sons of God*”--Members of the “*Body of Christ*.” These assets and everything that comes with them have become our inheritance because we are in Christ. We have been

joined to Him forever and now own what He owns. Try as I might, I cannot even begin to appreciate the full implication of what that really means.

Several Brethren authors said it this way:

“There is no question about there being a beautiful new position for the believer, but people limit it to its being theirs when they die. Scripture shows that it is ours *now*! (But now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ--Eph 2:13). They say, ‘you get heaven when you die.’ No such thing. You are there *now*. It is not *your* death that entitles you to it, but the Lord Jesus' death. There is not a single shade that was between the Father, and us but the Lord Jesus has removed in His death. No person can be truly happy until he knows that he has a new place now, and this is where the Lord Jesus is.”

“Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God”--Col. 3:2-3--J. B. Stoney

“Here both Jew and Gentile lose their places, as such, and are brought into one body, and united by the Holy Ghost to each other and to Christ, the Head, a Man glorified.

Now this body **is in the world, as is the Holy Ghost, whose presence constitutes it**. It is **not** in heaven. The Head is in heaven, and the members have **a heavenly position in union with Him**; in **fact**, they are in the world. This body has been passing along through the world; its unity maintained as perfectly as the day in which the presence of the Holy Ghost first constituted it. Nothing has ever marred its unity.”

--F. G. Patterson

“If you look at Christ, dying on the cross for your sins, you will get relief for your

conscience in the knowledge that those sins are put away forever. But if you look at the cross, and see Christ dying for *you*, and see that you died with Christ, you will learn that you have a new life, and a new place, a new standing before God altogether. As the Apostle says,

'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2).

It is an immense thing to see this new standing. As a sinner I was in Adam, and a partaker of death and judgment, but, by grace, I am now in Christ, where Christ now is, before God." --W. T. P. Wolston

"We know all our sins were paid for by Him; all the punishment we deserved fell upon Him, our substitute. In Him we died. All this happened when we were not in existence at all. The sins He bore were not yet committed. God knew all about us and all about our sins and shame, the punishment we deserved, and His ever-blessed Son took all that upon Himself. In the same sense God has quickened us with Christ, raised us up and seated us in Him, when He did this for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. This is simple, yet so wonderful and deep, that it is incomprehensible. It was all done for us, who believe, when it was done for Him. God in His marvelous counsels in redemption has associated us with Christ. He has made all who believe on Him sharers of His life and nature; He brings them into the same relationship as sons, and finally into the same Glory and inheritance."—Arno C. Gaebelein

DIVISION ONE-Chapter 1:1-14

God's Purpose in Christ

“...All of time, space and history have been created and are centered on a central purpose--to draw out from among man, the crown of God's creation, a specific group of people to be joined to God through marriage to His Son.”

DIVISION ONE-Chapter 1:1-14

God's Purpose in Christ

Christ is the Source of All Blessings to Us
and
the Head of All Things

Introduction to Division One:

Here are several somewhat obscure truths that are presented in this letter of the Apostle Paul.

Authority within the Trinity

ONE
Sole-ness, uniqueness,
unity, singularity, peace,
source, at-oneness,
beginning. or cause.

Have you ever wondered how authority is administered between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? It is very interesting to me that Paul repeatedly consigns to God the Father the position of original and supreme will to which every thing in heaven and earth is made subservient. Though co-equal in being, attributes and power, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit submit their own wills to the will of the Father. Remember Christ's prayer in the Garden? "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Never-the-less, not My will, but Thine be done." (Matt 26:39) It does not individually diminish either Son or Spirit to do this. We can learn from this that the strong may often submit their own power to others and do so without demeaning or diminishing their own personal sphere of influence. It is a grand truth that power held in check is just as strong as power unleashed or exercised. It is just sometimes harder to see.

The identification of the Church

The second truth is the fulcrum on which the entire letter turns. It is that--

*all of time, space and history have been created
and are centered on a central purpose—
to draw out from among man, the crown of God's creation,
a specific Body of people to be joined to God
through marriage to His Son.*

That Body is to be *solely dedicated* to His praise and His glory forever. Its selection and preparation is the pivot on which all understanding of time turns. It is the outworking of the election of God, which He made *prior* to creation having occurred. Think of it! All of time and creation waits and watches for the Father to secure you to His only Son! Your place and acceptability as one of those individuals who make up that body is secured and provided solely through the work of the Son.

To become one with Him, you must come to know Him intimately. The means by which you and others who are in that Body come to know God, and thus enter into relationship with Him in Christ, is the revelation of Him by the Holy Spirit.

Section One - 1:1-6

Our predestination as sons of the Father

Introduction to Section One

In these next six verses, you may expect to see two primary things emphasized--First is every believer's union with God, including the Apostle Paul. Second is the singleness^{5*} of his and every believer's calling. Paul makes no little thing of the fact that God, unilaterally, * called him to Himself and appointed him to his task of service. He then goes on to show how each believer is drawn into that same unity* with the Father and that the Father is the sole* source of position for each person.

As an apostle, he is unique.* As to his commission, it was imposed in accordance with the will of God the Father. As to his audience--he was sent *to the Gentile masses*. Paul was not sent to the house of Israel, as was Peter, James, and the other apostles. He was sent to the Gentiles by divine appointment. In the same manner, we did not set ourselves apart unto God; He set us apart unto Himself. We, like Paul, were conscripted into His service and set to our own particular* tasks of representing Him to a lost and dying world. In short,

*we were and are elected to a specific destiny--
life in the Son for eternity.*

It is *from that destiny* that we derive our goals, objectives and meaning for life. Question: Do your written goals for family, mental, physical, business, social and spiritual development rest securely on the foundation of your destiny as a believer?

Since we are destined to be the Bride of the Son and spend eternity in union with Him, our life here should reflect that privileged position and all that we are becoming by His grace.

God's work in election

(1:1) An “**apostle**” is one with authority and a commission--One who operates and lives within the protection and directives of the one who sent him out. It is in this very sense that Paul declares himself to be “**an apostle of Christ Jesus**” with singleness of purpose. He belongs totally and solely to his Lord. In order that we not mistake his commission, he plainly states that he was conscripted into service “**by the will of God.**” You will recall that on the road to Damascus, Paul was struck down by the brilliant presence of the ascended Jesus.⁶ There he was

^{5*} Note that the asterisk marks terms that are associated with the number 1.

⁶ Acts 9:3

confronted with the gospel of His saving work and he was drawn directly into serving Him.⁷

“Saints” (*hagios*--ones set apart to a particular purpose) are those in Ephesus who are believers. The same Greek root word is translated, “saint,” “sanctify,” and “holy” and consistently means to be “set apart.” This refers to their *position*. These same recipients of the letter are also called **“the faithful in Christ Jesus.”** **“Faithful”** (*pistos*, lit. one in whom you might have full confidence of fidelity) refers to their *condition* or experience. Does this mean that those who are ‘full of faith’ never doubt? No. They are people just like us who have their own moments of soul-searching. Thankfully, they are not held to God by their own strength, but by His.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Ephesians 1:1

(1:2) **“Grace and peace”** are always found joined when reference is made to the believer and to the riches provided him/her *through union* with Jesus Christ. **“Grace,”** *charis*, is defined by Archbishop Trenchard thus; “It is hardly too much to say that the Greek mind has in no word uttered itself and all that was at its heart than in this.” He was speaking of the way that *charis* was used in the language of pagan Greece. Wuest says this; “In the ethical terminology of the Greek schools *charis* implied ever a favor freely done, without claim or expectation of return.” It is in this very sense of the word that the Father acted in our favor before the foundation of the world, prior to the act of creation that brought all we know and can experience into being in one explosive event. The most essential element of this verse is the declaration that everything we have comes to us directly from **“God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”** as part of and coincidental with that creative act. Watch this carefully now--The role of Christ as Savior is widely advertised in most Christian churches today. His adoration is almost universal in both evangelical and liturgical bodies that claim to be Christian. But, it is also sadly the case that the position and role of God the Father is; (1) ignored by the Clergy, (2) often forgotten, and (3) mainly overlooked by many believers. It is not a matter of intentional omission, but simply one of neglect and lack of emphasis from the pulpit. Many bible teachers and a large percentage of church leadership simply omit focus on the Father out of habit. Is this a serious problem? Unfortunately, it is. This is a very dangerous course and leads to the continued weakening of the Church, as we will see.

I believe that this process is started whenever certain trends of thought begin to grow in the collective mind of any group of believers or in its leadership. It often begins with attempts to make Jesus “more relevant” to those being taught. Then we realize that it is difficult to describe a relationship that exists as spiritual rather than physical. Now we know that God is spirit, and must be worshiped in spirit and truth; but it surely is easier to describe our relationship to God in terms of *human* attributes. This appears to be sound reasoning--After all, wasn't Jesus, who is the Son of God, fully human as well as undiminished deity? Let's look at some of the results of following this path . . .

⁷ Acts 9:15

It is with the very best of intentions that we subtly indoctrinate our children in these erroneous concepts by only describing God in terms of *human attributes* and do it at the earliest ages by means that include;

- (1) The songs we teach them--("What a *friend* we have in Jesus").
- (2) The images of the man Jesus--*a kind-faced Jewish prophet*, as the object of their prayers.
- (3) Baby Jesus in the manger--*A sweet, innocent baby* worthy of being adored.

"So, what is so wrong with that?" you ask. The resulting idea that children who are fed these

ACTION ITEM: Teach your children to pray to our "Heavenly Father." Let them know that Jesus the man was God, because He was the Son of the Father. Establish the parenting concept that forms the basis for surrendering our will to a loving and benevolent father. Demonstrate that concept by your own attitudes towards parents and grandparents.

images visualize, is of God as man, reducing God and His Son to the role of super-men. This is not the scripturally defined persona of either the First or the Second Person of the Trinity. When awe of Christ-as-God is lost, the reality of absolute values associated with His attributes as the Son of God is thoroughly done away with. Jesus was not simply a better man. He was God come in flesh and identified *as perfect man*. However, as a man, He was *never not-God*--fully God. Every biblical record of His confrontation of demonic entities shows that they clearly recognized Him as the Son of God and reigning deity. Do we indeed rush in where angels fear to tread? Our choices for Sunday School fare and public worship suggest that we often do.

Our sanctuary from this kind of debilitating imagery is a clear and continuing adoration of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in ways that our children can see and understand. When we have clearly before our mind's eye the spiritual and scriptural presence of the Father as the sole object of our prayers and petitions, then the concept of Jesus the Man *as God* remains real to us. Our children can then relate to Him in the same manner. This is the view offered by the Apostle Paul as he brings our focus repeatedly to rest on the Father. When we do not have a clear understanding of the supreme position of the Father, then we lose spiritual sight of the very Person to whom Jesus Christ surrendered His own will. Once Jesus is separated from His Father, the mind is free to redefine Him into a Superman-a Jesus that can be manipulated. The charismatic church is exploding in growth based on precisely this kind of concept of Jesus.

Whenever I return to my hometown, Pascagoula Mississippi, and meet someone new, or someone I haven't seen in a number of years, they will usually ask if I have family there. When I mention my dad's name, I gain immediate recognition as belonging to the community--I am Mac Bowman's oldest son. People who know him will immediately come to conclusions about me, based solely on their relationship to him. That is exactly as it should be! After all, I bear his name. As "Sons of God," heirs to the kingdom, and "Christians," we bear the name of the Almighty and are

intimately identified with Him and all that He is!

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

It is appropriate that in this first Division of the letter we look at the Trinity as a whole and at work in their three distinct areas of authority vis-à-vis man. In this division of the epistle, Paul presents the Trinity in their individual roles regarding the salvation of the believer and the doctrine of Positional Truth. God the Father is the Planner; God the Son is the Executor of the Father's plan; and God the Holy Spirit is the Revealer of that plan and of the work of the Son. Remember, One God defined by eternal attributes seen in Three Divine Persons. There is no hint of subordination, but an order by which all of the work of salvation proceeds from God to us.

The Father, the Source of Our Blessings

(1:3) To reinforce this focus, Paul points to God the Father as the source of every Christian blessing. **“Praise”** is also to be directed to the Father. Further, these blessings are not earthly assets, but heavenly. They are deposited for us **“in Christ,”** which is to say that He holds every asset available to us where He is at the right hand of His Father. That does not mean that we are without resources here, but that our resources, strengths, means, and authority, are all sourced from our position in-Christ at the right hand of the Father. What joy this brings Paul. The words **“has blessed”** indicate action that has already taken place. The Father is not simply waiting until He deems us worthy of His blessing, He has already blessed us! Why would He do that? It is because we are *in union* with the Lamb who was worthy to be slain for us. It is in His righteousness that we stand before the Father and have always stood before the Father from before the foundation of the world. Do you doubt that for even a moment? Let the next verse wash over your soul--

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenlies with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

(1:4) **“For He chose us...”** (Thank you Father for not leaving it up to me) identifies the Father as the One who made the choice to claim us individually as His own. The middle voice verb says that the Father chose us for Himself. **“...in Him...”** refers back to the previous verse **“in Christ,”** and identifies Christ as the One in whom we are placed. We are now located, or found to be, “in Christ,” joined completely and irreversibly to Him, just as a bride is irrevocably joined to her husband and he to her. Divorce, you see, does not represent what is actually true.

All of this preparation is for the particular benefit of the Bride of the Son of God and occurred historically prior to the point of the **“foundation⁸ of the world.”** In considering the sequence of events, it must be recognized that because God is *eternal* in His being, there is no single point of

⁸ "Foundation" is *katabole* and means "a throwing or laying down."

beginning for Him as there is for that which He creates. As far as we are concerned, creation was simply the initiation, the starting point, of the continuum of time as we know it.⁹ Prior to that ‘event,’ we were “chosen” by God to occupy a special position in His plan based solely upon the counsel of His own will.

The result is that we are to be **“holy.”** “Holy” is a translation of *‘hagios’* (see verse one) and means to be set apart to a purpose. We have been selected out of all creation and set apart in this Age (dispensation) for the specific purpose of being the recipients of God's blessing and a source of His praise as the Bride of Christ. There are three types of “set-apart-ness” or sanctification with which we should be familiar as Christians:

- (1) Positional Sanctification - We are joined to Christ and share Christ's being set-apart as the perfect sacrifice for sin. This occurs the very moment we believe and is declared to be so from “before the creation of the world.”
- (2) Experiential Sanctification - We are living in light of our having been joined to Christ. The means by which that is accomplished is to reckon (declare) ourselves “to be dead to Sin,” to live in freedom from condemnation and under the grace of God's provision to His Son.
- (3) Ultimate Sanctification - To be in a glorified, resurrection body. This will occur when we are transported to the Rapture where the Bride (the Church) will be claimed by the Groom as His own for all eternity.

We are also to be **“blameless.”** There is nothing that can be held to our account. Nothing remains to be paid as a penalty for wrongdoing on our part. This does not concern simply the affairs of life among men, but the relationship between man and God. When the Father looks at us, He sees only His Son for we are entirely clothed in His righteousness. And, we must remember that this all was so **“before the foundation of the world,”** which means that He has *always* seen us this way. Even when you were in your most rebellious, rotten, spoiled, pitiful state, the Father still saw you clothed in the righteousness of Christ and therefore worth claiming as His own! We are supposed to learn to forgive ourselves and others this very same way—declare them worth saving and treat them as having already been saved. What a difference it would make in our relationships! We cannot live in a world for which Christ died and treat it, or anything or anyone in it, as boring, a burden, an obstacle to a better life, an impediment to our success, or something to be ignored. That's a mark of spiritual shallowness on our part. Every detail of this life should peak our interest and demand our focus, whether it is Ruby Falls, the grandeur of the Grand Canyon, the limitless expanse of the universe spread nightly over us, the sight of a baby reaching for a spoon, a child dealing with the effects of chemo, or the bright eyes of a teenager who discovers the love of the Lord Jesus and throws himself/herself into worship

⁹ Heb 11: 3 "By faith we understand that the ages were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which are apparent."

without reservations.

For he chose us in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Ephesians 1:4

The Omniscience and Omnipresence of God

(1:5) In order to understand the concepts of the next verse, it is necessary that we consider the nature of God and His attributes. **“Predestined”** is a word that usually requires us to think of time and events in a linear matrix. If we limit our definition to our experience, ‘predestine’ suggests that an event, yet future, is fixed in its details and cannot change. In that model it is impossible for anyone within the event to exercise choice or free will, because all outcomes are determined before their times arrive. We must achieve a richer understanding.

Omniscience

It is very hard for any of us to conceive of knowing everything (and at the same time, to act as if it were the case). One of the main reasons why this is so very difficult a concept for us to grasp is that there are so many new things that we learn every day. We have also come to expect that this process will continue for at least as long as we live. If you think about it, you know that each of us will start some project that simply will not be completed in our lifetime. There are places unvisited, letters unwritten, houses partially remodeled, gardens half-planted, degrees not yet attained, missions unfulfilled, good relationships unpursued and bad relationships not broken off. At worst, it is our passion for procrastination as our excuse for bad planning. At best, we leave that unfinished work-in-process for our successors to complete, with the firm conviction that it will add to *their* knowledge and understanding beyond any studied level that we achieved during our own lifetime. Trees are planted that our grandchildren will enjoy; research is begun that will take several generations for professionals to analyze and then to learn how to apply their ideas for the benefit of others who will follow them. In the age of the computer and realm of the Internet, we have grown accustomed to the proposition that whatever we know today is soon going to be, if it is not already, obsolete information.

“For the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow, and is the perfect critic of the thoughts and intentions of the heart (mind).” Hebrews 4:12

To wrap ones mind around the fact of “all-knowing” is to accept that all events have occurred, all days have come to an end, all life as we know it has ceased to be, and that the universe in which we live has ground to a stop in every sense of further development that we can express. To be at such a vantage point in the history of our world would certainly require one possessing properties and

attributes beyond anything measurable within the realm of human experience. Yet Scripture, that amazing record of Judean-Christian development, declares that God is “all-knowing.” There is no thing that He, the creator, does not know of fact, event, thought, or intention of heart. This is

stunning! How can we possibly comprehend this extraordinary statement that “He knows all, past, present, and future?”

*This vastness of His knowledge of all creation
rests in large part on His presence in all of creation.*

It is not simply that God “knows” what will happen in the future. It is rather that with God there is no such thing as the future. There is only time, the single event, which stretches from the instant of creation to the ultimate, final nanosecond of dissolution. His eternal nature means that all of earth-history is before Him in one single act of creation. Each decision and responsibility delegated to the crown of His creation, man, is accommodated and worked out through His sovereign will.

God does not simply **know what will happen**, based upon His divine foreknowledge of the future. Rather, there **is no future** separated from the present with God. All is one and the same-- What we view as **Past, Present, and Future** are just one single **event!** While we are seeing it unfold, as a map of time and history might be unfolded and displayed for us to examine, God is viewing the whole of time as an accomplished fact. One fact! He does not stand at any given place and view it as all past, all future or even all present--He stands outside of it all and views it as one event.

How is this possible? Stephen W. Hawking stated:

“Both Aristotle and Newton believed in absolute time. That is, they believed that one could unambiguously measure the interval of time between two events, and that this time would be the same whoever measured it, provided they used a good clock. Time was completely separate from, and independent of, space. This is what most people would take to be the common sense view.”

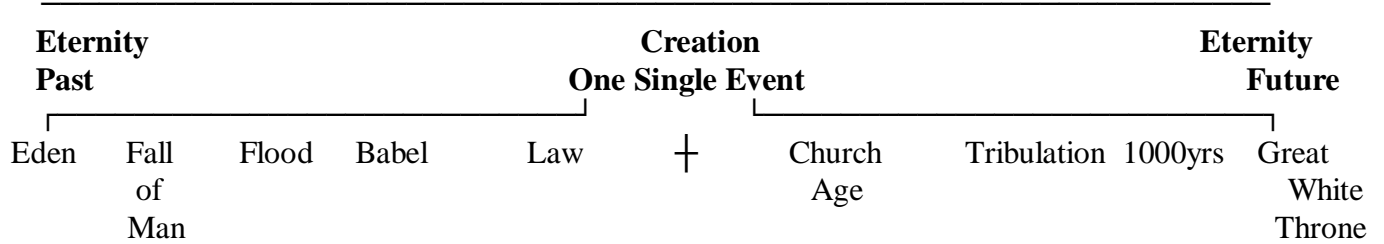
Most Christians today would certainly fall within that category of thinkers. Time is a linear action of events and space defines the place where events occur. Hawking continues...

“However, we have had to change our ideas about space and time. Although our apparently common sense notions work well when dealing with things like apples, or planets that travel comparatively slowly, they don't work at all for things moving at or near the speed of light.”

Speed of light? “And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God *is* light, and in Him there is no darkness at all,” (John 1:5). Scripture tells us clearly, and beyond any hope of John, the writer, having any physiological understanding of the depth of truth he was espousing, that God is the essence of that which defines time and space in this cosmos.

This is very, very hard for us to envision. The following chart may help to make it a bit clearer.

GOD



Omnipresence

The Nature of Omnipresence--

Omnipresence is a big word. It is an even bigger concept. Think about this--it means more than simply being in all places. It must include the idea of being in all places **at all times**. Try to visualize it this way--We hold within our brain cells, the memory of places we have been. Those memories are always associated with the times we came to know or experience them. We have been privileged to visit some very interesting places--New

Orleans at Mardi Gras, San Francisco during the rainy season, Tahoe in the snow, Miami in July, Atlanta in the Spring, New York in a winter storm. Each of these places is remembered within the context of conditions that prevailed when we were there. But, each of these places has an ongoing experience apart from our own time there. They are not always in the same condition in which we experienced them. However, to us those places are always viewed in light of our memory of them. Or, to put it another way; those places are always stored in our memory of the light of them. It's the light that makes up our perception of reality and experience.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God, "Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty"..."Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Revelation 1:8, 17, 18

When we consider the concept of Omnipresence, the idea of time necessarily comes in with it and comes in a manner totally foreign to any capacity we might have to experience it. Can you imagine going to sleep and waking up yesterday? Can you imagine seeing something that is going to happen and being able to step through a door into the past with enough time to prepare for or prevent that event?

For one to become omnipresent, time would have to cease to be a restraining concept. Time would be compressed into one event, linear action becoming completely irrelevant. So it is with light. So it is with God. Linear action is only relevant to those captured within the sphere of time, space and history. So it is with Man! No wonder God's ways are not our ways.

The Scope of Omnipresence--

The very nature of Omnipresence establishes “foreknowledge.” God “knows” the events we have yet *ahead of us* because they are *in His present*. He is right now precisely where they are occurring. Furthermore, He is also at the very moment of creation, declaring every single happening to be consonant with His eternal and divine will. Does that mean that God just “goes along with” each decision made by man? No, for the nature of fallen man is to oppose truth and reject righteousness. God does intervene in the affairs of man and in man's decisions according to the dictates of His own Sovereign Will. He does this in order to infuse this created world with displays of His absolute values and perfect character, and He has chosen man as the vessel through which to do that.

Free Will, the “Right” to Choose

God has given limited freedom of choice to man. You may choose to be offended that He did not leave it all up to you. Or, you may choose to be delighted. Personally, I am delighted. I think that most of our choices revolve around obedience to the truth as God reveals it to us individually. Sometimes though, He reveals truth to all mankind for a specific purpose. He does so in order that **every man might be judged by his own response**. With freedom, comes responsibility! We say it to our teenaged children. I often wonder if we really understand that the principle does not change with age or station in life.

It is also in the realm of common human experience that we will encounter God's truth repeatedly during our lifetime. When we do, we are then held accountable for our responses to Him, just like the servants given the talents while the Master of the house was on a journey.¹⁰ A principle emerges from this that states:

“with KNOWLEDGE, comes RESPONSIBILITY”

¹⁰

Matt 25: 14

As the Apostle points out, it is the love of God that is the source of all that is in store for those who are among the elect. From His loving choice, we are **“adopted”** (placed as adult sons) and given the civil status¹¹ of Sons of the Father.

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--Ephesians 1:5

(1:6) **“Grace”** speaks of God's provision for us in time as well as in eternity. We are not left to struggle here on the basis of our own human ingenuity or physical resources. Neither does He leave us at the mercy of our own mental abilities, skills or lack of talent. He empowers us for life with an infusion by the Holy Spirit of the life of the Son. It is His life, which we now live in anticipation of His coming to claim His Bride. That provision includes the means by which we live moment-to-moment and the means by which we will occupy ourselves for all eternity. Our adoption into His family, by being joined to His Son, is for the express purpose of displaying **“praise,”** honor rightfully demonstrated, **“of His glorious¹² grace.”** In other words, we are to be trophies before all the heavenly host of angelic beings, of His loving provision for His creation, elected to that position **“freely.”** There is no cost exacted from us, all having been made available to **“the One He loves,”** the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we rest. Apart from Christ, we are but animal creation. In Christ, we are lifted out from among mankind and set apart in that special realm of humanity in union to deity. To the unregenerate mind, this is the ultimate presumption. To the regenerate spirit in redeemed man, this is ultimate grace.

to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. Ephesians 1:6

Section Two - 1:7-12

Redeemed and brought into fellowship with Him

Introduction to Section Two

TWO

Help, support, confirmation, addition, increase, growth, strengthening, fellowship, contrast, diversity, separation, differentiation

¹¹ Wuest, Word Studies, p. 36

¹² **“Glory”** is Grace on display. **“Praise”** is our recognition of both Glory and Grace and our attention to them.

This second section of the first division of the letter brings us to the issue of our being brought into relationship with God the Father. What does it mean to become really intimate with God? This can be scary if you don't have some kind of instructions as to how it might affect your life. Well, relax. Not only is all of the plan and work done by Him, but also we are made the incidental heirs of every single thing that He (the Father) provides for His Son, ("in Christ").¹³ Our security as the bride of His Son and our growth as the Body of Christ begin right here with the union of each redeemed person to the Father, in the Son. First, His work is redeeming us from our lost condition and providing all that we need "in time," just as He provided for His Son, the Lord Jesus. Then, Paul tells us of the administration of God's will at the end of time, and of our place in His eternal plan to follow.

Assets of the Believer

(1:7, 8) **"Redemption"** means "reclaimed at a price." In the richer and fuller sense of use, it refers to a property once owned, then lost, and now discovered in the market for sale and "repurchased" to become again the property of the original owner.

Every child is born into the world in innocence and is the property of God the Father, the giver of life. At some point, that small person will reach an age and stage of development that enables him/her to exercise the freedom of will that is granted to all mankind by the Father. At that point, they may choose to reject God and His claim on their life. That man, woman, or

child will then become lost to God by the rejection of His offer to claim them as His own on the basis of the sacrifice of His own Son. When His presence and provision are rejected and any other reason for living is grasped, that person is then bound into enslavement to Sin and their inner nature of rebellion is unleashed. Finding oneself in the Slave Market of Sin, he/she eventually must come to consider (even though they may not at all understand) that there is but one way out, through Christ the "door."¹⁴

When Christ died, His blood paid the price for the Sin of the whole world. No one is condemned to eternity in hell as a result of Sin, for that has been removed judicially. One is lost based on their own rejection of the price paid on their behalf.

"His blood" is the price paid for our redemption and **"the forgiveness of sins"** the result of our having been redeemed. Because He made that payment on our behalf, without requirement to do so on His part, the redemptive act was entirely **"of God's grace...lavished on us"** without measure and with clear **"understanding"** of our utter

"We will never be able to understand Scripture till we see sharply and clearly the distinction between Israel, the chosen earthly nation, and the Church, the Body of Christ. Paul is the apostle of the latter. And, as such, he is the apostle of a totally new thing." Wm R. Newell

¹³ Rom. 8: 32. He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

¹⁴ John 10: 7, 9

lostness. **“Wisdom”** is information about God and His character accumulated in practical terms, facts. Examples include: His power, unmatched by any force known to man or angel. His authority, unequaled by any created being, earthly or spiritual. He has given us an abundance of such information regarding who He is through direct revelation to the prophets, apostles and disciples. Paul tells the believers in Rome that God also revealed Himself through the natural world (Romans chapter 1). **“Wisdom”** includes the expression of our reasonable expectations based on what we know of God. **“Understanding,”** is knowledge gained through experience and testing of what we have learned. He orders our pathway in such a manner that our experience gives us opportunities by which to "prove" that the revelations are true and valid. What He did for us and is doing in us we could in no way do for ourselves. **“Understanding”** also includes our conclusions based on the application of our personal assumptions (expectations) to our experience.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. Ephesians 1:7, 8

(1:9-10) Paul is using the plural here (**“He made known to us”**), in order that we might all personally identify with what he is saying. It is specifically true, however, that Paul was *the individual* to whom God revealed his intentions for that entire special company of men and women placed into union with His Son, Jesus Christ, which is called “the Church.” Having redeemed us (the Church), the Father now, through the work of the Revealer, the Holy Spirit,

“It is in Acts 9:20 that the Lord Jesus is first proclaimed, by Paul, as the Son of God—and this is a distinct advance of truth concerning Him. Paul already stood in clearer light regarding the risen and glorified Lord than did the other apostles, for they had known Him primarily, in humiliation, as they were His messengers to Israel, of whom is Christ ‘as concerning the flesh’ (Roma. 9:5). But Paul’s first vision of the Lord Jesus was as the Glorified One, the son of god, in resurrection glory.”

–Wm. R. Newell

brings us into knowledge of truths heretofore hidden from men, including even Israel under the Law.

“Oikonomian” is translated “dispensation,” “stewardship,” or “administration,” by different scholars. The definition fits the common ideas of all of these. A dispensation is a period of human history from God's point of view. It involves a circumstance that exists on Earth and which involves the way in which man is related to God and the means by which God reveals Himself to man. In the Old Testament, this was mainly through the Mosaic Law given to Israel. The illustrations of God and His attributes were displayed in Tabernacle and Temple ceremonies and rites for all of Israel to see and understand. In the period from Pentecost until the Rapture of the Church, His revelation is through His Word¹⁵, which

reveals the Lord Jesus Christ under the direct ministry of the Holy Spirit. After the Church is taken out of the world, and Israel is brought under God's judgment and care, a period of personal

¹⁵ 2 Peter 1:19-21

reign by Jesus Christ for 1,000 years (the Millennium)¹⁶ will ensue. That is the “dispensation of the fullness of times,” the final period of earthly history involving man. After that time, earth and heaven will be removed and replaced with a new heaven and earth¹⁷ for all eternity.

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, for a stewardship of the fullness of the times--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. Ephesians 1:9-10

Scriptural predestination

Is every step that we take chosen beforehand for each of us by God? Can we actually make a difference in our life's circumstances by the choices we make? Does God give us the freedom to reject Him and His interventions into our lives? If He “knows before it happens,” then how could we possibly affect the things that are in our future by our own acts of will?

(1:11) “**We were also chosen,**” gives us confidence that our redemption is directly an outworking of the will (“**predestined**”) of the Father and “**according to**” His plan. This is a plan that has been in place since before the world was created. “**In Him**” identifies the sphere of our having been chosen by the Father. In eternity past, the Father chose the Son as the perfect and complete redeemer for all of mankind. In choosing the Son, He also chose all who would be joined to the Son. Therefore, we are “**predestined**” to our adoption as “Sons of God” by means of our union with Jesus Christ. Predestination is not the driving force of our will to accept the Lord Jesus as our personal redeemer.

*We were not forced to come to the Lord Jesus;
we were enticed by the Holy Spirit.*

The Church of Jesus Christ is not God's fallback position because things didn't go so good with Israel; oh no; this was His purpose and will from before the foundation of the world. --cb

The Father did not win us through coercion, but through loving compassion. Predestination is the driving force of the Father's will to install His own Son as the Supreme Ruler over all creation. Scriptural predestination is centered in the Father's provision *for His Son* including the election of His Bride and Her union with

the Son. In that union, the Church becomes “one with” God! As the Son is One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, so too is the Church One with God the Father, God the Son and God the

¹⁶ Rev. 20: 1-7

¹⁷ Rev. 21: 1

Holy Spirit. Christ alluded to this in His high priestly prayer (John 17), but now it is a reality for those “in union with” His Son. **“According to”** establishes the norm or standard...the standard for our election (predestination) is the **“plan of Him (the Father) who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.”** This is an absolutely stunning revelation—that our personal, individual election as Sons of God finds its source in the **“will”** and **“purpose”** of the Father. The Church of Jesus Christ is not God’s fallback position because things didn’t go so good with Israel; oh no; this was His purpose and will from before the foundation of the world. History ground its way across the ages to this very day and stopped right at your feet. God is inviting you to do a very seriously considered gut-check and then give Him a report on how He is doing!

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, Ephesians 1:11

(1:12) **“In order that,”** introduces a purpose clause; the purpose of our having been redeemed was that **“we...might be for the praise of His glory.”** We were not saved because of some intrinsic or implied quality of goodness on our part, but on the basis of His elective choice. He declared us individually to be the object of His love and grace. **“...to hope in Christ”** marks that moment in time when those who came to know the resurrected Christ turned from their despair and from their sins and placed their trust in the Lord Jesus. Right then, they were redeemed, accepting Him as the single solution to Sin. The Father had made provision for every single decision before the foundation of the world, in that timeless eternity past. He chose the Son and all who are in the Son, out from time and into a position that brings **“praise”** to Him forever.

in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:12

Section 3 - 1:13, 14

The work of the Holy Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance

Introduction to section three:

With the three persons of the Godhead before us, you can see fullness and completion. Under the numeral one (1), you have the work of the Father as Planner of the salvation of man. Under the numeral

two (2), you have the work of the Son in executing that plan and securing the redemption of man.

Under the numeral three (3), you see the Holy Spirit in His role of revelation of that plan to man, the object of salvation. This also signals the completion of the work of God for Man. The plan of salvation and the work of each member of the Trinity are evident with the giving of the Holy Spirit, the down payment of God's assets deposited for His own.

<p style="text-align: center;">THREE</p> <p>Fulfillment, fullness, Set-apart, holiness, possession, sanctuary, solidity and reality</p>

There are many aspects to the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. Two of those are to be looked at here; One, the “sealing” ministry of the Holy Spirit as the guarantor of our eternal security in Christ, and Two, the role of the Holy Spirit as the “earnest,” or down payment, on our inheritance.

It is by means of the Holy Spirit that the believer is placed into union with Christ. This is the location into which we are “sealed” by the Holy Spirit. Once having been placed “into Christ” by an act of God the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for any lesser power to undue such seal.

The “sealing” ministry of the Holy Spirit

(1:13) Many believers are afraid of losing their salvation because they discover sin in their life as they grow in their Christian experience. A lot of them do not understand that they are held secure “in Christ.” They are “**sealed**” (aorist-once for all) to Him by the action of the Holy Spirit. That work is not in response to merit on their part, nor can it be shaken or annulled by any particular act, which they might confess or commit. The Holy Spirit works at the behest of, and according to, the will of the Father. Since there was nothing we “did” in order to earn our election by the Father, it follows that there is nothing we can “do” to disallow His election or reverse the sealing work of the Holy Spirit.

The content of the promise is a display of God's love for us. It is expressed in love as He claimed us as His own and in love as Christ gave Himself for our redemption, and now in love as the Holy Spirit daily reveals that plan of redemption to us.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Ephesians 1:13

(1:14) It is the Holy Spirit **“who is the earnest”** (down payment) on our inheritance, signifying that everything promised to us will be delivered exactly in its proper time. **“Until the redemption”** refers to the resurrection of the believer's body at the Rapture of the Church.¹⁸ **“Glory”** is “shining” and describes the outward appearance of God as light. Our redemption will redound to the **“praise”** of the Father by all of creation, both in heaven and on Earth.

The Church is not dressed simply in ‘white’ robes of righteousness, but literally in “light,” brilliant robes of righteousness.--cb

In other words, our final, physical *resurrection* to eternal life will cause all creation to focus on God's unique work in man (and specifically, in the redemption of the Church, the Body of Christ) (***“praise”***) and will cause God's very presence to *shine* before *all creation*. Since “light” is the visible manifestation of God, this means that God's very nature and attributes will become even more apparent because of the resurrection and

appearance of the Bride of the Son, the New Testament Church, who will be clothed in light as is the Son.

who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:14

¹⁸ 1 Thess 4: 16-18

DIVISION TWO

Chapter 1:15-2:10

Our Participation with Christ in God's Work beyond Death

Introduction to Division Two

TWO

**Help, support, faith, confirmation, assurance,
service, ministry, and peace**

OK, God, what's the catch? Having been personally chosen by the Father to be joined to His Son, Jesus Christ, just what is now expected of me? What are my duties and what is my authority to act? Just how is my

participation with the Lord Jesus and my honoring of the Father to be performed while I am left here on Earth in hope of the Son's coming again for me? These are questions that come up in every class held on practical Christianity or living the "Normal" Christian life (whatever that is).
A few clues

The number Two (2) suggests a strengthening and clarification of issues pertaining to salvation. We can expect Paul to reveal in this division of the Epistle the source of the Believer's power.

Power? That sounds good. We have **POWER!** All right!!! But, wait a minute--Jesus had power. He had ALL power. And, yet He suffered. He suffered a lot. This "power" we have been given must be used in some special way if it is to be helpful to us and honored by the Father who gives it. We will see the extent of that power and the basis of authority we are given. We will also see that power multiplied through the unique work of the Son. There are places where "power" is called for and places where patience and real endurance are required. Remember, it is the Lord Jesus who is the "doer" of the will of God the Father. We are not supermen endowed with grand abilities and expected to perform feats of daring and extraordinary acts of courage. "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that a man be found *faithful*" (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). Simple faithfulness is our lot and His requirement. In this Division we can also find special attention paid to the authority and power the Father gave to His Son to exercise among and over the affairs of men. His is to work, ours is to trust. His is to do, ours is to wait, and to walk in what it is that He does.

Section one - 1:15-23

Divine power toward us in Christ our Head

Introduction to Section one

God's power is directed to and deposited in Christ as the “doer” of the will of the Father. In this we can see the strengthening unity of Father and Son. As regards us, we have now been joined to God through perfect union with the Son, the Head of the Church. We are thus confirmed by the testimony of two, Father and Son, as the elect of God and under His care. Union is the picture of two becoming one, which is now the believer's position, not *with* but “*in* Christ.”

Faith, the expression of our confidence in God's provision

(1:15, 16) Faith, when given expression leads to an experience of rest. That experience occurs whenever a believer walks in confidence that God is working His best for all who are involved. Therefore, the principle of Faith-Rest describes the believer's life whenever he or she is in fellowship with God and being led by the Holy Spirit “in Christ.” Love (agape) is the natural attitude towards others and thanksgiving is the inevitable result of a life in tune with the life of the Lord Jesus.

When you encounter people who can face adversity or success with a consistent poise and grace, humbly giving the Father all credit for gain or solutions, then you have identified one who is at rest in Christ and at peace (at one) with God.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. Ephesians 1:15, 16

Effective Prayer

(1:17, 18) What Paul prays for on behalf of the believers in Ephesus.

- (1) The Spirit of wisdom and revelation, i.e. “**information**” in order that they “*may know God the Father* better.”
- (2) That “the eyes of your heart” (a euphemism for ones “mind”) may be “**enlightened**,” i.e. “information” in order that they “*may know* the hope” of their calling and how rich their inheritance is.
- (3) That they “**may know**” of “His incomparably great power” exercised for believers.

Pray for *Understanding!*

Note that there are no petitions here for relief, but for understanding and wisdom. These are the basis of hope, rather than any ease from our present difficulties. It is tragic when Christians spend their hours searching for relief and change. These are the very circumstances brought into our lives by a loving Father precisely to bring us into a clearer and richer understanding of His care for us. **“May know”** is *epignosis* “knowledge that is true, full, accurate and tested.” **“Heart”** is *cardia* and refers to the organs of thought and conscience. **“Enlightened”** is a perfect participle, referring to an act in the past, which has results that extend into the present.

“It is not salvation merely that we have received; but we are set here as saved ones to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, in mind and ways of Him by whom we live. Hence there are little children, young men, and fathers (1 John 2), showing the grades, not of salvation, but of growth in the divine life.”

-J. B. Stoney

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of *wisdom and revelation*, so that you may *know* him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be *enlightened* in order that you may *know* the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.
Ephesians 1:17, 18

(1:19, 20) Paul's letters make it clear that the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers is to instruct them in the things of God, in order **“that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12).**

*We should easily conclude that believers
should, for the most part,
stop praying for relief
and consistently pray for understanding!*

Even when, no, especially when, the circumstance seems unfair, painful, or humanly unconscionable is it necessary for the believer to reach into inner resources of faith and trust that can only come from the life of the Lord Jesus within—faithfulness is called for here, not heroism. The Son faced His human tasks of obedience and suffering knowing that his loving heavenly Father is weaving a tapestry only viewed in its entirety from His Throne. If Jesus Christ would not interpose His own desires to recuse Himself as a victim of the most heinous act of cruelty known among angels and men, dare we suggest our own limited ideas as alternatives to the conditions we see around us? (God, give us *understanding!*)

The next thing to take in from this very powerful passage is this--The power that the Father brings

to bear in our life in order to accomplish His best for us, is the same power used **“when He (the Father) raised Him (the Son) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies.”** This is as strong as you can get! And, it is the standard package for believers, regardless of what their gift for service, personal strength of commitment, or standing in the church might be. It's much like an admission kit to the hospital. Everybody who is admitted gets one. But, think of what this is saying to us...God the Father is channeling the same degree of power through us to accomplish His will in our lives that He used to raise the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and draw Him into heaven. If that is what is going on all of the time as a standard provision for us, then what in the world have we left to ask for?

and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, Ephesians 1:19, 20

(1:21, 22) Look, says Paul, on the basis of that power, Christ has been installed by the Father as supreme ruler **“above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given.”** That pretty much covers every class of creation, angelic or human, fallen or redeemed, judged or free, **“not only in the present age, but also in the one to come”** referring to the Millennium and beyond. **“Rule, authority, power, dominion, and title,”** all refer to the angelic hierarchy, both fallen and righteous, who are given freedom to affect the affairs of men. It is important to remember that the *man*, Jesus, who is “the Christ,” is now at the right hand of the Father and ruler over every level of creation forever, specifically to function as head over it all on behalf of the Church. The Church is that unique company of the redeemed from out of mankind beginning with those in the upper room at Pentecost and ending with the calling out of the final remnant who are alive when the Rapture occurs.

far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, Ephesians 1:21, 22

The Church completes Christ

(1:23) This idea, that the Church completes Christ, is the least understood concept in Christian doctrine today. In fact, it may have always been so, since it was a deliberate mystery in the ages past and only has come to light through Paul. It is that company of New Creation believers **“which is His body,”** and **“the fullness of Him.”** He, the Heavenly Father, is saying to us that it is the Church, which completes everything that God intends for His blessed Son. Can you possibly take this in? The ascended Jesus is the Head of the Church, the Body of Christ. When they are ultimately united at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Eternal Son of God will be completed in the eyes and according to the will of the Father. Christ, the ‘Last Adam’ and the head of all creation, is completed by taking to Himself a bride, the Church of the New Testament, consisting of each individual believer redeemed by His blood. That's you and me and Paul and

Peter and Aunt Annie and.. .

which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Ephesians 1:23

Section Two - 2:1-3

Our previous fellowship and condition

Introduction to Section Two

Here we see the indices Two (2) used in the sense of contrast. All that we were has been changed in our “New Creation” selves. The New Testament Believer is a completely 'new order' of creation, one that had not existed until Pentecost. The Christian is not a Jewish retread. Nor is the Christian an improved man in any sense of the word. The Christian is a “new creation,”¹⁹ something that is completely new and unique within the entire history and family of man.

It is important that we recognize the degree to which we have left behind everything that motivated us (as regards our new spiritual life). At the same time, it is important to identify those traits of the Old Nature, which are still very much alive in the physical body of flesh in which we dwell in time. There is such a contrast between the 'new creation' and the old nature that is flawed and controlled by Sin. It is a provision of God that we are enabled to learn to avoid living on the basis of the flesh (to which we have died) and to live on the basis of the Holy Spirit (to Whom we have been made alive).²⁰

Section Two of Division Two will focus on that which we were before Christ was revealed to us. It draws before us a clear picture of our utter lostness and the source of the Old Nature, which moved us prior to our salvation.

¹⁹ 2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature...

²⁰ Rom. 6:3-5 How shall we who died to sin still live in it? We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Our Prior Condition

(2:1) When man was created in the image of God, it was in these respects:

1. Self-aware, possessing personhood distinct from all other creatures.
2. With moral reasoning, the capacity to assess right from wrong.
3. Self-determinate, possessing freedom of choice and a will to exercise in obedience.

Self-awareness mirrors God's existence, but is limited to time and space. God, in comparison, is unlimited by being both eternal and omnipresent. Man's moral reasoning mirrors God's holiness. Man concludes that an issue is right or wrong based on the information he has at his disposal, including the Word of God. God determines that an issue is right or wrong based on His absolute Righteousness and Justice. Man's freedom of will and the capacity to act in accord with his decisions mirrors God's sovereignty. While man is limited to the sphere of his existence, God is unlimited, because He is omnipresent.

Following his creation, man was given a body made out of the earth. Into that body, God breathed **“the breath of lives”**²¹ (plural). That was (1) the life associated with the Soul and (2) the life associated with the Spirit. Soul, defines that capacity in man to accept, respond, understand and relate to the created world on the basis of human or physical phenomena. Spirit, defines that capacity in man to accept, respond, understand and relate to the spiritual world which is the kingdom of God.

Adam's Fall

When Adam acted on the basis of his freedom to choose to obey, and he disobeyed the specific instruction of God; he died spiritually. His human spirit died and he no longer was able, intrinsically, to receive unfiltered communication from God. He began to see, hear, and understand the world and all of its ramifications, only in terms of his soul. He thought like an animal--the highest form of animal, to be sure, but not like the crown of creation as intended by his creator. He was lost and bound up by his transgression.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, Ephesians 2:1

Adam's Fall Inherited by All

(2:2) Like our father, Adam, we too **“used to live”** (past tense) in the sphere of sin and were **“dead.”** Alive soulishly, we were nonetheless spiritually dead and we lived according to the

²¹ Gen. 2: 7

dictates **“of the ruler of the kingdom of the air,”** who is Satan. **“Those who are disobedient,”** refers to those men or women who live in a state of disobedience to the Gospel, which has the power to set them free and unto God. That company of the disobedient includes both Jew and Gentile.

in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Ephesians 2:2

A great contrast

(2:3, 5) The conclusion of Section two is very significant. During the first part of this segment of the epistle, we see the prior lost state laid out for our perusal. This is the foundation for Paul's assessment that men are **“by (our) nature objects of wrath.”** That is, we are deserving of God's righteous judgment.

By nature, we were objects of wrath

Look at our previous life style—**“all of us...lived among (those who continue in this), gratifying the (desires) of our sinful nature.”** He excludes no one of us. **“By nature”** then, we stand condemned according to His standards.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. Ephesians 2:3

By grace, we have been claimed as God's own.

“But,” introduces a contrast of the greatest extent possible. Rather than declaring us objects of wrath, **“God, because of (*dia*, ‘in order to satisfy’) His great love (*agapē*) for us”** not on the basis of any merit on our part, but because He is a God **“rich (*plousios*, ‘inexhaustible’) in mercy, made us alive (*zōopoieō* ‘imparted life to that which is dead’) with Christ, even when we were dead in our sins.”** This all occurred while we were still disobedient, recalcitrant, lost souls. He did not wait until our hearts were changed and we turned to Him for deliverance from our individual messes. He saved us while we were totally antagonistic towards Him and His work. Look at Romans 6:3-4, “Don’t you know that as many as were placed into (union) Christ Jesus (by means of the Holy Spirit) were placed into His death? We were buried with Him in order that just as He was raised up from among the dead, so too might we be raised that in newness of a life (imparted) we might order our behavior.” This is so important. The resurrected life is one that is *imparted* as a free gift to us, the cost being entirely borne by Christ through His incarnation as a man and death on the cross. The works of that life are *already* accomplished by Christ and prepared *for* us as our pathway through life representing Him and bringing glory to the Father. It’s not supposed to bring credit to us! They have been finished so that we might walk *in* them, not so that we might *do* them! It is only when we see this clearly that we realize that all the

credit goes to the Father. This is His story, not ours. It is all about Him and His glory, not about us. It's not even about how much we love Him, but about how much He loves us! Praise songs should not be about "Here *we* are to worship, here *we* are to bow down, here *we* are to say that you're *our* God." Praise should be about His worthiness, His awesomeness, His willingness to claim us as His own.

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

Section Three - 2:6-10²²

Raised, and seated in heavenly places

Ascended with Christ

(2:6) Here is one of the most neglected doctrines of the Church today--It is not that we have been merely saved from the wrath that is to come on the world of unbelievers. Nor is it only that we have been assured of His protection from the Evil One while we are still on Earth awaiting His return. The truth which is so often left out of current teaching is **that Jesus, the Man, who lived, died, and was raised from the grave by the Father, is now at the Father's right hand and we (every individual believer) are now irreversibly joined to Him where He is!** What that means to us is that we have a *position* before the Father that is exactly the *position* that the Lord Jesus occupies. The practical implication is this: the Father does not see us in any light other than in the person of His own dear Son!

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:6

Divine Purpose

(2:7) If we could take the Father's view, we would see that the object of this union is that we are to display to all creation, in heaven and earth, every facet of His grace, mercy, and kind intentions, just as He provided for His own Son.²³

in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his Grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:7

Divine Means; First of Salvation

(2:8) Did we come to Him or did He come to claim us? How strong the urge is to say that we turned from our ways and grasped the grace offered to us by Christ on the basis of our knowledge, out of our futility and the pain in our lives. Many believers are saying just that and

²² Section Three has been moved forward to verse six because it is this writer's opinion that the great contrast of verses 2-5 demonstrates the principles of contrast that would be consistent with section two of division two--a double emphasis on contrast, strengthening, and growth. This is believed to be appropriate because our salvation was accomplished while we were still lost, but our being raised and seated "in-Christ" was effected at the historical point of our election being realized.

²³ 2 Cor 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

clinging to the end of their own faith as their lifeline to God rather than the faith of the Lord Jesus that His work is sufficient. It is tragic and wrong for them to be falsely comforted by the strength of their resolve and tenacity in enduring suffering or in witnessing.

Here, Paul tells us otherwise. We have been granted salvation **“by grace,”** that is, on the basis of God's favor and provision freely given. It is appropriated on our part, **“through faith;”** that acquiescence to the hounding of the Holy Spirit that tracks us down and overtakes us as a fleeing prey. And, the key is that **“this faith is not of yourselves.”** The faith that we have, moving us to accept the free gift of union with God, is itself a **“gift of God.”**

For it is by grace you are having been saved, through faith--and this faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God--Ephesians 2:8

(2:9) There is no sense in which our faith can be deemed a “work” of man. Nor can anything, done by anyone, be construed as meriting salvation as a response from God. Thus, there is no basis for boasting that we had anything to do with our own personal redemption, nor for the works in which we walk as believers.

not by means of works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:9

Divine Means; intended secondly, for *Service*

(2:10) Arno Gaebelein says that this verse is the central verse of the first three chapters, and Robertson tells us that **“workmanship”** is *poiēma*, from which we get “poem.” Gaebelein says, “It is a beautiful thought in itself to think of those who are saved by grace, and united to Christ as ‘the poem of God’.” The term *poiēma* may also be translated as “masterwork” or “masterpiece.” Think about this for a moment—

*the church is God's masterpiece,
the most important and precious of His works in creation,
His masterwork on eternal display before all creation.*

“Good works” *epi ergois agathois* (for the purpose of good works) are those works which meet God's standard of absolute righteousness, not simply acts which are meritorious in the view of man. Those works are also already completed *by* our Lord, and revealed in us by the Holy Spirit within each believer. It is Christ alone who can accomplish absolutely righteous work, and He did it all before we arrived; **“prepared in advance”** *proētoimasen* (to make ready beforehand) **for us.”** **“To do”** *hina en autois peripatēsōmen* (lit. ‘that we should walk in them’) making them experiences brought into our lives by the Father to serve His own purposes. Note that we are not to accomplish (“do”) the works, but *walk in them*.

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

DIVISION THREE

Chapter 2:11-4:16

The Church Mystery, the House of God and the Body of Christ

Introduction to Division Three

In Division Three we will see enclosure. It is best illustrated by the triangle, the simplest line structure that may enclose an area. This speaks to us of the Trinity, of the work of the three persons of the Godhead as it applies to man and his salvation. Consistent with this being the Third Division, we will see the involvement of the Trinity.

- * The Father: First, there is the original state in which we are found by the Father and in which preparations were made according to His will.
- * The Son: Then, there is the work of the Son, which brought us into a position of acceptability to the Father.
- * The Holy Spirit: Finally, there is the spiritual house into which we are formed by the Holy Spirit, which is the Church. Because we are the beneficiaries of that work, Division Three will present the completion of the plan of our redemption and its revelation to us and to all of the heavenly onlookers.

The Church, the Body of Christ, is properly presented in Division Three as the central object in the completion of the plan of God for all of time and all of mankind. It is through the Church that the **"manifold wisdom of God is made known"** to the angelic realms who watch (that "great crowd of witnesses" Hebrews chapter 11). It is they who must learn of God's character from the plan of redemption for man, in which plan they had no place or benefit.

Section One - 2:11, 12

The original state

Introduction to Section One

In Section One we can see principles revealed associated with the numerical order noted throughout this study. For instance; being in Division Three, you can expect to see the total work and involvement of the Trinity. This work is presented in perfect order, the First Section dealing with the work of the Father as the single source of will and devised the whole of time, space, and history. In this Section, look at the unilateral way that God chooses His own and brings them to Himself according to His will and election.²⁴ As Gentiles, they had no claim on any relationship with God as did Israel.

As regards the Gentile, he was born without obligation to the Law of Israel and without a relationship to God. Because of that, there was no hope of any gentile achieving the promises made to Israel. His birth position was one of separation from God.

Their former state

(2:11) Those believers in Ephesus were primarily Gentiles. Though they are now joined to Christ, they had never been under obligation to the Law of Israel, having been born outside of national Israel. They were **“called uncircumcised”** by Israelites in a demeaning sense (circumcision being a requirement of the Law).

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)--Ephesians 2:11

(2:12) Because of their birth as Gentiles, (and this is true of every believer today) they had not inherited either the promises that God made to Israel, or the obligations of the Law. They were considered by all Israelites to be **“foreigners to the covenants of the promise”** and thus, **“without hope and without God.”**

remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. Ephesians 2:12

Paul is making the point clear--they were alone, without God and without hope.²⁵ In other words,

²⁴ 1 Cor. 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

²⁵ Here we can see the principle of one applied in a negative sense. 1 can indicate unity, singleness, or purpose as positive indices. Or, it can

as long as Israel had the promises and the covenants as the means to standing with God, Gentiles who did not know the God of Israel were separated from God and truly without hope.

Section Two - 2:13-18

The enmity put away

Introduction to Section Two

In Section Two we see the work of God the Son, the second person of the trinity. In Him, God is made flesh and comes to dwell among men. Christ is the embodiment of deity and humanity as the unique being in the universe, God and Man. We will also see that the Gentiles who were separated from God and the promises of God given to Israel are now brought into a new position before God. They have been brought into a single, unique body that includes Israelites. This is both growth and expansion as Jew and Gentile, once separate, are now drawn together "in Christ".

Union of Jew and Gentile in a "New Body"

(2:13, 14) Where the Gentiles were once alone, now they **“have been brought near”** to Israelites by means of the sacrifice of Christ. Where there was a barrier of sin which separated Gentile from Jew, Christ **“has made the two (Gentile and Jew) one.”** It is not an amalgamation of national Israel with an entire company of Gentiles, but of individual Israelites with individual Gentiles into a single third company, the Church. In other words, both Gentiles and Jews now stand on the same ground of condemnation and at the same door of redemption, the door--Jesus Christ. This is illustrated in the Old Testament tabernacle as the gate of the congregation and in the Temple as the gate to the Women's Court. Christ said it to the disciples; “I am the door of the sheep...” and, “I am the door...” (John 10:7, 9) speaking of Himself as the only access to Heaven that was possible for any man.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,
Ephesians 2:13, 14

Without the door of access, the barrier would forever separate man and God and Gentile from Jew. With Christ the “door,” the barrier is no longer a separation, but is penetrated with His own sacrificial offering of Himself, allowing free access between those who had been hostile and at the same time creating one body of both Jew and Gentile.

A word of caution! Take care that you do not extend that privilege of access backwards in time

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and make the melding retroactive to Israel under the Law. Until Christ passed through death on the Cross, there was true separation according to the will of the Father. It is only under the administration of Grace that the single body is a reality.

The End of the Law

(2:15) This verse is a key to understanding that the Church is not a continuation of Israel or of God's promises to that nation. From the raw materials of Gentile and Jew, God drew a new purpose expressed in special creation—**“His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two.”** God took **“the Law with its commandments and regulations”** and “abolished” it. This is so clear. The Law was satisfied once and for all, and in practical terms, it was done away with as an ethical and moral standard--all of it--every commandment and regulation, which served to; (1) define Israel as distinct from the Gentiles and (2) define righteousness as distinct from unrighteousness. The life of the Lord Jesus now defines both.

In **“abolishing”** the Law, He set it aside totally, inclusive of all of its **“commandments and regulations,”** as either a rule of life or a standard of righteousness for man, whether Jew or Gentile. In place of the Law, He created **“one new man,”** a new order of being which is neither Jew nor Gentile, and thereby put them on an equal footing before Him. Regardless of the past, each must now come to God through acceptance of the crucified Jesus. He, Jesus the Christ, is that representative **“new man,”** the “Last Adam,” in whom we are now placed at the right hand of the Father. Whether we are Jew or Gentile, we must each come to the Father through this new order of mankind. We are either identified with the risen Christ, or we are utterly lost.

by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,
Ephesians 2:15

Therefore, the Church may not be viewed as an advancement of Israel, for it is made up of an entirely *new order of created mankind*. The existence of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Church, makes clear a path into a new relationship with God. That is the fact of *reconciliation*. It is God's purpose **“to reconcile both”** Jew and Gentile to Himself through the life of His Son. That believer out of Israel, one who was living in light of the Law with his faith in the God of the covenant of promise, must now of necessity come through regeneration into the only relationship available to man in this age. Whatever difference (**“hostility”**) there might have been between the Jew and the Gentile in the past, as a result of God's election of Israel, is now forever ended. There is but one company of the redeemed in this age from the birth of the Church in the upper room on Pentecost until the Rapture. It is inclusive of both Jew and Gentile by natural birth, but exclusive to the reborn as “new creations.”

and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. Ephesians 2:16

One Gospel is to both Jew and Gentile

(2:17) Since Pentecost, there is but one Gospel to all men. *There is **no special program** in effect for the Jew today.* All of the promises associated with the covenant relationship God established with Israel are set aside while the Church, the Bride of the Son of God, is called out and claimed by Him. The Abrahamic Covenant has been realized in Christ's resurrection and ascension, as the promised "Seed" rose and assumed His glory and throne. Through union with Christ, Abraham's seed is steadily increased as each believer is identified with Him 'in Christ.'

Both, **"you who were far away"** (Gentiles) and **"those who were near"** (Israel) now are the recipients of the message of **"peace"**-- peace with one another and peace with God. The Israelites' place of preference has been eliminated until such time as God draws them together in the land to deal with their rejection of Messiah and cleanse them of their unbelief. Until that occurs, there is but one Gospel available to them--Jesus was God come in the flesh and is now the ascended Lord of All. Today, the Israelite cannot, on the basis of any prior claim, redefine Him or reach the Father apart from invoking the name of Jesus. This means that those within the Church who seem to enjoy toying with the heritage and practices of things Jewish are running the very grave risk of drawing into the life of the Body of Christ elements of Jewish principles that are intended to bind one under the Law. That Law defined the barrier that separated Jew and Gentile; a barrier which no longer exists! Today, we must avoid the pageantry of Israel's celebrations; for to assimilate things Jewish into our Christian experience is to embrace the very bondage from which Christ set us free!

To assimilate things Jewish into our Christian experience is to embrace the very bondage from which Christ set us free!

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Ephesians 2:17

One Spirit

(2:18) It is **"through Him (Jesus)"** that any man has **"access to the Father."** It is the same means for **"both"** Jew and Gentile, and is actuated by the Holy Spirit. It is not possible for any man to come to God by any other means than acceptance of the Son of God, Jesus our *ascended* Lord.

This verse thoroughly discredits the claim of those who would address God by any other name or who attempt to identify with Him on the basis of their "honest heart." Many would have us believe that the relative honesty of the individual has merit and can earn one a place for eternity. That is simply not true according to this message by the apostle Paul. It is only **"through Him"** that we **"have access to the Father."**

For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:18

Section Three - 2:19-22

The spiritual house

Introduction to Section Three

Because we are now joined to Him, we are enclosed entirely within His provision and participants in His inheritance. We have become totally identified with Him and are now members of His household, citizens of heaven, even while still on earth.

The “Temple” of the Holy Spirit in this Age of Grace is the physical body of each believer (1st Corinthians 6:19) and the collective body of all believers gathered “in Christ” is the spiritual house of God on Earth (1st Corinthians 3:16-17). This “house” will ultimately be removed to Heaven by Christ at the Rapture. Until then, we occupy this real estate as citizens of heaven and live *here* on the basis of our assets drawn from *there*.

Remember that Israel was an Earthly people with an Earthly destiny, and they remain so. They will inherit precisely what was promised to them; real estate. Theirs is “the Land” forever (Genesis 19:7). The Church, however, has no such earthly promise or destiny. The Church, the Body of Christ, has a heavenly inheritance. It is the Church, which is joined to the Son in unbreakable union forever.²⁶

Since Pentecost, there is no program of redemption for Israel under the Law. All men are now faced with the same decision regarding the Lamb of God and His perfect sacrifice, without distinction as to race, ability, or national origin. In his letter to believers in Rome, Paul states “There is therefore no condemnation for those who are *in Christ Jesus*.” (Romans 8:1). All those who are not “in Christ Jesus” stand under condemnation because of their rejection of the sacrifice, the price already paid for their redemption. We cannot afford to ignore that warning—it is tantamount to abandoning altogether those who have not yet come to realize their plight, whether Jew or Gentile. We are charged with the ministry of the gospel of reconciliation.

What that means to us is that a completely different economy of the grace of God is in effect, beginning with Pentecost and ending at the Rapture of the Church. That economy, which in the Old Testament was defined by the Law of Israel, is no longer in effect, being replaced by one in which the *life of the Lord Jesus* is the criteria for access to God and for living day-by-day.²⁷

²⁶ Rom. 5, 6 United with Him in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be in the likeness of His resurrection life.

²⁷ Gal 6:15, 16

One People-One House

(2:19) Furthermore, we are individual members of a company comprised of all who have accepted God in Christ and who have been elected by the will of the Father to life in union with Him.

Where we were once **“foreigners (not of Israel) and aliens (not numbered among the Old Testament elect of God)”** you are now **“fellow citizens.”** This means that our resources and provision are from a heavenly home. We are of **“God's people... members of God's household.”** The sense of intimacy here should not be lost to the reader. It is not that we are God's property, but we are now members of His family. We, in being joined to His Son, are now His children, Sons of God.²⁸

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, Ephesians 2:19

(2:20-22) Note in this passage that there is no reference to the priesthood of Israel in the building. First, there is the **“chief cornerstone,”** Jesus our Lord. Second, there are the **“apostles.”** From them, we obtained our specific instructions as to our relationship with God in Christ. Third, there were the **“prophets.”** Please note that the apostles are listed before the prophets. The most likely indication is that the prophets referred to were not those to Israel, but those who announced the coming of Christ and the advent of the Church Age. In the broader sense, a reference to the Old Testament prophets here would not change the impact of the passage at all, for it was through the prophets that the coming of Christ as the Kinsman Redeemer and Messiah of Israel was laid out. They saw that this would result in His rejection, but then the mystery of His becoming the chief cornerstone of the New Testament Church was hidden to them. Through them, we learned of the first advent of Christ and of His rejection by Israel and mankind and of the election of a people apart from Israel as His own.

In contrast to the temple in Jerusalem, built solely for the function of the priests of Israel, this building is **“joined together in Him and rises to become a temple set apart”** not “to,” but **“in the Lord.”** Where the first temple was built “to” God, the second is built **“in”** God. This is a very important distinction to make.

In the same manner, **“we too are being built together.”** Here, we are enclosed entirely within God, and are irreversibly joined together in that position. The purpose is that we are **“to become a dwelling in which God lives.”** The company of believers, the Church, has become that temple, the place where God meets and comes face-to-face with mankind. The “temple” is the Church universal--that composite of individual lives, which is the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit.

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as

²⁸

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Romans 8: 14-16

the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:20-22

Subdivision Two - Chapter 3:1-13

The Ministry of the Mystery

The Message of Paul

Postscripts are almost always very important. When it is a postscript of an apostle, it deserves even closer attention. This is the case in Romans 16:25-27, where Paul declares in explicit terms that the Gospel, which he preached to the Gentiles was given to him in a special revelation. Further, he claims emphatically, that this revelation was exclusive to himself and different from that of the apostles to the house of Israel.

“My Gospel,” is a term used by Paul in three passages.²⁹ This term is explained in several other Epistles³⁰ as well as in the section of the letter before us. It is important to recognize that he was not taught this gospel by any of the others who were appointed apostles before him, but by direct revelation from the Father. It was on his second visit to Jerusalem, seventeen years after his conversion³¹ that he taught “his Gospel” to the other apostles. Then they too acknowledged the distinct character and content of Paul's message as compared to their own. They were “**...seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised,³² just as Peter with the gospel to the circumcised.³³**” (Gal 2:7)

This important difference must be recognized if Peter's instructions to Jewish converts to Christianity are to be properly understood. The same is true of James' letter to believers who were all within the Jewish band of Christian converts. These were the only generation of believers to have been rightfully under the Law prior to their redemption as New Testament believers. No other individual or group could make that claim. For that reason, Hebrews, James, and 1st and 2nd Peter must be studied with that in mind. **[Application: each book of the Bible must be studied with its specific audience in mind in order to preserve the message and intent of the book]**

The “Mystery” revealed

“We must carefully remember that the mystery does not mean the church merely. It is the mystery of Christ emphatically; and the part about Christ is the higher of the two.” --William Kelly

²⁹ Rom. 2: 16, 16: 25, 2 Tim 2: 8

³⁰ Col 1: 25, 26 and Galatians in particular

³¹ Gal 1: 11-2: 12

³² Lit "Gentile people"

³³ Lit "Israelites"

(3:1) **“For this reason”** refers back to "being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives" of 2:20-22 and is the introduction to a statement that is completed in verse 14-17. **“I, Paul, (am) the prisoner (lit. “fettered”)**, is not the bond-slave designation used in other places, but rather a word for being constrained or tied down. Here, **“of”** is possessive and designates ownership by **“the Christ Jesus.”** Use of the article before “Christ” says that Paul is one tied in ownership to “the Messiah, who is Jesus.”

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

(3:2) **“If”** is first class and states an assumption that they **“have heard”** all of this before. **“Administration”** (“dispensation” in the KJV) is *oikonomia*, literally “the law of the house.”³⁴ The Father had deposited in Paul that which was going to be required of the Gentiles in order for them to be built up into the building that He intended.

If you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, Ephesians 3:2

The Mystery Defined

(3:3) **“The mystery”** defines “God's grace” from the previous verse. Use of the definite article calls attention to the substance or character of the “mystery” which was revealed to Paul. The **“mystery”** is the total purpose of God in Christ, of which the Church is a resulting consequence.

that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. Ephesians 3:3

(3:4-5) His purpose in writing this epistle, then, is to enable them to better **“understand”** his **“insight into the mystery of Christ.”** **“Understand”** refers to their application of what they know to experience. They are to live in light of truth revealed. **“Apostles”** is understood to mean those men selected by the Lord Jesus and appointed to present the Gospel to Israel, and through Paul to the Gentiles. **“Prophets”** cannot mean the Old Testament prophets, for they were part of the **“other generations”** during which the **“mystery”** was not revealed. They are the New Testament “forth tellers” of the resurrected Lord Jesus who are taking the word of His ascension throughout the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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

³⁴ Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Kenneth Wuest p. 81

(3:6) **“That the Gentiles are”** is a translation of one word in the Greek and identifies a fact, not a purpose.³⁵ **“Fellow-heirs, joint-members, and sharers together”** all indicate a common ownership through common holdings as people. The Gentiles now hold with the Israelites a common ownership of that singular promise which is only realized by one who is **“in Christ Jesus.”** It is very significant that **“Jesus”** is used in conjunction with His title as Messiah. All of the promises made to Israel are not included here, rather that promise of salvation by Christ on the cross, but not union, which is unique to the New Order of creation, the Church.

That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs together with Israel, joint-members of one body,
and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

(3:7) **“Minister”** is *diakonos*, from which we get our word “deacon.” **“According to”** is *kata* and indicates a standard or means of measuring. Paul's service of the Gospel is to be commensurate with the power given as a gift of God's grace. He does not act out of his own power or on the basis of his own authority. [Application: be very careful about **“taking power and authority”** over Satan.]

of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was
given to me according to the working of His power. Ephesians 3:7

Paul's Unique Commission

(3:8, 9) There is no article before **“saints,”** calling attention to the character of those who are “set apart.” Of this group, Paul says that he is the very least, yet to him was given the charge **“to preach to the Gentiles the...riches of the Christ.”** There is a definite article before **“Christ,”** specifying the historical Messiah as the object of his gospel. It is his specific duty **“to bring to light”** (that is in contrast with something that has been veiled or hidden from view) **“the administration,”** *oikonomia*, (see v.2) **“of this mystery....”** There is a “rule of life” that attends becoming a Christian. You will not find that

Just as the hopes of Israel derived their points of distinction from Messiah the Prince coming to reign here below, so the hopes and calling of the Church receive their distinctive marks from the position now assumed by the Lord Jesus Christ on high. The difference is that betwixt earthly and heavenly, carnal and spiritual blessing. In Egypt and the wilderness, they look for the land of promise with a bountiful basket and store. In Canaan when groaning under the idolatrous rule of apostate kings, or when weeping by the rivers of Babylon, the faithful long for the Redeemer to come to Zion, Who shall bless every man under his own vine and his own pomegranate tree. But the New Testament sanctions no such expectations for the Christian. The Jew was entitled to hope for blessing here of a worldly nature; but the believer's blessings are heavenly and spiritual, enjoyed by faith alone. They take their character from the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ at the Father's right hand; and from Him, not as the King of Israel and the ruler of the nations, but as the glorified Head and Life of the Church.

—W. J. Hocking

³⁵ Word Studies in the Greek NT, Kenneth Wuest

“rule of life” in any instructions to God's earthly people for it **“was kept hidden in God for ages past”**. You must find it in God's instructions to His Heavenly people--and that is Paul's singular responsibility--to define that “rule of life” for the Church. It is almost impossible for some believers to release their hold on what Christ is saying as the Messiah to Israel in the Gospels and grasp what He is saying through Paul to the New Creation Church!

In the box on this page you will find a short excerpt from a highly regarded Brethren author, W.J. Hocking. His comments on the difference between Israel and the Church is a message all but lost to the majority of Christians today, even those within the evangelical branch of the Church. If we fail to reconsider what these men of God had to offer and come to grips with the uniqueness of the Body of Christ as distinct from Israel, then we surely will not be prepared for what God has in store at the end of this age. The expected course will be a continual melding of instructions to Israel with what today's Church's leaders believe to be a righteous “rule of life” based largely on the Mosaic or Davidic Law. This will continue to impoverish the Church and render her powerless to minister the Gospel of the ascended Lord Jesus. Consider Paul's following statements regarding his ministry carefully, for his work is our own.

To me, the very least of all such as are set-apart, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and to bring to light the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. Ephesians 3:8, 9

The Purpose of the Church

(3:10, 11) The intention of God expressed in His will through the Church is here stated for us.

- * **“That”** introduces us to a purpose clause.
- * **“Now”** gives us the time frame of reference.
- * **“Manifold”** is multi-faceted, as a cut gem.
- * **“Rulers and authorities”** are classes of angelic beings that have to do with man and his world.
- * **“Heavenly realms”** tells us that we are here for all of creation, in heaven and on earth, to observe, in order that they might know more of God.
- * **“According to”** is a standard or norm.
- * **“His eternal purpose”** states that this position of the Church is an expression of His eternal will.

The focus is on the Father. This means that the purpose for which God has called out the Church is that through it He might show to all the angelic realms, the full spectrum of His wisdom and character. It is important to note that there is no redemption for the angelic segment of creation who chose to follow Satan and fell from grace. Salvation is reserved to man, for whom Christ died.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should

be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Ephesians 3:10, 11

(3:12) Now, the focus shifts and is on the Son. It is **“in Him and through faith in Him”** that we have the freedom from sin and the confidence in our redemption to **“approach God (the Father).”** Would the Son of God approach His Father with thanksgiving and petitions? Absolutely! So, too, may we approach our Father with thanksgiving for His provision and petition for that which we most need in order to live victorious lives in Christ.

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:12

(3:13) Knowing that he has suffered on their behalf, Paul says, in effect, “get a grip on it,” you are caused to **“glory”** (shine) by means of his **“sufferings.”** There are circumstances in which a believer is in difficulty specifically for the benefit of others. This should not be a cause of discouragement, but of increased trust and dependence on God and rest, knowing that He is bringing in His best for each of us.

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

Subdivision Three - Chapter 3:14-21

Christ Abides in the Inner Man by Faith

We are Filled into All the Fullness of God

Introduction to Subdivision Three

Here, in Subdivision Three of Division Three, we see emphasis on our completion in Christ becoming reality and maturing in our experience. This is true individually as well as universally. The whole realm of creation will honor God for eternity and does acknowledge Him as the Creator now, with the single exception of unbelieving man. Sometimes this is willingly done on man's part and sometimes only by his being drawn kicking and screaming through difficulty. But, it is always in accordance with the Sovereign will of the Father. The principle of dwelling, carrying with it the sense of being enclosed, illustrates for us Christ abiding within the heart of man by faith. The reality of our presence on Earth as the temple of the Holy Spirit, enclosing Him in our life and is yet another illustration of that same principle. Finally, it all teaches us of union. Union of God and man as we are taken and joined to God in Christ.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seen present with us as this segment of the Epistle unfolds

the pattern for a believer's prayer in this dispensation as defined by Paul.

1. Kneel before the Father, to whom your prayer is to be directed.
2. Acknowledge His Sovereignty.
3. Petition for personal inner strength as a ministry of the Holy Spirit.
4. Pray for a biblical foundation and spiritual sustenance for other believers.
5. Pray for a personal understanding of the depth of the love of the Father.
6. Pray for practical knowledge of the fullness of His will in your life.
7. Pray for His glorification, for ways to "make Him shine" before others.

Stage One--The focus of our adoration is God the Father.

(3:14, 15) The **“whole family in heaven and on earth”** gives us the picture of completion. There is nothing of creation that does not emanate from **“the Father.”** This establishes us properly in our relationship to the Father as the “Planner” of the Godhead.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. Ephesians 3:14-15

Stage Two--Our strength and enlargement is of the Holy Spirit.

(3:16) We are **“strengthened”**^{36*} by the addition^{*} of the Father's riches and the power of His Spirit within us. **“Power”** is *dunamis* from which we get the word “dynamite.” This means that we must not work out of our personal human strengths, but out of His strength and character. It is the essence of faith applied to our experiences. It is the basis on which we might attempt things that are beyond our known abilities or skills, but which we are impelled to do by the urging of God's Spirit within us.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, Ephesians 3:16

Stage Three--Completed as a dwelling place, we are indwelt by Christ.

(3:17) Our preparation as a temple is for a purpose. **“That”** introduces a purpose clause, **“that Christ may dwell.”** The place of His dwelling is in our **“hearts”** (“inner being”). **“Faith”** is the means of appropriating His presence. **“Rooted”** refers to our source of sustenance. It must be the Living Word. **“Established”** refers to our stability, or relative maturity. It is the sense in which we are gaining ground in our child-training program by the Holy Spirit.

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, Ephesians 3:17

(3:18) **“Power”** is “strength,” while that ability **“to grasp”** is “to apprehend,” not of experience, but of knowledge itself. It means to take possession of the breadth of the **“love of Christ.”** Every believer should live within the knowledge that God loves us and has given us every asset necessary to glorify Him in our present circumstance, regardless of what that might be.

In order that you may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, Ephesians 3:18

³⁶ * Associated with the number 2

(3:19) Where verse 18 presents knowledge as fact, verse 19 presents knowledge as tried experientially. **“Know”** and **“knowledge”** are both from *ginosko* and speak of experiential information. **“Love”** is *agape* and refers to source love. **“That”** introduces a purpose clause--our purpose as believers is to be **“filled”** with **“all the fullness of God.”**³⁷ Not to do great things, but to know Him fully.

and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:19

Don't miss the progression of verses 17-19. First, we are rooted in His love--Our nourishment flows from Him. Then we are to be established in His love--Our strength flows from Him. This produces power in us, power to **“grasp”** the enormity of His love and experience it in our lives. Nourishment yields energy! Energy is measured in terms of strength! Strength is expressed as power! There is nothing greater or more all encompassing, in the whole universe than His love! Finally, our experience will lead us to the point of realizing that His love and provision for us personally is greater than we can ever imagine or know--and at that point of encountering the omnipresence of God, we are being prepared to **“be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”** What a description of His intent towards us in bringing us to maturity in Christ.

(3:20, 21) This doxology begins with a double statement of God's omnipotence. He is **“able beyond all things”** translates *huper*, “over, in a measure exceeding,” and **“to do immeasurably more”** translates *huperekperissou*, “exceeding some number, more than necessary.” **“Power”** is *dunamis* “a source energy that moves to action.” That power is resident within us as the Holy Spirit and it is moving me and you along our line of experience both as believers and as members of the family of God. This is the ground on which we discover that we are bonded to one another through common experiences—the common thread is the requirement of personal faith in whatever we face. All of the Church goes through this process!

Now to him who is able beyond all things, to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.
Ephesians 3:20, 21

³⁷ Col . 2: 9

Subdivision Four - Chapter 4:1-16

Practical Results Regarding the Church

The sculptor, when asked how he accomplishes such amazing works of art, replied; “I take the clay, wood, or stone and concentrate on it until I can clearly see that which I want to save in it. Then I simply cut away all the rest.”

God is actively at work, removing all in your life that is not in conformity with the life of His Only Begotten Son.

Section One 4:1-6

Unities

The sculptor, when asked how he accomplishes such amazing works of art, replied; “I take the clay, wood, or stone and concentrate on it until I can clearly see that which I want to save in it. Then, I simply cut away all the rest.”

(4:1, 2) Paul declares himself to be a **prisoner in (in the sphere of) the Lord.** This is a locative word that places him entirely within the life of the Lord Jesus. He has died to all that he is naturally and is only alive in the ascended life of the Lord Jesus. From that position, he pleads with believers to **“live”** consistent with **“the calling”** they have

received from God. He goes on to describe some of the elements of that calling—**“humble, gentle...patient, longsuffering.”**

As a prisoner in the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:1, 2

(4:3, 4) Believers are bound by a common **“peace”** between themselves and between them and God. That peace is the unifying character trait that we all share, whether we realize it or not! One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to instruct us according to the revealed Word of God (the Son) as to our assets and privileges as members of the family of God. We are a single company, the Body of Christ, with **“one hope”** a single destiny.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called--Ephesians 4:3, 4

Things common to all believers:

(4:5,6) We share, **“one Lord,”** the Lord Jesus Christ; **“one faith,”** that measure of faith given to us by the Father to bring us to the Cross; **“one baptism,”** the baptism into Christ by the infilling of the Holy Spirit; **“one God and Father,”** the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, into who's family

we have been reborn.

one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:5, 6

Section Two 4:7-16

Captivity led captive and ministry for the increase of the body.

(4:7) **“But”** introduces a contrast. In contrast to all of the previously mentioned things, which we hold in common, we have also been given abilities and/or opportunities specifically suited to our individual responsibilities in Christ. Each is equipped to accomplish his/her particular tasks or to meet his/her specific challenge.³⁸ Immediately after giving the list of gifts to those in Corinth, Paul reminds them that each individual is equipped as God intended. Further, that the application of like gifts will not necessarily follow any given pattern. Have you ever noticed how much different preachers seem to follow just a few limited styles of delivery? Who made the rule that said a normal conversational tone and delivery was not acceptable? Why the measured, forced, cadence of so many messages? How much of the whole operation is simply role-playing and staging?

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. Ephesians 4:7

(4:8) Speaking of the ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father, Paul recalls Psalms 68:18—**“captivity”** refers to all those Old Testament saints held in Abraham's Bosom awaiting the Messiah's coming. These, the family of the groom at the wedding of the Lamb to His Bride the Church, are the saved of Israel and not members of the Body of Christ. These are the ones that He led **“captive”** to Himself when He ascended to the Father.

At the same time, He **“gave gifts to men”** in order that they might be equipped to serve Him on earth. The gifts are divine enablements for us to minister the Gospel to other men and women. They are not mere talents or skills in the human sense of the term, but always refer to the ministry of His directives to His own, the Word.

This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men." Ephesians 4:8

(4:9, 10) The ascension of Christ is applicable here in two senses. One, He **“descended”** to earth from His heavenly home with the Father at the instance of His birth as a man. Two, He **“descended”** into the grave from His place on earth as the Last Adam, there to present Himself to those who rejected Him across the span of time from Adam to the Cross. This was done so that all creation might know that God had met them in their own individual element and in a way that they could understand and accept. It was that which they rejected during life and on which they were now condemned. He who was held in total disregard was now the ruler of all creation in His omnipresence. (This is a great verse on the omnipresence of God)

³⁸ 1 Cor. 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) Ephesians 4:9-10)

(4:11,12) The gifts to men are listed here. These are not offices, but abilities to serve the Body. Note that they are all intended for service to and within the Church. **“Apostles”** are “those sent with a message and with authority.” **“Prophets”** are “forth-tellers,” not necessarily “foretellers,” but announcers of God's work and intent for man. **“Evangelists”** are those whose service it is to proclaim the Gospel, (as opposed to those who instruct in doctrine and training). **“Pastor-teachers”** are linked and refer to individuals given the specific skills required to impart Christian principles and to guide in their application to all of life's various circumstances.

The purpose of the gifts is given next—**“to equip the Saints.”** It is every believer's joy to share the Gospel with all. And, it is also true that every believer might display any of the skills necessary to accomplish God's work at any given time. But, in retrospect, one can see that God usually has used you in some consistent manner repeatedly and that He has thoroughly prepared you for that particular area of service to the Church. It is my belief that the gifts for service are best discovered in looking back at a life spent in open service to Him. In the everyday schedule of your activities, you should be open to any and every opportunity for serving God that is presented, regardless of the area of talent that is required. He will audit your time and use you where He deems best.

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up Ephesians 4:11,12

(4:13) Look at the goals of this gifting of the Body of Christ--One, **“unity in the faith.”** We are in union with one another in a single body, the Church, which is joined to Christ as His Bride. Two, **“the knowledge of the Son of God.”** This is an intimate understanding gained through the experience of living “in Him”. The result of these is the end product of child training of each believer through to maturity, the **“attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”** It is through having our lives taken over step-by-step and by being in-filled by the Holy Spirit that the believer experiences the truths of our standing in peace and union with God. We are one with God. Through maturity we become aware of, and experience, oneness with Him.

. . .until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:13

(4:14-15) At the earliest phase of child training we are **“infants”** without strength but with great energy. In that state, we are easily **“tossed back and forth”** by the circumstances of life. New fads in teaching techniques and new thoughts attract us to leaders who are self-serving and **“deceitful.”** **“Instead”** presents contrast; **“speaking the truth in love”** is the means of our living and growing. The opposite of that is being carried through life by changing winds of

teaching and situational ethics. The end product of “speaking the truth” is that we will **“grow up into Him”** in every aspect of our life. Look at the simplicity of this --we live in the sphere of truth and He manages our growth in every area of our life, both individually and corporately as a body.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Ephesians 4:14-15

(4:16) The Lord Jesus is the glue, which binds all together. Even here we must be careful of the mental image that develops. Pursue the illustration that we have chosen here and see what riches the principle of “union with God” brings out. While we have individual identity, the principle of union means that we become the glue that He is as He hold all things together. We are immediately transformed into the very substance of the man Jesus in His resurrected state as we are taken into Him as His Bride. That coming event should be the truth in which we live today! In addition, He is the foundation upon which we are all built up into a single body, each part functioning as designed and equipped. Take union away and you have no foundation, no building, no assembly, and no church!

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

I visited Pigeon Forge Tennessee some years ago and while there had the opportunity to watch a true craftsman at work on a potter's wheel. He took a shapeless mass of clay and started it turning on the wheel, pressing his fingers into it with obvious purpose. I could see nothing, but his concentration on his work let us know that he could see the design and shape of his work before the wheel ever began to turn. Slowly, the object in his mind rose from the mass on the wheel. Sometimes, he crushed it again into the shapeless mass of clay, which it originally was, and started all over again. When he was at last satisfied that the object was worthy of his name, he removed it from the wheel and with great pride, put it on display.

As the Lord Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be shaped and molded by the will of His Father, so too, is every believer crushed and pressed into Him. When the Potter finishes His work, He will see only the Son, but will have folded every one of us into that single vessel of honor, the Church-the Body of Christ. He knows the design and the precise shape, even from before the foundation of the world and has chosen us individually to take our place in the lump of clay on His wheel.

DIVISION FOUR -
Chapter 4:17-5:21
Consistency in the Believer's Walk

Section One 4:17-24

The ways of sin versus the way of Truth

Introduction to Section One

There are many ways to hinder the Spirit of God at work in your life and grieve Him deeply. You can also bring the truth of God down in the eyes of others by displaying a lie in your life. Whenever we think like lost people, act like lost people, and fail to honor God, like lost people always do, then we are living a lie and failing to represent Him in truth (1 Jn 1:6).

“It is one thing to know that we have life in the Lord Jesus, together with full forgiveness and acceptance before the Father, and it is quite another to be in continual fellowship with Him--feeding upon Him by faith--making Him the exclusive food for our souls.” --C.H. Mackintosh

Not only is the Christian in Christ, but also He is in the Christian as the source of new, heavenly life. The branch receives all its life from the vine; as we abide in Him we draw upon Him for the qualities of life, which are in Him alone. Often a man is heard to say, “I’m trying to live a Christian life,” which means that he is depending upon himself to do it. His resource is himself. Along with many others in our churches today he is substituting a good life for a Christian life. --N.B. Harrison

“Christ in you” is unto our being “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). It is to work in us that which has been perfected by Him. It is the whole realm of our being made Christ-like; having all the faculties and features of the Lord Jesus, which are resident in the new life received at new birth, brought to maturity. Every spiritual virtue will be nurtured and developed; love, meekness, goodness, gentleness, intelligence, etc., so that we are not just theoretical Christians, but real ones, spiritually responsible and accountable.--T. Austin-Sparks

Grieving the Holy Spirit

(4:17) **“..futility of their thinking”** is “empty thought processes.” “Stop being empty headed!” is the phrase. “Use your minds intelligently and scripturally.” Faith is not mindless, but rational, tactile and very, very practical. The first way that we can grieve the Holy Spirit is to use human viewpoint instead of divine viewpoint in assessing our condition in the world. Human viewpoint is assessment of our circumstance solely on the basis of human, natural phenomena and experience. Divine viewpoint is assessment of our circumstance on the basis of what the Word of God instructs us to expect. What could be more reasonable than that? Here is a written record and pattern to live by, pay attention to it and use it in your decisions about life and living. **“Gentiles”** refers to those uninitiated in Scripture and/or who are unrelated to God. Philippians 2:5 says, **“..let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

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

(4:18) The second way that we grieve the Holy Spirit is to lose our sensitivity to sin and remain ignorant of truth by remaining untaught in the Word of God³⁹ and cold to the fellowship of other believers. **“Ignorance”** is not imposed but is the result of a heart and mind that have turned away from God in rejection of His entreaties.

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Ephesians 4:18

(4:19) The third way of grieving the Holy Spirit is to engage in sexual sins (**“sensuality”**) and the pursuit of promiscuous relationships that use others in order to gratify our growing desires. Pornography leads to an increased appetite for more stimulation, which in turn leads to increased sexual activity. This process yields the myriad of social and health problems that are today's plagues of the inner city and of adolescents in general. **“Indulge”** is “to practice as a pattern of living” and describes habitual behavior. Hard rock music with rhythms that dull cognitive thought, and suggestive dance routines that simulate the sex act, are simply the first steps in this pathway of physical and mental stimulation. Performers like Madonna, Kiss, the dancers of Soul Train, or any one of a thousand MTV Video casts are only further declinations of what has become sensual common fare on prime time television illustrating this very principle. As a whole, black comedians' routines⁴⁰ are fast becoming the worst offenders in this venue. Their language is base, crude and vile and the mental images they draw for their audiences deny dignity and respect for individuals or honor for the authority of God.

³⁹ Hebrews 5: 12, 13

⁴⁰ HBO December 1992

Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality, greedy to indulge in every kind of impurity. Ephesians 4:19

(4:20, 21) **“But”** introduces a contrast. We **“did not come to know Christ”** through self-gratification, but through what we **“heard of Him”** by other's testimony, and by what we **“were taught in Him.”** All that we **“know”** (facts and information, not experience) of Christ (His Messiah-ship) we learned through **“the truth that is in Jesus.”** In other words, the man, Jesus, explained the Messiah (the Christ) in terms of the truth.

But, you did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. Ephesians 4:20-21

(4:22) The contrasts continue. In Christ, **“you were taught”** that you possessed an Old Nature associated with Adam. That inner nature, **“your old self,”** is constantly **“being corrupted by its deceitful desires.”** That Old Self is training itself through the experiences of the flesh.

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

(4:23-24) On the other hand, we should be renewing our minds; putting **“on the New Nature, (which is) created to be like God.”** Our *New Nature* has been created to be **“like God”** and render us suitable as members of His family. That New Inner Self is trained by God through the Holy Spirit within, not by our animal experiences. **“New”** is *'kainos'* (new in quality not in simple occurrence) and refers to the new order of being that the believer is, now having been joined to Jesus. It begins with a renewing of the mind and is a continuing process throughout life.

to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:23-24

Section Two 4:25-5:2

Imitate God in Christ, Walk in Love

Introduction to Section Two

Now we get practical advice as to how to take on the character of God by walking in Christ. That is accomplished by adopting the principles of the life of Christ through yielding our lives and bodies to the Holy Spirit so that His life becomes our own. Since we are a single body in Him, there are some universal truths, which will be characteristic of all believers. Correspondingly, there will be some behaviors that will be characteristically absent from our lives. These last are obvious traits associated with being led by the enemy, Satan, the father of lies.

(4:25) **“Therefore”** refers back to the previous passage and the truth in which we are being trained. Because **“we are all members of one body”** (the Body of Christ) we must not lie and practice deceit. (We must remember that Satan is the Father of lies and the master deceiver.

TWO

The number 2 is associated with contrast, division, growth, conflict, strength, strengthening.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. Ephesians 4:25

(4:26, 27) The Greek word for **“angry”** is *orge*, which means a settled indignation based on a studied attitude of rejection (Wuest; Robertson). There is a place in the Christian's life for being predisposed against sin and unrighteousness. In situations where that attitude is warranted, do not let sin creep in and corrupt. **“Provocation”** is a different concept. That is an attitude of irritation, aggravation, and/or bitterness. That is what the believer is to avoid, for it robs you of presence of mind, joy, and focus on the Word of God. In addition, it is the thing that brings stress into your life with serious cardiac results. (The Word of God is not only profound, it is extremely practical)

The purpose is clear, that we **“do not give Satan a foothold”** in our lives.

“Be angry, but stop sinning:” Do not let the sun go down while you are still provoked, and do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26, 27

Lest we be confused as to how this is to be accomplished, Paul give us a short list of behaviors, the means of correction, and the goal to be displayed in our lives.

A list of contrasts and purposes...

(4:28-32)

The Command	The Means	The Goal
Stop stealing.	Go to work	Something to share
Stop profanity.	Encourage others	Benefit the hearers
Stop grieving the Holy Spirit	Go to work	Imitate God
Eliminate bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice	Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving	Imitate God

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands that he may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:28-32

(5:1, 2) **“Therefore”** means, “because you are children of God, be like (imitate) your Father.” This does not say that we are to imitate Christ. Rather, we are to imitate the Father, who made it His purpose to reveal (manifest) His Son. So, too, are we to live in such a manner that Christ, who lives in us, is revealed to the world around us. **“Live”** is compared here as an equal to **“gave Himself up.”** In other words, living **“a life of love”** is tantamount to giving yourself up as an **“offering and sacrifice to God.”** Now, that is precisely what Paul told those believers in Rome—“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable spiritual service.”⁴¹ This is the way that Christ revealed the Father’s love to the world.

Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children: and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

⁴¹ Romans 12: 1

Section Three 5:3-21

Light in the Lord and Christ as its source

Introduction to Section Three

As we are encompassed in Christ, there are character traits which are displayed and which mark us out, as His. These begin with a purity of life, that essence of His life produced in us by the Holy Spirit. Reverence for all creation is ours and is the opposite of things “obscene.”

(5:3) Now comes the character of **“holy people.”** (The NAS has “saints”) and the meaning is “ones set apart,” in this case, set apart to God's purpose. In imitating God, purity of life is expected--a life free of even a suggestion of **“sexual immorality...or (sexual) impurity, or of (sexual) greed.”** “Impurity” and “greed” should not be dislodged from their orientation to sex in the context of this verse. **“Impurity”** refers to deviant behavior, rather than promiscuity. **“Greed”** refers to an increasing appetite for sexual gratification.

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

(5:4) **“Obscenity”** means invoking God's name in a declarative fashion, presuming to express His will towards another or some thing that you deal with. **“Foolish talk”** consists of words without foundation in truth or substance, i.e., words that express ideas contrary to the revealed will of God. **“Coarse joking”** are those expressions common among men that trivialize God in this world. Our speech should be liberally sprinkled with **“thanksgiving.”** This should call to mind the admonition from Paul's letter to the believers in Corinth...“If an unbeliever bids you to a feast, and you are disposed to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience' sake... for if I partake with thanksgiving, why then, am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?”⁴²

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

(5:5) **“For”** introduces a reason. You are to avoid the patterns of life just listed above for a primary reason--Because a person who exhibits a life of sexual immorality, impurity, or greed **“is an idolater”** and sex is his god. He is, therefore, excluded from **“the kingdom of Christ and of God.”**

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is

⁴² 1 Corinthians 27-30 It is important to note that it is at the unbeliever's feast that the believer is found offering thanks to God for the meal that he/she is about to consume.

an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.
Ephesians 5:5

(5:6) The admonition of v.4 is continued here in **“empty words.”**

obscurity, foolish talk, coarse joking = empty words

This whole category of speech and thoughts is referred to as **“such things,”** which incur judgment, **“the wrath of God.”** It is not on the Sons of God, but on the **“sons of disobedience.”** It is on those individuals whose life is characterized by such language and thought that God's judgment will fall.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:6

Because those kinds of people are going to be subject to God's wrathful judgment, **“do not be partners with them”** and engage in this kind of behavior.

Therefore do not be partners with them. Ephesians 5:7

(5:8) Note in this verse that it does not say that you once walked in darkness. Rather, it says that **“you once were darkness”**.⁴³ This is not referring to a behavior, but a quality of being. What we once were, we are not now! Now, **“you are light in the Lord.”** This is completely positional and locative. It states that a dramatic change in composition has taken place. Where once we were creatures of darkness, now we are new creations of light in Christ Jesus. A transformation has taken place! Further, since God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all--it follows that we are of His same substance, light, thus we should **“live as children of light.”**

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

(5:9, 10) Light produces fruit, not from behavior, but from its very nature. **“Fruit”** is singular. **“Goodness, righteousness, and truth”** are all part of the singular fruit of light. As we live as the light which we are, we will **“discover what pleases the Lord”** whose we are.

(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:9-10

(5:11-14) I find it interesting that behavior was not mentioned in discussing the “fruit” of light. Rather, here in the discussion associated with **“darkness”** we find attention focused on **“deeds.”** It reminds us that “men love darkness better than light, for their deeds are evil” thus, we are to

⁴³ Compare with 1 John 1:5

“expose them.” There is a reason for simply exposing them by light and it is introduced by **“for.”** Our path is not to loudly condemn those that are engaged in **“fruitless deeds,”** rather to live in open contrast, letting our character speak to them and the Holy Spirit convict. We should not even mention what they are doing **“in secret.”** **“But”** introduces a contrast--in contrast to our silence, our character (light) will expose the whole of their folly and disobedience.

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Ephesians 5:11-14

WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

Wisdom is the *application* of what you know of God’s Word to your experience.

Understanding refers to the *conclusions* you may come to as a result of what you have tested.

(5:15, 16) **“Wisdom”** is the application of biblical principles to your personal experience.⁴⁴

Anything else would be living according to the dictates of the Old Nature, driven by the father of deceit. Here, **“opportunity”** refers back to **“how you live.”** Too often, we read into that instruction “witnessing” rather than “living.”

Then we compound the error by extending the

instruction to “witness in the manner and after the pattern of how I witness.” Sometimes the methods of the local assembly for witnessing, whether it is a set time for visitation, or passing out tracts at particular events, or even the biannual revivals, all become the definition of ‘witnessing’ adopted by the whole assembly. Anyone who is not participating in the sanctioned activities is considered to not be witnessing. That is not the intent of this instruction. The entire thought is an extension of “live as children of light” and carries us into every moment, not just isolated moments of perceived spiritual service. Our life *is* our spiritual service. Remember Romans 12—“Present your bodies, a **living sacrifice.**”

Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-16

(5:17) **“Therefore”** (a conclusion is presented) **“do not be foolish”** (and live as unwise, **“but”** (a contrast is presented) **“understand.”** “Understanding” is what you gain from application of biblical principles to your experience. It is tested knowledge that has become objective fact in your own personal life. You learn a biblical principle; you apply that in your life; you gain “understanding” as a result of seeing the principle proven in your own life and experience. It is through living-as-light that we gain a real understanding of **“what the Lord's will is.”** This will not happen until we are living as light. Do not assume that you will know the will of God **prior to** any given decision. Live as light and you will understand God's will *as you are going.* “Having therefore gone, teach all men whatsoever I have commanded you”⁴⁵ was the Lord's own

⁴⁴ Proverbs Chapter 2

⁴⁵ Matt. 28: 19, Mark 16: 15

instruction to the disciples and carries the same thought.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.
Ephesians 5:17

(5:18) Drunkenness dulls your ability to make cogent decisions and leaves you vulnerable to the Old Sin Nature. Rather than letting that take over your life, **“be filled** (pres. imperative-continuously) **with the Spirit.”** It is the control of one's mind that is important here, the ability to make decisions. Nothing that causes us to lose control over our thought processes should be practiced.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18

(5:19, 20) Let your outward expression, **“speak to one another,”** be consistent with your inner life—**“make music in your heart to the Lord.”** And, there should always be a prayer of **“thanks to God the Father”**⁴⁶ on our lips. It is important to note that prayer and thanksgiving are again directed to the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is careful to keep our attention focused on the Father as our source. This cannot be overly emphasized--Believer, always direct your prayers to the Father!

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19, 20

(5:21) Submission, is deference to another's needs and direction. We should be in a mind-set of pliability and compromise where methods are concerned and absolutely firm where principles are concerned. If we are oriented to someone else's needs,⁴⁷ rather than our own, we will be most likely to imitate God. Since this is precisely the attitude and motivation of Christ, it is being most like Him.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:21

⁴⁶ 1 Cor 1:3, 4 Paul uses the same alliteration

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:24 "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor." This comes right at the core of Paul's instructions to the believers in Corinth as to how to judge their behavior towards men and before God.

DIVISION FIVE

Chapter 5:22-6:9

Natural Responsibilities

Introduction to Division Five

There is a natural, divinely authored, order to the responsibilities that are evident in the world of man. That order spans the entirety of creation and is patterned after elements of God's own character. What is true of the procession of authorities within the Trinity is also true within the heavenlies and then shows itself in every instance of life on Earth. Whether one looks towards God, at mankind, the kingdom of beasts, or the order of lesser life-forms, there is an order and hierarchy of responsibilities that yields the propagation of the species. In the same manner, the Church of Jesus Christ grows and expands as each successive generation is added according to the will of the Father to the very substance of the Godhead.

One foundational principle that may be observed among the rules of life, as dictated in scripture, for man is marriage. Union of man and woman in a lifelong monogamous relationship is illustrative of that union of man and God. That real union is one that is desired by Him and designed to last forever. Through that union, progeny are issued in fulfillment of the first promises of God to man and in accordance with the eternal plan of God, which has been in place since before time ever began.

The history of mankind, of man and woman in marriage, was designed by God to prepare us to understand the uniqueness of His Son, Jesus Christ. The advent of Christ as the God-Man, perfect deity and total humanity, is the reality of which the union of man and woman is only representative. If every marriage were entered into with this vision clearly in front of those being wed, then how much firmer the union would be. Marriage is not simply a social contract, but a divine commitment of two to build a new thing together. And, that is not talking about their children. It is the forging of *one new person* out of the two. Two bodies becoming one...Two minds blending into one single will...One single voice ...One single experience...One single destiny...and, expressing all of the unique qualities of the two that were joined.

Section One 5:22-33

Marriage, the fundamental form of unity for man

Introduction to Section One

Marriage is a picture of union. Just as there is union between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is union between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. The Church is the Bride, and thus the body, of the Lord Jesus. Christian marriage is to hold before the world the essence of that union between Christ and His Bride. If the world cannot see the principle of submission at the heart of each Christian marriage and family, then it will not understand our submission to the instructions to the Church in terms of holy living. Unbelievers will feel that we are accusing them on grounds that we are not willing to adhere to in our own lives--and they will be right.

Headship

In love, headship means that you give for the other person, not that you demand from them.

Instruction to wives and husbands

(5:22) There should be no question as to an individual believer's submission to the Lord Jesus. Paul says here that the wife is to be submissive to her husband in precisely the same manner. That does not mean inferior, but willing to be led by her husband.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Ephesians 5:22

(5:23-24) The reason is clear—“**...as Christ is the head of the Church, His body**” so too, is the husband “**the head**” of his wife. In the matter of submission to authority or leadership, this position of responsibility to lead is all-inclusive. Note that there is no accommodation for lack of education, lack of a more forceful personality, lack of earnings potential, or any other reason given for the wife to assume the headship of the family.

This is not an endorsement of staying in an abusive relationship. Those kinds of situations are dealt with in other areas. But, it needs to be recognized that God does not water down His intentions to allow for human weakness and uncomfortable situations.

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Ephesians 5:23-24

(5:25) Husbands are commanded to “**love your wives.**” “Love” is *agape* in the Greek. This is source love that requires no particular response on the part of the one loved. It is a unilateral command and is patterned by the love that the Lord Jesus had for his Church when He “**gave Himself up for her.**” In other words, the husband should demonstrate that he is willing to give

up his own life for whatever is in the best interest of his bride. This was so serious a call to living that the qualification for elders and deacons included that they be the husbands of one wife. Only through that means would the clear picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church be portrayed accurately. Therefore, it is the responsibility of those gifted to teach and to lead within the Body to confront those who follow with their own lives lived to this divinely tuned standard.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
Ephesians 5:25

(5:26-27) The object of Christ's love for His church was to **“make her holy.”** “Holy” means “to set apart to a purpose.” The purpose of the Church is to represent Christ and demonstrate His love as the object of His affection. **“Washing”** is “baptizing” and speaks of identification. The Church is now identified with Christ. “Washing” also speaks of union. The Church is now in union with Christ. The medium used in that baptism is the word of God. **“Water”** and **“the word”** are synonymous in their application to the individual who has come to Christ. First, there is the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, there is the ceremonial water baptism, the “washing” of that individual, which marks their identification with Christ before an entire watching world. The ceremony symbolizes the immersion in the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ that is the means by which the individual is “set apart” unto Christ.

Since the members individually are now identified with Christ, they share His character. As He is **“blameless,”** so too are the members in particular of the Church. Behavior is not in view here, but position. We are found positioned “in Christ.”

to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:26-27

(5:28-30) Now, just as Christ loves the Church, His Body, husbands are to **“love their wives as their own bodies.”** This is not to extol self-love, but self-less love; love that is unbridled, not meted out but is immeasurable, love that declares its object worthy of all adoration.

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--for we are members of His body. Ephesians 5:28-30

(5:31) Paul borrows the command of God to Adam in Genesis that made the marriage bond the primary union for man on earth. Man and woman who come together in marriage have **“become one flesh”** before God. It remains to be seen how little we understand of this rule of life. One glimpse is seen in how broad the effect of multiple sexual partners really is on mankind. There are myriad reasons why such results, destructive elements in any culture, appear, including:

Physiological Higher rates of cervical cancer.

Spread of genital warts.
Rampant venereal diseases (genital herpes, gonorrhea)
A compromised immune system.

Psychological A growing loss of commitment to marriage and children by fathers and mothers alike.
Nervous system disorders.
Loss of self-esteem through a diminished self-worth

Genealogical Children who do not know their biological parents.
Mothers who do not even know who the father of their child is.
Reduction in the input of loving grandparents.

Sociological Weakened family ties
Single parent families
Children raised without the influence of either father or mother

Ethnological Confusion that comes from a loss of one's heritage.
Angst associated with a loss of orientation to one's place in history.
Anxiety over recessive traits that may show up in offspring.

Marital fidelity is the only answer to these forces. They are only the tip of the iceberg and they are only symptomatic of the spiritual sickness that plagues Christendom as well as mankind.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." Ephesians 5:31 and Gen 2:24

(5:32, 33) We are reminded that this whole discussion is in reference to **“Christ and the Church,”** but, it presents very practical application to that which must prevail between husband and wife in the marriage of believers.

This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.
However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ephesians 5:32-33

Section Two 6:1-4

The family relationship

Introduction to Section Two

As marriage is the picture of union between the husband and wife, signifying the union of man with God; the relationship between parents and children are to demonstrate responsibility in our experience as men before God the Father. Children are representative of the believer who is now reborn into the family of God.

Just as our Heavenly Father provides for us because we are His children, so too are we to provide for our own children (both spiritual and physical)--for their growth, their nourishment, their strength of character, and for their inheritance. We are to give them our name and train them in the use of their personal talents and gifts of service. Every one of these elements is found in the assets of the believer.

Instructions to children

(6:1) The first command—“**obey.**” Obedience is a clear demonstration of submission to authority. It is especially true when you as a child disagree with the instructions of your parent. “**In the Lord**” refers to the quality of your obedience, not the condition of the parent’s relationship to God.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Ephesians 6:1

(6:2,3) The second command—“**Honor.**” “Honor” means to place in a position of high esteem, to cause respect to be shown. God rewards this action on the part of children towards parents with personal peace and long life.

“Honor your father and mother”--which is the first commandment with a promise—“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Ephesians 6:2, 3

Now, pay special note that *there are no instructions here for mothers*. This is because the father is the head of the family and is in the position of authority over his wife and the children.

*God holds the father, not the mother,
especially accountable for the well being of the family
and for the spiritual instruction of all family members.*

One of the greatest tragedies of this age is the absence of fathers as heads of their families in the

black community. It is heartening to see black pastors addressing this burning need. We have yet to see and experience the full negative impact that this lack of leadership is having on this generation of children, especially males, who are growing up without that authority figure and role in their training. Government will throw billions into the breach in attempts to accommodate the need, but there is no reasonable substitute for a stable nuclear family.

Instructions to fathers

(6:4) The reason “**fathers**” are mentioned specifically is because they *are* the head of the family. Fathers are *charged* with leadership of the family for one particular purpose;

*to demonstrate the authority that God holds
over the entire family of man and that
Christ holds over the entire family of the Church.*

Children are not to be abused (“**exasperate**”), but are to be given “**training and instruction.**” If children do not receive this from their earthly father, they will have great difficulty understanding it as to their Heavenly Father.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

Section Three 6:5-9

Sin's deformation transformed by grace

Introduction to Section Three

We must remember that man as he is now does not reflect man as he was intended to be when created. Adam in the garden enjoyed mental abilities unsullied by sinful conditioning that assaults every child born into the world today. Even before coming into the world as a newborn babe, the developing child in the womb is being conditioned by elements of decay that work to mar and make less perfect the specific creative and reproductive work of God. The unborn will respond to sounds which are either soothing or agitating; to chemicals that find their way into the mother's system as pollutants or elements of abuse; to genetic influences that are the result of generations of deterioration due to poor air quality, malnutrition, bad water, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, uppers, downers, aspirin, lead based paint, aluminum, etc.

Adam and Eve bore none of that burden. The only angst in their world was associated with that single restricted fruit tree. How pervasive that single test became--how it grabbed the attention of Eve and became the "foothold" which the Serpent used to bring them both down. It was one test;

one failure; one all-pervasive flaw that brought Sin into man's world and deformed it for all of time and history. It takes the power of God the Father and the end of time itself to rid man of this fatal flaw. Just as we are now made to be slaves to Sin in us from the moment of conception, in redemptive rebirth we are slaves to God as free men, bound no longer to that which Adam brought in and imposed upon each of us but bound inescapably to the Father **“in Christ.”**

(6:5, 6) **“Slaves”** were so for any number of reasons. They might have been drawn into slavery by debt, or by an act of war, or by purchase. This is not an endorsement by Paul of the existence of slavery, but of recognition that the condition was common and that the follower of Christ was likely to come from the ranks of slavery. If that happened to be the case, one was none-the-less under obligation to Christ to serve in their station of life in a manner consistent with the intent of their Lord Jesus.

In today's free societies the attitudes imposed here on slaves would be applied to worker and manager or company. Our attitude towards the source of our sustenance should include **“respect”** for their authority and **“fear,”** not cowering, but concern for their approval and **“with sincerity of heart,”** which means a genuine effort on our part towards their profit and well being. Our service to our employer is to be performed with an eye towards **“doing the will of God from within us.”**

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.
Ephesians 6:5, 6

The source of our reward

(6:7, 8) We are to **“serve without reservation”** as unto the Lord Himself, **“knowing that the Lord will reward”** for our efforts. There is a unique opportunity for the Christian in business today. We have the right to operate within the system that is in place, whether free market or managed market, in a completely free manner. This is true freedom in the business world--to know that we may expend our energies doing those things that are the “right” things to do and that God will be the rewarder rather than men. Further, that our reward will not depend upon our station among men, but on the merit assigned by God. We should work hard! We should work harder than anybody else around us. And, we should do so without strings attached. We should remain confident that our reward is always governed by our Heavenly Father.

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Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Ephesians 6:7, 8

(6:9) If the slave is to grant respect and concern to the master, the master is commanded **“not to threaten them.”** This is because the **“Master...in heaven,”** the Lord Jesus, is Lord over all and does not view either of them in any sense of particular favor. Our standing in heaven is “in Christ” and inconsequential with regards to our standing among men on earth.

And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Ephesians 6:9

DIVISION SIX

Chapter 6:10-24

Conflict and the Way of Victory

Introduction to Division Six

Conflict and difficulty are brought into the believer's life in order to reveal some new aspect of God and His character. The revelation may be to the one experiencing the problem, or it may be to another who is looking on. Whichever is the case, we are to stand in the strength of the Lord and not in our own abilities as men. Even though we might try to “give God the credit” for making us able to meet the test, it is important to realize where His strength is our refuge and where we are depending on our own genius and clever solutions to gain control of the situation. The acid test is always this; who gains the glory from the action? Do people compliment us on our insight, resolve, or even our faith? Or, are they serious in their thanksgiving to God for delivering you or them through whatever the difficulty presented? If everyone's attention is caused to focus on the Father's provision, then you can be pretty sure that your confidence was in His strength and not your own. Doesn't seem quite fair, does it? There you are, trying with all your might to cling to your commitment to claim His promises and tough it out. And, now with it behind you, no one is going to be able to tell you how proud of you they really are. After all, isn't that the very kind of positive reinforcement that we are told to use on our children constantly in order to develop in them a healthy and positive self-esteem? Alarms ought to be sounding right about now!!!

Well here is a news bulletin for you—

*The Way and Means of Victory in life
is not through a positive attitude!*

It is rooted in a positive experience with our loving Father's tender care and mercy towards us. It is not our *attitude* that wins the day, but the *love* of our Father for His children. We are to walk in those **“good works that the Father has prepared beforehand” (Ephesians 2:10)**. Knowing that truth, our attitude will improve, but, not as a source of our strength; rather as a result of His strength in us. His “Masterpiece” is completed when we do this. It is easy for man to believe that he is God's Masterpiece in the midst of all creation. Michelangelo captured the thought almost perfectly in the Cistine Chapel with his depiction of the creation of Adam. But, in Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers he makes it absolutely clear that it was not man, but the living organism of the Church, the Body of Christ, that was the heart and intention of the Father from the very moment of creation's planning prior to one single element becoming a reality! You and me, and every individual believer from Pentecost to the Rapture were in the thoughts and heart of God. That's what this entire existence is all about—the universe was created to capture our attention

and imagination and enthrall us with His majesty and glory. It was all done to impress on us His power and might, so that we might know just how high He has raised us as the Bride of His Son, the ascended Man, Jesus!.

The Creation of Adam - Ceiling of the Cistine Chapel

God, the source of our strength

(6:10) Our strength is ultimately **“in the Lord.”** This verse recognizes that our human strengths have no substance (‘spiritual capital’) in God’s realm or in the sphere of Christian service. It is **“His mighty power”** that we weld and not our own pitiful human influence. The key to humility rests on our understanding of this principle. As we mature in age and knowledge and gain skill in dealing with people, it is increasingly difficult to remember that our skill is humanly engineered and is strength of the old nature. One good test is this; if the same thing can be accomplished by an unbeliever, then it is not based in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 6:10

(6:11, 12) There is a **“full armor”** provided the believer by God that will protect us **“against the wiles of the devil.”** Satan is the master deceiver and the father of all lies. His deception is beyond the ability of man to withstand, but we are not left defenseless. Because the **“battle is not against flesh and blood”** we will need spiritual defenses. **“Rulers...authorities...powers of this dark world...spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies,”** these are all categories of fallen angels who make up the hierarchy of evil which we encounter in the world and against which we need the protection provided by God.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:11, 12

(6:13-17) Here then is **“the full armor of God”** for the Saint...It is given that you **“may be able to stand...and having done everything you know to do, to remain standing.”** The picture is one of victory. The implication of “full armor” is that we are totally equipped for anything that we might face. The ‘gifts of the Spirit’ that we are given are for our specific service to the Body of Christ, and the ‘full armor of God’ is for our work and stand in the world. Notice that we are prepared in this way to do every kind of service that a believer might be called to perform. That means that though we are gifted at teachers, we might be called on to minister through evangelism, or administration, or construction, or hauling out the garbage, or sitting with the kid in day care, or nursing the sick. There is never a pass given to us because, “my gift is teaching,” or “I don’t study like you do because my gift is evangelism.” Let’s examine these pieces of armor with this in mind.

“Truth”...is a belt around the waist. On this belt the weapons of battle are

carried. Our strength then is to come from God who *is* Truth. We are to be armed with His very character and nature.

“Righteousness”...is our breastplate. It protects us where we are the most vulnerable, in our heart and mind. His righteousness is the mortar that glues the wall of our doctrinal positions together. To know the righteousness of God is to stand on the ground of peace with Him. It is only in that position that we have assurance of life.

“Readiness”...is our pair of boots. As God's army, we are to be prepared to move across whatever ground is before us, carrying the Gospel of peace. In order to gain this degree of preparation we must “study to show ourselves approved unto God...rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” There is one type of ground within the Body, there is another within the local assembly, there is a third outside in the community, and there is a fourth abroad on the mission fields—our preparation with the Word of God makes us effective wherever we find ourselves serving, without fear and without excuses.

“Faith”...is our shield. Where the breastplate protects in hand-to-hand close combat, the shield protects from those assaults lobbed from long range. In other words, “righteousness” protects from those enemies that we see, while “faith” protects from those enemies that we cannot see. It is “righteousness” that dictates our behavioral choices as we are confronted daily. It is faith that keeps us when we do not understand even the direction from which the testing is coming. Righteousness dictates that we are not drunkards or slovenly in our work attitudes; faith gives us the courage to continue without bitterness when loved ones hurt or our pathway is difficult; because our faith does not flow from our own hearts, but is a “gift of God” that comes with salvation “in Christ.” One evangelist said this: “When confronted with attacks on the Lord Jesus we often react by attempting to protect Him. He is the Lion of Judah; open the cage and let Him out.”

“Salvation”...is our helmet. We are saved on the basis of what God has revealed to us of Christ; on the basis of what we “know.” Our will is now submissive to His will. Our mind has been exchanged for His mind.

“Word of God”...is the sword used by the Holy Spirit in battle. This does not simply refer to the Bible, but to the living Word, the ascended Lord Jesus. “The word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and is the perfect critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness

that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
Ephesians 6:13-17

(6:18) Following the context of the previous verse, prayer **“in the Spirit”** is prayer within the sphere of the Word of God. It is not possible to read into this phrase a charismatic utterance. Our prayers and requests are to flow out of our alert minds and genuine concern for other believers. We are to apply the Word of God actively **“on all occasions”** and in all manners of requests, but always within the *revealed* Word of God. Again, that speaks against ecstatic utterance or untranslated instruction. That means that we must know the Word and the intent of God regarding events in our lives and in the lives of other saints. Absent that specific knowledge, we should first pray for understanding and the revelation of His work and will.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18

(6:19, 20) Look at the examples given by Paul of what the believers in Ephesus should be praying for regarding his needs... **“that words may be given.”** This is for specific knowledge for ministry of the Gospel, and for a spirit of **“fearlessness”** in the declaration of the Gospel. Nothing of relief or protection, for those are givens in the walk of the believer. And certainly not prayer for ease or prosperity.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.
Ephesians 6:19-20

(6:21, 22) Paul is sending them a report in order that they might know how he is being sustained in grace and what his work consists of at the present time. He is not partitioning for assistance or support. This is a testimony of God's provision specifically for their encouragement. How different this is from the media evangelists and preachers who lace every time of testimony with requests and dire reports of need of funds in order to continue their work. Perhaps if it was truly the Lord's work, instead of their personal goals, there would not be such angst.

Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. Ephesians 6:21, 22

(6:23, 24) Note that **“faith”** is from **“God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** This is an important statement. **“Peace and love”** are declared to be their due as saints. **“Peace”** is their standing before God the Father in the Son. The believer is *at peace* with God. There is no more any animosity between the Father and the believer. The full price of sin has been paid by the

sacrifice of the Son, thus there is no claim that sin can make of any believer. **“Love”** is the substance of what they are, for “in Christ” we are joined to Him who is love. Love, therefore, is not descriptive of a feeling, but of spiritual substance; it is the stuff of which the believer is now made. **“Grace”** is the summation of God's provision for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are found in Him on the ground of peace.

Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.
Ephesians 6:23, 24

EPILOGUE:

When the believer comes into a full understanding of the fact that he/she is not just secured in a heavenly home, but that he/she is also delivered from the power of sin and Satan here as well, then all that God is making available can be brought into enjoyment in day to day experiences. The key to this is to grasp the truth of our **position** before the Father. He sees us in His Son and is predisposed to shower us with all that He has made available for His Son to whom we are joined.

What a relief from having to generate merit on our part! God loves us as the objects of His affection, not because of any particular behavior or brilliance on our part. He loves us simply out of His own sovereign choice of each of us as that object on which He would bestow His blessing.

Positional Truth is a foundation doctrine. The letter to the Ephesians clearly presents that doctrine and the benefits and assets of heaven that are the believer's as a result of now being found **“in Christ.”** Study it carefully. Then, receive it as truth in your own life. You will be enriched and empowered to more accurately and fully represent the Lord Jesus, who gave all that we might become thoroughly His.