

EPHESIANS

Knowing and walking in the authority and richness of life in Christ



Notes for your edification

by

Geoffrey Bull

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Course Outline

The purpose of the letter to the Ephesians:

Encouragement to the church to know and walk in the authority and richness of life in Christ

Goal or purpose of the course:

To help us ...

... firstly, to understand our true identity – whose we are, and who we are in Christ

... then, to learn to walk in Christ in the activities and conversations of our everyday relationships. Taking Jesus into 'our' world, and thereby bring glory to the Father.

... finally, to be able to exercise our God given authority and prevail against the enemy in the strength of Christ who is our life and our all

Key Verses:

Eph 1:3-6 ... *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”*

Eph 2:4-10 ... *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*

Eph 4:1-3 ... *“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

Eph 6:10-13 ... *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

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Lesson 1 Introduction

Background to the Epistle to the Ephesians:

The epistle to the Ephesians, along with Paul's other epistles to the Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, are collectively known as the "Prison Epistles" as they were written from Rome during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

Paul had first paid a brief visit to Ephesus on his second missionary journey ([Acts 18:18-21](#)). Then on his third missionary journey he spent about three years in Ephesus, preaching and teaching to both Jew and Gentile ([Acts 19:1-20:1](#) and [20:31](#)). Then on the return leg of this journey on his way back to Jerusalem, Paul stopped in at Miletus and called for the elders from Ephesus to join him there for a brief meeting ([Acts 20:17-38](#)). Paul returned to Jerusalem in AD 57 and it was some years later, somewhere between AD 60-62, that he wrote the epistle to the Ephesians.

Reason for Writing to the Ephesians:

There is no question that, while living in Ephesus, Paul's teaching and example would have brought these Ephesian believers to a high level of maturity in Christ as he taught them ... "*the whole purpose of God*" ... ([Acts 20:27](#)). However, when he finally left them Paul gave them a warning ([Acts 20:28-32](#)) and it is apparent that the "savage wolves", that he spoke about in his warning, had come in and done their evil work to bring disunity, factions and doubt to the believers and denying them from walking in the inheritance that belongs to the sanctified. We know this simply by looking at the various themes that run through the epistle and the admonitions brought to them through this letter. We see Paul bringing ... "*the whole purpose of God*" ... once again to them by way of this epistle.

Similarity between Ephesians and Colossians:

Our study will focus on the message brought to the church, found in the book of Ephesians. However, we will find that there are numerous similarities to be found in the epistle to the Colossians and so we will, from time to time, dig into Colossians to confirm the message found in Ephesians.

More than any other two books of the New Testament, Ephesians and Colossians share numerous similarities. In fact to some degree of similarity, 75 of the 155 verses of Ephesians are found in Colossians.

Both epistles commence with doctrinal sections which centre on our exalted Lord and His eternal plan and purpose and then proceed to the application of His purpose to our personal lives and our various human relationships.

We capture some of the similarities between the books in the table below:

Ephesians	Colossians	Content
1:1-2	1:1-2	Paul's typical greetings
1:15-23	1:3-20	Thanks is given for the saints and a prayer given for them
3:1-13	1:23-29	The apostle's commission to make known the mystery of the gospel
4:17-32	3:5-17	Christian living, speaking of putting off the old nature and putting on the new
5:15-20	3:16-17 & 4:5-6	The Christian's walk and the duty of giving thanks and its expression in praise and song
5:22-6:9	3:18-4:1	Instructions to husbands and wives, parents and children, and slaves and masters
6:18-20	4:3-4	Paul's request for prayer for himself, references to his bonds, and reference to the mystery of the gospel

Similarly, there are parallels in expressions that occur more frequently between Ephesians and Colossians than in other two books. In fact, the expressions listed in the table below are found only in Ephesians and Colossians and not in any of Paul's other writings. These few unique expressions almost sum up the overall message of Ephesians and Colossians.

Ephesians	Colossians	Expression
1:7	1:14	Redemption specifically spoken of as 'the forgiveness of sins'
1:13	1:5	The word of the truth, the gospel
1:23 3:19 4:13	1:19 2:9	The fullness of God or of Christ
2:12 4:18	1:21	Alienation from God or His people
3:17	2:7	Being rooted in Christ or His love
4:2	3:13	Forbearing one another
4:16	2:19	The joints of the body and their part in the increase of the body
4:32	3:13	Forgiving one another even as the Lord has forgiven you
5:5	3:5	Covetous defined as idolatry
5:16	4:5	Making the most of your time
6:6	3:22	The giving of 'eye service' as 'men-pleasers'
6:21-22	4:7-8	Reference to Tychicus as bearer of news and information

While there are many parallels, the emphasis in Ephesians is on the church, the body of Christ, while the emphasis in Colossians is on Christ, the Head of the body.

Recurrent Words or Phrases in Ephesians:

- **"Grace"** occurs 12 times (Ch1:2, 6, 7; Ch2:5, 7, 8; Ch3:2, 7, 8; Ch4:7, 29; Ch 6:24)
- **"One"** in relation to unity occurs 13 times (Ch2:14, 15, 16, 18; Ch4:4, 5, 6, 25; Ch5:31)
- **"Together"** in relation to unity occurs 5 times (Ch2:5, 21, 22; Ch4:16, 17)
- **"In Christ"** statements including "In Him", "In Whom", etc occur 29 times (Ch1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 20; Ch2:5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 18, 21, 22; Ch3:6, 11, 12, 21; Ch4:15, 16, 21; Ch6:21)
- **"In heavenly places"** occurs 4 times (Ch1:3, 20; Ch2:6; Ch3:10)
- **"Riches"** occurs 5 times (Ch1:7, 18; Ch2:7; Ch3:8, 16)
- **"Church"** occurs 9 times (Ch1:22; Ch3:10, 21; Ch5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32)

The Themes in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

There are a number of themes woven together through the book, some of which include:

- Christ the exalted Lord and summation of all things.
- The believers riches and responsibilities in Christ
- The unity of believers and wholeness for a broken world
- The believers in-Christ wealth, walk and warfare
- The church, a purified and equipped people to take Jesus into our world.

1. Christ the Exalted Lord and summation of all things: Christ is the centerpiece of everything God has planned and purposed. All of God's plans, from eternity past, now and on into the future eternity, are centred in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Gen 1:1 and John 1:1-4 clearly state that Christ was part of the Godhead at creation ... *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men"*. And Ephesians speaks of Christ the centrepiece, ... *"the summing up of all things in Christ"* (Eph 1:10) ... *"Christ Jesus being the corner stone in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord"* (Eph 2:20, 21) ... *"in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph 3:11) ... *"He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above the heavens that He might fill all things"* (Eph 4:10).

2. The believer's riches and responsibilities in Christ:

Ephesus was the financial centre of the ancient world. The temple of Diana was not only a centre for idolatrous worship, but also a depository for wealth. So in the epistle we find "financial" words such as: 'riches', 'inheritance', 'fullness' and 'filled'. Too many Christians live like spiritual paupers when Christ has made us rich. Paul exhorts us to start drawing on the riches we have in Christ. We inherit wealth by faith and invest the wealth by works.

In the preface to his book "Be Rich", Warren Wiersbe has a story that sums up what Ephesians is all about. It goes like this:

"An undernourished boy was found on the city street and taken to hospital. After the nurses had bathed him and dressed him, they put him to bed and brought him his dinner tray. Conspicuous on that tray was a large glass of milk. The boy's eyes lit up as he reached for the glass, but then he paused and, looking at the nurses, asked a question that broke their hearts: "Can I drink ALL of it?"

It was obvious that back home there was never enough of anything".

But for believers there is no lack. Eph 1:3 ... *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"*.

Paul encourages Christians not to live like spiritual paupers when Christ has made us rich. It's time we stopped living on substitutes (particularly religious substitutes) and started drawing on the riches we have in Christ!

Walking in the rich life of Christ we can fulfill our responsibilities to walk in unity, purity, harmony and victory!

3. The unity of believers and wholeness for a broken world:

We want to be loved and accepted by God and by others. We don't like to feel rejected or divided. Ephesians is about uniting all things in Christ.

It starts with our acceptance in Christ: ([Eph 1:6](#)) ... *"to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved"*.

It progresses to our being united with Christ through His grace: ([Eph 2:4-7](#)) NLT ... *"But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of His grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all He has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus"*.

Then, in Christ, ([Eph 4:2](#)) ... *"with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love"* ... we learn to walk in unity. In Christ we can break down the divisions – one ethnic group from another, husband from wife, parent from child, employer from employee. We become a people who ([Eph 5:2](#)) ... *"walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma"*.

4. The believer's in-Christ wealth, walk and warfare:

For us to be pleasing to God our lives must be properly adjusted to Him in all things. So coming to know God, loving Him and letting Him live through us in every aspect of our lives is the whole purpose of our being on this earth. The divine purpose for us is that ... *"we should be to the praise of His glory"* ([Eph 1:12](#)) and ... *"to Him be glory in the church"* ([Eph 3:21](#)).

Our identity directly impacts our conduct.

Ephesians begins with the believer's position and identity in Christ, then addresses our life in the world and finally establishes our attitude to the enemy.

- ... *"God ... raised us up with Christ and seated us in Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus"* ([Eph 2:6](#)). We must begin our spiritual life from the place of rest, sitting in Christ at the Father's right hand, learning Christ and putting on Christ.

- ... “Therefore I ... implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Eph 4:1). Our walk expresses our life and influence in the world. As we have put on Christ we are to give Him expression in our conduct in all relations.
- ... “take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm” (Eph 6:13). We stand in the authority of Christ against all evil, and influence the spiritual atmosphere over our communities through prevailing prayer.

5. The Church, a purified and equipped people to take Jesus into our world:

This letter to the Ephesians provides an amazing panorama of God’s eternal purpose for His church – from before the foundation of the world through to its consummation in the fullness of Christ. Before the world was formed and the division of nations (Jews and Gentiles) occurred, we were all chosen in Christ.

To bring us in line with His original purpose and plan He made us alive from sin, by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By breaking down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, male and female, master and slave, bond and free, He made us one new man in Christ and purposed that we might grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The emphasis in Ephesians is not so much on our individual salvation as much as it is on our wholeness and effectiveness as a community of believers in bringing salvation to our community. Ephesians is the gospel of the church. It explains the Father’s eternal purpose to establish through Jesus Christ, His Son, a new people, His church, who will take the light and life of His love into a dark world.

The responsibility of this new community is to bring life in place of death; unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation; wholeness, purity and righteousness in the place of corruption and wickedness; love and peace in the place of hatred and strife; and to stand steadfast and strong against all forms of evil.

Our identity in Christ expressed through our walk in unity, love, purity, wisdom and mutual submission is how the church brings glory to the Father.

... “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph 2:10) ... to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:12).

... “to Him be glory in the Church” (Eph 3:21).

Lesson 2 – Seated in Christ in Heavenly Places

Eph 2:6 ... *“But God ... raised us up with Christ, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”.*

The Christian life is a supernatural process that operates by grace, and it begins and continues with the work of God on our behalf. For this reason, when Paul writes to the believers at Ephesus, he does not begin with a list of instructions or commands to be carried out, but rather he devotes the entire first half of the epistle to explaining all of the wonderful things that God has done **for** us. He also prays that we come to an understanding of our position in Christ and that we may appropriate all the blessings that are ours in Christ. Then, after having established the riches that we have in Christ, he moves on in the second half of the letter to the practical matters of how we ought to live and to wage war in light of our new identity. Christ can only be clearly communicated through the people in whom He dwells. He lives in and **through** us. This epistle is about Christ living in and through His people, the church, in our world.

So we commence with sitting in His presence and learning Christ. Only when we have a clear understanding of our identity in Christ will we be able to express Him in our walk and in our warfare.

Those who try to walk before they have sat will find they go out in self effort and are doomed for failure. Christianity does not start with what **we “DO”** but with what **Christ has “DONE”**.

Eph 1:3 ...*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”.***

The first thing we must learn is that the work, both initially and progressively, is not ours but His. All He asks of us is that we submit to Him and allow Him to do His work in us.

Eph 2:10 ... *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” ...*

Phil 1:6 ... *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus”.*

Seated and Attentive to Explore the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

So we commence from a position of rest, seated in Christ, and learn of Him. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, we are going seek to plumb the depths and discover something of the **unsearchable riches of Christ**.

Ephesians 1:1-23 ...*“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His*

grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the **riches of His grace** ⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. ¹⁵ For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”.

Rom 11:33 ...“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”

Eph 3:8 ...“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ”.

Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the Will of God

The author of this letter, the God ordained Apostle Paul, was able to use the expressive superlatives to state his deep experiential love and appreciation for the spiritual riches of Christ that were his, for one main reason: he had first, before going out to minister, before ‘doing’ anything **for Christ**, sat at the feet of our Lord to receive **from Christ** and had learned Christ. He had received a revelation of Jesus Christ as his life and his all. This revelation commenced on the road to Damascus and went on for years after that. Paul, by example, shows us that we must start from the place of rest, seated, to learn Christ. In fact it’s an ongoing attitude of being attuned to the Holy Spirit as He teaches us Christ. The only reason Paul has something to write to us is because he has first sat in the place of rest and received a revelation of Christ.

Gal 1:11-18; 2:1-2 ... “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ **to reveal His Son in me** so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days” ... “Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ² It was because of a **revelation** that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles”.

It was to Paul the ‘mystery’, hidden down through the ages, had been revealed, which is:

Col 1:27 ... “Christ in you, the hope of glory”.

And it was because Paul’s eyes had been opened to the work of the cross and the riches of grace in Christ that he could say:

Gal 2:20 ... “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, 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 up for me”.

Because Paul had started from, and maintained, a position of rest before the Lord, a position or attitude of learning, and had received the revelation of Christ as his life and his all, he had gained a full understanding of the **work of the cross** on his behalf and had come to understand his position in Christ and Christ in Him, that he could then live by the **way of the cross**.

This is the pattern Jesus Himself set when He said ... “I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (Jn 8:28) ... “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9) ... “The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works” (Jn 14:10). Both Jesus and Paul, by example are telling us that if we don’t first sit and learn Christ and put Him on, we will have nothing to offer when we go out into the market place of life. Christ must be seen in us by others in the same way that Jesus said ... “he who has seen Me has seen the Father”.

That’s why the evil spirit could say to the pretenders when they were trying to cast out the demons, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you”? (Acts 19:15). Because they saw Christ in Paul. Paul had learned Christ, his identity in Christ was known, he knew without doubt that Christ lived in Him.

Paul is not just writing a theoretical treatise to the Ephesians, he is pouring out rich words of encouragement that emanate from an intimate knowledge of Christ gained by revelation ... “*the fellowship of the mystery*” (Eph3:9) ... and “*the fellowship of the Spirit*” (Phil 2:10) and experience from a life of embracing Christ and the cross ... “*the fellowship of His sufferings*” (Phil 3:10).

Just listen to his words in Philippians:

Phil 3:3-14 ... “*for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and **put no confidence in the flesh,*** ⁴ *although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:* ⁵ *circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;* ⁶ *as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.* ⁷ *But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.* ⁸ *More than that, I count **all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,*** ⁹ *and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,* ¹⁰ ***that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;*** ¹¹ ***in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*** ¹² *Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.* ¹³ *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”.*

Like Paul we may receive revelation of Christ as we sit at His feet in prayer and in His word, but more often than not, we learn Christ as He reveals Himself to us out of the challenges that are presented to us as we embrace the work and the way of the cross.

To grasp the deep things of Christ we have to leave the shallows and go down into the depths. We have to leave the heights of our comfort zones and bow down, very low down, because the precious riches of Christ don't lie out on the surface where they can be abused. These mysteries of Christ are treasures hidden in the deep and difficult places and times of adversity. It is always, and only, those who have plumbed these depths in their walk with Christ that truly understand the riches of His grace and mercy and come to a revelation of Christ as their all in all.

Have a look at some of the inexplicable sufferings and adversities Paul endured and see a man who has “touched God”. A man who has ‘learned Christ’ amidst the harsh trials and tribulations that he faced in his journey of life to know Him whom to know is life eternal. Listen to the words of a man who fully understands the unsearchable riches we have in Christ:

2 Cor 6:3-10 ... “giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,⁴ but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in hunger,⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,⁸ by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;⁹ as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, **we live**; as punished yet **not put to death**,¹⁰ as sorrowful yet **always rejoicing**, as poor yet **making many rich**, as having nothing yet **possessing all things**”.

Paul was the one who later in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:23-28) gave account of the numerous lashings, beatings with rods, imprisonments, stonings, shipwrecks, robberies, sleepless nights, false accusations, hungers and thirsts he had faced. If ever there was a man that had a reason to question God about all the torment and trials he faced it was Paul. Yet other than his request to God to remove a ...“*thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan*” (2 Cor 12:7) from him, to which God replied ... “*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness*” (2 Cor 12:9), we don’t hear Paul questioning God. Instead, in the face of all adversity we hear him say ... “*I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:10).

We will never have met with adversity as frequently or severely as Paul did, yet have we not time and again questioned God when we have been through trials? Yet, here Paul, the author of this epistle, stands as our example. It’s out of his personal experience and knowledge of Christ, and total trust in Christ, that he can help us to come to an understanding of the unfathomable and magnificent riches that are ours in Christ.

Also, in the second half of Ephesians, when Paul talks about our walk he will do it as our **example**, one who speaks from experience. That’s why he confidently says ... “*be imitators of me*” (1 Cor 4:16) and ... “*in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example*” (2 Thess 3:9). We also hear him say:

2 Cor 4:7-11 & 17-18 ... “*But **we have this treasure** in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;⁸ we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.¹¹ For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh ...¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*”.

No matter what he went through Paul's eyes were fixed on Christ, not on the situation or circumstances, so that he could learn Christ and put on Christ.

It's this humble man, ... *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"* ... that says, ... *"To me, not the greatest of the apostles, not the greatest of the saints, not as one who is better than any other, but one who is less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach ... the unfathomable riches of Christ"* (Eph. 3:8). Through Paul and his inspired writings we have the opportunity to understand and draw upon these riches that were a mystery, hidden through the ages, and revealed to Paul. So let us meditate carefully on the words that he, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has penned for us.

It's to ... *"the saints who are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus"* (Eph 1:1) ... that he writes. We are included in the 'faithful in Christ Jesus', so it's to us he also writes!

The Riches of His Grace

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

In all his letters Paul always commences with a greeting, starting with the word 'grace'. What is grace? To comprehend the 'riches of His grace' we need to have some understanding of what Grace means.

The traditional answer is: "Grace is unmerited favor." Or an acronym where G R A C E stands for **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Those definitions are correct, but they don't quite hit the nail on the head. Grace is more than that. What do we mean by 'unmerited favour'? It means we have no merit, and God does what He does for us as a favour even though we have no merit. Nothing can merit grace.

But God's grace is more than just unmerited favour. For His grace does not only extend to where there is no merit, but grace also reaches out to where there is demerit. Demerit is worse than no merit. No merit means you have nothing of merit to your account, but demerit means you have a negative balance to your account; you have unworthiness in your account. As sinners we were not only without any worthiness, but we are worse than that, we were everything that we should not be!

Looking at Paul once more we hear him say of himself ... *"To me, who am less than the least of all saints"* (Eph. 3:8), and ... *"I am foremost sinner of all"* (1 Tim. 1:15). He explains that as foremost sinner and least of the least it was he that ... *"persecuted the Church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it"* (Gal 1:13) and he that gave consent to the heinous murder of Stephen (Acts 8:1). Paul shows us he not only lacked merit but had a huge amount of demerit to his account. Everything he stood for was an offence to God and if anything could stand in the way of grace, it was right there in him. But grace reaches out beyond no merit to demerit, no matter how much that demerit, and embraces that person with favour. That is what God's grace is; favour extended no matter the condition, however great the demerit may be; that is grace.

Now, as believers, we have a whole lot more to learn about grace. As we move on with God and grow in Christ, grace is something we have to rely on more and more, and even more than we did when we came to salvation. We will find that we will be saying from the depths of our heart "by your grace and

your grace alone oh God will I make it through”. We will find it takes more grace to continue that it took to start. But we stand assured by Paul that God has lavished upon us **the riches of His grace!**

As we submit to the Holy Spirit as He teaches us Christ, we will go on discovering all the time things we did not know concerning the demerit that was in us and how by His grace God has dealt with us and is continuing to deal with us to bring us ... “*to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*” (Eph 4:13). That, after all, is the purpose of grace!

There is another thing about grace: grace is not a payment of debt. No one has a claim upon the grace of God. God does not owe us anything. God is not our debtor. There’s nothing He has to pay back to us. Grace is free. Grace is the free extension of God’s love and kindness where it is not deserved.

When we come to understand the true nature of grace and how undeserving of it we are, and that God is under no obligation to us, then we begin to realize the abundance of God’s grace. We come to understand that ... “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Rom. 5:20 KJV). When we comprehend this then we begin to understand something of the **unsearchable riches of His grace** towards us. We stand in wonder and amazement of the fact that God voluntarily, spontaneously granted to us, free of charge, His unmerited favour. And then we begin to get a glimpse of the meaning of the words ... “**the riches of His grace**” and that we truly have great spiritual wealth in Christ.

Paul begins with “*grace to you*” ... because our life in Christ begins with grace and continues with grace. Grace holds it all together.

Heb 4:15-16 ... “*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶ *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the **throne of grace**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need*”.

Every time we pray, every time we talk to God, we come to the “throne of grace”. His throne is a throne of grace!

Peace of God

Eph 1:2 ... “*grace to you and **peace from God***” ...

Note that it does not say ‘peace *with* God’ but rather it is ‘peace *from* God’ or ‘peace *of* God’. Peace *with* God is what happened at salvation. We were restored in our relationship to the Father through the blood of Jesus; we were restored to a position of peace *with* God.

But now, as believers, we now enjoy the peace **of** God. One of the many spiritual blessings we have in Christ with Him living in us is His peace. He is peace. Peace is a person – Christ. So Paul is reminding us that we are to rest in Him and His peace as He does His work in us.

John 16:33 ... “*These things I have spoken to you, so that **in Me you may have peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*”.

God Our Father

Eph 1:2 ... “*grace to you and peace from **God our Father***” ...

God is our Father. Being ‘born again’ will not have its fullest meaning and work in your life until you enter in to an understanding of the Fatherhood of God. He is your Father – the One who birthed life in you, in your spirit, and the one who cares for you. His incorruptible ‘Seed’ (1 Pet 1:23) – Christ – was placed in you. You are a child of God the Father by the birthing. Being created in His image and likeness does not make you His offspring. Only by being birthed by the Father makes Him your Father and you His child.

Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, but after he sinned he gave birth to sons and daughters in his own image and likeness, not the image and likeness of God.

Gen 5:1-3 ... “*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him **in the likeness of God**.² He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.³ When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son **in his own likeness, according to his image**, and named him Seth”.*

Adam’s offspring were like him, sinners in need of salvation. Adam was the federal head of mankind, and through him we were all birthed in sin. That’s why Jesus said to Nicodemus:

John 3:3 ... “*truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God”.*

And in His prayer to his Father Jesus said:

John 17:23 ... “***I in them** and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me”.*

He was referring to the mystery that was yet to be revealed:

Col 1:27 ... “*Christ **in you**, the hope of glory”.*

God becomes our Father when we receive His “Seed” – Christ – and He is birthed in us. We are ‘born again’.

1 Cor 6:17 ... “*But the one who joins himself to the Lord is **one spirit***”.

From then on we, like Paul can say, ... “*it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*” (Gal 2:20). And with Christ as our life, birthed in us by His Father, His Father is our Father. We are ... “*heirs of the Father and joint heirs with Christ*” (Rom 8:17).

The Lord Jesus Christ

Eph 1:2 ... “*grace to you and peace from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ***”.

The **Lord** Jesus Christ. He is the One whose name is above every other name, and to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father (Phil 2:9-11).

We are in subjection to His Lordship. We are submitted to Him. Apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5) and are nothing. It's only as we abide, remain in union, submitted to Him, that we will receive His life giving sap and bear much fruit.

If we have even a glimmer of understanding of His amazing grace towards us we will more than willingly submit to His Lordship. For His is not a domineering, dictating 'overlording', but a loving Servant heart, a caring leadership that He offers us as Lord.

We as parents want our children to submit to us, not because we want to control them, but, because we want to help them navigate life wisely, avoiding trouble, and we can offer them that wisdom and leadership. We don't want to and can't force them to submit, but it brings us great pleasure when they do and when we see them follow our guidance and succeed.

Similarly, Jesus who is the Alpha and Omega, in whom is all wisdom, wants to be our wisdom and lead us in paths of righteousness. He won't force submission, but when we submit we bring Him pleasure as we follow His plans and purposes for our lives and bear much fruit for Him. Submitting to Him as Lord simply means that we, as vessels containing Him, yield our wills, our minds, our mouths, our hands and feet to Him so He can be expressed through us as we go about our daily lives touching the lives of others, to His glory.

Lesson 3 – The Formation of the Church

Eph 1:22-23 ... *“the church which is His body, the fullness of him who fills all in all”*

Ephesians chapter 1 and 2 bring insight into the formation of the church. It explains who the church is and how it was formed. In Chapter 3 we learn something of the purpose of the church. Then the first part of chapter 4 focuses on the preparation and ministry of the church, with the remainder of the epistle being devoted to the lifestyle of the church.

In this epistle we will learn about of the church, Christ’s body and its heavenly calling, its earthly conduct and its satanic conflict. We will see something of Christ – the fullness of the church, and, the church – the fullness of Christ. The first part is about our wealth, the Christian in Christ. The next part is about our walk, Christ in the Christian. Finally it concerns our warfare, Christ and the Christian versus Satan and his hosts.

Our starting point, to understand more about the church, necessitates consideration of who the church is and what it is not. We will start off with the latter.

The Institutionalised Modern Phenomena Called ‘Church’:

If we look at the book of Acts and trace all the places the gospel was taken to and where Christianity prevailed and go back to those places now, we will find that most are Muslim, with the remainder following some dead (mostly state controlled) religion. Why? Simply because somewhere along the line the church failed to continue as it was at the beginning – to be people, containers of Christ, taking Jesus into the market place and the highways and byways all day every day – and instead it has become institutionalised. We have Emperor Constantine mainly to thank for that change, with his fervor for building of Basilicas. So today, not all, but most cases of what is known as ‘church’ is an institution or organisation running a series of ‘programs’, most of which are centred around a building where the participants gather to take part in the events on the program list.

Sadly many have adopted the concept that people (unbelievers) must be brought to the ‘building’ where the ‘church’ gathers at set times, generally on Sundays, for them to find Jesus, instead of the ‘church’ being people (believers) taking Jesus out into the unbelievers world. Some even run ‘crusades’ in their buildings and expect the sinners to want to come in there to find Jesus, someone who they are not particularly interested in. They don’t want to come to our institutions. Sadly, and it’s largely because of what they often see, they think we are weird and hypocritical and don’t want to be part of our lot.

God, in the person of Christ, came down to earth and became incarnate in a man. He came to us. We did not have to go to Him to find Him. That would not be possible. Not only did he come to us but, in becoming incarnate in man, He showed us what man with Christ in him looked like. He showed us what the presence of the church should be like in the world. He gives us a picture of the ministry of the church.

Jesus was in the pubs talking to the publicans, in the shady alleys talking to prostitutes, down at the tax office, in the market place. He was wherever the people were. He who is the Way, the Truth and the Life

went to the people where they were in their environment. Jesus didn't gather a bunch of disciples and go and build a building somewhere and hide away to run a program, trying to convince His disciples to try and go out now and again and convince a few folks to come in join them for their meetings so that they could get to meet Him. That's not the pattern He set.

The gospel, the good news that unbelievers so desperately need, is centred on the Person of Christ. Col 1:19 says that in Christ the fullness of deity dwells. He is the fullness of God and He lives in believers. Eph 1:22-23 says the church is His body, the fullness of Him. The church, believers, is the vehicle through which is He communicated to the world, as Christ can only be communicated through people (believers) in whom He dwells. The church (Greek word: εκκλησία – ekklesia from ek = 'out of' or 'from' and kaleo = 'call' and the two joined together means 'called out ones' or was also commonly used for 'summonsed assembly' or 'assembly' – see Acts 19:39 and Acts 7:38) is believers in all walks of life and in all sorts of places every day of the week taking Jesus into those places, communicating Him to the people that are there. Institutions or organizations with their many programs cannot do this.

It does not matter how big our gathering is or how great our services are, the community outside are completely oblivious of what we are up to in our meetings. At most the unbelieving community knows there is a building in their locality which they call a 'church' and in their minds that's where 'religious' people go on Sundays. But that's it. And the majority of unbelievers want nothing to do with 'church'. The services we hold are only experienced by believers. And make no mistake, it's good for the church to gather for worship, teaching, mutual edification and for prayer, but that's not where it ends by a long way. It has never been God's plan for the church to be a self serving introverted organization or institution.

The incarnation was God coming to us to bring us hope, and in a similar way the church, Christians, (people with Christ in them) are to take Christ to men and women wherever they happen to be. That's God's plan and pattern for the church, His people. We are to operate in the presence, the locality, the experience of the unbelievers. Christ in us wants to be seen, touched, heard and his love shared out in the world of the people. This is true evangelism. This is the church alive and active every day and all the time. If we gather in a building on a Sunday for worship, teaching, mutual edification and prayer it's for the purpose of being made ready for action as the church alive and present out in all walks of life on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday!

This is also the basis for true discipleship. The believer with Christ in him or her walks along side of the new convert as they go about their daily tasks, so that they can see Christ in action in His everyday environment. Is that not what Jesus did with His disciples? He hung out with them day by day as they went about their business. Their 'faith' lesson took place walking down the road with Jesus cursing a fig tree for having no fruit on it. He didn't restrict His discipling to a 'program' of set 'meetings' in a specific building.

God has placed each one of us in a specific vocation and a specific location to let Christ be seen as He goes about daily tasks and duties. We are containers of Christ and when we go to work its Christ in us as us going to work. And as we are all doing that, it's the picture of the church taking Christ into our culture

and community. **The goal of the church is to make Christ present and visible in the world where people are lost and in need of Him.**

This is how the early church lived and moved. Thousands added daily to the community of believers. They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). ... *“the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing”* (Acts 19:20). And sadly this all got institutionalized and organized and introverted and hidden away in a building, and now we see the rise of so many cults, religions and forces of darkness controlling most nations.

The church is not an activities list; the church is people in whom Christ lives sharing Him with others. Our calling is not so much to do great things as it is to be a great person. Christ lives in us and is our life and we are called to present Him to our world. The church is the resident presence of Christ in this world.

The church is not a fixed location. It's wherever the born again people happen to be, and they're moving about all the time. It has never been defined in Scripture in terms of an institution or physical building. Statements like “where do you go to church?” simply don't make sense because church is not a place. The church is people. Church is not something we do, it's who we are. People in whom Christ lives and expresses Himself, wherever they happen to be on any given day. We have a Person, Christ, in us and it is Him we must reveal. That's Paul's message to the Ephesians.

Eph 1:22-23 ... *“the church which is His body, the fullness of him who fills all in all”*

Col 1:17 ... *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”*.

If we consider these verses and think of the church in terms of activities or programs or a physical building they make no sense at all. They just become figures of speech. Meaningless. But if we see the church as people in whom Christ, in all His fullness, lives and is expressed, then they make full sense.

Just listen to some of the songs that are sung and statements some folks make, about Jesus 'out there' somewhere and how we long to find Him or how we would like Him to come to us. They attend their services and in song or prayer beg Him to join them and come and fill their meeting place with His presence. Where do we think He is? If He is not in us, as His word says He is, when we are begging Him to come to us, where do we think he is coming from? Where does He go when our service is over? Do we think He hides in the car park and hangs around the big empty building all week long hoping that we will come back and once again sing and pray and invite Him back to grace us with His 'presence'?

God 'out there' somewhere belongs to the Old Testament. He was found high up *upon* a mountain, or *upon* a prophet or a king, or He hovered *upon* the Ark of the Covenant. Because of sin man had separated himself from God. God did not move away from man, man chose to go it alone.

Man knew he was in some way responsible to God to live an upright life but could not fulfill that responsibility. To appease God, man, from time to time, took some offerings, lambs, oxen, doves or other things, to offer as a sacrifice. The people had a high priest who acted as a 'go between' to represent them before God and he would place the sacrifices on the altar and say a prayer for the people. The people then went away but they, in and of themselves, were no better than they were

before they brought in their offerings. But somehow they felt a little better and went their merry ways until the next time, on the due day, they came back with more offerings and the rituals were repeated.

Sadly many believers have adopted that pattern into their understanding of what church is all about. Going to a place, a 'temple', to seek God and to appease him by singing and praying to him and bringing Him an offering in the hopes that He will pitch up and make them feel a little better. Then they go away, often with not much changed, only to return again at a later date to repeat the whole process. Any wonder why the world is being taken over by the Muslims and other sects. This is not the 'church' as God ordained us to be.

The Old Testament showed us that there was a huge gap between God and man and there was no way that man could possibly bridge that gap. The only way that gap could be bridged was if God could somehow come down into our world. That's exactly what Jesus did. He became incarnate in the flesh. He came to live and show us how man with the Divine nature in him was to live. He became our substitute and took our sin, the thing that separated us from Him, upon Himself and died on the cross for us. He redeemed us. He paid the price, His own blood and life, to bring us back into harmony and relationship with God. As a Man, Jesus shed His blood on behalf of mankind so that we could enter into a new and eternal covenant with God our heavenly Father. Then God did an amazing thing, he placed His Seed in us and new life was born in us. Christ was placed in us. The Divine came to live **in** us. Not to be **upon** us from time to time as in the Old Testament, not to be **with** us as He was with the disciples and people before His crucifixion, but to be **in** us all the time from now and forever! Our old nature was removed and replaced with His Divine nature.

Col 1:27 ... *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"*.

Col 2:9-10 ... *"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete"*.

Eph 3:18-19 ... *"that you ... may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God"*.

Being a Christian is not about programs and being isolated from the world in holy huddles. Our time here on earth is about being Christ in our world. God placed us here for a purpose, that He may live in and through us and be seen and touched by those in need. Christ in is His purity and holiness, in His love, His joy, His peace, His patience, His kindness, His goodness, His faithfulness, His self control seen and felt by people of all walks of life. Influencing them with His love. Showing them that they are loved and accepted and that there is a hope for them. Winning their hearts. So really it comes down to one thing; are we available? Will we take Him into our streets and neighbourhoods and the world around us? Will we be the church as God planned us to be?

Establishing Our True Identity

The church, the body of Christ, is made up of individuals (individual members of the body) in whom Christ dwells and over whom he is head. If we are going to be a part of the church triumphant in our world, we first need to understand who we are as individuals. We need an accurate understanding of our true identity in Christ, so that we can go out with confidence, courage and trust to reach out to the lost with the love and healing touch of Christ. We have entered into a new and eternal covenant with the Father and we need to know what are our covenant blessings and responsibilities. That understanding is made clearer as we go through the letter to the Ephesians, commencing from verse 3.

The Father's Plan from before the Foundation of the World

Eph 1:3, 4 ... *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him”.*

V3: We have been blessed with ***every spiritual blessing*** in the heavenly places ***in Christ***. This is one of the many benefits of the new covenant. To get some understanding of the magnitude and extent of the blessings that are ours in Christ we need to take time to look at all the “in Christ” (including the “in Him”, “in Whom”, etc) statements in the New Testament. This is something we should all do. As we do search the Scriptures we will see that our Father has not left anything out. We are truly blessed and exceptionally well equipped in Christ.

He does not just give us a little now and again from time to time; He has given us everything in Christ. It's done. He has banked the blessings in our heavenly bank account. Enter into the blessings and enjoy them! It's one thing to have been given the blessings but it's another thing to appropriate them and make them yours. He has made the provision, we must take possession.

If God has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ, then He must have given us the capacity to receive and hold these blessings. What a call to an enlargement of our whole being so that we may abound in the spiritual blessings and live an overflowing life! What a challenge to thirst for the living water and to come and drink and drink that we may *“be filled up to all the fullness of God”* (Eph 3:19).

The story goes like this: a very rich man died and as he had no children or close relatives, he left his wealthy estate to a very poor distant relative who lived the other side of the world. Upon hearing of his inheritance the poor man could have said, “I'm used to being poor, I'll just leave the inheritance there until I am old, then one day I'll make use of it”. But rather than continuing to live in poverty he got up and decided to go the distant land to claim his inheritance. When asked by his friends where he was going he said, “To take possession of my estate”. We have an inheritance far greater than this man. What are we going to do with it? Will we by faith take possession of the blessings that are ours in Christ? Or are we, in the face of a plentiful supply, content to live as spiritual paupers, defeated and downcast?

Just to name a few, the blessings we have been given include our forgiveness from sin, our justification and sanctification, a robe of righteousness, heavenly citizenship, a place in the body of Christ, the joy of

being heirs of the Father's riches in Christ! God has made Christ to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). We don't have to seek for these things; in Christ we have them already! We're more than conquerors through Him! We're strong in His strength! We can do all things through Christ! All we need to do is appropriate the blessings that are already ours in Christ. Search the word, find out what they are and live in them!

Chosen in Christ

V4: We were chosen "in Christ" before the foundation of the world. Before creation, chosen by the Father to be in Christ! This is another of the amazing benefits we have in the new covenant. To be 'in Christ'!

What does it mean to be 'in Christ'? It denotes our position – where He is, we are. It defines our privileges – what He is, we are. It describes our possessions – what He has, we share. It determines our practice – what He does, we do.

What does it mean to be 'chosen'? Well it starts off with, by whom you are chosen. The significance of being chosen is always related to the status of the person doing the choosing. For example, as a child when you stood as one of the group of kids in front of two team leaders who were taking turns to choose the players in their teams, as you waited your turn to be picked, you silently wished that 'Big Johnny' would pick you because he was the best all-rounder in the sport and you knew if you were on his team you would be on the winning side. We all want to be on the winning side!

You were chosen by the Father! There is no one greater to do the choosing! Almighty God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. He chose us to be in Christ. We're on the winning team! The winning team is the church over which Christ is head!

Our Father in Heaven has only ever had one plan and that is the one He set in place before the foundation of the world. Before He did any creative work of building our earthly home and creating man. His plan was to have a large family, birthed by Him, containing His Divine nature, who would come to maturity and represent Him. This collective group He would call the "church", the "body" of which His Son would be "head".

So 'in Christ', partaking of His fullness and every spiritual blessing heaven has to offer, we, the church are to walk in His holiness and purity and fill this world with His presence and His love. That's who we are and that's why we are here. That is how it was planned before the foundation of the world, that is how it was in the early church and that is how our Father wants it right now.

There's more! Let's examine the next of the new covenant benefits that is ours.

Accepted and Adopted as sons

Eph 1:5-6 ... *"in love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

You have a purpose for living. The Father's desire from eternity past for you is that you live for the praise of His glory.

V5. Predestined to adoption as sons. Here and in verse 11 we meet a misunderstood word if ever there was one! 'Predestined'. The truth is that it is only ever used in relation to people who are born again. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we taught that people are predestined to hell, or to heaven for that matter, because the word is only ever used to refer to the born again. The word translated 'predestined' would have equally well, and probably better, have been translated 'to design definitely beforehand'. Now all it means here is that it was God's definite design way back before He created man that He would place His Seed, Christ, into the man He would create and then that man would grow into the full stature of Christ. That meant there would be a maturing, a growth from child to mature son that would take place in man. That's what predestined to 'adoption as sons' means.

The words 'predestined' (v5, 11) and 'chosen' (v4) are used here to describe what God planned or purposed before the foundation of the world. Before man was even created and before the entry of sin onto the scene. It was the entry of sin, which occurred after man had been created and disobeyed God, that separated man from God. Man then need to be redeemed and even that had been provided for before the creation of the world. These words, 'chosen' and 'predestined', have nothing to do with people being designated to go to hell. We are not predestined to hell or heaven.

God could have made us creatures that could not have sinned and failed Him. We have examples of creatures He created in the animal world that never deviate from the purpose of their being. For example, the Mourning Dove, if it loses its mate, remains widowed for the rest of its life. God made these birds that way, that was His design for them, and in the same way He could have made mankind so that they could not have deviated from the paths of righteousness. But His decision to create man and woman who would be capable of giving Him loyal obedience, loving service and voluntary devotion meant that He had to create man and woman as free agents; people with free wills that could also turn away from Him and disobey him if they wanted to do so. Otherwise we would have been made puppets, with no freedom in our love, devotion, reverence, loyalty and affection. God wanted mankind to willingly submit and to offer Him spontaneous, voluntary love and devotion. When sin entered the scene, the Saviour was given and man was redeemed through the work of the cross, and God can, in Christ, present us in His glorious presence holy and without blame. He says to mankind, whosoever will may come. Whoever believes on the name of the Lord will be saved. It's not His will that any should perish but that all should be saved.

If we look at Rom 8:29 ... *"for whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son"*... This is not God, from eternity past, saying, "This one goes to heaven and that one goes to hell". This is simply telling me that when I have placed my trust in Christ and believed in Him and received Him as my Saviour, I may know with assurance, on God's authority, that it is definite and settled forever that I will be conformed to the image of Christ. As Paul says in Ephesians, I will "learn Christ" (4:20) and will mature into *"the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (4:13).

Adoption as sons

Now back to the subject of 'predestined to adoption as sons'. Of interest, the word used here for adoption has no parallel in the Hebrew language and is only found in the Pauline epistles. 'Adoption' comes from the Greek word υἰοθεσία *huiiothesia*. This compound word comes from two words: *uios* = 'a son' and *tithemi* = 'to place', 'set in place'. So the more literal translation would be "placing as a son". So 'adoption' (placing as a son) is a word of **position** rather than of **relationship**.

Through regeneration or being born again we birthed into the family of our Father as His child. So we get into God's family by the new birth. Adoption (the placing of a son) is then an act of the Father by which He gives recognition to His born children an adult standing in the family. We are born into his family as a **child**, we then progress, or mature into '**sons**' – the term for those who have attained adult standing.

So God planned way back before creation, ... *"according to the kind intention of His will"* (Eph 1:5) ... that by His grace we would be not only be birthed as children into His family, but that He, by the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, would bring us to maturity, ... *"to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (Eph 4:13).

He wants us to come to maturity so that we can claim our inheritance and enjoy and live in our spiritual wealth, and share this wealth with those around us who live in darkness.

V6. His grace – yet another of the covenant blessings! God fulfilled His side of the covenant and He also, by grace, provided His only begotten Son, the Man Jesus Christ, as a substitute for us to fulfill our side. He did not alienate us, He accepted us, just as we are, and bestowed grace upon us in Christ and brought us into a life-giving relationship with Him; not because of anything we have done or could do, but because of His grace. Amazing grace! You cannot earn grace, you cannot earn His loving-kindness.

From the position we occupy seated in Christ in heavenly places, when we look below to the depths of sin and despair from which we have come and look up and onward to the glory that is before us, we understand that our salvation and standing is ... *"to the praise of the glory of His grace"*. All credit is His and His alone!

We are not merely forgiven, justified, cleansed from all sin and all forms of defilement, but we are accepted, received in loving-kindness to the very heart of God as if we were His Son.

John 17:23 ... *"I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me"*.

When He looks at us He sees the Beloved, for we are one in Him. His love and acceptance of us is the same as it is for His Son. That's grace!

1 john 4:23 ... *"By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world"*.

Christ has already passed through the judgment and He will never have to do that again. Never again will He face the forsaking of God. Never again will His soul be enshrouded with the blackness of sin, the taste of the bitter cup, the agony, the pain, the shame, the curse and the rejection of the cross. That is all a thing of the past. He went there once for all. It is finished. He has been raised and accepted into the presence of the Father where he is seated at His right hand in glory. Now we, who are accepted in the Beloved and are seated in Him in heavenly places, can stand in confidence knowing that Christ will never face the judgment again and nor will we. For ... *“as He is, so are we in this world”*. We’re accepted in the Beloved!

Redeemed!

Eph 1:7-8 ... *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us”*.

There are three words used in the New Testament for “redeemed”. One means to buy something which then becomes yours. We were redeemed by God and now we belong to Him (Rev 5:9). Another means to buy out of the market. Something bought out of the market will never be placed on sale again. A slave could be bought by a philanthropist and given a certificate of freedom. That meant the slave was now a freeman and would never be returned to the market as a slave. We have been redeemed from the curse of the law, never to be placed back under law (Gal 3:13) The third meaning of ‘redeemed’, the one used in Eph 1:7, is from two Greek words; apo, meaning ‘away from’, and lutrosis, meaning ‘to be free’ or to be loosed’. Together the literal meaning is ‘to be loosed away from something’. So here ‘Redeem’ means ‘to purchase and loose away from’.

Added to this, from the same verse we have ‘forgive’ which means ‘to carry away’. In this passage redemption and the forgiveness of sin are directly linked. In Leviticus 16 we read of the ‘scapegoat’. Two goats were used on the Day of Atonement. The sin of the nation was placed on one goat and it was offered on the altar as a sin offering. Then Aaron would lay his hands on the head of the live goat and confess the sin of the nation over the goat and then the goat was sent away into the wilderness never to return again. Christ died in our place as a sin offering to pay the price for our sin and satisfy the justice of God, but our sin was also poured into His body and He carried our sin away to the grave so that it might never be seen again.

Col 2:14 ... *“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”*.

In reality, we have been redeemed in all three meanings of the word; we have been bought and belong to God, we have been bought out of slavery to sin and set free forever, and we have been purchased, taken from the sin slave market, and our sins have been sent away never to be seen again. The words redemption, blood and forgiveness used together here make it clear that the price paid was the blood of Jesus; what we were set free from was our trespasses, our sin. We are no longer slaves, but free, and not only free, but sons! All of this was done according to the riches of His grace.

We can feel perfectly at home as a son in the divine family, fully assured of the Father's acceptance because we know with certainty that we are redeemed and our sins are forgiven!

Why was the price the blood of Jesus?

Lev 17:11 ... *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement".*

Can we place a measure or value to the blood of Jesus? No, its value is infinite; sufficient to atone for every man, woman and child that has ever, or will ever, live here and more besides. His blood has paid for our eternal forgiveness, our restorative forgiveness and our governmental forgiveness.

Eternal forgiveness – every sin past, present and future is forgiven by God, the Judge of all. This forgiveness is granted to the believer the moment he comes to God through believing in Jesus.

Restorative forgiveness – as a believer, from the time my responsibilities as a child towards the Father began, and if I fail, I come to Him not to beg forgiveness, as that has been eternally settled on the cross, but I come to Him knowing that *"if I confess my sin He is faithful and just to forgive my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). As believers, if we sin there is no basis for condemnation and punishment (Rom 8:1) as Christ has borne our condemnation and punishment for all sin and we are hid with Christ in God, but it does affect our communion with the Father. Our communion is restored when we acknowledge and confess our sins to the Father.

Governmental forgiveness – has to do with the consequences of sin. If as an unbeliever, before coming to salvation in Christ, a person lived in such a manner as to abuse his or her body through gluttony, drunkenness, drugs, lack of rest and so on, and has suffered ill health as a result, the person, as a believer then comes to God, knowing his/her sin has been forgiven, and asks for physical healing, God has made provision for this and through the blood of Jesus provides restoration.

What is the measure of this forgiveness? It is *"according to the riches of His grace"* (Eph 1:7). It is not **out of** the riches of His grace but **according to** the riches of His grace. An example will show the difference. If I needed some money to start a business and went to a billionaire relative to ask for financial assistance and his response was a cheque for a mere \$1000, he would have given to me **out of** his wealth. On the other hand, if he gave me a whole lot of signed blank cheques and said, "Use as much as you like", he would have given me **according to** his wealth.

As the born again we can rejoice for we have been forgiven and redeemed, not **out of** the riches of grace, but **"according to the riches of His grace, which he lavished upon us"** (Eph 1:7-8).

Only when we look at the innocent, sinless Son of God upon the cross, there because of the Father's immense love for us who were sinners by nature and by choice, and realize that the Father's infinite love for His Son did not keep Him from offering up His only Begotten, can we begin to appreciate the phrase "according to the riches of His grace". For here the Father's undeserved bounty towards us is manifested by the 'planned-in-eternity-past' redemption through the blood of the Lamb. Redemption and forgiveness *"according to the riches of His grace"* – what a covenant blessing!

Lesson 4 – The Formation of the Church Part 2

Eph 1:8-14 ... *“In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory”.*

The Mystery – Revealed in Christ

In these verses, all of history is moving towards a goal. God has an eternal purpose in Christ, and He is moving steadily towards the fulfilment of that purpose. Those whom the Father has redeemed and reconciled to himself as children He enlightens with the understanding of His purpose and the manner in which it is being fulfilled.

... *“In all **wisdom** and **insight** He made known to us the mystery of His will”* (v8).

As we walk through Ephesians, our heavenly Father enables us to see the great ultimate truths of eternity and at the same time helps us with the solution to problems that we face each moment of time. He enlightens us with wisdom and insight in order to reveal His will concerning the goal and purpose of life and all its little details. For a moment let us compare Ephesians with Colossians:

Col 1:9-20 ... *“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all **spiritual wisdom and understanding**, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven”.*

God has numerous temporal plans or counsels but only one eternal purpose. That eternal purpose, which was established before the foundation of the world, is presented in the passages from Ephesians and Colossians; the summation of all things in Christ.

Now any cosmic bystander could be pardoned for not understanding how all things were going to be summed up in Christ. In Genesis Ch 3 man was separated from God through sin, then in Ch 4 man was separated from man through murder, by Ch 7 God had got so mad at man he sent a flood and wiped out all but one family and a whole lot of animals, then after that, in Ch 11, linguistic confusion reigned at the tower of Babel with God scattering the people across the earth for their misdeeds. God then appointed Abraham to gather up a few people and become father of a new nation and create a difference between Jew and Gentile nations, a difference that was maintained until Christ's death on the cross. Sin is ripping everything apart yet we are assured that God, in Christ, will gather everything together in the "fullness of times"!

What was not so apparent was that all along, right from before the foundation of the world, there was an invisible plan running parallel to that which could be seen by the eye. A 'mystery' hidden in God down through the ages and only revealed for the first time to Paul. A mystery that has been revealed only to the church, God's blood bought children.

1 Cor 2:7-8 ... *"but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"*.

When we are born again, when we are in Christ, we enter His divine wisdom and insight into His plan and purpose that spans time from before the foundation of the world to the end of the ages. ... *"He made known to us the mystery of His will"* (1:8). It is **to us** that He makes known this wisdom and insight. He has given us insight into things that even His mighty angels long to look. The church is an object lesson to the angels. They learn the wisdom and counsels of God as they watch and behold His grace at work in us and watch His purpose unfold as time goes by. We are privileged and need to take seriously this insight he has given us.

We are privileged to enter these things, not simply for intellectual gratification, but that the truth may build us up and establish us in Christ, so that we might be morally formed into vessels of honour unto God. As the Apostle John wrote, ... *"And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3). So as we look at the unfolding mysteries of the different dispensations, we should ask the Holy Spirit to let this truth have a sanctifying effect on us, and not just some intellectual value. The revelation of the mysteries that God has made known unto us should grip our minds and consciences such that it will lead us to behave as people who truly are strangers and pilgrims in a foreign land, ever looking for the drawing near of the glorious era Christ will usher in when He returns.

A summary of the mystery of His will is given in one clear concise sentence.

Eph 1:8-10 ... *“In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth*

Focus is on this final divine event, toward which all of creation marches, where God will head up and sum up everything in Christ. There is one plan of God – Christ in us as the fulfillment to human life. Israel, the Jews, the Church and all that God has to do with will finally flow into Christ, and flowing out of Christ will be His life, and only His life. All humans are to be fulfilled by Another Person – Christ.

Looking at the verses above, what does Paul mean by an ‘administration’ or a ‘dispensation’ or an ‘economy’? An economy is an ordered condition of things. But all economies are not necessarily the same. For example, different nations have different economies because they do things differently from each other. They may have different values or laws that constitute their particular economy. Similarly in Scripture and in God’s economy, a dispensation, or economy, is that particular order or condition of things that prevail in one special period or age which does not necessarily prevail in any other period or age.

There was the economy of innocence in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were absolutely guiltless, sinless, pure, upright and harmless. This was short lived and only lasted until Adam disobeyed God.

Then there was the dispensation of conscience where God dealt with humans on the basis of whether or not a man was obedient to his own conscience. This was the period from Adam to the flood, 1665 years. Man proved that even if he had information, God’s word, he would fail to honour his conscience. As James 4:17 puts it, ... *“to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin”*. So God sent the flood, which put an end to the second dispensation.

The third economy was that of human government which God introduced to Noah and his family after the flood. Man was put back in control of the earth and himself, but this did not last long. Soon Noah got drunk and uncovered and into trouble; the people tried to build a tower (Babel) up into the sky so they could make a name for themselves. So God put an end to it and confused their languages and scattered them all over the earth. So after 427 years, that ended that dispensation and started the next.

The dispensation of promise. God called Abram and established him as father of a new nation. God and Abraham entered into covenant, but it was not too long before man yet again proved he couldn’t keep promises and failed God. After 430 years this dispensation was over.

In came the dispensation of Law with Moses as the new leader of God’s people. With the 10 commandments and all the will in the world the people again failed to be able to keep God’s law. This dispensation continued until Pentecost.

Then graciously, God ushered in the dispensation of grace! This began in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost and will last until the rapture or catching up of the church to be with the Lord.

Finally, for those left on earth, there will be a period of tribulation for seven years followed by the millennial rule of Jesus on Earth. The promises that were made to the nation of Israel, but not fulfilled because of their rejection of Christ as their messiah at His first coming, will be fulfilled during this period of 1000 years. After this will be the judgement and then, finally, in this dispensation of the fullness of the times, everything will be summed up in Christ, every knee will bow to Him. ... *“so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:10)* and He will gather ... *“together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him” (Eph 1:10)*.

God’s eternal purpose centres wholly in Christ! It involves all things in heaven and on earth because everything that is set against Christ has also been affected and will be dealt with in Christ at His exaltation on the final day.

The greatest objective for all believers is that which is often neglected, which is, the truth of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. After all that’s why we’re here and why He’s doing a work of grace in us now, so we can look forward to Him enjoy Him throughout the ages! The churches complete blessing, each individuals blessing, the redemption of our bodies, the conversion of Israel, the full redemption of all Gentile peoples all await the coming of our Savior. How we should long for this great day, and watch for it as the watchmen watches for the morning!

May we more fully and prayerfully meditate upon the Word of God as the Holy Spirit grants us wisdom and insight into the glorious purpose of His grace, so that we may walk in the light of that knowledge and anticipate the great day when all things will be summed up in Christ.

Inheritance Obtained

Eph 1:11-14 ... *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory”*.

... *“In Him also **we have obtained** an inheritance”,* could equally well have been translated, ... *“in Him also **we have been made** and inheritance”*. Both are grammatically correct and both are true spiritually. The one includes the other. In Christ we **have** a wonderful inheritance (1 Pet 1:3-5) and, in Christ we **are** an inheritance. Christ redeemed us with His blood, we are His. Jesus was God’s love gift to us (John 3:16) and we are the Father’s love gift to His Son (John 17:6, 9, 11, 24). ... *“all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God” (1 Cor 3:22-23)*.

Our present blessings are nothing to be compared to the inheritance that awaits us in glory. Now we are possessors of *“the riches of His grace”*, then we will be partakers of *“the riches of His glory”*. All that He is in His glorified life, we shall share. We will also reign with Him.

2 Tim 2:12 ... *“If we endure, we will also reign with Him”.*

Rev 5:10 ... *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth”.*

This all seems so incredible. Do we dare to believe that an inheritance such as this is ours? Let God be the one to answer! ... *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will”* (v11). In eternity past God had us planned and designated as sons in His family and as sons then heirs. Our redemption in Christ was the first step in the *“working all things after the counsel of His will”*. What He has begun, He will complete. No one will stop him from accomplishing His sovereign purpose. We have every assurance that we shall obtain our inheritance in full.

Remember one other thing; we are joint heirs with Jesus. That means He cannot claim His inheritance apart from us!

Equal blessings

In the section from verse 12-14, the structure of the paragraph shows that Paul is emphasizing that the blessings belong equally to Jew and Gentile. A little paraphrasing will help make this more evident:

*... “In Him ... **we, the Jews**, who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, **you, Gentiles**, also, after listening to the message of truth ... having also believed, **you** were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of **our** inheritance”...*

Paul moves from the pronoun *“we”* (referring to himself and his fellow Jewish believers who had heard the gospel before it had gone to the Gentiles) to *“you”* (referring to his Gentile readers in Ephesus, who had heard the gospel message after it had gone out from the Jews) and then to *“our”* inheritance (in which both Jew and Gentile believers equally share). You can just see Paul here is already anticipating the statements that he will write in the second half of Ephesians chapter 2, where he will elaborate on the subject of the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles. Also, his repetitive use of the words “in Him” and “in Christ” in verses 12-14 leave no doubt that Christ is the reconciler, who works in us to bring unity and harmony.

Sealed

In verses 13-14 Paul moves the Ephesians from eternity past (v4-6) and the historic past (v7-12) to their present experience in the Holy Spirit. They could fully understand what he was saying because they were familiar with the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The whole process of salvation is given in verse 13. First they **heard** the gospel message ... *“the message of truth”*. The word of truth is God’s instrument in the sinner’s regeneration. ... *“the gospel of your salvation”*. The gospel had gone to the Gentiles and they had embraced the message, of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ on their behalf. Then they **believed**, and as Paul wrote to the Romans (Rom 10:13) ... *“whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Having believed they were born

again. The Father placed His Seed, Christ, in them and new life was conceived. Then having been born into God's family, they were **sealed** with the Holy Spirit. God marks his own by sending the Holy Spirit to inhabit us just as He promised he would do. The Holy Spirit Himself is the seal and He is with us forever. John 14:16-17 ... "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever, that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you". The Holy Spirit was divinely appointed and will not be finished His work with us until the day He presents us faultless before the presence of our glorious Father.

What is the significance of sealing? There are at least four things it stands for:

1. Finished transaction: Sealing speaks of a finished transaction. When important legal documents have been processed they are signed and stamped with a seal to signify that the transaction is complete. That's where the saying, "signed, sealed, and delivered" comes from.

2. Ownership: Sealing is also a mark of ownership. Cattle, horses and wood logs, to name a few things, are branded or marked with a specific insignia to show who the owner is, and in the old days even the slaves were marked by owners.

When I was in my late teens and early twenties I used to often spend weekends and leave days on a friend's cattle ranch. They held stocks of around 25,000 head of beef cattle. The cattle were fattened and from time to time they held sales. 4000-5000 cattle were sold at each sale. Bidders would come on the day, bid in the auction, pay their money, brand their marks on the cattle they purchased and then off they would go. We then gathered all 4000-5000 of the sale cattle and drove them overland to the nearest railway siding, which was a 2 full day cattle drive away. In the pens at the siding we sorted them by brand mark and penned them by their lots. It was all quite easy once you knew what each particular brand mark looked like. When they were all sorted into lots and the numbers tallied with the sale sheets, we loaded them in their respective train wagons and dispatched them to their respective owners nearest railway siding. The new owners got their sale cattle safe and sound. Job done!

Logs sent by river are also 'branded' and sorted by owner marks at the downstream harbor.

The Holy Spirit is our seal; God knows who we are so He doesn't get too worried with having us spend time moving around with others from the 'other fold'. We won't get lost and one day when the eternal 'sorting' takes place we will certainly be picked out and taken safely into His care. His seal is in our heart.

3. Authenticity: A seal is a sign of authenticity. Rare paintings, valuable art work, fine jewelry and other similar items of worth bear a stamp or seal to indicate their authenticity. There are those who trust in their own morality, good works or religious activities for acceptance by God. Jesus called such people 'thieves and robbers' (John 10:1) and disclaimed them. We know we are genuinely God's because the Holy Spirit bears witness within us to this fact ... "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*" (Rom 8:16-17).

4. Pledge or Guarantee: Sealing is also used as a pledge or guarantee. It's a part down payment. The Greek word (ἀρραβῶν) arrabōn, found in verse 14 translated 'an earnest' or 'a pledge', is used in Modern Greek for an engagement ring. However, in ancient commercial transactions the term signified a down payment, a deposit, or the first installment that paid part of the purchase price and secured legal claim to the article, or made the contract valid. So the guarantee is part of the thing it guarantees. While an engagement ring promises marriage, it is not itself a part of the marriage. Whereas, for instance, a deposit on a house, or a deposit on a hire-purchase agreement, is itself the first installment or payment of the purchase price. This is how it is with the down payment of the Holy Spirit. God is not just promising us our wonderful final inheritance, but He actually gives us a foretaste of it, although this is just a tiny fraction of our future endowment. The Holy Spirit is the Father's first installment to us, His children, as a guarantee that He will complete His work and finally bring us to glory.

Eph 1:14 ... *"with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory"*.

This refers to the redemption of the body at the return of Christ.

Rom 8:23 ... *"And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body"*.

Redemption is experienced in stages:

1. We have been redeemed through His blood - by faith (Eph 1:7) (Spirit)
2. We are being redeemed as the Holy Spirit teaches us Christ and our minds are being renewed (Soul)
3. We shall be redeemed when Christ returns and we receive new bodies (Body)

Secured

A question that troubles some believers is, "once I am saved, can I lose my salvation?" Or, in other words, "Is there some failure on my part that can cause me now to fall short of future perfect redemption?"

God has given us a pledge, a promise, which guarantees our eternal security and obtaining of our inheritance. More than any other epistle, Ephesians reveals the eternalness of our redemption. It starts off in eternity past with the Father's choice of a Body and Bride for His Son, who were to be ... *"holy and without blame"*. It then continues with the triune God through historic time and His work of salvation and sanctification of the purchased possession. Finally, it ends one day in the future, on that glorious day we all await, when all things are summed up in the Son and we, the church, are presented to Him glorified, spotless, pure and without blame even as He is Himself.

God views His entire redemptive plan through the eyes of eternity. Therefore, do we think it possible that He would contemplate stopping it at some *point in time*? Never!

We were chosen to be His children ... *"to the praise of His glorious grace"*

We were made His heritage and appointed to live ... *“for the praise of His glory”*

We will one day be redeemed as His own possession ... *“to the praise of His glory”*

To live to the praise of the glory of His grace is both to worship and acknowledge Him as the gracious God He is by our words and deeds, and to thereby cause others to see and praise Him also.

We became His people according to the good pleasure of His will; we were made His people for the praise of the glory of His grace. So everything we have and are in Christ comes from God and returns to God. It begins in His sovereign will and ends in His magnificent glory. We are God’s people and His possession and we live by His will and for His glory!

The all Encompassing Prayer

Eph 1:15-16 ... *“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers”...*

This prayer read is not an addendum; it’s directly linked to what Paul has been saying in the preceding 14 verses. You can almost hear Paul thinking as he writes: I have written and told you what the triune God has done to redeem you. But do you fully grasp it? I wonder if you really understand how precious and priceless is your inheritance in Christ. I know your faith in the Lord and how much you love the other believers, and I thank to Lord for you, yet I long for you to more fully and intimately know Christ and understand what you possess in Him. Oh that all your potential wealth in Christ may transform into being made personal and actual. And so he prays ...

Eph 1:17-23 ... *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”.*

Prayer is the means by which we get insight into what God is doing in our world. By prayer we get to see which part of His plan is getting His attention. We enter His plan through prayer and we receive His perspective on things by prayer.

In this prayer, Paul is praying for us! ... *“the faithful in Christ”* (1:1)

Wisdom and revelation

Paul asks the Father to cause the Holy Spirit within us to open up to us in a manner and a measure such that wisdom and revelation are brought to us. He also asks the Father to ‘switch on the lights’ of our heart – to enlighten the eyes of our hearts. He asks these things for us so that we may come to a better understanding and intimate knowledge of Christ. God wants us to go onwards past our own reasoning, to depending on revelation and wisdom from Him. Revelation is vital, as it is only as He reveals Himself to us that we get to know Him individually, personally and intimately.

1 Cor 2:9-10 ... *“just as it is written, ‘things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”*.

Wisdom and revelation is the light that enlightens our hearts. The Holy Spirit illumines our hearts – enables our minds to comprehend that which is of the spirit. Our spirit and Christ are one (1 Cor 6:17). The illumination of our hearts enables us to see, know and commune with Christ and align our mind, will and emotions (our soul) with Him. It’s this coming to know Him through revelation that helps us grow in Christ. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to reveal Christ to us. As we spend time in His presence and meditate in His word, the Holy Spirit will bring us the gems of revelation and wisdom and we will see and know Christ more clearly.

The Holy Spirit illumines the word and brings revelation of it in our hearts. He who inspired the scriptures also illumines them for us to have spiritual apprehension, because no human intellect can appraise spiritual things unaided. Prayer is the way we receive the much needed revelation to be able to discover all the gems and riches that are ours. And prayer is needed for wisdom to be able to make practical use of the riches that are revealed. To transform the heavenly truth into our earthly life we need the divine operation of the Spirit of Wisdom. That which the Spirit of revelation makes objective, the Spirit of wisdom makes subjective. The Spirit of wisdom adds the knowledge of experience to the knowledge of understanding.

Paul is not praying here for us to gain general knowledge of the truth, he is longing that we ... *“grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15)*. As we have received Christ into our hearts as Saviour he is praying that Christ may dwell (Eph 3:17) in full possession of our hearts and become the very Life of our life.

Enlightening

... *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know” (v18)*.

This petition is for spiritual apprehension of the three “what’s”:

... *“what is the hope of His calling”*...

... *“what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”* ...

... “what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe”...

1. The hope – His calling: Hope speaks of the future, calling speaks of the past. In the past, before the foundation of the world we were chosen to be in Christ. We were called to be His children, His sons and collectively, the church, the body of Christ, His fullness and to make Him visible in this ungodly world. We were called to be holy and blameless before Him.

The hope, the future looking aspect of His calling is twofold: There is the expectation now of a steady growth into an ever increasing spiritual maturity that attains to ... *“the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13). For us this hope speaks about being filled more and more into all the fullness of God and being transformed into Christ’s image from moment to moment.

2 Cor 3:18 ... *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit”*.

Then there is the hope as the last chapter of this age runs out and the dawning of a new tomorrow arises and the church now sanctified becomes the church glorified!

Eph 5:27 ... *“that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless”*.

In that eternal tomorrow, when we are glorified in spirit, soul and body, there will be perfect likeness between every believer and our Lord.

1 John 3:2 ... *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is”*.

As Paul prays, so should our heart yearn with this ... *“upward”* (Phil 3:14) ... *“holy”* (2 Tim 1:9) and ... *“heavenly”* (Heb 3:1) calling, that Christ may be our all in all.

2. The glory – His Inheritance: If our calling points back to the beginning where we were chosen to be in Christ and we began our Christian life, then our Father’s inheritance points to the future to that final inheritance of which the Holy Spirit is guarantee. We are heirs of the Father and joint-heirs with the Son, so, by grace, one day His inheritance will also be our inheritance.

Rather than thinking on what we get from God, this is a time where we should be meditating on what we are and what we can be to God. It’s mind-blowing to think so, but we are God’s prized possession. We are precious and valuable to Him. We are His inheritance! This thought should push us to our knees in worship and thanksgiving for His amazing grace and kindness towards us. That he chose us to be in Christ and we are a part of His body and the completeness of Him. We’re His inheritance!

3. The surpassing greatness – His power: While God’s calling looks back to the beginning where it all began and His inheritance looks forward to the future where it all culminates, God’s power spans the

interim period, in which we now live. This incredible power is directed towards us! God’s power is at our disposal to carry out that to which He has called us! Talk about being enabled and equipped for service! As we walk in union and fellowship with Him, connected to the Source of Power, so His power works in and through us.

The exact measurement of His power is can be seen in what God wrought in Christ. It is summed up in four words: resurrection, exaltation, lordship and headship.

Paul uses many superlatives and gives some detail to describing God’s mighty power because only His power can fulfill the expectations of the demands of His call and bring us safely to heaven where we will enjoy the riches of the final inheritance that will be both ours and the Lords. In his colourful language Paul shows the stages of events in which God’s power is displayed:

- ... *“He raised Him from the dead”* (v20a). He raised Jesus out of death to an altogether new immortal and glorious life, something no one had ever previously experienced and something we eagerly await. Death is the absence of life. Out of no life, nothing, God raised Christ in new life! What power and might is that! Then He...
- ... *“seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion”* ... *“and He put all things in subjection under His feet”* (v20b-22a). This is the place of supreme honour. David foresaw this moment in his words written in Psalm 110. and then He...
- ... *“gave Him as head over all things to the church”* (v22). Christ is head over the universe and everything in it and is head over the church. He is Lord and sovereign over all things and His is the glory that fills the church. He who is the Supreme One who fills the universe is He who fills the church. The church is His body and the church is His fullness.

These three things go together because it is Christ’s resurrection from the dead and having defeated and being enthroned far above the evil powers of darkness that He has been given headship over all things to the church.

As the God-man Christ is not complete without the Church; as His body the Church is the compliment of Christ.

Christ - the Head	Source of Wealth	Fullness of the Church
	Sufficiency for Walk	
	Strength for Warfare	
Church - the Body	Filled with the Spirit	Fullness of Christ
	Filled unto all fullness with God	
	Filled with Christ	

We need to pause here and bow before Him and contemplate the privilege and responsibility of the position, and possession we have in Christ. We need to consider just to what extent we have claimed Him as our fullness, and in what measure we are the compliment of Him. What a hallowed responsibility

this puts on us to represent Him aright in this world of darkness; to manifest His grace, His holiness, His repulsion of sin, His love and compassion for the lost, His deep down desire to reach the sinners and make known to them the riches of His grace.

Lesson 5 – The Formation of the Church Part 3

Continuing from the context of Eph 1:15-23, our spiritual **possessions**, Paul now moves on to consider our spiritual **position**. In doing this he goes on to paint a stark contrast between what man is by nature and what he can become by grace. Here we consider God's grace and power in operation in the creation of a believer and in the constitution of the Church. We see the Master-Workman about His work of forming the "new man".

God has made known the past, present and future of the universe, of the nations (Israel and the Gentiles), of the Church and of every individual believer in Christ. So let us consider these three stages.

Our Past

Eph 2:1-3 ... *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest".*

Some past it was too! We were helpless, hopeless, derelict, powerless, and bankrupt with no resources and absolutely no ability to save ourselves, because a dead person has no life by which to improve their condition. We were spiritually dead; dead toward God. We were dead in trespasses (plural - the habitual violation of God's law) and sins (the fruit of sin; the outward manifestation of the inward fallen nature). Our position in sin, determined our condition. We were wholly out of adjustment with God ... *"alienated from the life of God"* (Eph 4:18) with a ... *"separation between you and your God"* (Isa 59:2).

We lived ...*"according to the course of this world"*. The Message translation says ... *"You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live"*. The course of this world can be very wicked and vile, but you may object and say that you were not a "wicked" or "vile" person and that you lived a moral and religious life, so how could you have been classed with the "dead". The course of this world may often be moral and religious, but it is independent of Christ and God. You can only live a life *for* God after you have received a life *from* God, not before. It does not matter how moral or how vile you were, you were nevertheless dead in trespasses and sin. A moral person who dies and is buried is no less dead than a vile and murderess person who dies and is buried. Both are dead; lifeless. We were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins living apart from Christ, following the disobedient self life, under the influenced of the evil spirit, *"according to the prince of the power of the air"*. This is a sobering picture of the terrible condition of the human heart apart from God, and it is a description of everyone's original state.

Lusts of our minds – pride, vanity, selfishness, covetousness and self will are all independent of God and are just as evil as the lusts or passions of the flesh – greed, gluttony, drunkenness and sexual immorality. *"We were by nature children of wrath"*. John Stott provides a good definition of wrath, "It is God's personal, righteous, constant hostility to evil, His settled refusal to compromise with it, and His resolve instead to condemn it". God in His wrath hates sin, but in His love He loves the sinner.

So in our former state, before Christ set us free, we were subject to oppressive influences both inside and outside. Within was the self-centered pulls of the flesh, and without was the prevailing secular attractions of the world. Affecting both was the evil influence of the prince of the power of the air, the devil and his forces of darkness.

This past state of spiritual death applies to **all**; Jew and Gentile – for Paul once again uses the pronouns “**you were dead**” ... “*in which you formerly walked*” referring to the Gentiles readers in Ephesus and “**we too all formerly**” ... *even as the rest*” referring to himself and other Jewish believers. In doing so he levels the ground for all. By nature both Jew and Gentile are “children of wrath”, facing the same destiny. For, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, which is why we must all be born again. Unbelievers are not just sick, they are spiritually dead. They don’t just need resuscitation, they need resurrection!

Our Present

Eph 2:4-6 ... *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”,*

But God ... Two words but great meaning! Even though our sin was absolutely repulsive to God and we were objects of His wrath, we were inconceivably precious to Him and so, in His mercy and great love, He opened the way for reconciliation to deliver us from that awful state. When we were totally helpless God, in the richness of His mercy, stepped in and brought life and hope to the dead and helpless. Just as He did when ... *“The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep” (Gen 1:2)* and said *“let there be light; and there was light”,* so ... *“in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” (Heb 1:2)* and has ... *“made us alive together with Christ (Eph 2:5)*. He stepped into the darkness of our sinful lives and brought us life and light in Christ. The same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to the Father’s right hand, is the power that has raised us from the dead and exalted us with Christ.

The initiative in salvation was not from men to God, but from God to man. ... *“because of His great love with which He loved us”*. Redemption was planned and executed in the loving heart of the Father before the foundation of the world. By His mercy and grace we were saved. In His mercy He did not give us what we did deserve and in His grace He gave us what we did not deserve. Why? Because by nature God is love (1 John 4:8). Later, in verse 7, we will see that there was another aspect to His motivation to save us; that was ... *“so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”*.

If you spell evil backwards you get L-I-V-E. Evil is that which works against life. Christ came to reverse the evil and make us a-LIVE in Christ. The power that raised Christ from the dead, that reversed death and all evil, is the power that’s working in you and me right now!

Just as Satan is the source of all life in the unbeliever, so Christ is the source of all life in the believer. Out of these two sources flow two opposite streams, both in direction and in destiny; one is the vile stream of sin leading to death and the other is the pure stream of salvation leading to life.

How rich is His mercy! When we were vile and dead, God sent His Son to bring us salvation and life; when we were guilty God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins which he bore in His body on the cross. Such mercy and grace was shown to us.

‘Saved’ *σεσωσμένοι* (*sesōsmenoi*) is a perfect participle. It emphasises the present and continuing consequences of God’s saving action in the past. What it says is, “you have been saved and remain saved forever”. Our security in Christ is eternal!

He raised us up with Christ and seated us in Christ in Heavenly places. When the Father looks at us He sees us in Christ. Just as Aaron bore the names of the sons of Israel upon his breast piece over his heart before the Lord (Ex 28:29), so we are carried in Christ before the Father. He continually gives us perfect representation before the Father. How the Father sees us is how we should see ourselves, and we should live out of this reality in all our words and actions.

The little preposition “in” (... *“seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”*) denotes **position**. In the Word precedence is given to position over condition, because *where* we are determines *what* we are. In Ephesians Paul emphasizes our position and shows that our condition is an outgrowth or outcome of our position. We are either *in sin*, dead to Christ and living in the lusts of our flesh and minds, or we are *in Christ*, alive to God and walking in Christ. By nature all unbelievers are *in sin*; by grace all believers are *in Christ*.

Where do you live, “on” or “in”? Are you just living down *on* earth as a believer in a frenzy of anxiety over life’s adverse circumstances and situations? Trials, tribulations, suffering and sorrows will be yours here as they are permitted or even intended by God for your discipline, growth and training in Christ. But are you focusing on them and letting them get you down? Or do you constantly by faith rest in your position *in Christ in the heavenlies*, in His peace and joy? The latter is the only position from which you will have the courage and strength to bear and endure victoriously. Also, think of it this way; since we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies then we must be seated on thrones! We’re no longer in captivity, we’re enthroned!

The reality is that wherever Christ is the believer must also be, for he or she is now in Christ, bound together as one, for all time and eternity. Christ and the believer are eternally one, and He is ... *“far above all”*. In Christ we also are far above all, sharing fully, now and eternally, in the conquest, victory and power of that exalted position. In Christ we are ... *“more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37)* and He ... *“always leads us in His triumph ... and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor 2:14)*.

Our Future

Eph 2:7 ... *“so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”*.

What a future to look forward to! One initiated by God and depending only on the faithfulness of Him who, by His grace and mercy, saved us in order that throughout the eternal ages He might show ... *“the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”*.

In raising and exalting Christ, the Father demonstrated ... *“the surpassing greatness of His power”* (Eph 1:19-20); but in raising and exalting us He displayed ... *“the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 2:7), which He will continue to do throughout eternity.

Ephesians 2:1-7 certainly shows us that our heavenly Father is loving, merciful, gracious and kind, and Mal 3:6 (... *“For I, the LORD, do not change”*) and Heb 13:8 (... *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever”*) assure us this will never change!

His Masterpiece

Eph 2:8-10 ... *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”*.

The believer in Christ is God’s workmanship. We are His Masterpiece and we have no part in this miracle of grace. Our good works are the fruit of our life in Christ, but they have no part in placing us in Christ or making us a Christian. In the Greek text, the word “that” in verse 8 is neuter, while the word “faith” is feminine. Because they do not agree in gender, it means that the “that” is not referring to “faith” itself but to the whole process or experience of salvation, including faith as a part of the process. It is reinforcing the fact that our salvation is a gift from God. Our life, our position, our faith and the unsearchable riches we have in Christ are all outright unmerited gifts to us from God.

Let us digress for a minute and look at faith. Rom 10:17 says ... *“faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”*. God gives the gift of faith to all who give heed to the message of the gospel. When a person hears the gospel he or she can either resist, in which case there will be no faith to believe for salvation, or they can give heed to the ministry of the Spirit and through the vehicle of faith, which is given to them that heed the Word, they can believe and receive Christ as Saviour. For those who refuse the Word there will never be faith; for those who heed the Word, faith comes by hearing. For salvation, faith is simply the hand that lays hold of the gift that God of salvation presents to us.

We are His workmanship; exhibits of His craftsmanship and trophies of His grace. The Greek word ποιήμα (poiema) means: “that which is made”, or “a work” or “workmanship”. It is also the word from which we get the English word “poem”. We are His “poem”; something beautiful he is creating. The only other place in the New Testament where this word is used is in Rom 1:20, where it is translated ... *“what has been made”*, referring to creation. What it is saying is that creation is God’s poem, witnessing to His

eternal power and glory. So creation is God's first poem, but redemption is His second poem, and we who are saved are the syllables of His great poem of redemption. It is the great Poet, or Workman, who is at work in us. Our conversion is not an end in itself; it is the beginning of this work. We are God's "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17) and He is continuing to work in us to ultimately fulfill His purpose that we might be ... *"conformed to the image of His Son"* (Rom 8:29). He is working in us to bring us ... *"to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (Eph 4:13).

The moment a master, like Michael Angelo or Leonardo da Vinci, picked up his brush and began a work of art it became a masterpiece. It's not what Michael Angelo painted, or what stage of completion the work was at, but the fact that he was the artist that made it a masterpiece, and that he had in his mind a picture of the final form right from the first stroke of paint on the canvas. God is the Master and you are His masterpiece. And as Paul asserts in Phil 1:6 ... *"I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"*. All He requires is that we submit to Him and let Him mould and shape us so that He can conform us to the image of His Son, for that is what He has in mind for us to become. If we focus on what Christ desires for us today, we will be ready for tomorrow.

In our preparation God uses three main tools: the word (1 Thess 2:13), prayer (Eph 3:20) and trials or testing (1 Pet 4:12-14). As we meditate on His word it cleanses and feeds us and when we pray the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us. Together they cause us to grow in Christ. We then go through trials, suffering and adverse circumstances which test us. A manufacturer always tests his products before releasing them to the market to ensure he does not sell a faulty product. Items like some motor car components or air frames have to go through stress tests, while gas cylinders or piping have to go through pressure tests, to prove their strength and quality. When we go through our heavenly Father's testings we go back to his word and to Him in prayer to fetch strength to overcome or endure the testing. We will go through this cyclical process of growth and testing over and over as we mature, step by step, until we one day, reach "full stature". That's always been God's way; 40 years of wilderness preparation for Moses, 13 years in captivity and prison for Joseph's preparation, 25 years of waiting for Abraham to get his promised son, and 3 years of wilderness training for ministry for Paul.

Being born again, our conversion, or coming out of the 'grave', is not where it ends; we have to get the 'graveclothes' off. Remember Jesus words concerning Lazarus after He had called him back to life and out of the grave, He said, ... *"Unbind him, and let him go"* (John 11:44). The Greek word σωζω (sodzo) is translated "save" from which we get the word salvation. It means to "forgive, heal, deliver from death and all evil, rescue, preserve safe and unharmed, and, to set free". This is what God is doing in us, as expressed by Paul in Eph 4:22-24 ... *"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth"*. That's why the word and prayer are so important. We are to ... *"keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God"...* and ... *"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth"* (Eph 3:1-2).

God cannot work *in* us unless He has first worked *for* us and we have placed our trust in Him and been born again. Then once we are saved, He has to continue to work *in* us before He can work *through* us. And remember ... *“we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”*. His whole plan and purpose is to work through us to His glory. We are saved, not by good works, but unto good works; ... *good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”*. God is busy creating us for specific good works and He is creating specific good works for us. We all have different or unique characteristics and skills that He takes into account as He plans the “good works” we are to do. He is bringing together our potential and our purpose, and turning us into master craftsmen; ambassadors for Him (2 Cor 5:20).

There are two ‘faithful sayings’ that we need to heed:

1 Tim 1:15 (NKJV) ... *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”*.

Titus 3:8 (NKJV) ... *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men”*.

God’s purpose for our lives is that we become His workers carrying out the good works he has prepared for us in His harvest fields.

Phil 1:20-21 ... *“I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”*.

2 Cor 9:8 ... *“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed”*.

Col 1:10 ... *“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”*.

Titus 2:14 ... *“He gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds”*.

Heb 13:16 ... *“And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”*.

These works are to be the outcome of God working in us, not just our own works of the flesh.

Phil 2:13 ... *“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure”*.

It is by His grace that He works in us and through us, enabling us to echo the words of Paul.

1 Cor 15:10 ... *“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I laboured even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me”*.

We have a new power source, a new position, a new potential and a new purpose. Christ has worked **for** us and is now working **in** us that He may work **through** us, and thereby He is leading us to live out the plan and purpose He designed uniquely for each of us, to His glory and honour. These are the ... “good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

We are His workmanship, part of His redemptive poem, and our lives should now resound with the rhythm, music and lyrics of His heart as we joyfully go about the Master’s work.

One Unified Family

Eph 2:11-18 ... *“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

In verses 1-10 Paul has discussed salvation on an individual level, but now in Verses 11-18 the discussion turns to a national level and human society’s desperate need for reconstruction. Here Paul addresses converted Gentiles collectively and talks of converted Jews collectively.

The apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13) here proclaims that Jesus was not only a national Messiah, but a universal Saviour. His proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles is what caused Paul to face many beatings, stoning, imprisonments and much opposition from the Jews (Acts 21:27-36). The Jews thought they had the edge on all other nations and were not happy to have the Gentiles brought onto the same spiritual level as they were.

We must remember that God did in fact call Abraham out from the world and through him formed a nation, the Jews. God created a difference between the Jews and all other nations (the Gentiles). This difference was established, not for the Jews to be proud and aloof, but that through them God might reveal Himself as the one true God to the Gentile nations. God deposited His Word with the Jews and through the Jews He gave the world a Saviour. However, while the Jews maintained a notional and ritual difference, morally they failed. They ended up just as corrupt and morally decayed as the nations around them. That’s why we see God, from time to time, having to discipline the Jews for their failure to maintain their spiritual separation and moral standards.

God made no covenants with the Gentile nations. His covenants were all made with Israel and all His promises were made to Israel. He made many wonderful promises about the Gentiles, but none directly to them. So until Christ had come to the earth and had completed Calvary's work and the gospel had begun to be preached it could be said of the Gentiles that they were ... *"separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world"*.

Sin separated man from God, and man from man. Sin separated human society into hostile peoples and groups. Sin caused a massive schism in humanity, dividing people racially, nationally, socially, economically and religiously. Human society is in desperate need of reconstruction. How is this to be achieved? Man has tried through avenues like the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations, but these have failed to bring lasting peace between nations. No treaty ever made or yet to be made will bring opposed nations together in lasting peace. Because the heart of peace is not an organization or and it", but a "He". He, Christ, is our Peace. There is no other way. Here in Eph 2:11-18 Paul shows Christ as the answer to the nations' plight.

This passage falls into two parts:

1. The contrast between Jew and gentile:

We can start by summarising the contrast by means of a table:

We	Jews	Circumcision	Commonwealth of Israel	Near	Covenants of promise
You	Gentiles	Uncircumcision	Alienated	Far off	Strangers
Two –separated by		The barrier of the dividing wall			
		The law of commandment contained in ordinances			
		Enmity			

The spiritual condition of the heathen Gentile is summed up by Paul. They were:

- **Without Christ** – they were worshippers of the goddess Diana and knew nothing about Christ. The promise of a Messiah coming to deliver Israel knit the Jews together as citizens in a commonwealth. But for the Gentile the only common bond they had was sin.
- **Without covenants** – God's covenant with Abraham included blessings of the Gentiles but God did not make any covenants directly with the Gentile nations. They were strangers to the covenants of promise.
- **Without hope** – Historians say there was a cloud of hopelessness covering the ancient world.
- **Without God** – The heathen people had many gods (Acts 17:16; 1 Cor 8:5) but they did not know the one true God, or refused to honour Him (Rom 1:18-23). The Jews had one God in whom their national life centred.

2. The conciliation of Jew with Gentile:

So God stepped in and provided a way of salvation for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. All the wonderful things God promised in His covenant with Israel meant nothing to the Gentiles because they were not part of it. But then we hear Paul's words, "but now" ... *"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"*.

He then goes on to explain the salvation and hope they have through Christ:

Christ Himself is their Peace:

Eph 2:14 ... *"For He Himself is our peace"*. He's not just a peace-maker, he is our Peace.

Christ made peace:

There are four steps to Christ's work of peace:

- Eph 2:14 ... *"He ... broke down the barrier of the dividing wall"*. This separation was typified by the wall in the temple by which the court of the Gentiles was separated from that of the Jews. If a Gentile went beyond the wall it would result in his death. This wall made the Jews bigots in their attitude towards the Gentiles. Christ has done away with the wall, the veil was torn in two, and even the temple was demolished. The whole lot gone; all natural barriers between Jew and Gentile.
- Eph 2:15 ... *"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances"*. The cause of the enmity was the Law because it made a definite distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews had the Law given to them by God. They considered themselves teachers of the law and made their boast in the Law but most dishonoured God by regularly breaking the Law. The Gentiles were a law to themselves having no Law. The Gentile had sinned "outside the law" while the Jews has sinned "inside the law". All had sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Someone had to bear the judgement and pay the penalty for sin. Christ did this in His flesh. He fulfilled the covenant; He accomplished all that the law and commandments required. He was the law-fulfiller. There was no more need for the law. The cross of Christ is the only place where the enmity between Jew and Gentile could be abolished. It is here, at the cross, that Jew and Gentile meet on an equality of both sin and salvation.
- Eph 2:15 ... *"in Himself He might make the two into one new man"*. Up to now he has dealt with barriers to peace. Now God does something totally new. God does not try to make Jews out of Gentiles or Gentiles out of Jews; through His redeeming blood he does away with racial, national and religious divisions and both Jew and Gentile are raised to become citizens of heaven ... *"for our citizenship is in heaven"* (Phil 3:20). God forms a "new creation race", a "new man". We are no second rate citizens. We are not "completed Jews" as some like to think. We are a brand new creation race ... *"Therefore if anyone (formerly Jew or Gentile) is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come"* (2 Cor 5:17). Redeemed Jew and Gentile, new creatures, form the "body of Christ" of which Christ is head. Jew and Gentile see

themselves no longer according to their former nationality; they see themselves as “in Christ”. This is ... *“a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11)*. Jesus reconciles the new race to God ... *“thus ... reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross” (Eph 2:16)*.

- Eph 2:16 ... *“that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross”*. Before Jew and Gentile could be at peace with each other they had to be at peace individually with God. Once God was their Father they could call each other brothers. It was at the cross that they both met as equals; as sinners. It was through the cross they both emerged forgiven and made new in Christ. Through the cross they were both united to God and united to one another as members of Christ’s body.

Christ preached peace:

Eph 2:17-18 ... *“And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father”*.

Having become peace and having made peace, Christ preached peace. He could have come to judge but He chose, in grace and mercy, to come and deliver the message of peace. That is his message and now He preaches it through those in whom he dwells. He wants everyone to be at peace with Him and to live in His peace. He is the pathway to peace with the Father.

To summarise, the Gentiles old position can be compared to their new position:

Old Position	New position
“Without Christ”	“In Christ” (Eph 2:13)
“Aliens”	“A holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9)
“Strangers”	“No more strangers” (Eph 2:19)
“No hope”	“Called in one hope” (Eph 4:4)
“Without God” (Eph 2:12)	“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3)

The Church – a Habitation for God

Eph 2:19-22 ... *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit”*.

“So then”... Paul connects v19 with v 18, showing that now Jew and Gentile have equal access to the Father through the Son.

1. The church – the household of God

Talk about an amazing change in heart, just look at the writer Paul, who was formerly Saul of Tarsus the bigot of bigots, the Hebrew of Hebrews, as he, the 'elder brother', welcomes home the 'prodigal sons' ... "you (referring to the Gentiles) are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household". Oh the power of the Cross of Christ, it has abolished all racial prejudice and enmity! This is a picture of the joy and harmony of the household of God.

The apostles, prophets, Jews and Gentiles all come together and meet in Christ. Jesus is the meeting place. He is the cornerstone of the house He is building ... "in whom the whole building, being fitted together". The corner stone binds the structure together. He has united Jew and Gentile in the church.

2. The church – an holy temple in the Lord

Eph 2:20-21 ... "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord

The pagans at Ephesus had their magnificent temple of the goddess Diana. The Jews had their famous temple in Jerusalem. Christianity has its temple, a building made without hands but built by God, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone and of which we are "living stones" ... "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5).

This building is not yet complete; it is growing day by day as each new convert becomes a living stone and is added to God's household. Herod's Temple in Jerusalem and Diana's Temple in Ephesus were destroyed. The temple Christ is building will last forever. Jesus said, ... "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matt 16:18).

3. The church – an habitation of God

Eph 2:22 ... "in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit".

The old physical temple is no longer relevant in God's economy. The only temple God now dwells in is the one made without hands, in the hearts of His redeemed, reconciled new creation race.

This is why Paul and the early apostles had such a hard time from the Pharisees. The Pharisees did not want to let go of their Temple and all it stood for as that was the means of their livelihood. They tried the level best to stop the spread of the gospel, to protect their own welfare.

God desires a dwelling place on earth as well as in heaven. He wants to be with His family. Where they are He wants to be. Also where there are needful sinners, there He must have some way of revealing Himself to them and of reaching them with the gospel ... "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me" (John 17:23). So during this dispensation of grace, until the return of our Lord to take us to be with Him for all eternity, Christ takes up residence in each believer who constitutes His Church. We

are the habitation of God. He lives in us. We are the visible part of God on earth ... *“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27) ... “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20).*

Christ died to make reconciliation, man to God and man to man, possible. We must live to make the message of reconciliation personal as ... *“God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation”* and ... *“we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:18-20).* Our feet should be shod ... *“with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15),* for ... *“blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt 5:9).*

Lesson 6 – The Purpose of the Church

Eph 3:1-13 ... *“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus or the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 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. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory”.*

From chapter 1 to chapter 2 to chapter 3 there’s a progression, a pattern of development. In chapter 1 Paul expounds on the Father’s plans from before the foundation of the world and riches we have in Christ and this leads to a prayer that we might understand and appreciate the immensity of God’s grace and kindness towards us in Christ. In chapter 2 he further progresses the theme of God’s purposes in Christ, where he speaks about God’s amazing grace in saving us from sin and death and raising us to new life in Christ, and he speaks of the far reaching significance of the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile both to Christ and to each other, forming one new body, the body of Christ, the church. His declarations of these truths, which have a practical and important meaning to the whole of life, lead him to pray for us once more.

So ... *“for this reason”*, as Chapter 3 starts off, Paul starts off to pray, saying ... *“I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles”*... and then he deviates for a moment to talk of the great secret, the mystery, and his stewardship of this mystery, that has been in the heart of the Father from eternity, but which has at last been revealed in this glorious dispensation of grace. So he goes on to say ... *“if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief”*(v2,3).

Steward of God’s grace

While verse 5 says this mystery had been revealed to ... *“His holy apostles and prophets”*, Paul was the first to whom it was revealed ... *“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Gal 1:11-12) ... *But when God, who had set me apart*

even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days" (Gal 1:15-18).

In the New Testament no one else besides Paul speaks about, or refers to, the "body of Christ". This revelation was first given to Paul so that he might communicate it to others. The truth that Jew and Gentile were to be brought into one fold had been communicated to the twelve apostles by our Lord in His parable of the Good Shepherd in John 10:16 ... *"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd"*. However, from John 10:19 it is clear that they did not understand this parable at the time and the mystery remained a mystery to them until later when, to and through Paul, it was communicated. In Acts 10:1-48 we have the account of the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a Gentile, where Peter had the vision of the sheet being lowered from heaven with the animals, crawling creatures and birds on it. Through this vision and revelation from the Holy Spirit Peter came to the understanding that ... *"God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him"* (Acts 10:34-35). But even though Peter came to the understanding that all were welcome to Christ, he continued to comingling law and grace as was evident by Paul having to rebuke him for this in Gal 2:11-21. It was probably only much later in his ministry that Peter came to the full revelation of the mystery. However, the revelation of the one body, its unity and its union with Christ the head of the body was the mystery revealed to Paul. For on the road to Damascus when he heard the words ... *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me"?* (Acts 9:4) he had learned that to touch the body was to touch the Head. Paul, without doubt, is the preeminent apostle of the 'mystery'.

For this reason we, the new creation believers, should look primarily to the epistles of Paul for our source of revelation and understanding of God's plan and purpose for us in this dispensation of grace.

It's really important that we know what God has planned and what He is doing and that we intelligently understand our place and function in this dispensation of grace in which we live. Many believers get confused, and some have even fallen away and gone astray with strange teachings, because even though they live in this dispensation of grace they try to live and behave according to other dispensations, most often confusing law with grace. They try to follow "another gospel" (Gal 1:6-17) and are 'accursed' as a result. Many of the early leaders like James and even Peter got caught up in this matter of comingling law and grace, and Paul had to rebuke Peter and put him straight on this matter (Gal 2:11-21). Just as Paul told Timothy, we must learn to ... *"rightly divide the word of truth"* (2 Tim 2:15). All scripture is **for** us ... *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim 3:16-17), but not all is directly **to** us. There are many 'types and shadows' and prophecies in the Old testament that we can learn from, there is much good moral teaching in the gospels, but the only place we will find the "in-Christ" message and the blueprint for the lifestyle of the church is in the epistles, especially Paul's, and a few chapters out of John's gospel.

If we spend all our time in the Old Testament, yes we will find many good and valuable things, but we will also end up trying to run around and ‘do’ things trying to get God’s acceptance or forgiveness, when, according to the gospel of grace, we are accepted in the Beloved and are forgiven of every sin, past, present and future. If the Old Testament prophets and leaders are our blueprint we will be trying to get God to pour out His Spirit on us, and we will forever be trying to get an ‘anointing’ from Him, whereas, the Anointed One now lives permanently in us... *“As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him” (1 John 2:27)*. All we need to do is to learn to abide in Him and He will flow out of us abundantly. If, on the other hand, we spend time only in the Gospels and try and use that as our guide to life we will be forever pleading with the Lord to be ‘with’ us or we will be trying to go places in an attempt to ‘find’ Him, when He actually is permanently in us and wherever we are He goes in us and we have Him in us at all times. He’s in us when we are good and when we are bad. He never leaves or forsakes us. Or, trying to live by the Gospel pattern, we will be trying to be kind and forgiving to other people so that God will be kind and forgiving toward us, when in our gospel of grace we forgive because He has forgiven us and we are kind because He who is kind lives in us and expresses Himself through us in kindness. Following the Gospel characters we will be trying to be ‘like’ Jesus of Nazareth, something that is impossible. As believers, living in this dispensation of grace, He lives in us ... *“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27)* and all He desires is that we yield our hands, feet, mouths and minds so He can express Himself through us. The reality is that ... *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, 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 up for me” (Gal 2:20)*. If we follow anything other than the epistles of grace we will be forever trying to get ‘more’ of Christ, when Christ in His totality already is in us. We can’t get any more of Him. What we need, like Paul experienced, is a revelation of Jesus Christ who is in us ... *“He ... was please to reveal His Son in Me” (Gal 1:15-16)*.

If you try and use an outdated map of an expanding city, like Perth, to try and find the location of a newly constructed home in a new suburb you will simply not find your way. You need the latest map and then you’ll find the address you’re looking for quite easily. Trying to live by the “old map” of the dispensation of law in this current dispensation of grace will simply get you confused, lost and unlikely to reach your destination. We need to understand these distinctions. We need to clearly see the difference between God’s order for the house of Israel and that of the house of God, the church. The epistles, Paul’s epistles in particular, are the road map for this dispensation of grace.

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to teach us Christ. Jesus said ... *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you” ... “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:16, 17, 26) ... “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you” (John 16:13-14)*. Christ, and all the riches

we have in Christ, has been “banked” in you. ... *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col 1:17). The Holy Spirit is our teacher to reveal to us who we are in Christ and what are the riches we have in Christ and what are our responsibilities as citizens of His family, and His household.

Prisoner of Christ Jesus

It was this truth, the revelation of the mystery, which had resulted in Paul being in prison. When he sat down to write he probably had to adjust the chains that bound him so that he could write freely. This may have reminded him of the fact that he was in prison because of the gospel he preached. Because of his stand for the equal acceptance of Jews and Gentiles in the family of God and their oneness in Christ, he was now in prison (Acts 21:27-36; 22:22-24). He didn't despair about being in prison. In fact his mind and purpose were filled with the urgency and importance of his calling. He saw this position he was in as being advantageous to the gentiles to whom he was writing, as it gave him time to consolidate his thoughts and put these down in writing for them. That's why he could gladly call himself ... *“the prisoner of Christ Jesus”* (v1) ... and it's also why he could say in verse 13 ... *“Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory”*.

This line of thought led Paul to dwell on his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles and what this meant to him. He then goes on to elaborate more fully on what he calls the “mystery of Christ”, about which he ... *“wrote before in brief”*. By this he is referring to what he had already said in Eph 1:9-13. He had also written elsewhere concerning this mystery – Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; Col 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3. He goes on to explain more concerning the mystery in Eph 3:4, 9; 5:32; 6:19.

What is this mystery which ... *“in other generations was not made known to the sons of men”* (v5) but now has been revealed? Paul tells us in verse 6 ... *“to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”*.

How does this differ from the promise made to Abraham that God would bless the Gentiles through Israel? Well, according to the prophets of old a day is coming, in the fullness of time, when Israel will be restored to covenant relationship with God and will enjoy special blessings here on earth, and the Gentile nations also on earth at the time, although living in subjection to Israel, will also partake of and enjoy their blessings. But the great truth for our dispensation, this period of grace, is that God, in accordance with His eternal purpose that he formulated before the foundation of the earth, is now calling out a people for the heavenlies to be the body and bride of His Son throughout the ages to come, and through whom He will administer the affairs of a redeemed universe. This body will be made up of people who were formerly Jews and Gentiles but who have been born again and brought into the new creation and united to Christ by the Spirit, thereby becoming one body with each other and with Christ as Head. In this body Jew and Gentile would be co-equal in every respect. Our human birth establishes our racial distinctions, but our spiritual birth unites us as members of one body.

In verse 6 Paul equates the ‘mystery’ with the ‘gospel’. This is significant because the ‘mystery’ is essentially truth that was *revealed* to Paul, and the ‘gospel’ was essentially truth *proclaimed* by Paul (He refers to it as “my Gospel” – Rom 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8; Gal 1:11; 1 Cor 15:1; 1 Thess 1:5). He received the revelation of the mystery by grace, and he proclaimed the gospel by the working of God's power.

It was this great truth to which Paul was ... *“made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power”* (v7). God gave him the stewardship of going to the Gentiles with both the good news of salvation through the blood of Christ and the message that Jews and gentiles were now one in Christ.

The numerous beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, insults and the snake bite and the imprisonments Paul endured as well as the many he led to Christ, the epistles he wrote and the many great miracles he performed were all testament to the magnitude of God’s energy and power at work in him. God had appointed Paul as the steward of His grace and apostle of the mystery and had certainly enabled and empowered him to carry out his ministry unwaveringly. This is the same energetic power he has directed to us who believe, which Paul spoke of in Eph 1:19-23.

Paul makes it clear that he has no special claim to fame and certainly does not think more highly of himself than any other person. In fact he considers himself ... *“the very least of all saints”* (v8) and in [1 Cor 15:9](#) he call himself ... *“the least of the apostles”*. He is our example of the fact that one who has met with God, who has been prostrated with wonder at the grace of God and really understands the deep truths of God’s Word, does not get a swollen head; rather, it creates in him a humble, broken and contrite heart. Paul is one who combines personal humility with apostolic authority and knows the difference.

Apostle to the Gentiles

Paul was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles ... *“the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.”* (v8-10).

The word ‘administration’ is the same word we met in Eph 1:10. The Greek is οἰκονομία (oiconomia) from which we get the English word ‘economy’, which we learned earlier is an ordered condition of things. The economy or dispensation of grace is the period in which that which was a mystery through the ages (previous dispensations) is now revealed and known.

Why did Paul call them the “unfathomable” riches of Christ? Simply because they included: redemption, forgiveness, resurrection from the death bed of sin, enthronement with Christ in the heavenlies, reconciliation with God, incorporation of Gentiles with Jewish believers in the new creation race, the end of hostility and the beginning of peace, access to the Father through Christ, citizenship of heaven and membership of His household, being an integral part of the Divine dwelling place among men, and all this and more in the future, including the riches of the glory of Gods’ inheritance in the saints. One thing we can be certain of is that we shall never come to the end of all the wealth and riches Christ has and gives.

In the same way that scientific people cannot keep their amazing discoveries to themselves, so Paul could not hold back the revelation of the mystery, the gospel of grace, which he joyously shared with all

who would give him ear. For us to see a great awakening and spread of the gospel in our day we too need to pray (Eph 1:17-19) for a ... *“spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him”* and pray that ... *“the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe”*. Because, when we come to the same conviction concerning the gospel that Paul had we will see an evangelistic zeal like never before. Let us pray that believers will earnestly search the word and open themselves to the voice of the Spirit so that He may bring to us a revelation of Christ and the glorious riches that have been banked in the bank of our spirits. So that we, like Paul and the early believers, will turn the world upside down for Christ! So that we may return to the days when thousands are added daily to the community of believers. It's only evil men with their secret societies that delight to gather in secret and to keep their mysteries and theirs and not to be shared. What we believers have been freely given we delight to freely share!

Principalities and powers are watching it all unfold

Paul's preaching and revelation to the Gentiles of the mystery was ... *“so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through the faith of Him.”* (v10-11).

In the combining of Jew and Gentile into one family, the church makes know the manifold wisdom of God. The existence of the church, of Jew and Gentile as one, stands as a clear visual statement of the purpose of God being accomplished. The Gentiles were very much under earthly rulers and authorities who reflected the ways of Satan's rulers and authorities. So the existence of the church which includes Gentiles is a clear demonstration that God has foiled Satan's plans, and that God's eternal purpose and plan are being worked out despite all the opposition Satan's forces could muster up.

A major point being made in this first part of Ephesians is the centrality of the *church* in God's purposes. The church is not just some divine afterthought; it's an integral part of the eternal purpose in Christ. Christianity is not just to be seen as being constructed of isolated individuals in a personal relationship with God; it is all to do with a united family functioning together in love. That's why Jesus, in His prayer to His Father in John 17:21 said ... ***“that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me”***. The eternal purpose concerns the church, the creation of a new and reconciled humanity in union with Jesus Christ. Christ died and rose again not only to save sinners, but also to form a single new humanity; not only to redeem us from sin but to place us in God's family; not only to reconcile us to God but also to reconcile us to one another. The church is an integral part of the gospel Paul preached. The gospel is the good news of a new family and society as well as of a new life.

As the church is central to God's purposes that's why we, the individual members of the church, the body, should be seen operating together in harmony and serving in love in the community as the constant, continual manifestation of the church in action in our locality. It is this what the 'rulers and authorities' are watching. It's this what unfolds to them God's victorious plan and their demise.

The “manifold” wisdom of God is made known through the church. The word πολυποίκιλος (polupoikilos) translated ‘manifold’ is a word used by Classical Greek writers with reference to flowers or cloth and holds the meaning ‘the intricate beauty of an embroidered pattern’. So the formation and development of the church demonstrates the intricate beauty of God’s wisdom in His eternal purpose and plan. This is not just some ad hoc plan, but one conceived in the all wise God before the foundation of the world and is eternal in scope. The church serves as a constant reminder that Satan and all evil is defeated and that God’s rule extends to all people, and Christ is Lord of all. The church is to reflect the transcultural, transethnic unity that is part of God’s eternal purpose and plan. The more this is a reality the more clearly we proclaim to the world and to the forces of evil the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The other place this word “manifold” is used is in 1 Pet 4:10 ... *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”*. Again this stresses the “one another” aspect or importance of the church as a corporate body functioning in love and unity as the vehicle through which the world and cosmic forces will see and know the manifold wisdom and grace of God.

One of the clearest declarations of Christ’s victory is that He has made a way for us, in Christ, to boldly approach and confidently access this mighty God, whose purpose embraces heaven and earth, time and eternity. If we are in Christ there is nothing that can stand in the way of our direct access to God. As written in Heb 4:16 we can ... *“draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”*.

Eph 3:13 ... *“Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory*

Paul knows, come what may, the victory is Christ’s. He knows his suffering is evidence that the gospel is being conveyed to the gentiles and that God’s purposes in Christ are being brought to fruition. Paul’s attitude is that of Christ who ... *“who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:2).

The second prayer

Eph 3: 14-21 ... *“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen”*.

This is the second prayer recorded in Ephesians and it relates to the discussion immediately before it concerning the church. The first prayer which was found in Ch 1:15-23 focused more on the individual. While this second prayer can equally be applied to an individual, the context in which it is offered here

shows that it is a prayer for the corporate body, the church. So Paul is praying for the collective group of believers at Ephesus when he prays this prayer.

The first emphasised *enlightenment*, whereas in the second prayer the emphasis is on *enablement*. The first is a prayer for *revelation* ... “*that you may know*” – a petition for spiritual apprehension of the riches of His grace. The second is a prayer for *realisation* ... “*that you may be*” – a prayer for spiritual appropriation of the riches of His grace. There is interdependence between the two prayers with contrasts and compliments as follows:

First Prayer 1:15-23	Second Prayer 3:14-21
Revelation	Realisation
Enlightenment	Enablement
Light	Life
Know what you are	Be what you know
Know the power of God	Experience the fullness of God
Power working for us	Power working in us
You in Christ	Christ in You
Church the fullness of Christ	Church filled up with Christ

What Paul is really trying to say in this second prayer is get your hands on your spiritual wealth, realize how vast it is, and start using it so that your love for one another and good works may be evident, in order that you may bring glory to God as the outsiders are influenced by your actions and attitudes.

We should note that the two prayers in Ephesians, as well as the prayers also written from prison in Phil 1:9-11 and Col 1:9-12, have to do with the spiritual condition of the inner man and not with physical or material needs. If the spiritual condition is healthy, the material needs will not be a major issue.

Paul starts by saying ... “*I bow my knees before the Father*” ... First of all, all prayer is directed to the Father as he is the prime authority figure in the Godhead and the head of the heavenly family. God is not only Father, but he is also the One from whom alone all the fatherhood that there is derives its meaning and inspiration.

Then, among the Jews it was usual to stand when praying (Matt 6:5; Lu 18:11). Kneeling was formerly only used in prayer as an expression of deep emotion or earnestness. Examples are: Solomon at the temple dedication 1 Kings 8:54; Stephen at his martyrdom Acts 7:60; Peter at death bed of Dorcas; Paul at farewell times Acts 20:36; 21:5; Jesus in Gethsemane Luke 22:41. However, now days, while it does not really matter if we are standing, sitting, laying prostrate on our faces or kneeling when we pray, the important thing is our attitude and that our hearts and wills are bowed before our God when we pray. The letter to the Ephesians uses posture in much of what it says: we were once lost in sin but then Christ raised us from the dead and we were *seated* in Him in the heavenlies; with Christ as our life we could then *walk* in Christ and carry out His work and we could *stand* against the enemy in His strength. We see the progression ... sit... walk ... stand. What is important is that the posture that links sitting, walking and standing is “*bowing the knee*”. It is through prayer that we lay hold of the riches we have in Christ that enable us to express Christ and stand firm against the foe in His strength.

The four requests

The four requests are interlinked and progressive. Paul starts off praying that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will in turn lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience in Christ will enable the believer to comprehend the inexpressible love of Christ, which in turn will result in their being filled up to the fullness of God. So Paul prays for inner strength, spiritual depth, apprehension of love and fullness of God.

1. Inner Strength ... *“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man”* (v16).

Note that the supply of this strength to the inner man is “according to” (not just “out of”) the riches of His glory. He gives without limit because He and His riches are infinitely great. Christ and all the riches of His glory have already been “banked” in your spirit. You have all there is of the Christ and His riches already, there is no more. When Christ was birthed in you, you got a full and complete and total Christ, not just a little bit of Him. In the “Seed” is the totality of the “Tree”. What Paul is praying for here is that the Holy Spirit, who is in you as your Teacher and Guide, will show you how to appropriate that which has been placed within your inner man so that you may “put on Christ” in your heart (mind will and emotions as well as where Christ is in your spirit).

Strength and power in the inner man is where it all starts. If there is no strength here there is no strength in any other aspect of our lives. The inner man can see, so we should pray like David prayed ... *“Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law”* (Ps 119:18). It can hear ... *“He who has ears, let him hear”* (Matt 13:9) and taste ... *“O taste and see that the LORD is good”* (Psa 34:8). It must be exercised ... *“discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”* (1 Tim 4:7-8) and it must be cleansed ... *“Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”* (Psa 51:7) and it must be fed ... *“man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4).

While our outer man may be decaying our inner man is continually getting stronger as we yield to the Holy Spirit to conform us to Christ who is our life and our all. ... *“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Cor 4:16-18).

To have the Holy Spirit empower the inner man requires that our spiritual faculties are submitted to and are controlled by God and we are exercising them in prayer and in the Word of God and living in loving obedience to Him.

2. Spiritual Depth ... *“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the*

breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (v17-19).

There are three little words Paul uses that we must examine to gain understanding of what he is trying to convey to us; dwell, rooted and grounded.

“**Dwell**” literally means to ‘settle down permanently and feel at home’. Paul is praying that we experience a permanent, continual and deeper relationship with Christ and not just be satisfied with a superficial, occasional relationship; that He is ‘at home’ in us in our every day moment by moment decisions and thoughts and actions. Ours should be an ever deepening fellowship with our Lord. We should daily reflect and ask, does the Lord feel at home in me and are we in constant communion?

The word “**rooted**” makes us immediately think of things in the garden. To be stable against winds and storms and to get nourishment and water a tree must place its roots deep within the soil. Similarly a believer must be deeply rooted in Christ to live a stable and fruitful life. Jeremiah gives us good counsel.

Jer 17:5-8 ... *“Thus says the LORD, cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit”.*

“**Grounded**” is a builder’s or architect’s term as it has to do with foundations and the groundings on which the foundations are based. The groundings, the soil compaction and base preparation on which foundations are poured, are of extreme importance if we want a stable and long lasting building. The most important part of any building is the grounding and foundation structure. It’s very simple; if you don’t go deep and sound with the foundations, you won’t go high and stable with the building.

The trials, circumstances and situations in life will test the depth of our experience and grounding in Christ. Later in Ephesians Paul will talk about the various relationships we have and our conduct in these situations. Of particular importance will be our husband-wife and parent-child relationships. There will be many disagreements and strained times, but if our love for the Lord and for each other is deep we will find a way to resolve the issue and through it we will grow even deeper and stronger in Christ. Paul’s prayer is that members of the body may experience a deeper relationship with Christ, so that this firm grounding and foundation will support and sustain them through the trials of life.

3. Apprehension of love ... *“that you ... may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (v18-19).*

... *“with all the saints”*... implies this is a truth we share as a body. Look at the four dimensions of this truth we share!

- The **breadth** of redemption – Jew and Gentile made into one new man and one Body of Christ
- The **length** of God’s eternal purpose – from eternity to eternity
- The **depth** of depravity and death – from which the sinner was found and delivered
- The **height** or position to which saints were raised – in Christ, in the heavenlies and far above all

In this text the word ‘comprehend’ represents the Greek word καταλάβειν (katalabesthai), which means ‘to lay hold of’, ‘to take possession of’, is made up of two words; kata meaning ‘down upon’, ‘profound’, ‘deepest down’; and lambanō meaning ‘to take’, ‘take up’, ‘seize’, ‘seize upon’. Together they convey a ‘deep down seizing or taking possession of’ something. The Latin word “prehendere”, which means ‘to grasp’, is the basis for our English words ‘apprehend’ and ‘comprehend’. More directly, from this same Latin word, we get the English word ‘prehensile’, which means ‘seizing’ or ‘grasping’. A monkey has a prehensile tail, because its tail seizes or grasps onto the branches of a tree as it climbs and holds on.

‘Comprehend’ has more to do with the mental understanding of an idea or certain knowledge, while ‘apprehend’ speaks more of you laying hold of something for yourself. So it is possible to *comprehend* and understand about something, but yet not *apprehend* and really grasp a hold of it make it your own. For example, you can hear someone preach about a certain topic and understand what they are saying, you comprehend what they are saying, but it is a very different thing when the Holy Spirit gives you a personal and deep revelation concerning that topic. It then is really yours; you know that you know it is so. So *apprehend* is a better meaning for what Paul is trying to convey here, as he is keen that we lay hold of Christ’s love in a very personal and intimate way and not just know about His love. He wants us to personally explore, experience and fully grasp hold of the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of Christ’s love. He wants us to come to that point where we experience the ‘fullness of God’; where we know that we know His love in a personal experiential way so that nothing, absolutely nothing, can shake us. We can face the fiercest of trial, the worst of circumstances and walk through unscathed and rejoicing in Christ who is our Life and the One whose love is unfailing.

This love of Christ which ‘surpasses knowledge’ and which parallels the ‘unfathomable riches of Christ’, is love which is found and grasped hold of only by revelation of the Spirit. So rich is His love and so deep are His riches that It cannot be known, fathomed out or discovered by human knowledge or reasoning. That’s why, linked to this second prayer, we need to pray [Eph 1:17](#) for a ... “*spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*”.

A person with limited finances constantly has to check prices to see if they can afford it. Not so spiritually for the believer because according to His riches we have received and we have unlimited spiritual resources with which to meet the demands of life. Paul teaches us to pray that we may apprehend, lay hold of, the strength, the spiritual depth and love of Christ so that we can with confidence say ... “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” ([Phil 4:13](#)).

4. Love and fullness of God

We repeat here what we started off saying; Paul starts off praying that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will in turn lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience in

Christ will enable the believer to apprehend the inexpressible love of Christ, which in turn will result in their being filled up to the fullness of God. Just as nature abhors a vacuum so the divine nature does too. God wants us, His children and His church, to experience His fullness.

The measure of our fullness is Christ Himself. We are not to compare ourselves with others to see how full of God we are, that's nonsense.

Eph 4:10 ... *“He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things”.*

Eph 4:13 ... *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”.*

If we were reading in Colossians we may argue that we are already filled with Christ, and positionally this is correct. The literal meaning of 'you have been made complete' in Col 2:9-10 ... *“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete”* is 'you have been filled'. This is true, in our spirit we have been filled with Christ. We can't get any more of Him. What needs to happen for us to be *“filled up to all the fullness of God”* as expressed in Eph 3: 19 is Christ, who is fully present in our spirit, has to be apprehended by the soul, the mind will and emotion part of our inner man. We will hear more about this in chapter 4 of Ephesians where Paul says ... *“that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind”.*

Benediction

Eph 3:20-21 ... *“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen”*

He is able to do for us not just what we can ask; not just beyond what we can ask; but ... *far... more ... abundantly... beyond ...* not only what we can ask but what we can even think of asking. And it's not *of* His power or *from* His power but *according to* the power, His unlimited, infinite dynamic power, that He is at energetic work within us, bringing into being all the things Paul has just prayed for; for inner strength, spiritual depth, apprehension of His love and filling up to the fullness of God. So that through all of this Christ and His church brings glory to the Father of this great family now and throughout the ages to come.

To the Father be glory in the church and in Christ, in the body and in the Head, in the bride and in the Bridegroom, in the community of peace and in the Peacemaker, to all generations now and forever. Amen.

In the next section we will see how our identity in Christ leads to our expression of Christ. Our expression of Christ, evidenced by a walk in unity, love, purity, wisdom and mutual submission, achieves our goal ... to bring glory to our heavenly Father.

Lesson 7 – The Preparation, Ministry and Lifestyle of the Church

The first three chapters of Ephesians were doctrinal and the last three are practical. In the first section we were seated with Christ in the heavenlies and were told who we are in Christ and learned of the riches we have in Christ and the composition and purpose of His church. The second part has to do with our walk in life and stance against the enemy. There is a progression from sit to walk to stand. The first part taught us of the riches we have in Christ, this latter part explains our responsibilities in Christ.

The last three chapters of Ephesians are divided into four main parts;

- 4:1-16 – walk in **unity**,
- 4:17-5:17 – walk in **purity**,
- 5:18-6:9 – walk in **harmony**,
- 6:10-6:24 – stand in **victory**.

“Walk” appears 8 times in this epistle.

Walk worthy of our calling

Eph 4:1-6 ... *“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all”.*

“Therefore” and “entreat” are two significant words. “Therefore” tells us that that the exhortation to follow is built upon the disclosures Paul has made in the preceding three chapters. The Christian walk is based on the knowledge of doctrine and truth, not on ignorance. For what you believe impacts on how you behave.

“Entreat” (KJV “Beseech”) is there because Paul does not lord it over other believers, he graciously and tenderly pleads with them to follow his advice. He gently reminds believers that as we have such a wonderful calling in Christ, we need to live up to that calling.

The focus of verses 1-16 is Unity. These first few verses explain that our responsibility is to protect and preserve the unity of believers in Christ. We look at four things relating to unity.

1. Unity born out of grace

Unlike uniformity, which involves external pressure, unity comes from grace within. So to be able to preserve the “unity of the Spirit” we must possess and exercise the necessary graces. Paul lists six graces:

... *“with all **humility**”* (lowliness KJV). In all places where this word is used it relates to unity.

Phil 2:3 ... “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility** of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves”.

Col 3:12-15 ... “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful”.

1 Pet 5:5 ... “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with **humility** toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”.

Humility is modesty. It understands that everything we have and are has been given to us through divine grace and that we should act accordingly, in modesty or humility.

... “and **gentleness**” (*meeekness* KJV). This is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:23). It emanates from Christ, as He is gentle ... “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29). Gentleness or meekness is an attitude of heart that never takes offence. Meekness is not weakness, it is power under absolute control.

... “with **patience**” (*longsuffering* KJV). Another of the fruit of the Spirit, which literally means “to endure with unruffled temper”. Patiently putting up with whatever is thrown at you without losing your cool and fighting back will definitely help preserve the unity.

... “showing **forbearance**” (*forbearing* KJV). Forbearance means “to put up with”. Rom 2:4 tells us about God’s forbearance – He “put up with” our stubbornness and unrepentant hearts with kindness and patience and eventually led us to repentance.

... “being **diligent** to preserve the unity of the Spirit” (*endeavouring* KJV). Diligence is “being on the constant lookout”. It also means to persevere and be industrious in any assignment.

... “in the bond of **peace**”. There is only ever war on the outside when we are at war on the inside. So we should heed Paul’s exhortation in Col 3:15 ... “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful”. Unity can only exist among those who have the Peacemaker in them, and to whom they are in submission.

So the passage could be paraphrased as follows:

... “with all modesty and humility of spirit, with unruffled temper, lovingly putting up with all that is disagreeable in other people, persevering and constantly on the lookout, preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.

Because we are containers of Christ and He is the source of these graces, we can express them in our walk and our words.

2. Unity built on truth

Unity that is built on anything but the truth will not be true unity and will not last. Paul gives us seven foundational truths that unite all believers.

... *“one body”*. This is the body of Christ. It is made up of all (Jew and Gentile) who have been born again, redeemed through the blood of Christ and made alive in Christ) and placed in His body. No one intentionally tries to harm his own body, so it is to be with the true believer. Only do and say that which unites and edifies the body.

... *“one Spirit”*. The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, who drew us to Christ and by whom we have been birthed into Christ and who is now our teacher to teach us Christ.

... *“one hope”*. The hope all believers have, that one day we will behold our Lord face to face and will be transformed into His image. On that day corruption will put on incorruption as we also get our new bodies.

... *one Lord”*. The one Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ who said ... *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”* (John 14:6). If two believers worship the same Lord it is hard to understand how they could not walk together in unity.

... *“one faith”*. This refers to the body of Christian doctrine. This is what Jude calls “the faith” ... *“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints”* (Jude3). If it’s according to God’s word, it’s part of “the faith” and we should concur with it.

... *“one baptism”*. There are a number of baptisms referred to in the scriptures, however, this “one baptism” Paul is referring to here is the baptism or immersion which takes place when the Holy Spirit places us in Christ. At our new birth we were placed (baptised) into Christ and Christ placed in us, so that ... *“the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit”* (1 Cor 6:17).

... *“one God and Father”*. Paul emphasises the Fatherhood of God throughout his epistles. In Ephesians 1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20 God is referred to as Father. This is very significant as He is Father of the family of which we are His children. As believers we are children in the same family, and unity is maintained within the family by honouring, loving, obeying and serving our heavenly Father. It is impossible to love Him if we don’t love one another, for ... *“to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me”* (Matt 25:40).

3. Unity developed through gifts

Eph 4:7-13 ... *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, and he*

gave gifts to men.” (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”.

We are the captives Christ led up to the heavenlies when He ascended from the grave. We were once held captive to sin (we were the ‘rebellious’ as mentioned in Ps 68:18 which is quoted here) but thanks be to Christ He set us free from the captivity of sin and we are now His captives, His bond slaves. Paul quotes [Psalm 68:18](#) here, which says ... “*Thou hast **received** gifts among men*”, whereas in [Eph 4:8](#) it says ... “*He **gave** gifts to men*”. The word ‘among’ comes from a Hebrew root word (אָבַן) “bin” which means “penetrate to core”. The Greek root word from which we get the words ‘captive’ and ‘captives’ is made up of two words αιχμή (aichmē) “a spear” and αλίσκομαι (haliskomai) “to be taken”, “conquered”, “captive”. Putting this all together we see that Christ is the gift that like a spear penetrating to the core of our heart was placed in us so that we received Him who is the gift of eternal life ([Ps 68:18](#) ... “*that the Lord God may dwell there*”), and, in return, we were given up from the captivity of sin and death to be His captives, His gift ([Eph 1:18](#) ... “*His inheritance*”).

... “*so that He might fill all things*”(v10). He wants us to be filled up to the fullness of Christ. So He, the Gifted One, gives us gifts and ministers through us to the building up of His body, until ... “*until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*” (v13).

Christ has given gifts to the church for its edification or building up. Gifts are given to every member of the body because ... “*to **each one of us** grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift*” (v7) (*literally “the gift of Christ”*). Christ is the Father’s gift to us. He is a multifaceted gift. He expresses Himself in many ministries and functions. Christ is in each one of us and He expresses Himself through us as he pleases in whatever gifting He chooses for the occasion. Every member of the body of Christ has something which he or she may contribute to the up building and edification of the whole body. Just as we have many members in our physical bodies that are not seen, internal functioning parts or parts we think are small and insignificant, but on which the overall wellbeing of the body is very dependent, so are there many members of Christ’s body that may seem insignificant, small or unnoticed, but in reality are very important to the overall wellbeing of the body as a whole. No gift, no matter how small we may think it is, is insignificant. It takes every part to be functioning according to its design and calling to allow the body to be healthy and strong. If anyone is not functioning according to the gifts and callings of God, the body will suffer as a result. We are all to walk in Christ and yield to Him so He can function through us to the good of the entire body.

Note we are given “according to”, not just “out of” the measure of Christ’s gift. His gifting is abundant, not limited.

There are a number of “gifts” through which He is expressed:

1 Cor 12:4-11 ... *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills”.*

1 Cor 12:27-31 ... *“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. 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”.*

Rom 12:3-8 ... *“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness”.*

Eph 4:11-12 ... *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”.*

No gift is given to, or “owned” by, an individual. Believers do not live in isolation; they are part of a body. Whatever the gift or ministry, it has been given to the body for the building up of the body. We are temporary channels, through which the gift passes to the benefit of the body.

The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given to equip the saints for the work of service or ministry, to the building up of the body. The word “equipping” is *καταρτισμὸν* (katartismōn) which literally means “a perfectly adjusted adaption” or “complete qualification”. So these ministries are there to “completely qualify” or “perfectly adjust” each member so they can do the work of ministry which in turn builds up and edifies the body.

This same Greek word is used in Gal 6:1 but is translated as “restore” ... *“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted”.* The word “restore” is literally “adjust thoroughly or completely”. So the fivefold ministries, as some call them, mentioned in Ephesians 4 are to *gently* point out the way of truth to bring members of the body to “complete adjustment” so that

they can function in their gifting and edify and build up the body. The five fold ministries are not to lord it over the others but in humility and gentleness, equip them for the work of ministry.

When my sensory parts signal to my brain that I am hungry, my brain responds and signals to my feet to walk to the cupboard or fridge to get some food. My hands take the food, prepare it and place it in my mouth. In my mouth my teeth, tongue and jaw muscles set to work to chew and swallow the food. On arrival in my stomach the food is digested by the stomach juices and fed to my blood system where the nutrients are fed to all the parts of my body. As a result my body is nourished, energised, satisfied and grows stronger so that every part can continue to perform its function in a healthy manner. As a healthy person I can then do all the tasks I have to do, play sport and enjoy life. Similarly, if I hurt some part of my body, the other parts compensate and take over the injured parts function until it is restored to full health and proper function once again.

In a similar way, all the parts of the Body of Christ have functions to perform for the mutual edification and building up of the body, so it can be and do what God purposed for it to be and do, to His glory. The gifts given to the body are to unite, edify and build up the members of the body. So each part of the Body needs to be alert to the needs of the other members of the Body.

4. Unity fosters growth and maturity

Eph 4:12-16 ... *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”.*

We see two things here: firstly, there is the Body of Christ, consisting of the born again, growing steadily until we attain to spiritual maturity ... *“to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”*, and secondly, there is the local body of believers who in ministering to one another are growing together and coming to a spiritual unity.

In this passage Paul gives five evidences for spiritual growth and maturity which include:

- The words and actions of Christ are seen in believers as they live the Christ-life.
- Believers are stable, grounded in the word, and not deceived by the subtle fads and snares of Satan. They don't run after every new thing that's the vogue of the day.
- Believers express the truth in love. This is more than just the spoken truth; it is also a life that manifests the truth. It is where our words and actions are expressions of the truth. Sometimes folks profess to be Christians but their lives show no evidence of the Christ life. This is not the

truth spoken or manifested in love. When you speak and live out the truth from day to day that's evidence of spiritual maturity.

- When believers cooperate with one another and are ... *"fitted and held together by what every joint supplies"* they demonstrate maturity. Every believer, no matter how insignificant they may think they are, has a ministry to give to other believers so that they may be built up in love. Even as babies do not grow properly and become distressed when they are neglected and never touched and held, so believers cannot survive in isolation, independent of the Body. We need the cooperation, the love and the encouragement of one another for us to grow and come to maturity.

Walk like a new man

Eph 4:17-24 ... *"This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth"*.

Again we have a "therefore". This signifies that Paul is saying, "Seeing that you were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, predestined to the adoption as sons, redeemed through the blood of Christ, forgiven of all sin, raised up and seated in Christ in the heavenlies, given gifts for the building up of the Body and all of this according to the riches of His grace, now here's what your response should be". He then goes on to say, "Take off the grave clothes and put on the new man's clothes; put on Christ." Because we are the 'ekklesia', the 'called out ones', we are called out of the ways of the world and because we are the saints, the 'separated ones' we are separated unto the life and ways of Christ.

There is a progression downwards if we walk in the ways of the ungodly:

- ... **"futility** of their mind". In the original the word means "deceptive", "unprofitable", "error", "folly" as well as a "futility". These are people who follow a mirage, and illusion, something imagined but not true. This leads to the next phase in the downward spiral:
- ... **"darkened in their understanding"**. Error and deception leads to darkened understanding which makes them ignorant of God and His ways and prevents them from attaining salvation.
- ... **"hardness of heart"**. This leads to a hard and obstinate heart, against God and His ways. When a person is under anesthetic for an operation he or she is unaware of what is happening to them. So is the person who is under the anesthetic of a hardened heart. They are not aware of the true condition of things in their life.

- ... *“Having become **callous**”*. This is the searing of the spirit through repetitive sin. The first time you are tempted in some way and you yield you go on to feel bad and repent. The second time you still feel bad, but not so bad, and you start to reason out why you’re doing the think and find excuses. On and on, each time it recurs you feel less and less badly until eventually your conscience is seared and you sin willfully and habitually and accept it as being ok.

If we avoid the first stage we will not end up in the last stage

... *“for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness”* (v19). Just a quick note about greed, which Paul refers to in verse 19 and which Jesus talks of in Luke’s gospel:

Lu 12:15 ... *“Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”*

Greed for material things is based on the assumption that life *does* consist in the abundance of a person’s possessions. But our Lord teaches that the exact opposite is true. None of our material possessions go on with us into eternity. The real measure of our wealth is how much we would be worth if we lost all our money and earthly possessions.

Verses 20-24 focus on learning and putting on Christ.

... *“but you did not learn Christ in this way”* (v20). Believers must learn the Christ who is in them because that is the only way they will ever come to truth. Christ is truth. His life and ways are the full standard for us to live by. We must be separated from the old life, take off the old, and put on the new.

The name “Christ” comes from the Greek word “Christos” which in turn comes from the Hebrew word “Messiah”. Christ means Messiah. In the Hebrew the root word (מָשַׁח) mashach (from which we get the word Messiah) in its most fundamental literal meaning, means “separate out”, with other meanings such as “anoint” and “smear”. So Christ (The messiah) was ‘separated out’ from the God head to become incarnate in man, to give us the example of the ‘separated life’, and then to die in our place so that He could “separate us out” from sin and death. He then quickened us and placed His life in us and raised us up with Him to be seated in Him in heavenly places so that we could continue to live by His ‘Separated life’ as we journeyed through this life. In this life we are referred to as the “saints”, the “set apart ones”. One day he will return to ‘separate out’ us that are His from those who are not, so that we may live with Him forever, eternally ‘separated unto’ our God.

We have been ‘annointed’ with the life of Christ, to live by His life, ‘separated from’ the ways of the world and living ‘separated unto’ Him. That’s the message Pauls has for us in verses 20-24.

Jesus said, ...*“he who has seen Me has seen the Father”* (John 14:9). He wants it said of us, he who has seen you or me has seen Christ in us.

These verses in Eph 4:22-24, which summarise Romans Ch5-Ch8, along with Eph 2:4-6 and Col 3:1-25 all state that we are a new creation in Christ, having identified with Him in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension to the heavenly places, and we are now citizen of above. As such we are to take off any

and everything to do with the old corrupt nature and lifestyle of this evil world, and put on Christ. We are to ... *“be renewed in the spirit of our minds and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”* (v23-24). We do this by meditating in His word, walking in constant union and communion with Him and listening to what he is saying so we can be careful to live in obedience to His will and ways.

We are called to live by and to manifest the life of Christ. The Christ-life is not always easy, but it is the only way.

1 Pet 2:21 ... *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps”*.

Phil 3:12-14 ... *“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”*.

Walk in the Spirit

Eph 4:25-32 ... *“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbour, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labour, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you”*.

Another ‘therefore’ because Paul wants to emphasis what he has just said, putting it into some specifics. He names five particular common sins we may encounter in our daily walks, all of which will grieve the Holy Spirit.

- **Lying** – to be exchanged for speaking the truth. Have nothing covered, or hidden, with no sham or pretence. Be open and honest to all.
- **Anger** – there is a righteous anger, like Jesus displayed towards the Pharisees and money changers in the temple, which is acceptable. But anger unchecked which vents itself in unkind or harsh words must be repented of and put away ... *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger”*. Anger unchecked turns into malice and Satan will be quick to work through a malicious spirit. Both lying and anger ... *“give the devil an opportunity”*. Prov 15:1 ... *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger”*.

- **Stealing** – to be exchanged by working so that we have something to share with others. In Christ our whole emphasis comes off from me and is directed to others. We live and work so we can bless others. I can live up to the righteousness of the Law if I don't steal something that belongs to someone else, but I can't live up to the holiness of grace unless I share with others what I have received according to God's grace and kindness. Paul was our prime example of a hard working person as well as minister of the gospel. Acts 20:34-35 ... *"You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'".*
- **Corrupt speech** – unwholesome words. Focus your thoughts on Christ so that your words present Him to others. Be a person of whom others say, "Oh it was so nice to be with him or her because they focused their conversation on Christ and I learned more about Him through them".
- **Bitterness** – is like a thorn left in your body to fester; it ends up in a big infected sore and leaves a scar. Bitterness is hostility that gets engrained in you and poisons the entire inner man. Wrath, anger or evil speech need to be repented of quickly and peace restored with the other person as quick as possible. That's like quickly pulling the thorn out and applying a healing balm. Soon you have no pain, no scar and not even the memory of the thorn.

If we do not grieve the Holy Spirit through yielding to sin and disobedience, but rather our minds are fixed on Christ, the Holy Spirit will be free to teach us Christ. The result will be that we will be able to say with joy, "I have learned Christ this way".

... *"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"* (v32). Unlike the prayers prayed in the dispensation of Law, where we ask God to ... *"forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us"* (Matt 6:12), where we have to do something to receive mercy from God, now in the dispensation of grace we ... *forgive each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us"*, we forgive others out of a thankful heart because we have been graciously forgiven the mountain of debt that indebted us to our Saviour.

Walk in love and purity

Eph 5:1-7 ... *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them"*.

“Therefore” is there to remind us of the previous verse where we learned that God in Christ has forgiven us and that by living in and through His life we are to be kind and forgiving. So Paul begins this section exhorting us, as a form of thanksgiving for all Christ has done for us and in us, to give expression to that which we see and hear in Christ. In doing this we will be walking in love. Paul is saying, “God is love (1 John 4:8) and he lives in you, so submit to Him and walk in love”.

... *“just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma”* (v2).

This offering refers to the burnt offering (Lev 1:1-17). “The burnt offering symbolized the entire surrender of the individual or the congregation, God’s acceptance thereof, with a view to the renewal and sanctification of the entire man and consecration to a course of life pleasing to God”. It had no reference to atonement or forgiveness of sins. “The burnt offering was based solely on the assumption that Israel had been admitted into a covenant of Grace with Jehovah, and so it could only be offered by those Israelites who retained their standing in the covenant. Strangers were permitted, if not guilty of any notorious offense, to offer burnt and thank offerings to Jehovah without being fully admitted (i.e. circumcised) into covenant with the God of Israel” (Unger 1966).

The person offered this offering because he or she was filled with thanksgiving and wanted to present something to God as an expression of their love and adoration. Besides being a sin offering on our behalf on the cross Christ was also a burnt offering, voluntarily and out of a heart of love and adoration, expressing His love to His Father. His first object of the cross was to glorify His Father ... *“yet not as I will, but as You will”* (Matt 26:39). This is the great Burnt Offering. He offered Himself for us, as a sacrifice of fragrant aroma to God for us.

Seeing that this is the example and manner in which Christ has given all for us out of His heart of love, we should be satisfied with nothing less than a response of love and thanksgiving which is evidenced by conversation and a lifestyle that expresses His holiness and godliness.

Paul begins with ...*“walk in love”* because love is foundational, love is the summation of all the fruit of the Spirit and primarily because ...*“love never fails”* (1 Cor 13:8).

On the other side, the sins and improper things Paul warns against are those that confront us daily, not only out in the work place but now days particularly in our homes where TV and Internet and other technology does its best to invade our homes with this evil. There is much sensual stuff shown on TV portraying immorality, impurity, greed and there is also much filthiness, silly talk and coarse jesting that goes on. If we sit and take this evil in, sooner or later it will come out in our conversation, attitude or actions, for ... *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Prov23:7 NKJV). The word in Romans is very clear ... *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”* (Rom 8:6). If it’s no good, turn it off and go to the Word.

That’s why we get another “therefore” in verse 7; it’s there to remind us that we should ... *“not be partakers with them”*. Don’t give our minds to this subtle and evil filth, so that it cannot degrade us.

This invasion of filth and evil into our lives is simply part of the ... “*schemes of the devil*”, by which he seeks to render us ineffective and to bring us down, of which we will discuss more in Ch 6.

To counter this evil ... “*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you*” (Col3:16) so that we can be in tune with our Lord and be in a position to heed the exhortation in Col 4:6... “*Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person*”.

Before we leave this section there’s one thing we need to consider briefly ... “*no ... covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God* (v5). If we put our resources, trust, confidence, identities or security in anything other than Christ, to that exact degree those things will become a substitute for Him. He won’t allow that. That is the reason a covetous man is called an idolater. Left unchecked, the drive to “have” that haunts us all, gradually will crowd God out completely. That’s why possessiveness or covetousness in any disguise must be identified, confronted, and surrendered to Him.

Walk in the light

Eph 5:8-14 ... “*for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you”*”.

Paul has just completed the exhortation to embrace personal purity and now he moves on to remind us we are light in Christ and are to walk in the light of Christ. The light of Christ’s holiness is to be our standard.

Note Paul does not say ... “*you were formerly in the darkness*”, he says ... “*you **were** formerly darkness*”. Darkness is that state of separation from God. It is the place of being ignorant of God. It means we formerly did not have the Light of Life. But now we ... “*are Light in the Lord*” because ... “*God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5) and ... “*In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men*” (John 1:4).

The fruit of the Light is in the God-Seed and is working in you, the believer, to bring about perfect liberty. If, in every circumstance and situation that happens to you, you don’t learn more of Christ who is in you, you will experience that situation again and again, until you do learn. God’s purpose for your being in this world’s schoolhouse is to learn Christ so that He may be expressed through you in your words and actions.

We, the born again, are children of Light and we are containers, possessors, of Christ who is the Light. He has communicated eternal life to us and His life is our life. He lives in us and His life is to be manifested in us as light. The graces that should characterise the children of Light are ... “*goodness,*

righteousness and truth". You will not find fruit where there is only dead profession, but where there is life there is fruit and ... *"you will know them by their fruits"*.

Prov 11:20 KJV ... *"Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right"*.

"Goodness" is *"kindly consideration for others"*. The fruit of light is kindly consideration for others. This is following in Christ's footsteps.

1 John 3:16 ... *"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"*.

"Righteousness" is *"rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before man*. More simply it is *"doing what is right"*. The fruit of light is doing what is right, before God and man. This is being pure and right in character and absolutely reliable and known to do that which is right.

1 John 3:7 ... *"the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous"*.

"Truth" is conformity to the will and word of God. More than that, truth is a Person; Christ. Jesus said, *"I am the Way the Truth and the Life"* (John 14:6). He is truth personified. Know Him and you know truth. If we abide in Him and He in us, the sap of His Life and Light will flow through us and we will produce the fruit of light; truth. Truth has to do with inward sincerity, congruent behaviour, absence of hypocrisy, straight dealings and trustworthiness. The fruit of truth is deeds wrought in Christ.

John 3:22-21 ... *"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God"*.

It is walking in goodness, righteousness and truth that ... *"is pleasing to the Lord"* (v10) and a good testimony to the unbelievers. However, if we say that we do these things and put forward an air of sincerity but our actual life and actions show something different, then the world will never forgive us and our testimony for Christ will be spoiled. So we need always to consider what we are about to say or do and ask of ourselves and of the Lord, *"Will this bring glory to you my blessed Lord? If the answer is, "yes", go ahead, if not, forget it.*

A similar passage to that in Ephesians 5:8-14 is found in 2 Corinthians:

2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1 ... *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord, "and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty"*.

Both passages contrast the ways of old and new life, and as a new creation in Christ we are exhorted to ... *“come out from their midst and be separate”*. We the saints, the ‘separated ones’, are partakers of ... *“the inheritance of the saints in light (Col 1:12)*, so we have no business fellowshiping with or functioning in darkness. We are to separate out all that which does not conform to the ‘Separated One’ who lives in us. Let your mind/will/emotions – your soul – be separated from the ways of the old nature and be joined to Christ in righteousness and truth. We are to live in accordance with the truth of the new man.

We live in the world but we are not of the world. Our strength living here in this world is in our separation from the world and devotion to Christ.

Children of light are made to live and walk in light, not darkness. You cannot drive your car with no lights on a dark night without crashing. Surgeons, dentists, seamstresses, pilots, and most any profession you can think of, cannot operate in darkness. They need light to be able to function correctly. We too need to live and walk in the Light of Christ to be able to function correctly and to His honour and glory.

... *“Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them ...all things become visible when they are exposed by the light” (v11, 13)*. We don’t have to criticize or fault find, that’s not what we are told to do; all we need do is turn on the Light. In our lives, words and actions, if we present Christ that will show up and expose all “darkness”. It’s by goodness, righteousness and truth in our words and actions that we will get the job done. That’s how we ... *“come out from their midst and be separate”*. We just show by our lives we are different in a good way.

If we want real blessing in our lives and we want to see unbelievers come to Christ we must not tolerate any hidden blemish or hypocrisy. Put wrongs right; confess wrongdoings; return goods that are not yours; fix wrong attitudes; expose anything hidden. Remember that ... *“there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb4:13)*.

Walk in wisdom

Eph 5:15-21 ... *“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ”*.

The literal rendering of the words translated “be careful” is “look or see with precision, accuracy and rigour”. A climber on Mt Everest would look with precision, accuracy and rigour at each footstep he took to ensure he did not place his foot on a loose footing or in a crevice, either of which could lead to a fall to death or severe injury, either of which would prevent him from reaching the summit. As we live in a world of sin where there are many temptations, influences, traps, snares and crevices that Satan would just love us to fall into, we need to be rigourous and very careful that we walk wisely.

Verse 14 talked about a “sleeper”. We cannot afford to ‘sleep-walk’, paying no attention to where we are or what we are doing. Only a foolish sailor will drift in the ocean not checking continually on the winds, his sails, the rudder and his charts to ensure he gets safely to his planned destination. We can’t have parts of the day where we are ‘daydreaming’ and not in tune with the Holy Spirit and Christ within. We need to make the most of every moment of our day, staying attuned to the Holy Spirit; keeping our mind/will/emotion part filled with the Spirit. Giving Him full attention, so He can teach us Christ and lead us in the Christ life.

... *“Making the most of your time”* (v16). Buy up the opportunity; make the most of it. If you go to the shops when the summer sales are on you find lots of bargains. If you don’t take up the offer when it is presented you’ll miss out because soon the sale is over. The days are evil the opportunities are few and far between. How foolish it is to waste opportunities to influence and win the unsaved when they present themselves. Tomorrow may be too late. The word ‘opportunity’ comes from two combined Latin words that mean ‘before harbour’ or ‘toward the port’. The picture is a ship taking advantage of a suitable wind and tide to carry it safely into the harbor. Paul tells us to make the most of the opportunity (the time) because life is short and full of surprises and we need to make the most of the opportunities God presents to us.

... *“do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is”* (v17). It is only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that we can be delivered from our foolishness. Our minds have to be enlightened, renewed, to understand the will and ways of Christ.

Rom 12:1-2 ... *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”*.

Note it does not say we have to know the will of the Lord, but that we have to *understand* it. That means we need to sit at His feet and enquire of Him what His plan and purpose is for us, so we can walk in it.

Col 1:9-10 ... *“we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”*.

That understanding may come to you through circumstances and situations you go through, as you look through the problem to Christ.

Rom 8:28 ... *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”*.

... *“do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit”* (v18). When you are drunk with alcohol you are not in control of your mind, will, emotions, words or actions. You foolishly fumble and stagger about making a total idiot of yourself and wake up the next day ill, sore and regretting your actions. Paul uses the contrasts of drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit purposely. On the one hand, when drunk with wine, you are not in control of your mind, will, emotions or actions, you are controlled by a spirit foreign to yourself, but on the other hand, when your attention is filled with the Spirit, your mind is fully attuned to the Holy Spirit and occupied with the Spirit and you operate in full awareness and understanding of His will and purpose. So ‘being filled’ here has more to do with ‘control’ than it has to do with contents or quantity. Your mind, your attention, is filled with, focused on, or fully occupied by the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is more about being submitted to, and under the control of, the Holy Spirit than it is about filling up empty vessels that need more fuel to keep the flame burning.

Paul is saying be fully controlled by and under the influence of the Spirit, not just wandering around in a daze, like a drunkard, not understanding God’s will and purpose for your life. The tense used is the present, so we are to habitually and continually to have our minds filled (minds occupied with) with the Spirit. Christ lives in you and wants to live and express Himself through you every moment of the day. The Holy Spirit is in us to teach us Christ, to reveal Him to us so we can give Him expression through our mouths, hands, feet, minds and emotions. Be dominated and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Compare [Col 3:16](#) ... *“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God”*, with [Eph 5:18-19](#) ... *“be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord”*. Whether you are filled with the Word or filled with the Spirit you get the same result. The Spirit and the Word agree, and as we fill our minds with the Word and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our understandings, so we come to the understanding of His will and ways, so that we can then walk in wisdom.

The evidences Paul gives here of the fullness of the Spirit, a mind fully occupied with the Spirit, include:

- **Joyfulness** – ... *“making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (v19). Happiness is a thermometer that goes up and down with changing circumstances, whereas joy is a thermostat that determines or sets the temperature of each circumstance. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. ... *“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:2).
- **Thankfulness** – ... *“giving thanks for all things”* (v20). Expressing thanks to God is one of the surest ways to enforcing victory over the devil. We can thank Him for all things if we trust Him implicitly because of Rom 8:28. Thankfulness is the voice of true love.
- **Submissiveness** – ... *“be subject to one another in the fear of Christ”* (v21). Those whose hearts are fully focused on the Holy Spirit and who are truly subject to Jesus Christ do not find it difficult to submit to others also.

The matter of submission is taken on and applied to various relationships in the verses that follow, as verse 21 is linked to verses 22 and the ones that follow it.

Walk in Submission

Eph 5:22-33 ... *“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband”.*

Submission is not to determine the order of authority, but rather it is to govern the operation of authority. It determines how authority is given and received. The Pharisees made a big deal of their authority to make themselves look important. Jesus used His authority to build people up and make them feel appreciated. For example, He washed the disciples’ feet. True submission says “others are more important than me” ... *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others”* (Phil 2:3-4).

Where most Bibles show ... *“wives be subject to your husbands”* or *“wives submit yourselves to your husbands”*, in the Greek text the words “be subject” or “submit yourselves” do not appear. So a more correct rendering of the translation of verses 21 and 22 would be ... *“submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord, wives unto your own husbands, husbands to your own wives”*. This is a call to mutual submission and respect. It’s not a call to wives to be the husbands slave.

Looking at verse 25 ... *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her”*. Our homes are to be a reflection of Christ and His church. One of sacrificial and unconditional love. We respond to His amazing love with thankful hearts. So it is to be with husband and wife, a mutual love and respect. Christ lives in both the believing husband and believing wife and as we live by His life and faith we can love one another in the strength of his might. The fruit of the Spirit is love and ... *“love does not seek its own”* (1 Cor 13:5).

The root of all marital problems is sin in one form or another, and the root of all sin is selfishness.

Eph 6:1-9 ... *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him”.*

... *“Children obey ... for this is right”* (v1). God puts the matter of obedience on the common ground of what is correct and right. Similarly in Col 3:20 we see ... *“Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord”*. Jesus was a child. He was obedient and submitted to His parents in all things. But the most amazing thing is that He, the Creator, stepped down to that position of ultimate submission, leaving us a perfect example that we should follow Him.

This commandment that relates to obedience to parents is the only one of the ten commandments that came with a promise or benefit attached to it ... *“that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth”* (v2). This shows the importance God places on children obeying their parents.

Fathers, our attitude to our children should be the same as that for our Lord. In fact in all our relationships, whether husband and wife, parent and child, master and slave or servant, should be governed by our relationship with our Lord. ... *“be subject to one another in the fear of Christ”* (5:21).

In all these relationships we should be engaging in them by living the Christ life before them. Our prayers, our lives and our examples should be consistent and result from an intimate walk with Christ. If that is the case mutual submission should not be an issue.

“Eye-service” is simply personified by the person who is slack at their work and is always looking out for when the boss is coming and then when the boss is approaching suddenly starts to put on a big effort and in such a manner as to attract the boss’ attention so he will see them hard at work and get the impression that they are a good worker. Opposite to this our attitude should be ... *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father”* (Col 3:17) and ... *“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve”* (Col3:23-24). The best way to witness to a boss is the do an honest and good days work.

Lesson 8 – The Warfare of the Church

The conflict

Eph 6:10-12 ... *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”.*

We have progressed from being ‘seated’ to ‘walking’ and now to ‘standing’. We sat with Christ and learned of Him; we expressed His life in our walk; now we stand firm against the enemy in the strength of His might.

“Finally”, because we can only stand against the enemy when our walk is righteous and pure, and we can only walk right when we have established our position in Christ. This order cannot be reversed.

When we seek to appropriate the blessings that are already ours in Christ, we find a host of evil powers attempting to prevent us from entering into and enjoying what is ours. We find ourselves faced with the abundant “schemes of the devil”.

In order to defeat the enemy we must first establish who the enemy is, where he is, and what he can do. We need to know his strategies and tactics.

First of all he does not come along with a red suit, horns and pitch fork! He parades as an angel of light. More often than not his schemes are so close to the truth, but are not truth, that they are difficult to discern unless we are attuned to the Holy Spirit and know the Word. Satan will often quite happily let you do good things to keep you from doing what God has specifically told you to do. He will do his utmost to keep you from the word, prayer and from fellowship with your Lord. He knows that’s where you go to fetch strength against him.

Unlike God, the Satan is not omniscient, omnipotent or omnipresent. He gets the job done by having a vast host of demonic helpers, the principalities, powers, rulers, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

Our battle is not against other humans. It is against spiritual powers of darkness. These powers seek ... *“to steal, kill and destroy”* (John 10:10).

Now, of utmost importance, we must consider the order of the first two lines ... *“be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armour of God”* (v10, 11). There are two separate things here; *“be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”* and *“Put on the full armour of God”*. Often times when we approach this passage we rush to focus on the armour. But the order is there for a reason. Both are necessary. We cannot have one and not the other. You cannot say “oh we will hand it over to the Lord and His strength, He will fight the battle for us” and leave it at that. Similarly you can’t say “I’ve got the armour on so Satan can’t touch me” and forget about needing strength and expect to be successful. We need both, first God’s strength and secondly the armour of God. We must first gain

strength before we will be able to gird up and wield the armour. We start with strategy and then go on to tactics. Strategy deals with the overall picture, the whole field; tactics deal with individual or specific fronts, particular movements, particular methods and ways of attack.

Christ is our strength and Christ is our armour.

Strength: This part has to do with strategising. Before you begin to fight you must possess strength, which can only come from the Lord. We need to *“be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”* because we cannot fight this battle without strength or in our own strength. We need to know our own weaknesses and also our total dependence on Christ for strength. We need to put on Christ that we may be strong in every area of our lives.

- We need to know the battle is God’s not ours. Christ is the Captain of our salvation and the Author and Perfector of our faith. We are to look to Him at all times.
- We do the fighting, God gives us strength and direction ... *“resist the devil, and he will flee”* (Jas 4:7)... *“for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live”* (Rom 8:13).
- Christ gives us support to boost our morale ... *“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted”* (Heb 2:18)
- He sustains us and gives us hope ... *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”* (Rom 15:4).
- We exercise in preparation for battle ... *“let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (Heb 12:1)
- We are to apply diligence in our preparation ... *“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love”* (2 Pet 1:5-7)
- God in His grace has given us promises to sustain and strengthen us ... *“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:15-16) ... *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly”* (Psa 84:11).
- We must develop our trust in God ... *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight”* (Prov 3:5-6)
- We must avoid certain things ... *“For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge”* (Rom 10:2) ... *“But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to*

“speak and slow to anger” (Jas 1:19) ... “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged” (2 Tim 2:24)

- Be able to stand firm ... *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you” (1 Pet 4:12) ... “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12).*

Armour: This part has to do with tactics. We have armour because there is something for us to do. There’s a struggle. We have some wrestling to do. So we need armour. Christ is our armour. When we ‘put on’ the armour we ‘put on’ Christ. Christ with whom we are one spirit (1 Cor 6:17) is appropriated by our mind (our soul part). This is the process of uniting of our heart so spirit and soul are one and in agreement. This is the renewing of our minds to the truth.

The strength and the power of His might are offensive, while the armour is almost entirely defensive. It is concerned with our protection and the defensive side of our struggle and skirmish with the devil and his forces of darkness. There’s no back protection so there’s no running away from the enemy. We are to stand firm and enforce the victory that is already ours in Christ. We do not fight *for* a place of victory, we fight *from* a place of victory.

Eph 6:13-17 ... *“Therefore, take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”.*

The girdle of truth. The loin belt was used by soldiers to fasten up their long flowing garments so that they could run fast into battle without impeding their progress. ... *“gird up your minds for action” (1 Pet 1:13).* We gird up our minds with truth so that our imaginations may not be ... *“tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph 4:14).* Christ is the truth ... *“I am the Way, the Truth, the Life” (John 14:6).* We put on Christ. A soldier of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear.

The breastplate of righteousness. ... *“by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30) ... “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21).* We again ‘put on’ Christ who is our righteousness. Think righteous; think with the mind of Christ.

Feet shod with the gospel of peace: Christ is our peace ... *“for the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom 8:6).* Peace is a fruit of the Spirit ... *and against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:23).* When we release peace we release a power against which there is no counter law or force. That is why it is a gospel of ‘preparation’ of peace. It quietens down the spiritual atmosphere.

The shield of faith. ... *“we live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal 2:20).* The shields were designed to interlock so the soldiers could march forward under a continuous shield. This suggests we are not alone in the battle. The faith here is not saving faith but the faith we live by. The faith of the Son of God who lives in us. When doubts or fears are shot at us we must quickly quench them with faith. We are who God’s word says we are. Our faith is in Him and His word. We don’t believe the lies of the enemy.

The helmet of salvation. Christ is our salvation. With our minds fixed on Him we have an impenetrable helmet. When our mind is fixed on Christ Satan cannot deceive us or lead us astray. ... *“for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4-5).*

The sword of the Spirit. This is our offensive as well as defensive weapon. The Word is sharp and powerful and destroys Satan’s lies. In the wilderness when being tempted by Satan, Jesus said, “it is written ...” and he defeated Satan. Take up the word, know the word and use the word to enforce our victory.

Prayer

Eph 6:18-24 ... *“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love”.*

Prayer is the fire power that wins battles.

Pray always. This does not mean we must be speaking all the time ... *“meaningless repetition” (Matt 6:7)* just to be heard, but rather it is the ... *“praying without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17)* that keeps us in constant communion with our Lord. It’s having our transmitter and receiver tuned to the frequency of His transmitter and receiver.

Pray with all prayer. Prayer includes supplication, petition, thanksgiving and intercession. Intercession and thanksgiving are powerful tools for derailing Satan and his plans.

Pray in the Spirit. ... *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom 8:26-27).*

Pray on the alert. We must keep alert and watch out for the attacks of the enemy. Jesus said, “*Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matt 26:41).

Pray with perseverance. Pray and keep on praying. Stick to it. This is prayer, not to force God’s arm and get man’s will done in heaven, but to pray and keep on praying until God’s will is established on earth.

Pray for the preachers. ... “*pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel* (v19). Pray for wisdom, power, clarity of speech and opportunities for the gospel. That Christ may be known in all the earth.

Final Encouragement

We are not alone in this battle. Paul had Tychicus beside him for encouragement. We have others around us for mutual encouragement too.

Peace, love, faith and grace to all who love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

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