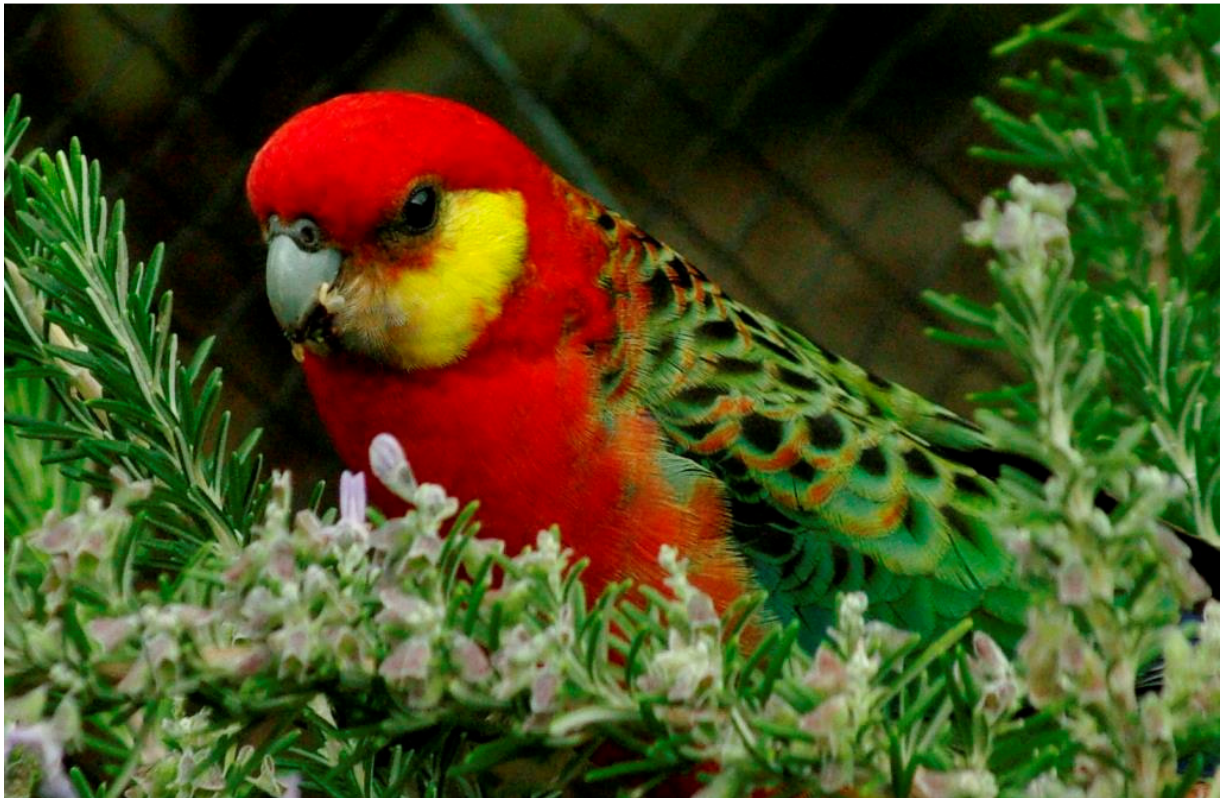


The “Mystery” Revealed

Insights from Ephesians

The summing up of all things in Christ



Notes for your edification

by

Geoffrey Bull

Copyright © 2021 Geoffrey Bull

All rights reserved.

For personal use, and sharing with friends, permission is granted for a copy of this publication to be made. However, for any other purpose no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

PO Box 549 Cowaramup

Western Australia 6284

geoffrey@geoffreybull.com

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the *NASB – New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

NKJV – Scripture quotations marked (*NKJV*) are taken from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

KJV – Scripture quotations marked (*KJV*) are taken from the Holy Bible, *King James Version*.

CONTENTS

		Page
Lesson 1	Introduction	1
Lesson 2	The Father's Eternal Purpose	11
Lesson 3	Christ Life – Embracing the Cross Life	21
Lesson 4	Equipped and Fully Functioning Body of Christ	29
Lesson 5	Our Position and Power	39
Lesson 6	Armed for Effective Service	48

Lesson 1 Introduction

Some thoughts to carry with us as we enter this brief study:

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a letter directed to believers, those who are ‘in Christ’. This is a message to the church – the Body of Christ. It has to do with the position and effective operation of the complete Body of Christ according to the Father’s overall eternal purpose and plan.

So our intention, as those in Christ, as members of the Body of Christ, is to gain some further insight, understanding, and ultimately appreciation of the Father’s ultimate purpose and intention through Paul’s stewardship of the “mystery”, as expressed in this letter to the Ephesians.

Eph 3:8-9 ... *“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Nations 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.”*

Key Verse:

Eph 1:9- 10 ... *“In all wisdom and insight He (the Father) made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, with a view to an administration (plan) 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.”*

Focal Point:

Very clearly, the focal point of this message to the church, the Body of Christ, is the Lord Jesus Christ! He who is the Head of the Body! So Ephesians is a panoramic view of the wondrous and glorious purpose and plan of God, brought about in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Epistle is God’s Word; it is God speaking and through the Apostle Paul, who is writing, giving us a revelation of our Father God and His eternal purposes, and so our thinking must always start with God the Father, the One speaking to us. So, although this is a message to the church, we must not fall into the trap of trying to interpret the message from a self-centered subjective point of view. Our viewpoint must always be from the heavenly places, seeing through our Father God’s eyes.

We must not try to start with ourselves and then ascend to God the Father; we must start with the Sovereign One, the Grand Architect, the Master Weaver, the Father of all and His plan and purposes for Himself and His Son, and only then descend to seeing where we, by grace, fit in. And then, by walking in His strength and according to His purpose our lives are to bring glory and honour to Him.

We will see God’s sovereignty and grace is present throughout the Epistle, from the introduction and right through to the end. It’s as Paul declared to the believers in Rome:

Rom 11:33, 36 ...*“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ... For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”*

The sovereignty of God is certainly seen in Paul's life. It would never have been possible for Paul to understand his pre-conversion life prior to his revelation of Jesus Christ. That vocation with which he was called when Jesus became his Lord and his life throws so much illumination upon the sovereignty of God in his past history. This is a principle which will help all of us as we serve God, and it shows how immensely important it is that Jesus shall be – not only our Saviour – but our Sovereign Lord. He is our life and He directs us according to His purpose. As we proceed we will look further into this matter.

Paul's Jewish birth, upbringing, training, education and deep embeddedness in something from which he would be extricated by the power of God, and something which was going to be shown no longer to be what God needed, is in itself of tremendous educative value. Why did God, in His foreknowledge, put a man so deeply into something which does not ultimately represent His mind? This is something we need to consider. So many will argue that, because they know with certainty that God brought them to where they're at – their ways, work, form, and association – that they think that's how it is to be forever. But Paul's history says NO to that argument. God's ways in Paul's case shows us that God may do a certain thing in a certain way, and all His sovereignty may truly be in it, but only for a temporary purpose. That purpose being to give a deep, thorough, first-hand, personal knowledge of that which is really at best a limitation upon the full purpose of God. It so important and vitally necessary for us as God's servants to have personal knowledge of that from which people we minister to are to be delivered. Abraham must know Chaldea; Moses must know Egypt; David must know the falsehood of Saul's reign. So Paul must know the proscribed Judaism with all its legalism, so that he can speak with the authority that comes from personal experience.

Paul wasn't changing his God at conversion, Jehovah was his God both before and after. The change was in the method of God. It was still God at work. It's important to note this because we cannot say, because we were born and brought up in this or that, therefore "Providence" intends for us to be like that forever. We must understand that we are as we are and where we are by the sovereignty of God, and we must equally know that when God opens our eyes to something that appears to be completely different to what has been in the past, that any major change is equally definitely of God, and the only alternative to making the change is disobedience to the revealed will of God. This certainly will test the depth of our trust in God, because what is presented may appear to be contradictory to all we have stood for up to now.

We do not know what mental and soul battles Paul had in accepting this massive turnaround in his life – that all that he was and stood for was now cast aside. No longer was he to depend on his natural abilities and learning and status. The change was so revolutionary – it appeared as if there were two contrary ways in the same God. But for him, and for us today, this is why we must *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not upon your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight"* (Prov 3:5-6).

So as we enter this study of Ephesians let us enter with minds open to the Holy Spirit to, to any fresh revelation He desires to bring to us, prepared to see as the Father sees, even if this may appear contrary to what we have understood in the past.

This series of lessons will not be a verse by verse tour through Ephesians, although obviously we will dig into some of the verses. We don't need a verse by verse expository study of this Letter, there are plenty of those in print. Rather, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will hover over the eminences embodied in this Epistle, and stand in awe gazing at the "unsearchable riches of Christ" presented in it.

In order to gain true insight, to gain a revelation of Jesus Christ, we do need the eyes of our heart to be opened in a manner similar to that which took place in the Apostle Paul when "it pleased God to reveal His Son in him" (Gal 1:16). So we need to pray that ... *"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you and to me a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. That the eyes of our heart may be enlightened ..."* (Eph 1:17-18) so that we may fully comprehend the Father's eternal purpose and plan as explained in this Epistle.

It's really important that we understand that the word "knowledge" used in this prayer (ἐπίγνωσις – epignosis) is more literally "knowledge upon knowledge", or "intimate knowledge". It is the "deep down knowing and understanding" kind of knowledge that only comes from illumination or revelation of the Holy Spirit. We need this "knowledge" if we are to be aligned with the Father's eternal purpose.

In Ephesians Paul is not presenting a specific theme, doctrine or subject. He is not debating, or reasoning or arguing. He is simply making a mighty proclamation. He is pouring out an accumulation of "revelations" given to him by God. The numerous superlatives he uses shows how much is bursting out of a heart that is full and overflowing of all he has received from God, of which he is steward of these mysteries for the church, the Body of Christ.

Paul is sharing with us, not from his own bright ideas, not from human wisdom, but that which was given to him by **revelation** from God. Paul refers to this as the "unsearchable riches" – the things that are beyond tracing or exploring or searching. Inexpressible things that can only come by revelation from God. And such is this Letter to the Ephesians, which embodies the Father's full and final revelation of His eternal purpose. It is an unfolding of the *"mystery which from ages past was hidden in God"*.

It is important to know that we can only understand and appropriate this message through revelation of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 2:14-16 tells us clearly that the natural mind has limitations and that spiritual things, things of the Spirit, can only be understood by revelation of the Spirit. So in light of this paradox of the 'preaching of the unpreachable' by Paul who received the Divine revelations, how much more do we need to pray for our eyes to be opened to understand these "mysteries." And that is why, before and during our study of Ephesians, we must pray the prayer Paul offers in Eph 1:17-19 – that we receive a Spirit of wisdom and revelation ... that the eyes of our hearts be opened. Because if we do not have the eyes of our understanding opened by the Holy Spirit this Letter will be no more to us than written mysteries. In fact, I think we should be praying that prayer for ourselves and those around us every day of our lives in order that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now having said all that, let us have a quick look at the background to this Epistle.

Background to the Epistle to the Ephesians:

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 while imprisoned in Rome.

So we have Paul, towards the end of his days, imprisoned in Rome. Now this may not have been what he had hoped for but this was definitely part of God's sovereign plan. Something for which we can be eternally grateful. Because Paul's busy itinerant ministry had now been halted and he was confined to prison, this was the perfect opportunity for the Holy Spirit inspired Letter to the Ephesians to be written. Along with this letter it was during his imprisonment that the Letters to the Colossians, Philippians and to Philemon poured out of Paul. His imprisonment resulted in the release of the revelations he had been given and over which he was "steward".

[Eph 3:1-4](#) ... *"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for 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 ..."*

Besides the numerous times during his journeys that the Holy Spirit had spoken to Paul giving specific instructions, he had been "caught up to the third heaven" ... and had ... "heard inexpressible words" (2 Cor 12:1-4); After his conversion he had spent a couple of years in the Arabian Desert (Gal 1:15-18), as well as many years alone in Tarsus communing with the Lord. So, having heard what the Lord had to say and to reveal to him during these lengthy periods, and having meditated much on these "mysteries", now was the time for Paul to pour out of his immense accumulation of spiritual knowledge for the benefit of the 'Body of Christ'. The letter to the Ephesians is a very significant part of the unburdening of his spirit. But little did Paul know, the Divine intention was much greater than confining this revelation to the believers at Ephesus, for through his "stewardship of the mysteries" we here and now have a clear picture of the Father's eternal purpose set out for us.

Paul's 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, later, when he met with the elders at Miletus, 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. So here we see Paul writing to the Ephesians to confirm and supplement the ... *"the whole purpose of God"* ... which he ... *"had not shunned to declare"* to the Ephesians and in Asia Minor during the years he had previously

spent with them (Acts 19). He is writing this Letter as a reminder to reaffirm the truth and encourage them in it.

Well, that's what was in Paul's mind; he was addressing a people and a need. What he did not know, and what could never have occurred to him, was that this Letter would be read by, and bring blessing to, an ever growing number of people throughout the world over thousands of years. Billions of people of every race would have and would read this message in their own language; commentaries, expositions, and sermons on this Letter would be in print in bookstores throughout the world. While Paul could never have foreseen this, what a vindication of his testimony! What a justification of his sufferings for Christ! What an unveiling of the sovereignty and grace of God!

And so there's at least two things we, here and now, can draw and definitely learn from Paul's example. And if you get nothing else out of this brief lesson, I trust that these two things remain in your mind:

Firstly, although we may have grown up in the Word and have been well taught, we need to constantly be reminded of and encouraged in the truth as we face the various trials, tribulations, pressures and ever present deceptions that try to delude us. We need godly friends to speak into our lives like Paul was doing to the Ephesians. We need to intimately know our Lord and constantly walk according to His eternal purpose and calling. And for this reason we definitely need to meditate once again on the truths in this amazing Epistle.

Secondly, for any who are suffering in fellowship with Christ and laboring diligently in obedience to Him, not knowing who and where our influence for Christ may reach, what inspiration and strength we can draw from Paul's example, and what proof of the truth of his words ... *"my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord**"* (1 Cor 15:58). You just don't know what God will do with what you may consider to be a small act of kindness, a simple word of encouragement shared, or prayer offered. He may multiply it into thousands of lives touched for His glory. A little boy once gave Jesus his lunch, five loaves and two fish, probably wondering how this would feed anyone else but his Lord, and look what happened – five thousand men along with their women and children were fed and 12 big baskets full of leftover gathered up! **Your labour is not in vain in the Lord!** Please, never forget that truth.

The Themes in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

We will not adopt a thematic approach to our study from Ephesians, rather we will look at Ephesians in a different manner, which we will discuss later. However, there are a number of themes woven together through the book, worth a brief mention now. 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 (our calling, conduct and the conflict we face)
- The church, a purified and equipped people to take Jesus into our world.

So a brief summary of each of these theme is as follows:

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.

John, in his gospel, clearly states that Christ was part of the Godhead and responsible for all creation:

- John 1:1-4 ... *"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:

- Eph 1:10 ... *"the summing up of all things in Christ"*
- Eph 2:20, 21 ... *"Christ Jesus being the corner stone in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord"*
- Eph 3:11... *"in accordance with the eternal purpose which He (the Father) carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord"*
- Eph 4:10... *"He (Christ) who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above the heavens that He might fill all things"*.

The centrality of Christ to the Father's eternal purpose is definitely something we will consider as we proceed in this study.

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'.

A big problem today is that 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. Paul shows us that by God's grace we inherit the wealth we have in Christ, and by our actions we invest this wealth to His glory.

Paul asserts that 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! Dig into the bank of grace and use what has been given to us! Walking in the rich Christ-life we can fulfill our responsibilities to walk in unity, purity, harmony and victory!

So, the “unsearchable riches of Christ,” including the “riches of His grace,” is certainly something we will consider as we proceed in this study.

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

We want to be loved and accepted by God and by others. Who doesn't want to be loved and accepted! We don't like to feel rejected or divided. Ephesians is about our acceptance in Christ and the uniting of 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 ... *“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”*.

Then, in Christ, 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. Walking in Christ we become a people who walk in love:

- Eph 4:2 ... *“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love”*
- 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 (Calling, Conduct, Conflict):

For us to be pleasing to God our lives must be properly adjusted to Him and His purpose in all things. So coming to know God, loving Him and letting Christ live in and 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 living by the life of Christ we bring glory to our Heavenly Father:

- Eph 1:12 ... *“we should be to the praise of His glory”*
- Eph 3:21 ... *“to Him be glory in the church”*

Our identity directly impacts our conduct. Ephesians begins with the believer's position and identity in Christ. 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

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

It then addresses our life in the world. 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.

- Eph 4:1... *“Therefore I ... implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called”*.

Finally, it establishes our attitude to the enemy. We stand in the authority of Christ against all evil, and influence the spiritual atmosphere over our communities through prevailing prayer.

- Eph 6:13 ... *“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).

Watchman Nee puts it this way: first we **Sit** and learn Christ, then we **Walk** in Christ, and that enables us to **Stand** firm in Christ against the wiles of the enemy.

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 before the division of nations (Jews and Gentiles) occurred, we were all chosen in Christ.

After the fall of man and man’s separation from God, and the division of nations, to bring us in line with The Father’s 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, a new creation, 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.

- Eph 2:10 ... *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”*
- Eph 1:12 ... *to the praise of His glory”*.
- Eph 3:21... *“to Him be glory in the Church”*.

Now those are some of the themes we can find as we read through Ephesians, and we will pick up on parts of each of these as we go ahead. But before we discuss the approach to our study of Ephesians, first we need to briefly highlight some important words that recur throughout the Epistle.

Important Recurrent Words or Phrases in Ephesians:

The following recurring words or phrases are particularly worth noting, and we will do well to give them some thought as we study the epistle.

- **“Mystery”** occurs 6 times (Ch1:9; Ch3:3, 4, 9; Ch5:32; Ch 6:19). “Mystery” here is not to be seen as something weird or mysterious, it is just another word for “secrets” or “hidden things” that God chose to reveal to Paul, and through him to the church.
- **“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)
- **“Grace”** occurs 12 times (Ch1:2, 6, 7; Ch2:5, 7, 8; Ch3:2, 7, 8; Ch4:7, 29; Ch6:24)
- **“Riches”** occurs 5 times (Ch1:7, 18; Ch2:7; Ch3:8, 16)
- **“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 heavenly places”** occurs 5 times (Ch1:3, 20; Ch2:6; Ch3:10; Ch6:12)
- **“Church”** occurs 9 times (Ch1:22; Ch3:10, 21; Ch5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32)

Our Approach in understanding the message of the Epistle to the Ephesians:

Having briefly considered some of the themes running through the Epistle, and having highlighted some of the important and recurring words, let us now move on to our approach to this study.

There are two things to mention here:

Firstly, as we follow Paul’s inspired message from eternity past to eternity in the future we are given a glimpse of what took place or is planned to take place in, and the characteristics of, each of the following eras:

- “Before times eternal” – before the creation of the world
- From creation to the Cross – the Old Testament era
- From the Cross to the consummation of the age
- “The age of the ages” – eternity future

In the message we see that God is over all and controls everything – the what, why, how and when.

Then, there are four words that form a base or launching pad for gaining insight and understanding of the Father’s eternal purpose as set out in Ephesians. We will use these as we dig into this letter. It is also my encouragement to you that as you read the letter to the Ephesians (and, for that matter, any other passage of scripture you may be studying) that you use this basis as your approach to gaining understanding of the message presented.

The four words or questions are: **Origin**, **Purpose**, **Morality** and **Destiny**.

Origin – where do we start? If we do not start in the right place then all else will be meaningless. Unless the foundation is right the building will fail.

Purpose – is there meaning to our existence? For what purpose do we and all of creation exist? What is the Father's eternal purpose for Himself, His Son and all creation? Where, how and why do we fit into His plan?

Morality – why and how can we be holy and blameless, and live accordingly? What or Who defines moral or immoral life?

Destiny – where are we headed? Every journey has a destination. According to God's plan we have a destination, but what is it?

Using these four words and the questions they posit, we will see Paul provides coherent, consistent and credible answers in his letter to the Ephesian believers as he unfolds the Father's ultimate plan. We will also see how and where the events and characteristics of the four eras mentioned above and the important recurring words Paul uses fit into and form part of these answers.

Then we will finally see that another word – **Conflict** – enters our study.

Conflict – why do we face conflict, and how do we deal with this?

As we gain revelation of the Father's plan and purpose and walk accordingly we will face certain conflict as the enemy seeks to fire his darts against Christ in us. But what we will also find out is how the Father's plan includes our protection and the manner in which we are to prevail over the enemy.

So, until we get into the next lesson, let us prepare by

- reading through the Epistle to the Ephesians
- looking for answers to our four questions,
- seeing the unfolding of the events and characteristics of the four eras, and
- noting the significance of the important recurring words that Paul uses in bringing us the message of the Father's eternal purpose.

Lesson 2 The Father's Eternal Purpose

The first chapter of Ephesians (particularly v 1-14) is essentially a revelation of the Father's Eternal Purpose, established in His heart before times eternal. The rest of Ephesians elaborates on this purpose, it's outworking and implications.

So let us begin with this overview or synopsis of the message contained in the Letter to the Ephesians, which is supported and confirmed in Paul's other letters, so that as we proceed in this study it will all, hopefully, piece together and make sense. We begin by reading chapter 1.

Eph 1:1-23 ... *"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace 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 ⁵ He 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. ¹³ 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."

The message of Ephesians is designed to bring us, in humility, before God to receive a revelation of His eternal purpose, and our true relationship to Him and His plan. The Epistle brings us face to face with the Father, with who He is and what He desires and as done, and the unfolding of His eternal purpose going forward. Paul gives us a glimpse of His greatness and glory and shows us that He is Sovereign God – God over all with an amazing eternal purpose and plan.

Now let's take a look, in simple terms, at this purpose and plan, as set out by Paul in Ephesians Ch 1, and backed up by other scriptures, and after that we will look at parts of it in more detail:

First of all, way back in eternity past God the Father set out His eternal Purpose as follows: God had a plan and purpose and in the counsels of the Godhead it was determined that all things, everything that would be of God, His Eternal Purpose, would be centred in Christ, the Son. Everything pertaining to the Father's Eternal Purpose would be initiated, revealed and sustained in and by Christ. That's why we find the many "in Christ", "in Him", "in Whom" statements throughout this and Paul's other Epistles. Eph 1:10 speaks of ... *"the summing up of all things in Christ."* Colossians and Hebrews both confirm this truth. Col 1:16-19 states ... *"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 ... for it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him."* Heb 1:1-3 states ... *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."* So the centrality of Christ is paramount in the Father's Eternal Purpose.

Then, as an integral part of His Eternal Purpose God, who is Spirit (John 4:24), planned to create a material universe, including a place called Earth (the World) on which He would create plant life and living creatures including man who be created in the image and likeness of God. Because God is love and He created mankind in love, He made man with a free will – he gave us freedom of choice. His desire was that man would be a partaker of His Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) and that we would live by the life of Christ. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col 1:27).

The Father's plan was that mankind, in whom Christ would be the life source, would be the "Body", the "Bride", the "Church," of which Christ would be Head. The Father's Eternal Purpose for the "Corporate Christ", Christ the Head and His Body united as one, was that this would be the "Person" through which the Father and all He was and stood for would be expressed and seen throughout the eternal ages. For the Father it would provide a vast family, for the Son a Body and for the Holy Spirit a temple.

Also, somewhere way back before the foundation of the world God had also made spirit beings called angels, one of which was Lucifer. Now somewhere along the line Lucifer and some of his fellow spirit beings would have come to understand that the Father's plan was for everything to be centred in the Son, Christ, and that God was to create mankind, who would be partakers of the Divine Nature and partakers in the Father's purpose and plan for the ages to come. So jealousy took hold and Lucifer set out to establish himself above God, but failed dismally and was cast out of the presence of God. Isa 14:12-15 ... *"How you have fallen from heaven, o star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth,*

you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit." Since that day Satan and the host of fallen angels have made it their ambition to attempt to disrupt the Father's plan by attacking everyone and everything that has to do with Christ. 1 Pet 5:8 ... *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* Eph 6:12 ... *"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."*

So as soon as Adam and Eve were formed Satan wasted no time in exercising his deceptions. As a result, when Adam and Eve exercised their freedom of choice and chose to believe Satan's deceptions over God's word, a great schism was brought between them and God. Mankind took on the sin nature of the devil leading to death.

What is important to understand is that God is love (1 John 4:16), and in the reality of love He created man with a free will, freedom to choose. And where there is the reality of freedom of choice there has to be the possibility of making the wrong choice and entering into sin. Where there is the reality of sin, transgression and iniquities, there is need for a Saviour to redeem us from sin. Where there is a Saviour, there is the possibility of redemption – recovery to the position we were in before sin entered. For this reason, before the foundation of the world, before sin entered, the Son of God was provided as the sacrificial Lamb ... *The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev 13:8). So in love, in eternity past, before the foundation of the world, the Father in planning for man to have a free will with the possibility of wrong choice also made the provision of a Redeemer. Oh what grace, mercy, goodness and love!

Along with a Redeemer the Father's Eternal Plan included the provision of the Holy Spirit to lead us, teach us, guide us so that our sin stained soul, our mind, will and emotion area, could be renewed and conformed to the life of Christ with whom we are made one in our spirit part (1 Cor 6:17) when we are born again. The Holy Spirit is the One who teaches us Christ and releases the life and power of Christ in and through us.

So, whether sin entered the world or not, it was and is the Father's Purpose that all things are centred in Christ, that we live by the life of Christ, that we are His Body, His Bride, His Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and to express His love and life here and now, and ultimately through the eternal age to come, to the praise of the glory of the Father.

Now with that brief overview of the Father's Eternal Purpose let's now look deeper into some of these important matters.

Origin

It all starts in eternity past with God the Father, who is over all. He is our starting point or **Origin**. Right from the start and all the way through we see the emphasis of the Sovereignty of God. He is the Author

or Architect of all. The entire purpose and plan of the ages originates in the Father before times eternal, before the foundation of the world.

This is confirmed by expressions like ...*“Before the foundation of the world,”* ... *“He chose us,”* ... *“He predestined us,”* ...*“according to the good pleasure of His will,”* ...*“the mystery of His will”,* and ...*“according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”*

Yes, He who is Sovereign over all has an Eternal Plan and He establishes and carries out this plan by His grace.

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

This is not just a customary greeting Paul is issuing, there’s a much deeper relevance to these words.

It’s grace that provides the means for the schism between us and God to be bridged so that peace may be re-established between us. Peace is the pathway of the Eternal Purpose. We commence by grace, by which we enter the life of Christ, and this brings us to live, walk and end in peace – living in accordance with the Father’s Eternal Purpose.

We see that **everything** of His Eternal Purpose flows out of His **grace**. This is the Father’s choice, His will, His desire, what He purposes, and how He will achieve it – and He and He alone established it all by an outflow of **grace**. His throne is called a *“throne of grace”* (Heb 4:16) – and He determines and governs by grace.

Now to help understand a bit more about the true meaning of grace, this is where it is very important to understand the real meanings of the words “chosen” and “predestined.” We start with “chosen.”

Eph 1:4 tells us that we were ... ***“chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world”*** that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

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 kids in a group in front of two team leaders who were taking turns to choose the players for 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, Father God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. He chose us, you and me, to be in Christ. We’re in the winning team!

2 Cor 2:14 ... ***“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”***

But if you were doing the choosing for your team who would you choose? We naturally choose the best players. The strongest, the wisest, the fittest and the most skillful. But is that what our heavenly Father

did? No! Even the weakest, least skilled, what the world would call the “nobodies,” He sees as precious and valuable to Him and His purpose. He knows that we are but dust, yet He chose us. That’s grace! ...

You see, because the God the Father is omniscient, He knows all things, He knew we would fall into sin and shame, yet He chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world, before sin entered the scene. Because He knows that in Christ, living by His life and His resurrection power, we will win. We will achieve His purpose. What grace! It’s through grace we can say ... *“Let the weak say I am strong”* (Joel 3:10). Or as Paul echoed in Phil 4:13 ... *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* Hallelujah! Oh the riches of His grace!

The principle of the Father’s choice is to take what all others reject – the bruised reed; the younger brothers; the halt and lame; the last and least; the things that are foolish, despised and weak – these are God’s choice, that He may bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh may glory in His presence. This is made clear in 1 Cor 1:26-31.

We were chosen in Christ so that He could demonstrate what miraculous power His grace could achieve, to His honour and glory. As Eph 1:12 states ... *“to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”*

Being “chosen” also speaks of the **purpose** to which we are being chosen. Being chosen “in Christ” tells us something of our position, our privileges, our possessions, our inheritance, our responsibilities and our practice. We were chosen by the Greatest One of All, Father God, to be partakers of His Divine Nature through the life we have in Christ, to be the Body of Christ functioning under the Headship of Christ, together with whom we are to be the expression and representatives of the Father, here and now and throughout all eternity. And it’s all by grace! Oh the riches of His grace!

We will talk more on the purpose to which we have been chosen at a later stage, but now we’ll move on and look at the word “predestined.”

Eph 1:5 tells us that He ... *“**predestined** us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself”* and Eph 1:11 says ... *“also we were made a heritage, having been **predestined** according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”*

Predestined. Here in verses 5 and 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, those who are ‘in Christ’. 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, those who are ‘in Christ’. The word translated ‘*predestined*’ would have equally well, and probably better, have been translated ‘*to design definitely beforehand*’.

In these verses, replace the word “predestined” with the words “designed definitely beforehand” and it becomes clear that 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 ... *“to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13). That meant there would be

a maturing, a growth from birthing as a child to a maturing as son that would take place in man. That's what 'predestined to adoption as sons' (v5) and 'predestined according to His purpose' (v11) means.

The words 'predestined' (v5 and v11) and 'chosen' (v4) are used here to describe what God definitely and willfully planned or purposed before the foundation of the world. Before man was even created and before the entry of sin onto the scene. His purpose was that all things, including us, would be centred in Christ. That's what He wanted and planned for all of mankind He was about to create. It was the entry of sin, which occurred after man had been created and disobeyed God, which separated man from God. Man then need to be redeemed and even that provision had been made before the creation of the world. These words, 'chosen' and 'predestined', have nothing to do with people being designated to go to hell or heaven. We are not predestined to hell or heaven. These words simply relate to the amazing grace of God towards us in His definite desire and design, from the very beginning, for us to live in and by the life of Christ, to His glory.

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 chose 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 offered redemption through the work of the cross, which means 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.

2 Pet 3:9 ... *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for **any** to perish but for **all** to come to repentance."*

1 Tim 2:4 God our Saviour ... *"desires **all** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

Heb 2:9 ... *"But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for **everyone**."*

1 John 2:2 ... *"and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the **whole** world."*

Titus 2:11 ... *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to **all** men."*

In 3:16 ... *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*

God’s word is very clear. His purpose, will and provision, right from the beginning, is for everyone (all) to be “in Christ.” He “chose” for us to be “in Christ” and he “predestined,” He “definitely designed beforehand” that we be “in Christ” and come to full stature in Christ. By grace, right from the beginning, He made these decisions and provisions.

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 us that whoever places their trust in Christ and believes in Him and receives Him as Saviour, may know with assurance, on God’s authority, that it is definite and settled forever that they will be conformed to the image of Christ. As Paul says in Ephesians, we will *“learn Christ”* (4:20) and will mature into *“the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (4:13). This is consistent with:

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”*

Being “chosen” and being “predestined” are simply the actions and work of **grace** towards us! Chosen by the Greatest One of all to be In Christ, in the best team ever, and then to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ to come to maturity in Him, to be His recognized representatives! As Paul says ... *“according to the riches of His grace!*

Adoption as sons

Now back to the subject of *‘predestined to adoption as sons’*, because this is a term that is sometimes misunderstood and needs clarification if we are to understand what Paul is saying regarding the Father’s Eternal Purpose.

Now I must digress for a moment so we can have a better understanding in this matter. You see, in the Greek language there are four words used in the scriptures in respect of the various stages we go through in life namely:

- νήπιος (nēpios) – infant, one not yet speaking, a babe, the unlearned;
- παιδίον (paidion) – child (in relation to parents, of either sex, at any stage of life from infancy to adulthood); they’re your children no matter how old they grow, they’re yours.
- τέκνον (teknon) – child; or τέκνιον (teknion) – little child. This is the term is for youths, or young children.
- υἱός (huios) – son (implies connection in respect of membership, service, resemblance, manifestation, destiny)

In just about all places in the gospels and epistles the first three of these Greek words will all be translated into our English Bibles as “child” or “children.” In a few cases the fourth word (huios) is also rendered (incorrectly) as “child”, but mostly it is correctly translated as “son” or “sons”.

Now with that understanding we go back to the question of, “What is the true meaning and significance of the term “adoption as sons”?

In the west, adoption is the taking of a child from one family and making it a member of another family. But in the Greco-Roman culture of the day in which Paul is writing, a father adopted none as a son but his own child. Birth made him a child, adoption gave him sonship. Between birth as a child and adoption as a son there was growth, education and discipline.

Now, of interest, the word translated in our English Bibles as ‘adoption as sons’ has no parallel in the Hebrew language and is only found in the Pauline epistles. ‘Adoption as sons’ comes from the Greek word υἱοθεσία *huiiothesia*. This compound word comes from two words: *uios* = ‘a son’ and *tithemi* = ‘to place’, ‘set in place’. So the more literal translation into English would be “placing as a son”. So ‘adoption as son’ (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. That’s our **relationship** – He is our Father. His ‘Seed’ or ‘Life’ is birthed in us. Christ in you. So we become part of 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 of having attained 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 – their **position** in the family. The mature ‘sons’ are those who have embraced the Father’s ways and have been recognized as His representatives.

An English writer R.B. Jones make this clear. “To be a son is infinitely more than to be a child, and the terms are never loosely used by the Holy Spirit. It is not the difference in relationship, but in position. Every ‘born again’ child of God has in him the nature of his Father, and is a beloved member of his Father’s family. Adoption cannot make the child any nearer or dearer, yet it gives the child the status he did not enjoy before, a position he did not occupy. It is his recognition as an adult son, the attaining of his majority, the seal upon his growth to maturity of mind and character. **A child is one born of God; a son is one taught of God. A child has God’s nature; a son has God’s character.**”

A **child** was born in a manger in Bethlehem; a **son** was recognised by the Father at His baptism in the Jordan when the Father said, “*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*” (Matt 3:17).

It was only after His endorsement as “Son” by the Father that Jesus commenced His ministry, representing the Father.

Hebrews 1:1-3 ... “*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.*”

So Eph 1:5 ... “*He predestined us to adoption as sons*” simply means that the Father 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).*

His purpose is for us as His birthed children come to maturity as sons, to the ‘adoption of sons,’ to be His representatives through whom He is expressed. And all of this is established and brought about by His grace, and for His glory.

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, and 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, Christ’s Body, 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.

John 15:16 ... *“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.”*

More about ‘Son’ and ‘sons’

Now briefly, to cement what we have discussed regarding ‘adoption as sons,’ we look at the meaning of ‘Son’ and ‘sons’. This word ‘son’ has a much deeper meaning than our unfortunate common thought of a ‘son’ just being your male child, associated with ‘relationship’ rather than ‘position’ or ‘function’.

The triune Godhead consists of Father, **Son** and Holy Spirit. What is the significance of the second person of the Godhead being referred to as ‘Son’?

Some Scriptures make this clear:

John 1:1, 14 ... *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The Son was the Word who became flesh. What is a ‘word?’ You have a mind in which thoughts take place. If you want to express those thoughts, you speak them out in words. Your words express you and your thoughts. The ‘Son’ is the ‘Word’ – the outward expression of the inner workings of the Godhead. The ‘Son’ of God is the full representative or expression of the Father.

Heb 1:1-3 ... *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has **spoken to us in His Son**, whom He **appointed heir** of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He (the Son) is the radiance of His (the*

Fathers) glory and the **exact representation** of His (the Fathers) nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”

John 14:6-11 ... “Jesus (The ‘Son’) said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. **If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also**; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father**; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.”

Isa 9:6 ... “For unto us a **child** is born, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon His (the Sons) shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

These scriptures tell us that the ‘Son’ of God – is the full and complete revelation of the Father. The passage from Isaiah reveals this through the name given to Him – Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He, the ‘Son,’ is the ‘Word’ – the summation, the exact representation, the outward expression, and outward governing one of all that is God.

John 1:18 ... “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

So we really need to delete from our minds the association of the word ‘son’ with being a male child. God the Father did not give birth to a male child and call Him ‘Son of God.’ We must rather understand that the ‘Son’ is the ‘Word’, the One who is the expression or out speaking, or outward revelation of all that is God. The explainer of all that ... “*is in the bosom of the Father.*”

Now take this understanding of the meaning of ‘son’ into the ‘placing as sons’, or ‘adoption as sons’ and what it really means in the light of the Father’s Eternal Purpose as explained in Ephesians. God has stated through Paul (Eph 1:5) that ... “*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.*”

The Father has chosen us and made every provision for us to be ‘in Christ,’ birthed into His family (relationship), and then for us to grow, learn and come to full stature in Christ, to be His ‘adopted’ or ‘endorsed’ representatives, ‘sons’ (position or function), expressing both His nature and character in all we say and do, to His honour and glory.

We were ‘chosen’ and ‘definitely designed beforehand’ to be the corporate vessel of His expression and administration, and are referred to as His Body, His Bride and His Church. We are also referred as the Father’s inheritance. Something He prizes and something we will talk more about later!

Lesson 3 Christ Life – Embracing the Cross Life

In order to fully and correctly understand the Father's original and ultimate purpose we need our sin distorted vision to be corrected. This necessitates a change in our **point of reference** for all things, from self and our needs based viewpoint, to the Father's heart before the foundation of the world.

Paul did not start this Letter with God's amazing attributes or mighty actions, but with who He chiefly is, The Father. The Fatherhood of God is the foundational controlling factor that determines all His attitudes, purposes, intentions, and goals. So the question is: What would a Father desire, purpose and hold dear as His ultimate intention? Well, this is what Paul reveals in this Epistle, and which will only be clear to us if we look at it through the Paternal eyes, viewing the eternal outlook from the heart of the Father.

Since the fall man has, in blindness, tried to interpret everything as centering around, and being for, his own benefit. For instance, just stop and listen to the focus in our prayers – most, not all, but most concerns ourselves and our needs and the needs of our friends and family. Get saved, get healed, get delivered, get secure, and get to heaven. If this is where our focus is and if this is what we think and do this we will never understand the Father's eternal plan, purpose and intention. The Father's eternal purpose was established in His heart BEFORE creation, BEFORE we ever existed, BEFORE sin entered the world. The fall of man and the entry of sin has not changed His purpose one iota. Paul tell us clearly what was in the Father's mind way back in eternity past. Sin was not designed nor was it necessary to the Father's eternal purpose. God did not plan for the fall just so that He could redeem man. Sin entered because man, created by a loving moral God and given freedom of choice, failed to make the moral choice.

It is important to note that from eternity past there always existed in Christ the full capacity for redemption. He was ... *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* Rev 13:8. That's because the *"cross principle"* is and always has been woven into the very nature of God. This matter we will discuss further a little later.

So what is essential to understand is that the Eternal Purpose hidden in the heart of the Father is something which has never been involved in what we understand as 'time.' It is something which exists and operates on the eternal level, not affected by sin or time. So, while we deeply appreciate what Christ did for us at Calvary, we must desist from relating Christ purely to redemptive activities and see how He in fact is related to eternity and the Father's eternal purpose.

So in answer to the questions which may now be in your mind: If man had not sinned, would all things have been summed up in Christ? (Eph 1:0 ... *"the summing up of all things in Christ"*). Regardless of sin, was it God's plan for us to be *"in Christ?"* Had sin never entered would Christ have been incarnated into the human family? Paul gives us the answer:

Eph 1:3 ... *"Blessed be the God and Father ... who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing ... **in Christ**"*

Eph 1:4 ... *"He chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world"*

Eph 1:5 ... *"He predestined us to adoption as sons **through Jesus Christ**"*

Eph 1:6 ... *“He has made us accepted **in the Beloved**”, or, “His grace, which He freely bestowed on us **in the Beloved**”*

Eph 1:10 ... *“the summing up of all things **in Christ**”* (a very literal translation of this phrase is ... *“the bringing together again all things under one Head, in Christ”*)

None of these statements refer to or relate to the fall of man and sin. Paul clearly reveals to us that what the Father intends to realise in and through His Son has never been affected by the fall of man, sin, or time. It has always been the Father’s purpose and plan, from eternity past, that His Son is to have a Body through which to express His life – Himself – in the world now, and in all creation in the eternal ages to come.

What we have here in this Letter is a statement which reveals the outflow of God’s paternal heart, nature and desire. It reveals that the Father has determined He will have a vast family who will share His life, nature, Spirit, vision, purpose and character, and that this will all be accomplished through and for His Son.

Yes, the fall occurred, sin entered and corrupted man, and redemption through the blood of Christ became necessary to set us back on track with the Father’s original purpose, but neither this redemptive phase nor ‘time’ as we know it was ever to overshadow or alter the Father’s original eternal purpose and plan. We have to understand, interpret everything, and see and live in accordance with the fact that the Father’s purpose and plans are not determined by man’s need, not by our need, but in accordance with what was in His mind before the fall, before the foundation of the world. What He saw and held dear was this vast family, the Body of Christ, expressing nothing of fallen man but only that which is the image or expression of Christ – the glorified Son of man. Our point of reference in all things, all circumstances and situations, must be Christ and Him alone. We are here to be conformed to Him and to be the vehicle of expression of Him for the glory, honour, pleasure and satisfaction of the Father.

Eph 1:22-23 ... *“He ... gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

Eph 2:21-22 ... *“in whom (in Christ) 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.”*

Let us listen to Paul’s prayer in Eph 1 where 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."

Now let us focus on and discuss the part of this prayer which says ... *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is **the hope of His calling**"* ...

Example¹: There was a father who wanted to take his son to town for a specific reason, and when the time came to go he found his son outside playing in a mud puddle. So a "washing and clothe change" process was needed to be incorporated into the overarching plan and purpose of the trip to town. But once cleaned and changed the little boy became engrossed in playing with a toy he had recently been given, totally oblivious of why he had been called from the garden and cleaned up. He was more interested in staying and playing than going to town with his father. This reminds us of how easy it is to partake of God's grace (the 'clean up' and gifts we receive) and become wholly distracted from His original and eternal purpose. Listen to Paul's statement:

2 Tim 1:8-9 ... *"God ... has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own **purpose and grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."*

So the Father's calling incorporates **grace** along with His overarching **purpose**. Because of sin we have needed to be made new by God's grace, but we must not stop there; we have been made new creatures in Christ in order to be put back on track with the Father's original intention and purpose. We can only live and be part of His eternal plan by being "in Christ". The "clean up" is to get us back on track with His eternal purpose. This is why Paul prays to ... *"the Father of glory"* ... that we might receive a revelation of Him and that ... *the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is **the hope of His calling***." We are called to embrace His eternal purpose and plan. He calls us to live, not in what we perceive to be our purpose, but to be alive to His purpose. In this calling we see a progression of our fellowship with Him.

We start off by being called into the ...*"fellowship of the gospel"* (Phil 1:5) – we experience the grace of God which enables us to pursue the calling to walk and be led into the ... *"fellowship of the Spirit"* (Phil 2:1). But the Holy Spirit lives to reveal Christ in us to us, and this calls us into a deeper ... *fellowship with His Son* (1 Cor 1:9). Then as we learn and embrace the mind and character of Christ we are called into a ... *"fellowship of His sufferings"* (Phil 3:10). Here we live fully unto the Father sharing in His resurrection power and authority. The resurrection power and authority we read of in Paul's prayer Eph 1:19-23.

Continuing in this *"fellowship of His sufferings"* is contingent on having moved into a larger fellowship with the Father and His own eternal purposes. This is why, as Paul prays, we need a ... *"spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him"* and enlightenment so that we may know what is... *"the hope of His calling"* *"the riches of the glory of His inheritance"* ... and ... *"the greatness of His power towards us who believe"* (Eph 1:17-19).

¹ Story by DeVern Fromke, The Ultimate Intention.

Then the final calling is the one we hear from Paul in Eph 3:9-11, who calls ... *"all men to see what is the fellowship of the mystery"* (Eph 3:9). This is the ultimate in fellowship. This fellowship is a participation in which we may share in that ... *"which from the beginning has been hid in God."* Paul goes on to tell us that through this fellowship of the mystery it is the Father's intention ... *"that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places"* (Eph 3:10). What is this mystery? It is that we may be *"in Christ"* and *"Christ in us,"* that He may have a corporate Body through which to express Himself. The Son is the Head of this Body, the pre-eminent One who is the expression of all that God is, and all things are summed up in Him. Knowing this concerning the Son helps us understand the Father's intention for his many sons who make up the Body of Christ. This is a call to the Church, the Body of Christ, to us, to live in the eternal, to participate in the glorious eternal purposes and intention of the Father. His desire is that Christ will be so corporately expressed that the moral and spiritual essence of Christ will utterly govern every other unit in the universe.

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

That which was from eternity, the summing up of all things in Christ to the glory of the Father, was not interrupted in Him; it goes on in Him, as it states in Eph 3:11 ... *"in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

So in the light of Eph 1:9-10 which tells us that having made known to us the mystery of the Father's will, in the fullness of time, all things will be summed up in Christ. That means that everything intended and required for the realisation of the Father's Divine purpose and intention is in, and with, Christ, not only as a deposit, but all is Christ. That is the inclusiveness of Christ.

Then, in the fullness of time, nothing but that which is of Christ is accepted or permitted by God. That is the exclusiveness of Christ. This means that finally, not one fragment anywhere that is not of Christ will be allowed. All that is not of Christ will be consumed in the eternal hellfire. For the period we know as 'time' we experience the patience, the mercy, and the long-suffering of God, and this is so that we have opportunity to understand that He has made a way for us to be redeemed to and to walk according to His eternal purpose. This does not mean God has during this period accepted anything that is not of Christ, He hates sin. But it does tell us something of the immensity of His love for us in the inestimable price He paid, the life of His Son, in order that we may be 'in Christ,' and accepted in the Beloved, to stand holy and blameless before Him.

According to the Father's eternal purpose and plan Christ became incarnate – He became the Heavenly Man. The Church, the Body of Christ, is part of the Heavenly Man. He is Head of the Body (Eph 1:22). It is important that we understand that when we speak of Christ as the Heavenly Man we are not speaking of His co-equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit in Deity. We are not saying that the Church is Christ, God incarnate, occupying the place of Deity. We are speaking of the Heavenly Man – Christ is the Heavenly Man and we, the Church, are one with Him – He is Head and we are His Body. If any man is in Christ he is a new creature – a 'new man'. All the earthly distinctions (Eph 2:11-22) – Jew, Gentile, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision, all aspects of this earthly life are lost a set aside and one 'new man' is brought in, where (Col 3:11) ... *"Christ is all, and in all."*

Christ in His essential nature has never been of the earth. He had a relationship to man and Israel, He has a judicial relationship to this earth, but His essential nature has never been earthly. He is the Son, the Lord from heaven. In John 8:23 He clearly declared ... *“I am from above.”* So as Christ’s essential nature is not of the earth, neither is that of the Church. In the Father’s sight the Church, the Body of Christ, has never been an earthly item. Paul clearly shows in Ephesians that in the Father’s heart before the foundation of the world, before the fall of man, the Church was in the heavens, in Christ.

The moment we come into Christ, we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ. Eph 2:6 ... *“God ... when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places.”* We are not placed there at some future date. The moment we came into Christ, according to Col 1:13 ... *“He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”* We were lifted back up to the position we occupied in the Father’s mind, in the beginning, in Christ, as part of the Heavenly Man.

Just think of it, if we live as “worldly” Christians, how much we insult the Father. We are not struggling, working or striving at becoming a heavenly people, hoping that at some stage we may attain that state. We are a heavenly people and must live in accordance with that standpoint.

Accordingly, Paul spends a large portion of the Epistle in discussing the transformation of our minds and ways to align with the heavenly way – living by the life of Christ, bring honour and glory to the Father. As we pursue this path co-operating with our Teacher, the Holy Spirit, we walk towards the goal of being the fullness of Him who fills all in all. To be the fullness of Christ requires the emptying out of everything and anything else. So the Father’s way is then to break us, and empty us of everything that is not Christ and through His loving discipline bring us to the ‘adoption’ or ‘recognition’ or ‘placing’ as fully mature “sons.” The Father’s plan and purpose is to fill the universe with Christ, the Heavenly Man, through the corporate heavenly man joined to the Head, Christ. We are His workmanship (Eph 2:10) – He is busy getting rid of every bit of Jew, Gentile, Law, fleshly ways, and all that is not Christ, and He is conforming us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). The moment we come to the place where the last remnants and relics of everything that is not of Christ fall from us, then He will be fully displayed in us; then He will come to be glorified in the saints. Christ, not us, will be glorified in us, and then we will come to the full understanding of Eph 1:18 and know ... *“what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”*

Heavens Value System

In order to walk towards and attain the status of (Eph 3:13) the ... *“mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* we must conform to the heavenly values and manner of life. So now we look at heavens value system.

We learn by studying the Godhead and Divine way of life. The Father has purpose that all things are to be centred in the Son. The Son in turn lives to reveal, glorify and satisfy the Father, and ultimately, when all things have been gathered together in the Son and under His rule, He turns everything over to the Father.

1 Cor 15:28 ... *“When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.”*

This 'living for the other' is the Divine way, which the Father desires to be operative in His entire family.

2 Cor 5:14-15 ... *"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."*

This is saying our focus must not be placed on what God can do **for** us, but on what He wants to do **through** us, for His honour and glory. The Cross has not accomplished its deepest work in us until we move from focusing on what Christ has done **for us** to seeing what it has realised **for the Father**.

The cross principle is eternal in God. It is the Divine way of life. It's the way of sharing, selfless giving, and serving. The Cross-principle is woven into the very nature of God. That's why Christ is ... *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* Rev 13:8. The cross is not just an historic act on Calvary, it is the very inner value and manner of Divine life.

So we must not confine the Cross to a redemptive measure, for Calvary's Cross was the door or gateway to living by the life of Christ, which is a life of selfless giving and serving – **the Christ life is the Cross life**. In the pathway to becoming the "adopted sons", the "mature man", to the attaining of the "measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13) the cross has to become the manner and way of our life. Until selfless giving and sharing is fully embraced we have no real basis of fellowship with God or with man.

The cross principle flows out of the paternal heart of the Father and the Divine Counsels of the Godhead who determined before the foundation of the world that Christ was the Sacrificial Lamb. The riches of His grace is evidenced by the Father's love which gave His only begotten Son to shed His blood that we may share in His Divine life and live according to His eternal purpose and plan.

Eph 1:7 ... *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."*

If we say we love God, this is only true if we exercise moral choice, choosing to live to bless, to give, to serve, to share through embracing the cross life. We truly show honour and love to the Father when cross as an *operating principle* becomes a continual *operating practice* in our lives.

John 12:24 ... *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

I call this the "dying seed" principle. This is the principle of the Christ life. Christ is the "dying seed" whose life was shed that we may share in it. For others to know Christ we need to be expended for Him. There is no other way.

It is so important that we understand that the meaning of Eph 1:19-23, where Paul prays that we might know *"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."

Resurrection power, which is the greatest power there is, can ONLY be experienced by someone or something that is DEAD. There is no such thing as resurrection power apart from death. And Paul is praying that the eyes of our understanding will be opened so that we get this. This power and authority is ONLY operative in and through us to the extent that we live in accordance with the dying seed principle, the Cross life principle. This is the very essence of the Christ life. Christ in you, the hope of glory. The Father's glory is manifested when this Cross life, His life, the life of serving and blessing is operative in us.

That's why Paul says in:

2 Cor 12:9-10 ... *"And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, **for power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, **so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.** Therefore 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.**"*

That's not saying God's power will immediately remove every adverse attack against us. It's saying regardless of the attacks we face as we are poured out for Christ, embracing the fellowship of His sufferings for the sake of others, whether these situations or circumstances are removed or not, we are operation on an eternal level not a temporal one, we are operating with a power that no force of darkness can overcome, we are operating in the victory and triumph of the One who empowers us. Our flesh may not like this, but we will be soaring in the spirit, knowing that this is living the Christ life, the Cross life, that brings honour and glory to the Father.

Listen to Paul's words from:

2 Cor 4:7-12 and 16-18 ... *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels (Christ in you), so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 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. So death works in us, but life in you."*

... ¹⁶ *"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."*

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.”*

To this end, that we would embrace to Christ life, the cross life, of love and selfless serving, to the glory of the Father Paul prays for us:

Eph 3:14-21 ... *“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name (a name describes the nature), 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 (the way of the cross), 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.”*

We are not to just receive the life of Christ brought to us through the birthing, and proceed to live as we used to do, but we are called to a full participation in the life of Christ. Christ will only live in us the life consistent with His nature, a life poured out unto the Father and for others. This has always been the Father’s plan and purpose and it has in no way been changed by sin or the fall of man.

So no one who is allowing the self-serving, self-centred and selfish purpose of life is in any measure participating in the Christ life. This sadly is the failing of the “come and get” gospel that is so prevalent in many circles today, where people are snared by a message that Christ is there at their disposal to give them a good and easy life free from hassles, a ticket to heaven, and there at their beck and call whenever they need His help. These folks camp around their old self-centre; trying to get all that God has *for them*, possessing all *their possessions*, and appropriating all *their inheritance* in Christ, with little or no interest in self-denial, sacrificial living or manifesting the life of Christ unto the Father. The truth is, the cross is not the threshold to selfish attainment, but rather it’s a terminal to selfishness.

The bottom line, and message of Ephesians is: The Father has predestined, or determined beforehand, for us to be in Christ – a vessel through which He, all He is and values and stands for, may be manifested now and throughout all eternity. He has empowered us, with resurrection power, to live this selfless, serving life unto His honour and glory.

Col 3:1-3 ... *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”*

Living the Christ life we present to the world the only “gospel” they will see. The nature and character of Christ seen in and through us is the only “Bible” the world reads. Our selfless, serving, and giving walk as we live and walk in Christ, is to bring pleasure to the Father and blessing to the world. This is living according to His original intention and purpose.

Lesson 4 Equipped and Fully Functioning Body of Christ

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

For many believers this is a wonderful fact, that Christ has taken up residence in us and we have been saved. But we need to understand that this statement is not pointing to the *fact* of our salvation as much it states the *object* of our being saved. As each person comes to Christ it is a coming into something much greater, far beyond the redemption of the individual themselves.

Before the foundation of the world Father God planned that we would be in Christ (Eph 1:4) “to the praise of His glory.” He had, and has, this amazing plan which will be to the praise of His glory. The “*hope of glory*” is the fulfilment of the whole plan of God that was in the Fathers mind in the beginning – *the summing up of all things in Christ* (Eph 1:10).

This plan or intention or purpose of the Father is what Paul is conveying to us in this letter. So let us continue on our journey of understanding the Father’s original intention and purpose.

Paul is sharing the revelation brought to him by the Holy Spirit about the mystery, the fact and greatness of the church, the body of Christ; according to what was in the Fathers mind before the foundation of the world concerning its formation, function, and purpose; its unity with the Head and unity of every member of His body; its interrelatedness; its ordained functioning; and the warfare it faces, combats and the victory in which it stands.

Before we go any further it must be made very clear what the word “church” means. The Greek word (ἐκκλησία) ekklesia is made up of two words “out of” and “called”. The ekklesia are the “called out ones”. Called out for a specific purpose. We, the church, the ekklesia, are the ones called out of darkness into the light for the purpose of serving the One who has called us out. Called out to be containers and expressers of Him who called us. So “Church” refers to born again people, not buildings, institutions or programs. So “Church” is who we are, not where we go or what we do.

But looking down through history – through all the centuries to what degree has there been seen in this world a representation and expression of the “Church” as we have it set out in Ephesians? Most commonly what we see is an institutional “church” with form but without organic life. 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 (which the misinformed also call a church) where the participants gather on certain days to take part in the events on the program list. It is very clear, this is **not** the “Church”, the “body of Christ” that was in the Fathers mind in the beginning. Rather, this is the result of the very real conflict and warfare against the Father’s purpose waged by the forces of darkness to attempt to nullify the Father’s purpose. We will deal with the spiritual battle we face and the victory we are to enforce in a later lesson, but for now we need to give more attention to the Father’s plan, purpose and provision for us to be the true church, the body of Christ, and as such live to the praise of His glory.

Yes, Christ, and all the riches contained in Christ (Eph1:3), has been “banked” in you, and the Holy Spirit is given to reveal Christ in you to you. But Paul, in Ephesians, brings further revelation, for here we see the Holy Spirit is given to reveal to us, not only who we are in Christ and what are the riches we have in Christ, but how we are to grow to maturity, function, and express Christ as a corporate Body, in accordance with the Father’s original intention, a fully functioning Body of which His Son is Head. So let’s look further into what Pauls conveys regarding this matter as we take a walk through Ephesians.

Ephesians ch 1:

- 1:10 ... “summing up of all things in Christ” or “gather together **in one** all things in Christ” (lit. Gk. “bring together again all things under one head in the Christ”) – headship implies an associated body, the corporate oneness.
- 1:22 ... “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.”

Ephesians ch 2:

- 2:15 ... “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.”
- 2:19 ... “you ... are of God’s **household**.” Family is implied here.
- 2:20-22 ... “Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom **the whole building**, being fitted **together**, is growing into **a holy temple** in the Lord: Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the **whole building**, being fitted **together**, is growing into **a holy temple** in the Lord.”

Ephesians ch 3:

- 3:6 ... “the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of **the body**.”
- 3:10 ... “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.”
- 3:14-15 ... “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom **the whole family** in heaven and on earth derives its name.”
- 3:21 ... “to Him be the glory in **the church** and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Ephesians ch 4:

- 4:4 ... “There is **one body**” ...
- 4:12-13 ... “And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some 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.”
- 4:15-16 ... “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.”

- 4:23-24 ... “you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on **the new man**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”
- 4:25 ... “we are members of one another.”

Ephesians ch 5:

- 5:23 ... “as Christ also is the head of **the church**, He Himself being the Saviour of **the body**.”
- 5:24 ... “as **the church** is subject to Christ” ...
- 5:25 ... “just as Christ also loved **the church** and gave Himself up for her ...
- 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.”
- 5:29-30 ... “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**.”
- 5:32 ... “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and **the church**.”

Now let's go back to chapter 1 verse 11:

Eph 1:11 ... “In Him also we were made a heritage, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

The most literal translation of this verse is not as we find it in many of our Bibles, rendered ... “we have obtained an inheritance”, but rather it is ... “we were designated as a heritage”, meaning we were chosen out and made to be His inheritance - this is in accordance with His eternal purpose, and consistent with Eph 1:18 where Paul prays that we may know what are ... “the riches of the glory of **His inheritance in the saints**.” The end of verse 11 above goes on to tell us that our position as the heritage and possession of God has behind it both the sovereignty and efficiency of His will that energises and is operative in all things ... “according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

So we, the Church, the Body of Christ, the New Man, are the Father's heritage, His prized possession. And if that's how He sees us, then that's how we should see and relate to one another.

The New Man

Eph 4:12-13 ... “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 (intimate knowledge) of the Son of God, to a **mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to **the fullness of the Christ**.”

Eph 4:20-24 ... “But you did not learn the Christ in this way, if (since) 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 man**, 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 man**, which after (according to) God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

That which was in the Father's mind before creation is being made clear to us. It is a "Man" that the Father is after. That Man is represented by His Son, and the Church is His expression as His Body. This new Man is to be the universal manifestation of Christ.

In Eph 4:24 the word "new" from the Greek (*kainos kainós*) literally means "new in species" – a new creation. This "new Man" is something that never was before. There was an "old man" (the first "Adam man") who was before, and Paul says he has to go. But here we read of another man, the "new man" that never was before, and he has to be put on. This is the "new Man" that is "after God" (or "according to God").

If we say of a person he's a playwright "after" Shakespeare, we're saying he produces literature that is just like Shakespeare's work; so similar you wouldn't know the difference. So this ... "*new man ... after God*" is saying the "new man" is in accordance with that which is in the mind and nature of God.

The "old man" is the corporate order, whose head is Adam. This kind of man is seen and expressed throughout the world. This collective Adam, having departed from God, is an order which cannot be accepted by God and stands contrary to His mind and purpose. In putting off this "old man," we have laid him in the grave (Gal 2:20). As those now in Christ, we have laid aside the Adam type, the Adam order, and the Adam system, and we have now put on the "new man."

In Ephesians, the letter to the Church, Paul is speaking of a "new Man" which is the Church, "the Christ" as it is literally expressed in 1 Cor 12:12 ... "*For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is **the Christ**.*"

Christ is one with all His members, as the Head joined to the Body, all the members making one Body – this is the one "New Man", "the Christ" that Paul speaks of in 1 Cor 12:12 and refers to in Ephesians.

This is a collective, corporate man, a Man of a new order which is not Adam, but Christ, where (Col 3:11) ... "*Christ is all, and in all.*" Formerly it was Adam who was all and in all, now in the new creation it is Christ who is all and in all.

Eph 1:22-23 ... "*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.***"

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

The Father has determined from all eternity that this universe shall be filled with the Christ, the Heavenly Man, through that corporate heavenly man joined to Him as its Head. Now He is in the process of conforming us to Christ, to the image of His Son.

Corporate Consciousness

The "Old Man" corporate entity, which we refer to as "the worldly", while having a corporate expression that is contrary to the purpose and values of God, does not display a corporate consciousness, but rather

has an independent consciousness, a divisive, selfish and self-centred consciousness. In contrast, the “New Man”, which is a corporate entity, is to operate with a corporate consciousness. In the Lord’s purpose everything depends on this corporate life. This corporate life is a life of fellowship. The Lord cannot reach His purpose or end by independent individuals, and you and I cannot reach that ultimate end as independent individuals. We must have and operate in a corporate consciousness and inter-relatedness in order to reach God’s goal. The hope of glory.

Unfortunately, there are many of the Lord’s own children who don’t live according to this corporate consciousness, and for that reason they don’t grow and remain babes. They are somewhat like **butterflies**, going about life their own sweet way flitting from one thing to another with no corporate life, no related life. A conference here, a meeting there, a bit of religious TV here and there, but that’s it. All about ‘getting’ – getting information, getting a blessing, trying to get an ‘anointing’, maybe a healing, a prayer asking for something, but always getting and no or very little ‘giving.’ Many such believers may in and of themselves be very nice people, and a butterfly may be beautiful as it flits about, but there’s all the difference between a **butterfly** and a **bee**. A bee may also go from one thing to another, but it does so for a very good purpose. The bee’s life is a corporate life, its existence is only for the good of the colony. The bee’s life is a corporate life, selfless, serving and giving, while the butterfly’s life is an individual life, selfish and self-serving.

The whole of Ephesians chapter 4 is devoted to the new man’s corporate life. The new man, the church, the Body of Christ is to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. It is the corporate man that grows to that stature; individuals cannot do so. The end segment of my little finger can do whatever it wants, but it alone can never end up being my whole full mature body. It may say, “Well there are two other little segments that form my finger and we’re happy fellowshipping together but we don’t care much about anyone else.” Well that entire little finger still cannot be and perform as my full mature body. It takes all the members of my body operating together to constitute my complete body. Only in complete relatedness do we move into the fullness of Christ. Putting on the new man is about putting on this Body consciousness, a related-consciousness, a fellowship consciousness that belongs to the new man. We are all dependent on one another, as well as being dependent on the Head.

Now it may not always be possible to participate in the immediate, local, geographical fellowship of a large company of believers, but this is not the point, the point is a ‘consciousness’. It is a disposition, a characteristic, an outlook, a culture, where everything individual, personal, separate, or independent is set aside, and a putting on of a consciousness of relationship in which everything is for the Body, and in the Body, and by the Body. A life lived for others. The “others” may be believers on the other side of the world and not just those around you. It’s a consciousness of serving and being available (in prayer and intercession, in giving, or any form of service in whatever the situation demands) to anyone anywhere as the Holy Spirit directs and prompts you. It a living for the whole.

To fulfil God’s purpose we cannot do without one another any more than a natural man cannot be complete without every member of his body and his head all functioning together in unison. As Paul states in his prayer:

Eph 3:17-19 ... “so that ... you ... may be able to comprehend (apprehend, lay hold of) **with all the saints** what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of **the Christ** which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

We as individuals will not apprehend the whole alone, we need the strength and involvement of all the saints to apprehend that which brings us as a corporate unit to be filled up to the fullness of God. Note the fact Paul used the definite article here, “the” Christ (τοῦ Χριστοῦ). ... “to know the love of **the Christ**.” Christ’s love shared through and between members of the Body of Christ, the Christ, builds up the Body and fills it ... “up to all the fullness of God.” This truth is reinforced in the next chapter:

Eph 4:15-16 ... “we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, 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.”

Relatedness of members of the Body is equivalent to healthy eating, good education and exercise of the natural body. This is what causes a natural body to grow in wisdom and stature; without which the body becomes feeble and muscles atrophy. Spiritually, it is no different. We are members of the Body of Christ, and by contributing to the Body, the operation of each member of the Body, so the new man grows to full stature. There is no other way. Christ is revealed through the spiritual expression of the fully functioning Body. It’s there that the Lord’s ministry functions. Ephesians Chapter 4 focusses on this ministry functioning of the new man, the Body, the Church. Everyone is to occupy some place of spiritual value in the work of the Lord; where everyone is a minister of and unto the Lord in some way.

Ministry is the outward expression of the life within, the Christ life, and not the taking on of a uniform and title. We must forever reject the false notion that ministry is something restricted to and carried out by certain elect folks called the ‘clergy’. Everyone who is in Christ, those who through the new birth have Christ as their life, and are members of His Body and are His ministers 24/7 – expressers of the Christ life. It is the Lord Himself continuing His own life and work in and through His Body; the whole is the one New Man. The Body, the Church, was never meant to be something in itself, but from eternity was always intended to be “*the fullness of Him who fills all in all*” (Eph 1:23). It has no purpose apart from Christ, nor has its existence apart from God’s purpose in Him. That’s what governs what the Church is.

Please don’t misunderstand, when we talk about Body consciousness, relatedness, the ministry function of the “new man”, we’re not talking about just participating in some way in a “Sunday club” once a week for an hour or two and then doing our own thing for the rest of the week and thinking that is true Body consciousness or relatedness, as expressed in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. That is misguided man’s attempt to “do church” and is ineffective and doomed to failure.

One in Christ

We have to forever move away from the thought of Christ and us as separate entities. Christ is all and in all. Christ will be so corporately expressed that, the question of Deity apart, the moral and spiritual essence of Christ will utterly govern every other unit of the universe. One great, collective, corporate Christ. This is not saying Christ will lose His individuality, to be absorbed in some inclusiveness where all

His own personal distinctiveness ceases, rather, it means that, when conformed to His image, we are to be as one great person, the Body of Christ perfected, a corporate and collective expression of what Christ is.

2 Cor 5:15 ... *“Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.”*

What Paul means is that despite all that we find of inconsistency and failure in fellow believers, because of what the fallen nature has caused, we are to focus our attention on Christ in them, and because they're Christ's, and He is in them, keeping our eyes off the inconsistencies, we are to see and know them after Christ and not after the flesh. See according to God's purpose – the eternal corporate Christ, embracing all that is in conformity with Him and excluding all that in character is unacceptable to God. This is the building up of one another in love. Just meditate on what Love is as defined in 1 Cor 13:4-8.

Christ came to restore us to eternal life. Eternal life is not so much mere duration, but is a kind of life. Divine life. It's God's life and value system. It's the Cross life, poured out for others.

1 John 5:11-12 ... *“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

Of this life and Person Paul stated (Gal 1:15-16) ... *“He ... was pleased to reveal His Son in me ...”*

Eph 1:22-23 ... *“He ... gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

God's quest is to fill the universe with “collective man” gathered up into His Son. That is the ... *“mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (Eph 4:13).

This “new man” is constituted according to God's moral nature. This “man” becomes an embodiment and personification of the very moral nature of God – not of the Deity of God – but the moral nature. His entire being is yielded to and devoted to the will and purpose of God.

So Paul declares, put off the old and put on the new.

Eph 4:17-24 ... *“So this I say, 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 the Christ** in this way, if (since) 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 man**, 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 man**, which in accordance to God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”*

Some grammatical details to consider for clarity:

- **“Did not learn”** in the Greek is in the Aorist act. ind. tense – a completed action in past time, a settled matter. It is saying the fact of the corporate Christ, Christ the Head and we the Body, and our coming into completion in Him is a matter that was made clear to you when you came to Christ – it’s a settled fact, and anything contrary to this is not what you learned. There’s no room for compromise.
- **“if”** (ἐἰ) this particle should **not** be used here as a *conditional particle of a hypothetical case*, rendered **“if.”** It is a particle which is used here with the indicative mode which implies the *truth of supposition*. So it should read *“since, and it is a fact” ... “indeed you have heard” ...*
- **“You have heard”** (Aor. act ind.) and **“have been taught”** (Aor. Pass. ind.) – both of which being, Aorist indicative, signify completed action in past time, something forever settled. There are no excuses. You have heard, you have been taught.
- **“manner of life”** – the words here may equally well be rendered “mode of life”, “deportment”, “behaviour”, “value system”, “conduct”. So *“your former manner of life”* refers to the world’s value system. Get rid of it, that’s not who you are or what you stand for anymore.
- **“lay aside”** and **“put on”** (Aor. mid. Infin.) in a verbal form the infinitive points to purpose or result. It’s something you must do, for a specific result.
- **“be renewed”** (in the spirit of your mind) – (Pres. Pass. Infin.) This implies continual action with a specific purpose or result.

So together this says, there is no room for compromise. That which is dead and gone is buried forever, you know that, leave it there. Embrace the life you have in Christ as an operative member of His Body living and operating according to the new values and culture of the One who is your Head. Submit to His life in you, give Him expression, a life poured out for others for the building up of the Body in love. Keep your mind focused on the Head and His purpose and values.

Holding to the “old”. Sadly it is believers with unrenewed, confused and misinformed mentalities, holding to and operating in the “old”, so called, wisdom of the world that makes the gospel of none effect and renders the world as we see it today – without Christ and without hope. Trying to use the world’s ways to attempt to “do church” is never going to succeed and is the furthest thing that was in the Father’s mind. We must for once and for all put off the “old” and put on the “new” – operate in accordance with the Head, the mind of Christ.

We hear what is in His mind as we listen to Christ’s prayer before going to the cross, where He put an end to the old and established the new order:

John 17:21-23 ... *“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 glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in one unit, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”*

We can get a glimpse of what this oneness, the corporate life of the Body, the Church, the New Man is like when we read through the Book of Acts and see the numerous references to “together”, “one accord”, “one mind”, “from house to house”, “fellowship”, “taking meals together”, “not a needy person among them” “devoted to prayer”, “encourage them all”, “prayer made fervently by the church to God”, “many were gathered together and were praying”, “gathered the church together, “encouraged and strengthened the brethren”, “strengthening the churches”, “he went to them”, “examining the scriptures daily”, “in the market place every day”, “all of them were encouraged”.

God is love and the Body is the means of expression of Christ’s love. As His heritage, let us love one another, live for the other, and in doing so live to the praise of His glory.

In Summary

With what we have considered in this lesson let us go from here and re-read the entire letter and see how the message relates not only to us as individuals, but, more importantly, as to how we are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, the New man, whose growth to full stature is dependent on our inter-relatedness and functioning together in love.

In closing, for now, we will highlight just a few passages.

Let’s revisit a passage from Chapter 1, with the definite article “the” placed before “Christ” as it appears in the Greek text, and a more literal rendition from the Greek (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ) of “*the summing up of all things in **the Christ**.*” The verses then, literally, reads:

Eph 1:9-12 ... “He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the **bringing together again all things under one head in the Christ**, things in the heavens and things on the earth. **In Him also we were made a heritage**, 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.**”

Then we read:

Eph 1:18-23 ... “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.**”

Eph 4:15-16 ... “speaking the truth in love (lit. truthing in love, or, living out the truth in love), we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is **the head, 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***.”

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.”

Amen.

Lesson 5 Our Position and Power

Before we go on from where we left off, there's something I would like to share concerning what it means to be "in Christ," fully one with Him. Christ the Head and we the Body of Christ – One.

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."*

The Greek word (ὅμοιοι – homoioi) translated here as "like" is better and more fully translated as – **"assimilated into and fully conformed to"**. So substituting those words for "like" in this passage we read ... *"when He appears, we will be **assimilated into and fully conformed** to Him, because we will see Him just as He is."*

To make this clearer, for example, think of taking a gold ring and smelting it together with a gold bar and then pouring the mixture into a mould to form a new gold bar. The gold ring will have been **assimilated into and fully conformed to** the gold bar. You won't see the ring but it will be in there, all you will see is what appears to be one beautiful gold bar. The ones made righteous, us, and the Righteous One, Christ, joined as one – eternally one! That is what was in the Father's mind and that is how the Father saw us, before the foundation of the world Eph 1:4 ... *"just as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world."*

1 John 4:17 ... *"As He is, so are we in this world."*

Our destiny as the Church, the body of Christ, is to be assimilated into and fully conformed to Him. So that both now and through the eternal ages we the Body, with Christ our Head, may be the vehicle through which the Father is made manifest and glorified – His life and love seen through us.

So our love song to our Lord should be as the old hymn says, "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." When the world can see by our every attitude, word and action that we, the Church, the "called out ones," have been assimilated into and fully conformed to Christ, and our lives radiate His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, then I believe we will see masses bowing before Christ calling upon Him for salvation and being born again. Everyone out there is crying out for love and acceptance, and when it's pouring out of us they will come running to receive the Father's love, acceptance and forgiveness.

Seated and Operating in Heavenly Places

So far we have been considering what Paul has told us concerning the Father's purpose and plan, conceived in His heart before the foundation of the world – that we would be in Christ; the Church, the called out ones, forming the Body of Christ, with Christ as Head, revealing and expressing everything that is of God. It was the Father's desire that He was to have man in union with His Son reigning, administering the universe for Him. We, the Church, the called out ones, were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world for this purpose.

Now many believers are content just to know they have been saved, and simply enjoy the advantages of being saved from hell with a guarantee of a place in heaven one day. They're happy to live a reasonably upright life and attend a service on Sundays, but that's it. That's selfish and self-centred. We are saved not just to end up in heaven one day. If all God wanted was heaven populated with people He would have made man without a free will, holy and blameless, and just placed us in His presence for all eternity. But that would be pointless on His behalf. No, He made us with a purpose in view; that we would be in Christ, Christ the Head and us the Body of Christ, the Corporate Man, to be His representatives and administrators both now and throughout eternity. We are individually saved, born again, to be a member of a corporate body, the body of Christ. We function not just as independent individuals, but as members of a greater whole, the Church, the Body of Christ. The heavenly vocation to which we are called is a corporate vocation. It's mutual participation and fellowship on which His purpose and plan is based. So we are saved, put back on track where we would have been had Adam not sinned, so that we could become the fulfilment of the Father's purpose and eternal plan. So that we could pursue the heavenly vocation to which we have been called and empowered. We are the Father's heritage, here to satisfy Him, to bring glory to him. We are His instruments realising for Him, and Him realising through us, the very purpose He had in His heart at the beginning which prompted Him to create man.

Rev 12:11 ... *"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to the death."*

Through the work of the cross, Christ's shed blood, we are now able to live by the way of the cross, the Divine manner of life of selfless giving and being expended, that the Father's purpose may be realised, and that He may be glorified. As we come to the place where we love not our soul life even to the death, and as we approach that more and more, so we maintain our throne position and reign with Christ, and have ascendancy over all the power of the enemy. This is the heavenly vocation to which we have been called.

1 Cor 6:3 ... *"Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?"*

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

Rev 5:9-10 ... *"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'"*

Spiritually we have come to the place where redemption from sin, the atonement for our sin, and our salvation in that respect is complete. Now, as the redeemed, we have been raised up in Christ and placed in Him in the heavenlies. In this realm the struggle we face does not concern our salvation but our vocation. We are ambassadors for Christ. We are the body of Christ, the vehicle through which all that is of God is expressed, manifested and administered, throughout the universe. Our vocation as such is what will come under attack. Satan and his hosts do not want to be kept 'under foot.'

Let's now have a look at some passages of scripture that relate to our position and vocation seated in Christ in the heavenlies.

Paul prays that we may know what is the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe – power that is:

Eph 1:19-23 ... *"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."*

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.**"*

This is not something for the future, which is yet to happen, this took place the moment we were born again. Being born again means you are in Christ and Christ in you, and that means we are seated in Christ in the heavenly places far above all authority and power and dominion. In Christ we are taken out of this world system and seated in a new place because the Lord Jesus as Man puts man, the born again, into the realm of the heavenlies. If we don't see this, we do not see the complete meaning of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son became incarnate, He became Man, to fully identify with us, to redeem us and get us out of this awful system of darkness, out from being under the authority of darkness, back to being seated in Him in the Heavenlies at the Father's right hand, in the kingdom of Light and Life in the position of power over all the enemy. That's how Father God saw us before the foundation of the world and how He sees us now, in Christ – man assimilated into and fully conformed to the Man, Christ, seated at His right hand in the heavenly places. This position in Christ is the position of victory, empowered by God, from which we are to operate, from which we serve. We don't fight for a position of victory, we fight from a position of victory. We stand in our victory. Paul puts it really clearly in 2 Corinthians:

2 Cor 2:14 ... *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."*

Now just a quick word to differentiate between "the heavens" and the "heavenlies" or "heavenly places". In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth – where "heavens" refers to everything out in the universe – the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets and everything outside of the earth. But the "heavenlies" or "heavenly places" referred to in Eph 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; and 6:12 is not referring to places somewhere out beyond Mars or Jupiter or in the universe somewhere, it's referring to the realm of the spirit – the realm not seen by the natural eye. The realm where spiritual laws and activity takes place.

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

Eph 3:10 ... *“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.**”*

Eph 6:12 ... *“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.**”*

You don't have to go beyond Mars into the out there somewhere to be in the heavenly places. You face the attacks of Satan right here, but you can't see the evil forces behind the wiles you face as they exist in the realm of the spirit, in the heavenlies or heavenly places.

Satan sought to secure himself the place of government, authority, and worship saying (Isa 14:13-14) ... *“I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”* But because of his rebellion he and his associates were cast out of the presence of God never to be a part of the kingdom of God and destined for eternal damnation.

So Satan and all the forces of darkness know they are doomed to be bound and destined for hell fire and want to try to take down with them as many people, believers and unbelievers, as possible. These forces do not want us, the Church, the Body of Christ, the army of the Lord, to be seated in heavenly places, operating in the Spirit, operating in the life and power of Christ, and co-administering with Christ. Satan's objective is to deprive us of our throne position. He will put every temptation, distraction and false desire into our way to trip us up and make us ineffective in presenting Christ to the world. The forces of darkness don't want to be kept in subjection under our feet (Eph 1:22-23). They will try to make us fix our eyes on the temporal, the worldly, the things of the flesh, and off the things above in Christ, in the realm of the spirit, the heavenlies. The enemy will attempt to get us to do the opposite of Col 3:1-2, which states ... *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”* The devil does not want to see the life of Christ flowing out of us to others in the world.

Satan and his minions do not want us to be the *“fullness of Him who fills all in all”* (Eph 1:23). The fullness of Christ is for His Body, the Church, and no one outside is going to have this fullness, and Satan knows this and hates this fact. So for this reason he will do all he can to try to bring divisions in the Body. He will do this by attacking individual members of the Body so that they don't perform their proper function. He wants us out of the “heavenlies where we are seated with Christ” and into the “world and ways of the world” where we are ineffective and powerless, where his ways of selfishness and hatred reign supreme. He will do this primarily by appealing to the flesh and to pride.

One of the enemy's tactics is in some way to get the believer to make an alliance with the world system in their Christian activity. Trusting more in “methods” than in the supernatural power of Christ through them. It's in the unseen that the battle is really taking place. It's not what we can do in running things for the Lord here on earth, organizing Christian ministries and movements, but it's the impact of the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ upon spiritual forces behind people and things that counts most. The devil wants

to destroy the impact of the throne and he can do that if he can make a spiritual alliance between us and anything that is of this world system, and he will go to great ends to do this.

In Ephesians Paul is showing us what the Church, the Body of Christ, really is, and the Churches calling or vocation. Now, before we go any further, let me say that what Father God had in mind before the foundation of the world when He chose us in Christ, to be the Church, the called out ones, the Body of Christ, to be His representatives and administrators, was not what you will find springing up in the mind of many believers when you ask them to define the meaning of “Church.” What many believers think of, and they call it “church” – is getting together once a week in a specific building (which they also refer to as a “church”) for an hour or two and following a ritual or program (they sing some songs, take up an offering, say a prayer and listen to someone preach and then go home, and this is what they call “church” or “going to church”). I just call that “Sunday Club,” and that poses little threat to Satan. Especially as there are generally many of these “Sunday Clubs” going on in any specific city or town, each with its own preferred doctrines and denominational titles, each in competition with all the others for “members”. That in itself is so bad – different so called “Christian” organisations in competition instead of co-operation as one united body.

Now don’t get me wrong, I know there is much value in believers gathering to praise and worship God in song and receive instruction from the word, but to call that “church” and limit “church” to a once or twice a week organized meeting in a specific building or place at a given time is at best only a man-made organization attempting to “do” church. Especially when many are doing their own thing and not living the Christ-life on a daily basis, but they attend their Sunday meeting thinking that is “church” and that they are pleasing to God. When people live a worldly or compromised life all week and then attend a meeting to sing to God and call it worship, it’s nothing but hypocrisy, and that is not pleasing to God. That’s not the true Church and it poses little threat to Satan.

It’s true worship that bothers Satan. You see, true worship is that which emanates from a life lived continually to the glory and honour of God. One who is led by the Spirit; walking in the truth continually; a life of obedience to the prompting of the Spirit; and a life expressing the servant heart of our Lord. Such a life shows it honours, values or gives worth to the Father – worth-ship. This is worship in spirit and in truth. God is Spirit and He sees everything. He sees between soul and spirit and judges the thoughts and intents of the heart. When what He sees before Him is one whose life is a life constantly girded in the truth and operating in the truth He sees a true worshipper and receives his worship. Anything else is not true worship. Living a life not always girded in truth and yet singing, “I worship You oh lord,” is not true worship, it’s just hypocrisy coated in religion. It poses no threat to the devil.

But, when there is a movement in the direction of a real corporate expression of a Holy Spirit constituted testimony to Christ Corporate, then the battle is on and nothing will be untried by Satan to break it up, or in some way nullify that testimony.

Let me explain. First of all, the Church, the called out ones (ekklesia), the Body of Christ, is who you are, not what you do. And who you are brings with it a certain powerful influence. As one of the ekklesia, one of the “called-out ones,” a member of the Body of Christ, you are who you are through the birthing –

Christ birthed in you. Just as you, as a natural person, are who you are because your parents gave birth to you and you were born the person you are, not because you did something or are doing something. And now out of who you are you live and conduct life, you give expression to your character, nature and gifting. As a born again person, one who is “in-Christ”, Christ in you as you gives you your identity, and out of that identity you think, speak and act. Who you are becomes evident as you express the nature, character and ministry of Christ. Who you are effects what you think, say and do, not vice-versa; what you do does not make you who you are.

So this corporate expression of Christ Corporate is not so much a group of believers seen together and pursuing a program or ritual, doing something together in the natural realm; Rather, it is members of the Body of Christ, whether in a group in a particular geographical area or believers spread all over, people who may or may not even know each other, who are constantly attentive to the voice and prompting of the Holy Spirit, walking in obedience to whatever He is saying concerning a particular matter, so that the ministry and power of Christ can be released to accomplish whatever it is that the Father wants done.

For example, it may be a call to intercede or supplicate for a particular country, or a specific group of people, or some situation needing God’s intervention, and through the ministry in prayer of those obedient responding members of the Corporate Christ, seeing the supernatural power of God change the situation, bring a mighty awakening, or healing, or deliverance, or provision, or the answer to the specific need. And no individual or group getting the praise for what is achieved, but only God getting the glory.

Or, it could be, like Jonah, one member of the Body being directed and used to go to a particular place to proclaim Christ, but with others unknown or known to this person backing him/her in Spirit led prayer, and seeing the mighty hand of God move and bring the change He desires, and no one but God alone getting the glory. It’s each functioning member of the Body of Christ living in constant abiding union with Christ being available to heed the leading of the Holy Spirit so that the ministry of Christ in and through you may be released to accomplish God’s purposes wherever and whenever He decides. This is not limited to a time and place and program, it’s moment by moment, daily, seated in Christ in the heavenlies, being led by the Spirit to express or reveal Christ wherever and however He dictates. This real functioning in the Spirit of the Corporate Christ is what really bothers Satan and his hosts, as it wreaks destruction to his efforts to deceive and destroy people.

Now do you go out and look for trouble? No. No believer living the Christ life ever goes out of his or her way to seek conflict. But conflict is assured to all who live according to the Father’s Eternal Purpose, living in and by the life of Christ – seated in the heavenlies in Christ operating in the realm of the Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit and revealing Christ in all you think, say and do. Jesus assured us of this, according to His word:

John 15:18-19 ... *“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”*

1 Pet 5:8 ... *“Be sober, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

So now let's look at what Paul tells us of how we are to operate as those seated in the heavenly places in Christ, standing firm in our victory and thereby resisting the attacks of the devil.

After revealing to us the Father's eternal purpose and plan through chapters 1-6, Paul says, "Finally," implying, "from now on"...

Eph 6:10-13 ... *"Finally (from now on), **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. 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."*

Note Paul starts with "**be**" not "**do**." His prayer for us in Eph 1:17-23 starts off that we may know our heavenly Father, know what is the hope of His calling, know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. Know Him, know Whose you are, and know His strength given to us. Our strength is found in our position in Christ. Seated in Christ in heavenly places – there's no more secure and powerful position to be in. Jesus said, "*It is finished*" (Jn 19:30) – Christ has completed our recovery and we can now walk onwards in Christ in confidence – we need a revelation of that fact. We are secure in Christ and can walk forward in victory in accordance with the Father's eternal purpose and plan. Ask the Holy Spirit to make this a sealed and settled revelation to you. Be strong as a result of this **knowing** and **being** in Christ. Be strong in the Lord and in His power– not in yourself, or your strength, or your ability, or your programs. That's why Paul prays again for us, the Church:

Eph 3:16-21 ... *"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."*

Be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. This comes by revelation. Revelation comes as the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in you to you. Christ in your spirit is revealed to your mind, to your understanding by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. So spend time in prayer and in God's word to get to know Him and His strength that He desires to release in and through you. It is passivity, and the quenching of the Spirit, that opens you to Satan's deceptions and attacks, and will be your downfall. Seek Christ diligently. Daily, regularly, ask the Holy Spirit to bring you a revelation of Christ. He will answer and bring understanding and great inner strength to you.

Matt 16:16-19 ... *"Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but*

My Father who is in heaven ... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Note how the Church is immediately linked to its vocation – administration and governing. But of most importance here is that the "Rock" Jesus spoke of is the revelation of Christ to us. A growing revelation of Christ is what will build His Church up to the fullness of Him who fills all in all. When we are built up by a revelation of Christ and live out of His fullness, we will be unshakeable and we will enforce the victory Christ won for us. And if we try any other way to attempt to be built up we will fail. That's why the two prayers in Ephesians, Eph 1:17-23 and Eph 3:14-21, seeking a revelation of Christ, are so absolutely vital to our growth and ongoing inner strength, both individually and as the Church, the Body of Christ. Intimately know the One of whom it is said that we are assimilated into and fully conformed to Him.

We need to ask ourselves: Do you intimately know Him? Are you absolutely secure in Him? Do you fear for nothing?

Dan 11:32 ... *"but the people that do **know** their God shall **be** strong and **do** exploits"*

Again, this verse shows us knowing and being precedes doing.

Notice that Ephesians Chapters 3, 4 and 5 come before chapter 6. So (3:16) *"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"* and (4:30) ... *"and do not grieve (quench) the Holy Spirit,"* and (5:18) *"be filled with the Spirit"* all come before the struggle (6:10-20). It is the "sons," the mature representatives that are led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14). The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, our Guide and the One who will lead us in victory in Christ. We will fail in our struggle if we are not led by the Spirit. So constantly being filled with the Spirit, heeding and being led by the Spirit is of utmost importance². Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where He defeated Satan's wiles (Luke Ch. 4), and He sent the Holy Spirit to be our guide and Teacher so that we could face and stand firm against Satan's wiles. He quickens the Word in us to us in a time of need so that we can counter the devils attacks with the Word.

Eph 6:18 ... *"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 ..."*

Prayer is first and foremost a two way conversation with God. So having your spiritual ears open all the time to receive the communication of the Spirit is essential. He will reveal and teach us Christ, whose life and ways are to be seen in and through us, so that we with Paul can say, (Phil 1:21) ... *"For to me to live is Christ."*

² For your own study, concerning the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and led by Him in service for God and against the wiles of the devil, you may like to meditate on: Acts 4:31; Acts 6:5,8-10; Acts 7:54-60; Acts 11:24; Acts 13:8-12, 52.

This alertness to and heeding of the promptings of the Holy Spirit will also enable us to pray fervently and effectively for ...*"all the saints."* As the church, the Body of Christ, we are a unit whose wellbeing is dependent on the wellbeing of each member. Like an army where each soldier looks out for the others. Caring for one another and building up one another is part of our mandate. I have no right to be weak because my failure not only involves me, but also the whole family in heaven and earth of which I am part. If one part is malfunctioning it affects the whole. Pray for one another, for those you don't personally know as well as those close around you. Be attentive to, and pray according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Just think of how Moses needed Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms during the battle, and as long as they held up his arms the Lord's people prevailed (Ex 17:8-13). We need to hold up one another's arms in prayer so that the forces of darkness do not prevail against the Church. The battle is swayed by the prayer co-operation of those seated in the heavenlies ruling with Christ, on behalf of others who are down on the ground in the front lines of the fight. This is our heavenly vocation as the Church: changing the face of things from the heavenlies. We operate and fight in the realm of the spirit and see the outcome in the realm of the natural.

But be warned, the enemy will do all he can to push you into the corner of fatigue and depression, even illness, wearing you out to rob your fighting force. The easiest way this is done is when we are so busy "doing" things for Christ (like a Martha) and not spending time at His feet seeking to know Him (like Mary). This is where you need to actively take hold of the Lord. Lay hold of His strength, and He will answer and bring the inner strength you need. I'm not talking here about soul force – positive thinking. That is depending on your strength, your wisdom, your will or your natural abilities. I'm also not talking about gritting your teeth and saying by sheer determination I'll see this through. What we need is supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit of who Christ is, and His power in us – overcoming power. This revelation brings us to ... *"Be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might."* This revelation brings us to the *"fullness of Him who fills all in all."* So pray those prayers found in Ephesians (and Colossians) for revelation and understanding.

Finally, be aware: The work of the Cross is to rid us of self-dependence, that Christ may be our all; the work of the enemy is to make us cling to self-dependence and make us quench the Spirit. Know the difference. Know the difference between the discipline of the Lord, and the deceptive attacks of the enemy. The cross applied in your life to rid you of all that is not Christ, emptying out everything of self, to make room for the fullness of Christ, will, in doing this, bring you to a place in the spirit where the forces of the world and of hell will no longer have power over you. Living in and by the resurrection life of Christ denies Satan power over us. The Christ-life is the Cross-life, and this is the victory life.

Our Lord seeks to bring us to a place where we, both individually and as a corporate unit, the Church, stand strong in Him and accomplish our heavenly vocation no matter what the enemy throws at us, to get us to the place of absolute ascendancy over all that the evil one stands for and presents.

So ... *"Be strong in the Lord and in strength of His might"*

Amen.

Lesson 6 **Armed for Effective Service**

Take up the Full Armour

After the “Be” the “Do” follows – “put on” the full armour.

Eph 6:10 ... **“be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. *Put on the full armour of God.*”**

First note, there’s no armour for back protection, so there’s no running away from the enemy. We are to face and 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. Then, remember we are a corporate unit, the body of Christ, His army – so we are to look out for one another. If you see a fellow believer not clad properly in the whole armour help them to learn how to be fully dressed and equipped to stand firm against the attacks of the enemy.

Why do **we** need to put on the full armour? Because ... **“We wrestle not against flesh and blood”** ... It is **us** that do this wrestling against the wiles of the devil. We need the armour. And remember it’s not something abstract or impersonal that we fight against. We wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. We don’t fight flesh and blood, the people used by the devil, but we fight against the evil one and his host of spiritual beings and forces that are behind these people. So we need the protective armour as well as the strength of the Lord to prevail in this battle.

So now we move on to consider what this full armour represents and how we are to be prepared to be the effective and powerful Church, the Body of Christ, to reveal Him in and to our broken world. Prepared to stand against every attack levelled against us in an attempt to nullify our testimony.

Our job now is not to try to climb to a place of victory; No, Christ has put us there already; we’re there to fulfil our vocation in strength, but part of our brief is to prevent the enemy from toppling us from our position. Note our armour is defensive – it’s entirely protective. We are told to “stand”. We are victors and all we need to do is stand firm in that victory. It’s a position we hold, and we are to protect it. It’s ours and is not to be stolen from us. We are seated above. That’s where we are – we don’t have to fight to get there. That’s our position – accept it and stay there. We have been given everything necessary to not only occupy this position in Christ but also to remain there steadfast and strong.

Basically, if you read Eph 4:17 – 6:9 you will find it gives the contrast between the ways of the world and the moral code of the heavenly life, the Christ-life we now live and are to occupy. The devil’s attacks are levelled at getting us to slump back into the ways of the world. Much of his attacks are based on the divide and rule strategy. The armour is provided, and if we take up and put on this protective armour we will counter these attacks and keep our testimony shining strong and clear.

It is important to note we are to put on the **full** or **whole** armour, not just choose out parts of it. Leaving out any part leaves you vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks. Also, we must remain in a constant attitude of humility and dependence upon the strength of our Lord, especially after we have experienced some

victory in our lives, or if you think, “Oh I’m a strong Christian”, and never forget Paul’s warning from 1 Corinthians:

1 Cor 10:12 ... *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.”*

Also, we need the full **armour of God**. We cannot depend on our own resources or abilities to counter the enemy’s attacks. The ‘wiles of the devil’ can, and will, defeat our reasoning, common sense, arguments, will-power and psychology; we need the whole armour of God. Thank God we have not been left to our own resources and devices!

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.”*

At the time of writing this Epistle Paul is chained to a Roman guard at all times, day and night, so he is very familiar with their habits and actions. He notices that they have their girdle, breastplate and shoes on **all the time and never take them off**, even when they are asleep, off-duty or on stand-by. These remain on just in case an emergency arise and they are ready to act immediately. Putting these on would take time and delay the guard from responding to the emergency, making him vulnerable to trouble. Paul noticed that they pick up or put on their shield, helmet and sword when reporting for and while on duty. These items can be gathered up very quickly.

Paul uses these analogies, and it is important to see the two divisions of three items of armour in each:

1. Eph 6:14-15 ... *“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*
 - having girded ... having put on ... having shod

“**Having**” is something that has been done. It is something which ought to have been done from the beginning and ought not in any way to have been forsaken. Once put on in the beginning, these are never taken off. “Having” represents a permanent state of readiness.

2. Eph 6:16-17 ... *“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 (take) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*
 - in addition to all, taking up ... and take ... and take ...

“**taking**” and “**take**” are actions carried out each time when entering active service or reporting on duty.

So we start off looking at the first group of three – the “having” group:

The Girdle of Truth:

Eph 6:14 ... “Stand firm therefore, **having girded** your loins with truth.”

1 Pet 1:13 ... “Gird up the loins of your mind.”

The “loins” spoken of here are the loins of your mind. A girdle is something strong that holds things together, and carries the weight of the weapons. It’s like a belt around your waist to hold your trousers or gown up, so that when you run your trousers or gown don’t fall down and trip you up. So the mind of the believer is to be girded or strengthened in truth, so it can withstand the wiles of the devil and not be tripped up. It also means you’ll be ready instantly for action against attacks.

The primary strength of the believer comes from having a mind continually girded with truth. Satan is after your will. He gets to your will by searing your conscience. He gets to your conscience through your reasoning. He gets to your reasoning through subtle half-truths, or partial knowledge, or subtleties leading to compromise.

For example; you are given 20c too much change by the shop keeper and you reason, “That’s so little I’ll just keep quiet,” or, “if he’s so slack and gives me the wrong change that’s his problem,” and you keep the money. Well that kind of reasoning starts the process of searing of your conscience. Call it what you like, but it is dishonesty and theft. You’re living a lie. The more you do this this more you will do it until eventually your conscience is seared and your will is given over and you become a compulsive theft and dishonest person.

Or, you may be following a particular preacher and for one reason or another he or she begin to preach something not quite in line with the truth and you think, “This must be okay because we trust this person.” And the next thing you go following him or her down the path way of deception and error.

Another example may be where there is someone really good and kind and thoughtful who you are particularly attracted to but they are an unbeliever and you falsely reason, “I’ll win them to the Lord so it’s okay to be in a relationship with them”. But God’s word, the truth, very explicitly states (2 Cor 6:14) ... “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers ... what fellowship has light with darkness.” This compromise is a result of “soul” attractions to the flesh, and Romans 8:6 is very clear ... “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. You enter this relationship of compromise and you’re open game for the devil. We either accept the Word of God as sole authority in all matters of faith and practice and live under His blessing, or we do not and we face dire consequences.

Just look at the number of times Israel compromised God’s command not to come in league with the enemy, yet they did, and **every time without exception** it ended in disaster and judgement against Israel. We can, and must, learn from that (Rom 15:4). Any alliance with the world system, the principles or methods of the world in any way adopted in our life or spiritual activity, will always result in our undoing both as individuals and as the church.

Often we see the Lord’s people using the world’s methods and systems to attempt to bring success to their ministries, or save them from disaster. They may keep public favour and good will, but it is the

pathway to loss of spiritual power, and instead of gaining they will have lost, and only the devil will be smiling in the end. Even if you maintain something in the eyes of men through compromise but have lost all spiritual power, you have sold your soul to the devil. False reasoning leads to a seared conscience, which leads to further false reasoning and soon your will is taken captive and Satan wins the battle. That's how it goes.

If the devil can get something that is not truth into your mind he will have undermined your strength and your throne position will be lost. A lie, a half-lie, disinformation, or anything false lodged and accepted in your mind will soon cause your downfall. "Wiles" are very subtle. Satan won't come along with the obvious, it will be subtle, he comes dressed up as an angel of light – 99% truth, but not the full truth. Just a teeny weeny bit of compromise, and if you accept it he's got you beaten. A little half-truth or disinformation about someone or a group, and, if taken on, this could end up in great division within the Body of Christ. Or, you may be doing wonderful things for the Lord and in will come a tiny thought of self-congratulation. That is simply pride of humility – a false virtue – and Satan's got you.

2 Cor 10:3-5 ... *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 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.**"*

Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, who is the Truth, means weighing up every thought presented to you against the truth. That's why it is only as you are constantly girded in the loins of your mind with the truth that you will be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. It's only if you already know the truth that you can immediately spot the lie when it is presented.

Truth here does not merely or only mean systematic doctrine, a whole system of teaching called "the truth." It does have something to do with that, but it is the truth about God, the truth about the things of God, the truth about Christ, the truth about God's people, and the truth about one another.

Remember in John 14:6 Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life,"* and in John 8:32 He said, *"And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* So girding up the loins of your mind is simply spending time in His presence, in His word, getting to know Christ. It's not just the truth that sets you free, you have to know the truth. It's in the **knowing** of the truth you are set free. Letting the truth transform you and your ways. 'Knowing' is the 'girding' of the mind. Pray Eph 1:17-23 for a revelation of Christ, the truth, so that you may "know" – get it settled. It means both mastering the truth, and being mastered by the truth.

Don't be among those who are ... *"tossed about by every wind of doctrine"* (Eph 4:14). But rather know the truth and stand firm in that which you believe.

One of the main tactics of the devil is to attempt to weaken the Church by division. A lie, false information or a half-truth about someone or a group of believers; a whisper here and a whisper there with embellishments added along the way. It sounds reasonable so you accept it as the truth and act on it. Others reject it and soon enough factions are set up and division occurs. Division robs the Church of power

and Satan smiles. Weigh up everything you hear about anyone, take it to the Lord in prayer. Find out the truth and only act on truth, and you'll be safe and others won't get hurt.

How do you counter these attacks? By having your mind constantly girded up with the truth. Always ask and check:

- "How much of this is true and how much is a lie?"
- "Where will this lead if I accept it unchecked?"
- "If I accept this information unchecked about someone else and it turns out to be false and I propagate this information will I be adding to their unjust hurt?"
- "Does this align with God's word?"
- "If you sense what you are hearing is not the truth then refuse to listen any longer. Don't let lies or disinformation pollute your mind.
- "Is there another side to this matter?"
- "Have I checked with the person concerned to hear their side of the story before I go any further with this matter?"
- Do you have a "check" in your spirit? If it's true you'll experience peace within. No peace, no go.

How are you going to meet these wiles of the devil? – By having girded up the loins of your mind with the truth. Even if what you are hearing looks or sounds right, still take it to the Lord; take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. In doing this we will enjoy the Lord's protection against the wiles of the devil.

We don't have to be constantly in fear of the enemy, rather let your mind dwell on appropriating the provisions God has made for us. Put on the full armour. Know the value of your weapons, know how to use them, and be sure you are constantly equipped with your weapons.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life". The truth we need is the truth that is in Christ.

Christ can only be clearly communicated through the people in whom He dwells. He lives *in* and *through* us. This epistle is about Christ, He who is the summation of truth, living in and through His people, the church, in our world. The truth in action.

Worship in Truth:

John 4:23-24 ... *"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in **spirit and truth**."*

...*"**Worship in spirit**"* – is possible only by those who are born again and in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells Rom 8:9 ... *"But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."*

...*"**and in truth**"* – means truth embraced and expressed in every aspect of one's life.

Worship is that which emanates from a life lived to the glory and honour of God. One who is led by the Spirit; embracing and walking in the truth continually; a life of obedience to God's word and the prompting

of the Spirit; and a life expressing the servant heart of our Lord. Such a life shows it honours, values or gives worth to the Father – worth-ship. This is worship in spirit and in truth. God is Spirit and He sees everything. He sees between soul and spirit and judges the thoughts and intents of the heart. When what He sees before Him is one whose life is a life constantly girded in the truth and operating in the truth He sees a true worshipper and receives his worship. Anything else is not true worship. Living a life not always girded in truth and yet singing, “I worship You oh lord,” is not true worship, it’s just hypocrisy coated in religion.

If you are not girded in truth continually you’re not a worshipper in truth, and that means you are an idolater as you’re placing value or worth in something other than the truth. Don’t let lies and compromise rob you of being a worshipper in spirit and in truth.

Spirit of Truth:

John 16:13-14 ... *“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.”*

Having girded your loins in truth also means being constantly filled with the Spirit of truth. Be sure to do nothing to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit, but be constantly attentive to His leading. He will guide you into all the truth.

So ... *“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth.”* Keep your position of strength.

The Breastplate of Righteousness:

Eph 6:14 ... *“Stand firm ... and **having put on the breastplate of righteousness.**”*

Righteousness is moral uprightness and purity, something that has its origin in God. Man apart from God cannot attain to God’s standard of righteousness. It’s impossible. God will not tolerate one iota of unrighteousness in His presence. Because we could never attain to God’s standard of righteousness, Christ put on flesh and became a man to represent man on the cross and pay the price so that we could be put back in right standing with God. So that we could stand before Him as righteous and acceptable ... *“holy and blameless.”*

2 Cor 5:21 ... *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

He *imputed* His righteousness to us. Imputation means – you take something that belongs to one person and put it to the account of another. God imputed our sin to His Son, He bore our sin, and God has punished our sin in Christ. But that’s not where it ended. For, as a result of our punishment being borne by Christ, God then also put to our account the righteousness of His Son. So when we stand before God He doesn’t see our sin or you or me, He sees the righteousness of His Son covering us. Christ’s perfect righteousness has been put to our account, imputed to us by God. God pronounces us just and righteous,

and that's why Paul declared in Rom 8:1 ... *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

But that's not the end. For God also *imparts* into you and me the righteousness of His Son. He puts it into you and me, He makes it a part of you and me. This is a result of the birthing, being born again, when the "Seed of Life", Christ the Righteous One, is "implanted" in you and me.

1 Cor 1:30 ... *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."*

"Having put on the breastplate of righteousness" ... we are made righteous the moment we are born again. It's not something we can work for and try and attain. We are made righteous at the birthing. Old unrighteous nature out, and new righteous nature in. The life we received in Christ is righteous, holy, sinless and perfect. That life is not in our flesh, our flesh is not sinless or perfect. That life is in our spirit, where we are one with Christ – 1 Cor 6:17 ... *"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit."* This Divine Life in us, in our spirit, will, if we cooperate with and obey the Holy Spirit our Helper, transform our soul (that's our mind, will and emotion part), which in turn will transform our words and actions, so that our outer expressions are righteous, holy and acceptable.

The devil knows our flesh is unrighteous and weak and will try to make us fixate our minds on the outer or fleshly or worldly things. That is why it is important to set your mind on the Spirit, the source of righteousness, purity and holiness. Rom 8:6 ... *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."*

Eph 4:24 ... *"put on the new man, which according to God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."*

This "new man" is constituted according to God's moral nature. This "man" becomes an embodiment and personification of the very moral nature of God – not of the Deity of God – but the moral nature. His entire being is yielded to and devoted to the will and purpose of God. This is the position and stance of the one *"having taken up the breastplate of righteousness."*

The breastplate of righteousness is part of our essential defence armour. Two things: one, the enemy will try and get you to doubt your righteousness in Christ and make you think you're no good, get you into introspection, and self-condemnation and in so doing render your testimony ineffective. So, two, *"having taken up"* means the fact of your righteousness in Christ is settled, ask the Holy Spirit to settle that in your heart so that each time you face the enemy's darts of doubt or questioning you can hold fast to the Word of God in this respect and with assurance, without wavering, tell the devil to get lost.

Hearts of righteousness is a defence if we heed the inner voice of righteousness and think and do what is right. If we know in our heart something, a thought, or a decision, is wrong, and there is no peace within, if we do not adjust that thing we will hand power to the enemy, and we will be pulled away from our heavenly vocation. Any unrighteousness in our lives will be our undoing. So having taken up the

breastplate of righteousness never put it down. At all times hold to your position of righteousness and walk in righteousness and truth in every relationship and dealing. Stand firm in your heavenly vocation.

The breastplate covered the entire abdomen from the base of the neck down to the upper part of the thighs. It covered the soldier's trunk. It covered all the vital organs within the abdomen; the heart, spleen, liver, lungs, kidneys, etc. The ancients believed that these organs were the seat of the "affections." We hear terms like, "venting one's spleen", "feeling liverish", "bowels of mercy", and "being heartless", all of which speak of feelings or affections.

So the enemy will try to attack our feelings, emotions, and affections to attempt to trip us up. Inordinate desires, condemnation, false accusations, uncertainty, anxiety, undermining of our confidence, damaged feelings, feelings of loneliness and abandonment, hyped up emotions, or emotional lows, etc. – these are all part of the enemies tactics. But we should never depend on our feelings, emotions or affections as they will let us down. There is only one protection against these assaults, the "breastplate of righteousness". We may have amazing and unusual experiences from time to time, but don't rely upon them, simply thank God for the positive experiences but don't reply on them. We don't put on the "breastplate of experiences" we put on the "breastplate of righteousness".

So the bottom line, the real meaning of "*and **having put on the breastplate of righteousness***" is simply, no matter how you feel or what attack is coming against you, continually thank and praise God that you are the righteousness of God in Christ and walk in righteousness. This is an essential defence against the wiles of the devil.

Prov 10:30 ... *"The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not dwell in the land."*

Prov 12:28 ... *"In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death."*

Rom 6:13 ... *"and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."*

The Preparation of the Gospel of Peace:

Eph 6:15 ... *"**having shod** your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."*

That passage begins, "**Stand firm** therefore ... *having shod your feet* ..." Standing firm can only be possible if you're well shod. If you're not well shod you'll get thorns or spikes in your feet, you'll stumble on uneven ground, and you'll get burnt feet if you have to run over hot coals. You simply won't be able to "stand firm" against the devils traps. If you're unstable you'll affect both your own security and that of the whole army. You may put others in jeopardy. Being securely shod means you're ready, stable and mobile.

... "the **preparation of the gospel of peace**" speaks of readiness or being prepared for action. Watchfulness and alertness is implied. You never know when the attacks may come, or how the devils tactics may change. So be alert and prepared at all times.

Matt 26:41 ... *“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

... *“having shod ... with the gospel of **peace**”* – continual peace with God, peace within and peace with others is implied.

Now as we continue, let us remember the context of taking up the whole armour is the defense of our position and vocation as those seated in Christ in heavenly places, ruling and reigning with Him. We are here as His ambassadors to present the gospel to the world.

So now, back to our verse. ... *“**having shod** your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”*

“Having shod” – from the Greek (ὑποδησάμενοι) hupodésamenoí – literally means “having bound under.”

The Roman soldier’s shoes were bound under his feet. Bound or taped on so they would not fall off. Bound on not to be taken off, even when he was “off duty,” so that at a moment’s notice he would be able to get up and into action with no delay. This, for us, represents an abiding preparedness, an ever readiness with the gospel of peace. An ever-readiness with a gospel mind-set, the gospel ever present in our thoughts so that we are always ready to give and answer, to defend the faith, and express the good news to anyone anywhere as the opportunity arises.

What has this to do with warfare and defending our heavenly position and vocation? If our “shoes” are off, if we are not constantly prepared, if our situation is one of compromise, either because we are ashamed to declare the good news for fear of ridicule, or we have not hid the truth in our hearts and cannot defend the faith, we will fail in the opportunity before us. We will not be in the place of ascendancy, power and victory and darkness will prevail in the lives of those before us. Be sure the enemy of our faith will do all he can to prevent us or hinder us from declaring and living out the gospel of peace.

Do you know Christ? Are you firm in your faith? Do you know what you believe to be the gospel of peace? Do you know truth from error?

Eph 4:14 ... *“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.”*

You don’t have to wait for a special opportunity and then get your “shoes” on; remain shod, be ready to jump to any opportunity that arises, and you’ll be surprised at the most unlikely places and circumstances at which unforeseen opportunities arise. Each day arise and ask, what do you have in store for me Father? Be ready with a message as well as with the testimony of your life in Christ. Be current in the Word, be alert to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and be ready at all times. That’s very practical, and keeps us on pace with our heavenly vocation.

The “gospel of peace” is also the “good news” that Christ in you is your peace in all and every circumstance and situation. Don’t ever remove these “shoes” and let the thorns of doubt, fear or anxiety prick into your

“feet” and cause you to stumble or be unable to walk. No matter what onslaught of the enemy you face, you can walk on in peace in Christ if you are continually shod with the gospel of peace

As we conclude this first group of the armour, remember ... “*Having put on*” means we are to put on and never take off or put down the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The Shield, Helmet and Sword:

Now we come to the three pieces of armour we are to deliberately “take up.” Like the Roman soldier, when you’re “on duty” and “in service” you’ll need the shield, the helmet and the sword.

Shield of Faith:

Eph 6:16 ... “*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.*”

The shield spoken of here is not the little round one being held by a Roman soldier in hand to hand combat that is seen in many pictures. It is the large oval one big enough to cover the entire soldier. The flaming arrows or fiery darts sent by the enemy are deflected by the shield of faith. These are missiles of fear, doubt, unbelief and uncertainty – the opposite of faith – all aimed at destabilising you. These fiery darts are sometimes against individuals, or groups of believers, or sections of the church or even whole countries. They can come in many forms, but the most common are to do with thoughts. Doubt, fear, uncertainty, unbelief and imaginations.

The darts were dipped in fuel and set alight then shot. If there was no shield and they hit their target they set alight the soldier’s clothes or whatever they struck. Once alight the soldier would be severely burnt or killed by the fire. Doubt, fear and unbelief all have the capacity to severely damage you, or even destroy you. To stand firm we must trust implicitly in Christ. We live by His life and by His faith (Gal 2:20). Prov 3:5-6 ... “*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.*” All means all. Have your entire heart covered by the big shield of the faith of the Son of God. Fix your eyes on Him and trust Him at all times. That is the place of safety.

The “faith” in the “shield of faith” is not some intellectual belief, it’s the quick application of what we have come to believe from God’s Word against whatever is being thrown against us. Faith applies the truth, it applies the promises of God. Faith never points to itself, it points to its object – Christ. We are not to put faith in faith. Our faith is in Christ alone. He is the truth and answer to everything we face. We live, not by our faith, but by the life and faith of the Son of God. Know Him, trust Him, rest in Him and be safe. What He has promised and provided he will fulfil – trust Him and live by His life and faith – that’s what “taking up the shield of faith” really means.

Gen 15:1 God said ... “*I am thy shield.*”

Psalm 84:11 ... *"The Lord God is a sun and shield."*

1 Peter 5:8-9 ... *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in the faith."*

No matter what the Lord instructs you to say or do, trust Him, do not doubt His word, and do not waver in unbelief or fear, for that is tantamount to going into battle without a shield.

So each day arise and set your eyes upon the Author and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:1-3), for He is our shield.

The Helmet of Salvation:

Eph 6:17 ... *"And **take** the helmet of salvation."*

1 Thess 5:8-9 ... *"But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as **a helmet, the hope of salvation**. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

It is interesting to note the Greek word for helmet here pericephalaian (περικεφαλαίαν) is made up of two words – peri meaning 'around' and cephalé meaning 'head.' Meaning here: a "helmet" is something that goes around the head – to protect it against the enemy's blows – blows of criticism, rejection, and hopelessness.

These are heavy blows. If you're not protected, a heavy blow of despair could bring you tumbling down like fearful Elijah from Carmel's heights down to the Juniper tree in the wilderness.³

Heb 5:9 ... *"And having been made perfect, He (Christ) became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."*

Trust and obey for there's no other way. That's putting on the helmet of salvation.

Our salvation, our hope, is in Christ. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col 1:27). As Pauls says (1 Cor 2:16) ... *"we have the mind of Christ."* Taking up the helmet of salvation is simply putting on the mind of Christ. So taking the helmet of salvation is making sure your life is hid in Christ. Your "head" – your mind, will, thoughts, desires, all your thinking, and decisions should all be fixed on Christ. Hear what He is saying. Believe what He says over what the enemy tries to ram into your mind. Take every thought captive to Christ.

Col 3:16 ... *"Let the word of Christ (that's the mind of Christ) dwell richly in you."*

One of Satan's tactics is it to make you weary and feel hopeless. When you have applied yourself diligently in serving the Lord and you see little apparent results the enemy will put thoughts of hopelessness, despair and disillusionment into your mind. He wants you to give up. He will try to get you focusing on a few small

³ 1 Kings 19:1-4

failures and forget the big picture. He may get us focusing on the minute tactics and forgetting the overall strategy of the Christian campaign. Forgetting that to which we are destined – the hope of glory. The helmet of salvation is the hope of salvation. Salvation is an ongoing process with a final result. We are saved (spirit reborn), we are being saved (transformation of our soul), and we will be saved (new bodies one day). So when the enemy tries to put despair in your mind and make you think it's all too hard and all for nothing remind him of the hope of glory – remind him of what John says in the Revelation – the Son of man will return to take you to be with Him for all eternity where there will be no Satan, sin or strife. And remind yourself and also speak out God's infallible word and promises:

2 Tim 1:7 ... *"For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."*

2 Cor 4:16-18 ... *"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."*

Col 3:2-4 ... *"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."*

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."*

John 10:28 ... *"I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."*

That is the hope of salvation. That's the truth, that's the mind of Christ. Wear it as a helmet!

The Sword of the Spirit:

Eph 6:17 ... *"And **take** ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to know and use the Word of God properly.

This is also something that helps us maintain our position, not win it. When Jesus, led by the Spirit, was tempted in the wilderness He faced the fiery darts and blows of the devil, but He did not use the Word of God to get one up on the devil, He didn't need to, but simply to maintain His position. So use the Sword of the Spirit, the Word, to return something to the enemy. In battle you give out as well as receive. With the Word you positively meet the onslaught of lies, deception, discouragement or whatever is thrown at you. Break the attack with the truth. Be ready at all times with the Sword of the Spirit to counter the lie.

Know the value of the Word, have it ready, and know what to use, when, and how to use it. Have the Word stored up in your heart. Have the Holy Spirit quickened and revealed Word hidden in your heart. If

it's not there you'll have nothing with which to defend yourself. This means daily meditation in God's word. So, as Paul stated:

Col 3:16 ... *"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you."*

2 Tim 3:16-17 ... *"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."*

The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is necessary to cut us off from any and every element of compromise, which if not removed would result in us giving ground to the enemy and rendering our warfare ineffective. This includes all dependence on elements of the world-system in order to accomplish the work of God. Worldly motives and ambitions, as well as the world's methods must go and the Sword of the Spirit must bring us to a place of absolute transparency spiritually where the Christ is all and in all and nothing is of ourselves.

Heb 4:12-13 ... *"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And 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."*

Not one fragment of what is natural, fleshly, or worldly, can get through to the heavenly position, let alone survive there. That's why often, when we're facing some spiritual issue and don't get through, we'll find that the Lord is busy dealing with whatever if not of Himself, the fleshly or worldly attitudes or methods we're trying to employ. He will turn us back to deal with the spirit of the world before we can proceed any further in triumph.

Whenever self or flesh enters, our ability to withstand the spiritual warfare waged against us is weakened. Bringing in anything of the natural man into our thoughts, plans and the work we are assigned will allow the devil the upper hand over us. Get the sharp sword of the Spirit to cut out all flesh, and cut between natural and spiritual so that only that which is of Christ remains. When it is only the life of Christ and nothing of ourselves in operation, we will have something over which the devil and forces of darkness have no power, and we will stand triumphant.

Summary

2 Cor 2:14 ... *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."*

What a difference it will make in our dark world as we stand and enforce the victory we have in Christ, allowing Him to manifest through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

Rom 13:12, 14 ... *"The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light"... "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."*

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. 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.”*

This is how we stand, fulfilling our heavenly vocation, as the church triumphant. Amen.