

# 11th MINNESOTA BIBLE LECTURES

April 26, 2014, Rosemount, Minnesota



Theme this year...

## EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS:

"The Blessings and Teachings  
Found in Christ Jesus"

**Registration** - 8 A.M. with start at 9 A.M.

Chapter 1 - Daniel Mayfield, Denver, CO - 9:10 A.M.

Chapter 2 - Paul Wiens, Owatonna, MN - 10:10 A.M.

Chapter 3 - Baxter Exum, Madison, WI - 11:10 A.M.

**Lunch break** - Noon to 1:30 P.M.

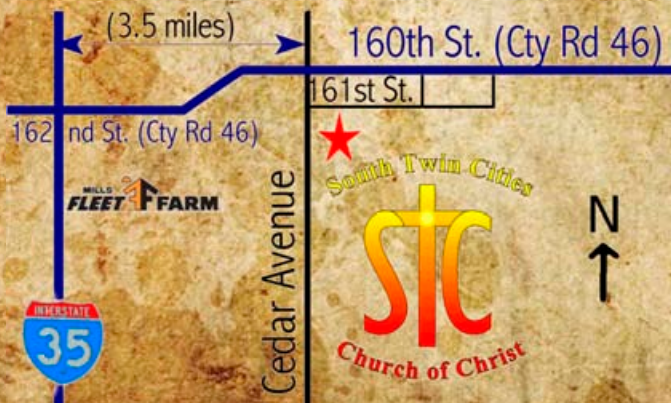
Chapter 4 - Earle Rattai, Kenora, Ontario Canada - 1:30 P.M.

Chapter 5 - Randy Martin, Lakeville, MN - 2:30 P.M.

Chapter 6 - Joey Barrett, Abbotsford, WI - 3:30 P.M.

*This event is free to attend. Childcare for ages 1 to 12 is provided for free.  
Refreshments are provided for free in morning and afternoon. More  
information can be found on Facebook by a search for "11th Minnesota  
Bible Lecture" on 4/26/14 under "Events".*

*Also on the web at: [www.minnesotabiblelecture.blogspot.com](http://www.minnesotabiblelecture.blogspot.com).*



**For more info, call:**

**Randy Martin (612) 414-5803**

**Dan Mayfield (507) 363-7671**

**- This lectureship is sponsored by the  
Owatonna Church of Christ and the  
South Twin Cities Church of Christ.**

**- It will be held in the South Twin  
Cities Church of Christ building near  
the intersection of County Road 46 &  
Cedar Ave in Lakeville.**

**- Though physically in Lakeville, the  
address is 16120 Cedar Avenue South  
- Rosemount, MN**





## **Welcome**

We appreciate your attendance today at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Minnesota Bible Lectures, an event conceived and started in 2004 under the guidance of the elders and congregational members of the South Twin Cities church of Christ in Apple Valley, MN and the Qwatonna church of Christ in Owatonna, MN.

From the beginning the objectives of annual lectures have been to:

1. Provide an opportunity for faithful saints and guests from the upper Midwest states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and the Dakotas to gather for a day of sound doctrinal teaching, singing and fellowship for the purpose of edifying them in the Christian faith while giving glory to God.
2. Increase the visibility and understanding of New Testament Christianity in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and in Southern Minnesota.
3. Provide preachers from the upper Midwest a forum to deliver messages on assigned topics to a larger and more diverse audience and improve their public speaking skills.

Thanks to the many of you who have consistently supported the Lectures over the years. We have been blessed in our efforts and, God willing, will be able to continue to provide this day (and hopefully days) for many years to come.

We pray that this year's topic will be especially meaningful to you and that at the end of the day you will be glad you came.

May God bless our gathering today and your being here. Please enjoy the day.



## Table of Contents

### ***Epistle to the Ephesians***

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Richer Than You Think – Daniel Mayfield.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>In Christ There is Life – Paul Wiens.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Paul’s Prayer for the Ephesians – Baxter Exum.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The Nature of the Church – Earl Rattai.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Imitators of God – Randy Martin.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Family Relationships – Joey Barrett.....</b>	<b>45</b>





- **Education:** BBA Degree in General Business, and minor in Art from Oklahoma Christian University; Bachelor's in Theology from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver (graduate in May, 2014).
- **Work:** Currently working with one other family for the Middle Park Church of Christ (Granby, CO) on a bi-weekly basis as the temporary preacher.
- **Family:** I have a wonderful and supportive wife who is my greatest source of encouragement in the ministry. I also have a couple of awesome parents who brought me up to love the Lord, which is why I am in the ministry today.
- **Personal Interests:** I am an avid CrossFitter, and I enjoy everything related to the outdoors.

## RICHER THAN YOU THINK

The mid 1930's marked the heart of the great depression in America. Nearly everyone was affected by it. One particular individual, a sheep farmer in Texas named Mr. Yates, was experiencing a number of financial difficulties. In fact, he was not even able to make the mortgage payments for his home. Because of his delinquent payment history, his bank let him know that his home would be repossessed if he failed to make the upcoming payment. This brought great panic on the poor sheep farmer. Not long after he received the news from the bank, he was approached by an oil company inquiring about his land. They asked if they might test his land for oil, and seeing that he had nothing to lose he gave them the go ahead. Upon drilling, they found what was at the time the largest oil deposit in North America right under his home. This poor man had no idea that he was incredibly rich. Often times Christians are living just like this impoverished man. Those in Christ have been blessed with incredible riches, yet much of the time these riches are not recognized.

Paul's letter, known as Ephesians, is one which outlines the great riches found in Christ and His church. There are arguably very few chapters in the scriptures that outline so greatly what the Lord has done for His body as Ephesians chapter one. If one desires to bolster his faith, he might consider turning to Ephesians. Perhaps one has found himself in the pits of discouragement. Surely a closer look at Ephesians will begin drawing the individual into a

healthier, encouraged state. From the text, we shall meditate on the riches found in Christ. This study will closely examine the entirety of Ephesians chapter one. First, we will make a few notes regarding Paul's opening address. Second, a close look at the riches in Christ from verses 1-14 will be examined. Third, a breakdown of Paul's desire for the Christians will be looked at from verses 15-19. And last, Christ's raised position in the church will be discussed, along with some applications for the Christian today.

## THE ADDRESS

The first few verses of the letter give address to "*the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.*" Concerning the name of the epistle, our earliest Greek manuscripts omit "*in Ephesus*" from the opening address. The original writing of Paul most likely said, "*To the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus.*" All this means is that the letter was not written to any specific church, and was likely a circular letter. It probably made its way through the churches of Christ in Asia, one of which would have been Ephesus. Paul told the church in Colossae to be on the lookout for a letter coming from Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). Many scholars believe this passage is referencing the letter we call Ephesians. The idea that this epistle was a circular letter is further strengthened by the fact that Paul chooses not to greet anyone in specific. Being that Paul spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10), it would be unlikely for him to fail to mention any of those Christians he grew to love. Greeting specific brothers and sisters by name was a very common practice of Paul in his New Testament writings. Another evidence in support of this claim is that the letter neglects to address a specific occasion. Nearly all of the writings of Paul were to specific churches who were undergoing specific problems. This letter, on the other hand, is very general in nature. Combining all of the evidence, one can see that the letter was written in general to those who are "*in Christ,*" and could almost be written directly to the Church of the 21st century.



## RICHLY BLESSED

Immediately after his opening address, Paul begins discussing the many riches found in Christ. He says in verse 3, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*” The first word *blessed* is the same as the Greek word meaning “thanks.” Paul is opening his letter by thanking God for giving every spiritual blessing to those in Christ. Paul is telling the church that God chose not to spare a single spiritual blessing from his people. These spiritual blessings make the Christian incredibly rich because God has given all there is to give. These blessings are not free to the public, though. They exist only within the confines of being *in Christ*. In many places around the world, however, people are seeking their spiritual blessings through various false sources. There are Muslims who go so far as to dive bomb buildings via aircraft in hopes of being blessed by Allah. There are others who seek their blessings through Buddha. Recently a friend and I had the opportunity to visit a Buddhist temple not far from my home in Denver. We walked up to the temple just as an Asian woman was in the midst of her worship. She had one of those incense sticks, and she was waving that thing all around in the air. Smoke was slowly lofting up before this big old statue of Buddha. These individuals who are seeking their spiritual blessings outside of Christ will be greatly disappointed, because every spiritual blessing is found in Christ. It is also important to understand that the blessings we have in Christ are *spiritual*. One can mistakenly base his Christian security on how great or little he has been blessed physically, or materially. God’s blessings come in many forms, though, especially the spiritual. Being that God made us spiritual beings, there really is no greater blessing than that of being blessed spiritually. Thankfully, Paul goes about describing these individual blessings in Christ. It sure would have been a bummer if he left the letter at this point!

## CHOSEN

The text says in verse 4, *“even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”* God chose us! Have any of y’all ever been playing a sport where they happened to be “picking teams?” This is simply the dreadful situation where two team captains are in charge of picking who they want to be on their team. I remember one time being invited to play a game of softball with some friends from church. It just so happened that they were picking teams that day, and so we were lined up against the fence awaiting our place. Slowly the guys to my right and left began to dwindle, and I wondered to myself if by any chance I might be picked last. “Certainly not!” I thought to myself. Well, it finally came down to only me and one other guy (it actually might have been a girl) against the fence. The unnamed individual was called, and I was left standing there by myself. “Well, I guess I’ll choose him,” said my new team captain. Okay, did he actually choose me? Of course not! He got me by default. This, however, is not the way God chose us. It wasn’t as if God made a last second decision to choose us because we were all there was left. The text says that he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. God’s eternal plan involved choosing us in Christ. The Calvinists love to run with this verse and use it as a proof text for their manmade doctrine. They would suggest that God destined some people for hell and some for heaven without the possibility of free will. This is a false doctrine that makes no sense in view of the context. The text says that God chose us “in Him.” The choice was not specific individuals, but rather all who conformed to His method of salvation. God chose that all those in Christ would be His chosen people. One might reflect on ancient Israel and the fact that they were born into God’s chosen race. Though Israel was the chosen nation of God, those born into it had no choice in the matter. Christians, on the other hand, choose to be born into Christ. Jesus said that unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3). As Christians, we are born into this chosen race through baptism. It was at the moment of immersion that the Divine Creator

chose us. Paul says that He chose us so that we might be holy and blameless before him. This is rather incredible when we consider where we were before we had Christ.

## THE GRAND ADOPTION

There was a time when we were fatherless. While in Africa, my wife and I had the opportunity of working with many young children. Some of these children were orphans. I remember one particular occasion seeing this young boy off by himself. He was probably 5 years old, and did not seem to have a mother or father. He was filthy, and from head to toe he was covered with dirt, grime, and various wounds. He carried with him a strong scent of feces and urine. His clothes were tattered and torn, and his flesh was bone skinny. He was sad and forlorn as I approached him. When I got close to him he placed himself on the ground with his hands over his eyes and his head between his knees. He was rejected, and was looking for someone to love him. He wanted somebody to accept him, and truthfully, I had a great desire to take him as my child. On many occasions my wife and I talked about how we wished we could bring these children back with us, but we couldn't! We simply could not do it. We were powerless over the situation. We did not have the money to pay for the children, or the space to house them. We did not have the energy to care for all of them, or the medical expertise to cure them of their various diseases. We wanted to, but we just couldn't do it. You know, at one time we were just like that. Before Christ, we were orphans on the ground, fatherless, and filthy. We were covered from our heads to our toes with our own sin, black as death. We were like the plagues of Egypt, marred by our own bad decisions. Unlike my wife and I, God was not powerless over that situation. He was able to take us into His home and adopt us as His children. *"In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the riches of his grace"* (1:5). He took us and washed us in the pure waters of baptism, cleaning us from our filth. He took our spiritual and emotional wounds and healed them through his living word. He took our torn clothes and gave

us priestly garments by which we could approach Him. He also gave us the most incredible family known as the church. We are no longer orphan children searching for something better. Rather, we have a family, and we have the most perfect Father who has ever existed. In order to do all of this, though, a great price had to be paid.

## BOUGHT BACK

There was a time when you and I were enslaved. The text tells us in verse 7 that, *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”* That word *redemption* literally means that our ransom was paid. There is no telling where we would be had it not been for this act of love. There was once a man who had been a prisoner for all of his life, and because of his long imprisonment he grew accustomed to the hard cement ground, and the feel of the chains around his wrists. One day a prison guard came and told him that he was free to go, because his ransom had been paid in full. The old man rejoiced at the news of his freedom, and almost got up after being freed of his chains. The man, however, did not get up. He had been there for so long that he had nowhere else to go (or so he thought). He hated the chains, and he hated sitting on the hard ground, but he was afraid to take the step out of the prison cell. Sometimes we are just like this old man. For whatever reason, we occasionally forget that we have been freed from the bonds of slavery. Our debt has been paid in full by the blood of Christ, yet we often choose to sit in our prison cells hoping for a rescuer. Well, Christ is standing at the door of that prison cell calling for each of us. One can almost see him standing with the blood running down every part of his body, holding the keys to redemption. And He’s standing there saying, “I paid for your freedom with my blood! You’re free to go! Come out!” The currency responsible for paying our ransom note is the blood of Jesus. Paul says this was *“according to the riches of his grace.”* There is no price that comes

close to the price Christ paid on behalf of His people. Because we have been redeemed, we no longer live in a state of darkness, but rather one that is full of wisdom and insight.

## ALL CLEAR

Paul says that “*in all wisdom and insight*” God made known to us the mystery of His will (1:8-9). What exactly is this mystery that was made known to us? “*This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*” (3:6). The mystery is simply that one no longer has to be Jewish in order to partake in the promise. This application is great for us today, because we are Gentiles who are also partakers of the promise. Imagine for a moment what it would have been like to live without the full revelation of God. Picture the prophets lying on their beds desperately searching the scriptures for the answers to God’s Divine plan. At one point Daniel the prophet reached near despair as a result of not knowing God’s plan. Now, the passage here is specifically speaking of the fact that God revealed His mystery regarding the Gentiles. However, this passage can be applied to the blessing we have in knowing the full revelation of God. In our homes, on our shelves, on our phones, and elsewhere, we have the complete word of God waiting to be read. Imagine living without this book. Perhaps a more diligent world of seekers would exist. We would likely search with greater fervor in hopes of discovering the truths of God. How blessed are we to possess such a wonderful revelation that includes all of us? God revealed His mystery to us, and we have every answer contained in one book.

Paul mentions that all of this was “*a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth*” (Ephesians 1:10). The word used by Paul for *plan* is the Greek word οἰκονομία (transliterated *oikonomia*). This word literally means a dispensation of some sort. Essentially, God wanted this mystery of the gospel to be dispensed to all of the world. God’s plan wasn’t to deliver this message to a fraction, but rather to the entirety of



mankind. This is why Paul speaks of the “*stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me*” (Ephesians 3:2). The word for *stewardship* is the exact same Greek word οἰκονομία, or *dispensation*. God gave Paul the job of dispensing this message to the world. In a literal sense, Paul traveled all over the known world of the time, but in a broader sense his message was delivered globally. Paul’s writings, along with every other Biblical author, are preserved for us today, and are dispensed for the entire world. The full revelation of God has been revealed to the world through the Bibles we possess. Given that this mystery is being introduced as pertaining to the Gentiles, it is only fitting to look at the inheritance awaiting all those who hope in Christ.

## SEEN FROM AFAR

There is hardly a greater motivation to hard work than knowing a reward will be granted upon completion. Paul mentions here that In him “*we have an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will*” (1:11). There are some who go through this physical life as if it is an end in itself. As spiritual people, we understand that something much greater awaits. In Christ we have a promised inheritance. Now, Paul says that “*we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory*” (1:12). He goes on to say, “*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is a guarantee of our inheritance*” (1:13-14a). What Paul seems to be saying is that the Jews were the first to hope in Christ, and the Gentiles came afterwards. The important matter to note, however, is that both Jews and Gentiles alike have a future inheritance.

## THE DIVINE GUARANTEE

The text tells us that the Holy Spirit is the “*guarantee*” of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it (1:14). The word for *guarantee* literally means a “down payment.” In other words, God has placed His Holy Spirit within us as a down payment of the inheritance to

come. This is God's way of giving us a full assurance that we will be saved and partake in the heavenly home awaiting us. Being that God has given us this guarantee, we must remain faithful in our Christian walks. Paul writes in Colossians 1:22-23 that we are presented as holy and blameless before him, *"if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard."* Now, Paul's point in discussing the Holy Spirit is to give each Christian the confidence to remain faithful, knowing what is to come. He says the Spirit is a guarantee *"until we acquire possession of it"* (1:14b). As Christians we must remember that we have not acquired possession of this inheritance quite yet. Paul wrote in Philippians about his pressing on towards the prize of the upward call. He understood that it was a daily duty, and we need to keep this in mind. As mentioned previously, what greater motivation could we have than knowing the inheritance we have awaiting us? At this point in the letter, Paul shifts gears slightly. No longer is Paul listing the spiritual blessings in Christ, but rather he is discussing what he wants the Christians to know.

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

As Paul begins a prayer in verses 15 and following, he discusses the knowledge that each Christian should possess. He prays that God may give them a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (1:17). He has just mentioned the incredible riches that exist in Christ, and he wants them to understand some things. What good would these blessings in Christ be if we did not know about them? See, sometimes we can be just like the impoverished man in the great depression. We have great riches, but we must understand them. Do you know how rich you are in Christ?

Paul goes on to mention three specifics of what he wants them to know. The first being that they should have a good understanding of the hope to which they have been called. The hope awaiting the faithful Christian is heaven, and the calling has to do with the Christian walk.

Paul wants them to understand that they have been called to something, and this will certainly require a daily effort on their part. When you're called by somebody, you are expected to go to them. Well, we have been called, and we will be journeying until the very end. Paul mentions secondly that he wants them to know what are the riches of His glorious inheritance. Again, what good would all of the riches in Christ be if we had no concept of them? Lastly, Paul wants the Christians to know the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards us who believe. He says that this power is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. Now, imagine for a moment what the grave of Jesus would have looked like after He laid there for three days. At that point His wounded flesh would have been rotting, and His bodily fluids would have recessed into the back of his body. His burial wrappings would have begun to meld with his skin as the wounds dried up. Jesus was dead! His side had been pierced releasing blood and water while he hung lifeless on the cross. No advent of modern medicine, no combination of the greatest minds in existence could have fixed Jesus' broken and dead body. Now, imagine the power it would have taken to bring that body back to life! Imagine Christ as he laid lifeless in the grave. His fluids would have returned to His body as if they never left. His punctured organs would have begun to function again, and the wrappings around His body would have slowly fallen off as he sat up in the grave. If that isn't an incredible picture of power, I don't know what would be. What is absolutely profound is that the power we have working in us is "*according to the working of His great might that he worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places*" (1:19b-20). The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power we have working for us daily. But where exactly is the power located?

The text tells us that Christ has been seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places (1:20). We also learn that every spiritual blessing in Christ is in the heavenly places (1:3). This phrase *in the heavenly places* is mentioned multiple time throughout the letter of Ephesians, and it refers to the spiritual realm. We can know this because 6:12 says that our struggle is not

against flesh and blood, but is “*against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*”

The words *rule* and *authority* in the above passage are words that Paul uses to describe demons.

Now, back in Ephesians 1 the text says that Christ was seated “*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named*” (1:21). What is so cool

regarding this passage is that Christ was seated far above all *rule* and *authority*. In other words,

Christ was positioned far above any influence of the demonic realm. If we are positioned with

Christ, then we also have been placed far above the spiritual forces of evil. Paul says, “*Even*

*when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with*

*him and seated us with him in the heavenly places*” (2:5-6). Christ was raised far above all evil,

and we have been seated with Christ, therefore we are far above the influences of the evil one.

Do you want to be away from the influences of the devil? Then draw near to God.

## WORKING FOR US

The final couple of verses in chapter 1 are sometimes used out of context to say that Christ is the head of the church. Christ *is* indeed the head of the church, but this passage in particular is not saying that. Ephesians 1:22 says, “*And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.*” In context, what “things” might you imagine have been placed under the feet of Jesus? Well, did the text not just finish explaining that Christ was risen far above all spiritual forces of evil? Because of verse 21, we can understand that verse 22 is further expounding on the position of Christ. Not only was he raised far above all spiritual forces of evil, but the spiritual forces of evil are under his feet. The passage then goes on to say that he was given as head over all things *to* the church. The word “to” in verse 22 essentially means “for.” The passage could read, “*and gave Him as head over all things for the church.*”

Simply put, Christ is in His risen position on behalf of the church. Christ is working for the church where He is seated.

## APPLICATIONS

It cannot be stressed enough how rich we are in Christ Jesus. Because of our God's extreme generosity, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing that exists. At this point it is important to go back through the text and pick up a few loose pieces in order to make direct application to the Christian's life today. The first point to be made is in regards to how thankful the Christian needs to be for these blessings in Christ. Paul began this letter in verse 3 by thanking God for blessing us with every spiritual blessing. Interestingly, Paul goes on to praise God for these blessings three more times in chapter one. Just as soon as Paul begins to list a few blessings he stops and says, *"to the praise of his glorious grace"* (1:6a). It matters not that Paul is sitting in a prison, undergoing an incredible trial. He can think of nothing more than the blessings God has given those in Christ, and he wants to thank God for it. Again he says in verse 12 that *"we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."* And then he mentions again in verse 14, *"to the praise of his glory."* Are we thankful for the blessings we have in Christ? Do we stop and take the time to praise God for giving us every spiritual blessing in existence? Our prayers are often filled with the many things we want, but rarely consist of our many thanks. Perhaps it is an offense to God when we see the never ending list of wants, but look right over the great list of blessings already given. The Christian needs to stop and be thankful for these many blessings.

After mentioning the grand list of blessings given by God, Paul immediately goes into a prayer regarding what he wants them to know. Essentially, Paul wants the Christian to know of these great blessings. What good would any of these blessings be if the Christian did not know of them? That would be no different than the impoverished man in the great depression living with



those riches right under his home. The discouraged Christian would do well to take some time to diligently reflect on all that God has done for those in Christ.

Paul mentions “in Christ,” “in Him,” or an equivalent phrase 11 times in the first chapter. He is making a clear case that every blessing exists “in Christ.” This means that no person outside of Christ even has the ability to share in these blessings. The logical question to ask is, how does one get into Christ? Well, thankfully Paul teaches the answer to this question in a couple of other books. Paul says, “*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Galatians 3:26-27). The answer is clearly stated. One must be baptized to get *into* Christ. Paul says something similar in the book of Romans. “*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:3-4). Here again, the same author as in Ephesians gives the key to how one gets into Christ. Only through baptism does one enter this relationship. Romans describes this baptism as a death in order that the Christian might be raised to walk in newness of life. The clear point here is that anyone who wishes to share in the blessings of Christ must submit to Christ in the waters of baptism.

## CONCLUSION

God has done a great deal for His Church. Every Christian is able to confidently say that they have been chosen by God. God has taken all of those in Christ and brought them into His home as His own Children. These blessings were paid for by the rich blood of Christ that brings redemption to those who were once enslaved. No longer does the Christian wander around in darkness, because all wisdom and insight has been made known, leaving every question answered. Those who are obedient are able to share in the grandest inheritance ever given. And

each Christian is able to confidently move forward knowing that the God of heaven and earth has sealed his children with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of that inheritance. We are rich in Christ. Let us go forward thankful for these blessings. Let us move forward with a clear understanding of all that has been done on our account. If you desire to share in these blessings, and you are standing outside of Christ, then submit to Him through baptism and all of these things will be yours.



James Paul Wiens is a fourth year student at the Online Academy of Biblical Studies in which he will graduate this May. He plans on enrolling into the Master's program at Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver to further his bible education. Paul is married to Amy Wiens and they have four daughters: Stella, Olivia, Emma, and Nora. He enjoys Bible study, spending time with his family, lifting weights, playing basketball, movies, and life. Something interesting about Paul is that he is named after James Paul McCartney of the Beatles. Paul desires to help anyone and everyone get to heaven and to spend his life serving our Lord!

## Ephesians Chapter 2

“In Christ There is Life”

### I. Introduction

Having introduced the matter of salvation in Ephesians chapter 1, the apostle goes on to describe the spiritual state from which they had come, and the blessings which they now enjoyed in Christ. In Ephesians chapter 2, God's wonderful grace comes into focus and the result of that divine mercy is seen in the edifice that is built upon the “foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone” (2:20). In the first half of the chapter Paul reminds the Ephesian saints of their past (2:1-3), contrasts that with the present (2:4-6), and holds forth the prospect of what they could and should be (2:7-10). The second half of the chapter shows the hope they now enjoyed (2:11-13), the peace in the one body (2:14-18), and the spiritual building of which they were a part (2:19-22).

### II. The Past

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

These opening verses of Ephesians 2 are dripping with God's wisdom! God so perfectly, so magnificently, so amazingly, so eloquently, reminds the Ephesians (through the apostle Paul) of their past. Why would God do that? So the Ephesians would have a greater appreciation of the life they now lived in Christ. Do not all of us need a reminder of our past sometimes? Well, here it is folks!!

Notice, if you will, in verse one Paul says the following, “*And **you** were dead in **your** trespasses and sins.*” (Emp. Added PW). There is this false doctrine going around in the world of Christendom that says man is born with sin, literally that he inherited sin the sin of Adam. It is these sins of Adam that man inherited which caused him to be totally depraved, lost, tainted, no good, sent out to pasture, dead in sin, the moment he stepped onto the scene!! But that's not what Paul says here to the Ephesians. Rather he reminds them they were dead in **their** trespasses and sins (spiritually speaking). If you are struggling with this than I encourage you to do a careful study, shall we say, of Ezekiel chapter 18. I am confident that when you complete that study you will be up lifted, encouraged, and have a clear mind on the fact that your sin is your problem, period!! And I have no doubt Paul mentioned sometime in the three years he spent with the Ephesian saints that they had a sin problem, that is was their problem, and then provided for them a way to be free of that sin, and his name is Jesus Christ!! Amen! God is so good at clearing up false doctrine if we would just take the time look!!

Paul goes on to tell them; while you were dead in your trespasses and sins you formerly walked according to the course of this world. Notice Paul said they “walked”, describing a habitual life style, day after day, all of the time according to the course of this world. They allowed the age in which they lived to dictate their course of action. These brethren once walked in conformity with the customs and manners of the world at large, allowing the cares, temptations, and desires of the flesh to rule and direct their lives. Oh my, do we have a problem with that today? Letting the latest JC Penny ad dictate what we wear and leaving Hollywood to decide how we should speak and act! And who is the one pulling all of the strings? It is the prince of the power of the air, Satan himself. Friends, we must not forget that Satan is a real character. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, admits this fact. Apart from the reality of the Devil, the world cannot adequately explain the cause of the evil tendencies and actions of men. Our generation has witnessed some of the most heinous crimes and acts of violence. Are we to conclude that such is the result of some psychological maladjustment, lack of education, or because someone ate too many “Twinkies”? The only adequate explanation for such wickedness is found in Peter’s warning that “your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1Pet.5:8). Who do you know that can go head to head with a roaring lion and live to talk about it?

Paul now reminds them that those in the world who have this spirit or rebellious disposition influencing them are the “sons of disobedience”. “Sons of disobedience” implies that Satan can and does influence men; therefore he can, in a sense, call them His “sons of disobedience”.

The apostle Paul, in reminding the Ephesians of their past, now tells them “*we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest*”. I find it most amazing that the Holy Spirit would move Paul to write these words. How wonderful it must have been for the Ephesians to hear the words “we too” (Jews and Gentiles) once lived in the lusts of the flesh. The great Apostle Paul once indulged in the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Oh, how relieved they must have been to realize that they were not alone. Let that sink in a minute. We, as well as the Ephesians, are equal with the Apostle Paul. We all have battled with sin and were by nature (sustained habit, Thayer) children worthy of God’s wrath, even as the rest of humanity. This verse in no way supports the man-made doctrine of inherited total depravity.

### III. The Present

*4But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.* (Eph.2:4-6 NASB).

The Ephesian saints at this point are clearly reflecting on their past. The apostle Paul has done a wonderful job of setting the stage where he will now begin reminding them of who they are in “The Present”.

The certain doom of man in the preceding verses is immediately washed away from memory with the words “But God”. God has intervened on behalf of man and rescued him from his inevitable date with hell. God gets the glory. It was his idea, and his alone, to save wretched man from the filth of his sins. The words “But God” carry significant weight and importance. None other “But God” could save man from his sins and the Ephesians, without a doubt, understood this fact and so should we!

Paul tells the Ephesians that God is “rich in mercy”, there are many in our society today such as Warren Buffet, Bill gates, Donald Trump, and many others who are rich beyond our wildest dreams. There are people who have silver, gold, and every material thing you can think of. But Paul says that

God is “rich” in mercy. God is so rich in mercy that he is willing to impart it to others; so rich that he can make all blessed (Barnes, E-Sword). God’s cup, if you will, is overflowing with His mercy. God is the author, the originator, of mercy. If the Ephesians wondered at all why God was so rich in mercy then the Apostle Paul would tell them why: God’s love for all of mankind is why. I think the Apostle John said it better in his gospel. In the third chapter, verse sixteen, John writes: “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life* (NASB). God extends his mercy to us because he loves us, because he cares for us. We are on the mind of God every single day! Oh, how the Ephesians must have felt when they understood that reality. Ask yourself, “How do I feel knowing that I am on the mind of God every single day”? How does it make me feel knowing that God loved me so much that he sent his “Only Son” to die for my sins? Our God, because of his nature, couldn’t do anything else but save us of our sins.

God is so rich in mercy and love, that while the Ephesian brethren were dead in their transgressions, God made them alive together with Christ. In case the Ephesians didn’t get it by now, Paul gently reminds them that were saved by God’s grace, His unmerited favor. Paul is in no way taking away the significance of faithful obedience. He is simply reminding them that it was all of Gods doing that saved them and made them “alive together with Christ”. Now while they were dead and helpless in their sins God came with His great mercy and love and extended his grace to them, making them alive together with Christ. You see, one of the reasons that God saved man was to put on display His grace for the world to see. “In the ages to come” refers to succeeding generations of people throughout all time. The church, therefore, is God’s show window to display “the surpassing riches of His grace toward us” and thereby encouraging others to accept His offer of salvation (cf. Eph.3:9-11).

It would therefore be appropriate to ask ourselves, “What kind of advertisement for God’s grace, kindness, and love are we? What kind of advertisement are we for the Gospel of Christ? Do people know more or less about the grace of God by the way we live at home, as parents, on the job, at school?” The church, as a whole, and we as individual members of it, are an exhibit of God’s grace. Generations throughout time are to know about God’s grace and kindness through the church, which is God’s plan. Friends, the world needs to see Jesus Christ in us because he is the realization of God’s grace (Jn. 1:17). All of God’s grace put together was displayed or realized in the man, Jesus Christ. Oh, how Paul is driving home with the Ephesians just who they are and how they are to be. And this applies to us as well. All of this wealth of grace and kindness from God is “in Christ Jesus.” The all-important questions is: “Are you in Christ?”

The Apostle Paul tells the Ephesians just how they got “into Christ” in verses eight and nine. *8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Eph.2:8-9 NASB) This passage of scripture has been grossly distorted, twisted, and mangled. There are many in the religious world today that believe these verses are teaching something completely foreign to sound biblical teaching. There have been many a more educated men than I that have revealed the truth on these verses, but I will try my best to do them justice. Let us first examine the word “Grace”. The basic definition of grace is “unmerited favor”. Grace is inherently “undeserved,” meaning, for the purposes of our study, that God’s gracious gift of sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins is not something God owed us, nor was it anything which we deserved or bring to be on our own (Jn.3:16; Rom. 5:1-2, 6-10). However, the fact that we can do nothing to **deserve** God’s grace through Christ does not mean that there is nothing we have to do to **acquire** this grace!

Denominational teaching, which is infiltrating the Lord’s church through some who want to make us like the denominations, holds that a proper definition of grace excludes all possibility of human effort of any kind to appropriate God’s grace. What Paul is really saying is that it is beyond the ability of mankind to merit in any way the grace of God’s gift in sending Christ to die for our sins. God’s grace



always means that He freely gives to an individual, group, nation, or all humanity some favor which we could not ever design or obtain by our own thinking and doing. The reception of that grace by those to whom it is offered is always qualified by some response from the recipients, which God reveals in presenting His grace to us. This principle of grace is not confined to Paul's epistles; it is God's practice throughout Scripture.

Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of God (Gen. 6:8 NASB) and by faith he did what God told him to do, "prepared an ark for the salvation of his household" (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:22 NASB). Did Noah's doing what God told him to do negate the grace offered, making a way for him to escape the condemnation God brought upon the world? Absolutely not! Would God Have saved Noah if he had refused to do what God commanded him to do? Absolutely not! **Only when Noah cooperated by obeying the Lord was he saved by grace.** Obedience is not "earning" or "meriting" salvation; it is receiving or acquiring the grace God offers in His appointed way. (Clarke T)

Now let us look at faith as it is used here in verse eight. We will not take the time to discuss the Calvinistic view of faith (which says that there must be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on man in order for him to have faith) for we already know this view is completely erroneous. The real and very valid question is whether this saving "faith" that Paul mentions here in verse eight is a personal faith and trust in God and Christ, without which no one can be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6), or if it refers to "the" faith, the body or system of faith which dictates what we are to believe, how we are to serve God and our fellow man, and how we live to show we belong to Christ (cf. Acts 6:7; Jude 3). Personal faith comes by hearing God's word, and the Word of God is the system of faith for mankind (Rom. 10:17). With careful study I believe in this passage that faith could be either the personal faith we need to have in Jesus as the channel of God's saving grace, or the system of faith (the Gospel of Christ) which calls for our personal trust in Jesus.

One thing is certain: If the "faith" of 2:8 is personal faith, it must be an obedient, working faith in order to be acceptable to God (Gal. 5:6; Heb. 11:6; Jam. 2:14-26). One simply cannot access the grace of God in Christ without having a personal trust which moves one to do what God says we must do (Rom. 5:1-2; Heb. 5:8-9). When our human efforts are actions God commands in order to receive His grace, they are not attempts to merit or earn salvation (Tit. 3:4-7). They show our love for God and our willingness to accept the offer of His grace (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1Jn. 5:3).

Friends, salvation is not something man came up with on his own, it truly is "the gift of God". God, in His wisdom, knew that salvation couldn't be based on works or merit for then man would surly boast "Look what I did". We are, now don't miss this, His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. These "Good works" God determined beforehand that we, the church, would walk in them. These "Good Works" would for all time be a distinguishing mark of the household of God. Are we walking in "Good works"?

#### IV. The Hope

*11Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— 12remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:11-13 NASB).*

The Apostle Paul, having just reminded the Ephesians of the life they now lived in the present, stirs their hearts with "The Hope" they now enjoyed in Christ. Friends these three verses in Ephesians 2 carry so much love and hope that if you don't get goose bumps when you read it, or if your eyes don't well up with tears, then perhaps you have haven't looked close enough yet. Remember when I asked you to put yourself in the context as if you were the Ephesians hearing this letter for the first time? Imagine

the impact these verses must have had on the Ephesians. It must have been a remarkable site. Paul tells them exactly where they once stood with God. At one time the Ephesians were “separate from Christ” because of their own trespasses and sins. Having rejected God, the gentile world plunged deeper and deeper into the depths of depravity (Rom. 1:20-32), eventually reaching the point where God Himself gave them over to their sinful behavior.

The Gentiles had no hope, this does not mean that they did not cherish some degree of hope, but rather that they had no basis for hope. Picture the patient sitting in the examination room and the doctor speaks those words of despair, “There’s no hope.” Or what of the child who wandered from his parents and after hours, perhaps days of searching, someone finally says, “There’s no hope.” Separated from God, the entire pre-Christian Gentile world was without hope. But these same words of despair describe the present spiritual situation of more than six billion souls in our world. “No Hope!” Let the words sink into your heart. Contemplate the lost condition of humanity. Then “remember” the great love that God had for our souls in sending His son to die in our place. One writer’s assessment of this unbelieving mass of humanity is right to the point:

They knew of no atonement for sin. They had no assurance of pardon. They had no well-founded hope of eternal life. They were in a state of darkness and condemnation, from which nothing but a knowledge of Christ could deliver them. All Christians may in like manner be reminded of the fact that, before their conversion, they were “without Christ.” Though they had heard of him, and were constantly under the instruction which reminded them of him, yet they were without any true knowledge of him, and without any of the hopes which result from having embraced him. Many were infidels. Many were scoffers. Many were profane, sensual, and corrupt. Many rejected Christ with scorn; many, by simple neglect. All were without any true knowledge of him; all were destitute of the peace and hope which result from a saving acquaintance with him. We may add, that there is no more affecting description of the state of man by nature than to say, he is without a Savior (Barnes, E-Sword).

“And without God in the world”, simply means the gentiles did not believe in or honor God as such. The words without Christ, no hope without God, are the most terrifying words a man could ever hear and these words at one time summed up the Ephesians perfectly and us as well. The words Paul writes here are indeed cutting the Ephesians right to the core! But Paul doesn’t leave them feeling empty and lost. In verse thirteen Paul tells them the words that would lift a man to the heavens and back again, the words that made the Ephesians and all who have ever been afflicted by sin truly feel loved. “*But now, in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ*” (Eph. 2:13) Friends, these words apply to every single one of us. All of us know the gravity and weight of these words. All of us at one time were dead in our trespasses and sins. All of us were without hope and without God. But now, because of Jesus Christ and the blood he shed at Calvary we have been brought near to the creator of the universe, God Almighty. We are now a part of the family of God. Imagine what the Ephesians must have felt knowing these things and now to be near God Almighty because of Jesus Christ. Friends, we are blessed!

The Ephesian’s now have “The Hope” the Jews have and can wait with confidence for their Lord to return and take them home, and so can we.

## V. The Peace

*14For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

*17AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father* (Eph. 2:14-18 NASB).

The great Apostle Paul is not done yet, he goes on encouraging the Ephesians with “The Peace” they now have in Christ. What better way to set your mind on peace than to think of Jesus, for he is our peace. Christ’s death on the cross made both groups (Jew/Gentile) into one (cf. Gal. 3:28-29). Tearing down the dividing wall, i.e. the system of Judaism which excluded the gentile from association with the Jew and the blessings associated therewith. The Old Law was never going to justify man for all time; the need for something better was necessary. That need came in the form of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Christ, himself said “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to father but through me*” (Jn. 14:6 NASB). It was in the mind of God from the beginning that Christ would come to this earth and die on the cross for man’s sins, thus establishing peace between God and man through the shedding of His blood. Now all can be brought together as one through faith and obedience in Jesus Christ. That, my friend, is the peace we are all looking for. There is a place where we are all one and a place where there is freedom from the guilt and shame of our sin. That place is in the church of Jesus Christ. What joy the Ephesians must have felt knowing there is unity and freedom of sin in the church and all are welcome to it. Praise God!!

## **VI. The Spiritual Building**

*19So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit* (Eph. 2:19-22 NASB).

The Apostle Paul now ends this beautiful declaration by telling the Ephesians that they are a part of a Spiritual building; a part of the church of Christ. Now that the Ephesians were a part of the church of Christ they were “no longer strangers and aliens,” but were “fellow citizens with the saints”. They now had rights that can only belong to one who is in Christ. It meant they had access to the Father, and that, with boldness. When a man travels to various countries he is required to carry his passport with a valid visa that permits him to enter into that country. There are certain limitations and restrictions as to his movement and activity while in that country. Paul is telling these brethren that they are not in God’s kingdom on a “visa”, but as citizens by birth into that kingdom. This “citizenship” was (and is) granted to ALL the saints. Gentile Christians were not second class citizens, but equal in their relationship to God and with another (cf. Gal. 3:28). That is powerful!

The Ephesians were now a part “of God’s household”. As a Christian we are a part of the household of God, we are part of a family. As a member of God’s family there are special blessings we have, as well as responsibilities.

First, we have God as our heavenly father. Of all of the references that Jesus could have used in describing God, He chose the term “Father” (Matt. 6:9). We are not only called children of God; we are **His** children (1 Jn. 3:1-2), and partakers with Him of the divine nature (2 Pt. 1:4).

Second, as members of God’s family, we can come before our father with boldness and confidence (1Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:19). Paul had just stated in verse 18 that we have “access” to the Father through Jesus Christ.

Here is a truth that is almost too great for us to comprehend. Perhaps it can be illustrated with the picture of a man who serves as a corporate president. He has hundreds of employees under him, with a number of managers handling the day-to-day details of their respective departments. He does not have time for such details, nor opportunities to visit with each employee. And yet, one day, he hears a little

knock on his door, and recognizes that knock as belonging to his child. Suddenly, he puts everything aside and opens the door to welcome this particular visitor. Why? *Because it is his child!* And this is the precisely the idea here for the Ephesians to consider. Through Christ, they as children may go right into the presence of their Father, and He will always be ready to receive them.... As long as we are faithful to Him, we can go to Him with confidence, assurance, and certainty, knowing that He will hear our prayers (Heb. 4:16). He is our father! (Billy Smith, Getwell Lectures, pg56).

Third, we have Jesus as our elder brother. He is the “first-born among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). We are “fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Because He became a man and dwelt among us, He understands us, and is sympathetic with us.

Fourth, with these blessings comes responsibility. When I was growing up I had certain “chores” that I had to perform on a daily and/or weekly basis. As children in the family of God we have responsibilities as well. We are to let our light shine (Matt. 5:16), and walk in the light (1Jn. 1:6-8). We are to be “zealous for good works” (Tit.2:14). We are instructed to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age (Tit.2:12). We are to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice in service to God (Rom. 12:1-2). We must assemble with the saints (Heb. 10:25), pray without ceasing (1Thess. 5:17), study and rightly divide the word of truth (2Tim. 2:15), and give as we have prospered (1Cor. 16:1-2). We are not to let sin reign in our bodies (Rom. 6:12). These are but a few of the blessings and responsibilities we have as members of the household of God.

But Paul goes on telling the Ephesians in verse twenty that they were built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in which Christ Himself is the corner stone. Christ is not only the corner stone; He is the chief corner stone. The “doctrine” of the apostles and prophets of the first century “line up” on Christ. It is the doctrine of the church which gives it stability. Remove the doctrine and you remove the stability of the building itself. Doctrine establishes moral principles and morality rests upon the precepts contained in the word of God. When men abandon doctrine, the abandonment of moral principles is not far behind. The **only** temple that our Lord Jesus Christ ever built is **His** church; all others are imposters! And because the foundation was built upon the doctrine of Christ the whole building (church) fits together perfectly and therefore is able to grow into a holy temple in the Lord in whom you (Ephesians/Christians) are being built into a dwelling of God in the spirit. There is complete unity in the church, consequently, no congregation is an island unto itself. We are to interact with the various congregations, and cooperate so as to accomplish the great work that God has given us to do. While it is true that each congregation is autonomous, it is a mistake to suggest that congregational autonomy means congregational isolation. The very unity of the church as the body of Christ implies that each and every congregation, as well as each member, is “being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit”.

## Conclusion

Before we leave this chapter, please consider the wonderful contrast that is drawn between the Christian’s **past** and **present** life. Prior to our conversion, we were under the control of the devil, walking according to the course of this world, alienated from God, and without hope. But having become a child of God, we now enjoy all the blessings and privileges that go with being a part of the kingdom, a member of the family of God, and a stone in Gods temple. Friends, we are somebody now - In Christ there is life.







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## Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

This morning I wonder whether I am the only one who tends to get distracted while trying to go to God in prayer. I obviously do not know what your prayer life is like, but I know from my own personal experience that I will often set out to approach God for some reason – perhaps giving thanks, perhaps asking for forgiveness, perhaps to ask for help with something – and right as I seem to be getting in the right frame of mind, I see the proverbial squirrel. Something catches my attention, my mind wanders, I deal with that distraction, and eventually I get back to what I wanted to talk to God about in the first place. Has that ever happened to you? I know it happens to me all the time, and it also apparently happened to the apostle Paul. We see it over and over again in the book of Ephesians.

We see it especially in Ephesians 3. We are here today to study the word of God; so, I would invite you to turn with me to Ephesians 3 and to keep your Bibles open to this passage as we study. We will look at the entire chapter in just a moment, but once we all make it to Ephesians 3, I would invite you to get the overview here at the beginning. Notice, please, in Ephesians 3:1, how Paul starts out, *"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles..."*, and then in the New American Standard Bible, at least, we have a hyphen, we have a dash. And so Paul starts out introducing the prayer that will come later (in verse 14), but in those introductory words up in verse 1, he refers to himself as the *"prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles,"* and that, of course, causes Paul to think. He starts thinking about the fact that he is in prison for the Gentiles. Perhaps he thinks back to his own conversion. Maybe he thinks about those false accusations of bringing a Gentile into the temple, the accusations that had led him down the path into prison in the first place. Maybe he thinks about all of the beatings and persecutions on his missionary journeys through Asia Minor and eventually Greece. All of this was for the Gentiles. Paul, though, doesn't want them to feel bad about that, he doesn't want them to feel guilty about that, and so he goes off into this explanation of how the gospel was always intended to be for the

Gentiles, how the gospel was always intended for them, and what an honor it is to be a part of God's eternal plan to preach the gospel to the whole world.

The way I see it, then, we almost have a huge set of parentheses around verses 2-13, as Paul explains how amazing it is that the Gentiles are now included in God's plan. In fact, he says that all of this is the "mystery" that has now been revealed. He uses the word "mystery" three times in these opening verses. Usually, when we hear the word "mystery," we think of the Hardy Boys. We think of a crime that needs to be solved. In Bible times, though, that word referred to the inner workings of a religion that were only known to those on the inside. Being from Madison, home of the University of Wisconsin, I think of those rituals in the various fraternities and sororities on campus. They have rituals that are only revealed to those who are initiated. That seems to be the meaning of the word that Paul uses here. And we are about to find that the mystery of the gospel has now been revealed. It is not that somebody finally figured it out; instead, God has announced it. What was once only known by God behind the scenes has now been announced publicly. The mystery has now been made known, and the mystery is: All people, including Gentiles, now have full access to the gospel, and because of the gospel, all of us are now made one in the church. All people are now welcome in God's family. And that is Paul's purpose in life, to make that mystery known to the whole world, to preach God's eternal purpose.

By the way, some in the religious world may try to use these verses to make us think that God's will is too mysterious and too complicated to ever really understand on our own. Not so! In just a moment, we will notice in verse 4 that we can understand the mystery simply by reading Paul's words! When we read, therefore, we know what the mystery is.

So when Paul then says, "For this reason," he is referring back to the amazing blessing of being "in Christ Jesus." Even Gentiles can be "in Christ." So "for this reason," Paul prays for the Christians in Ephesus. With all of this as background, I want us to look at all 21 verses of Ephesians 3. We will notice the explanation in verses 1-13, but our focus (our emphasis this morning), will be on Paul's prayer at the end. Please look with me at Ephesians 3, starting in verse 1,

*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, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith*

*in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.*

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

As we focus on Paul's prayer, even before we get into what Paul actually prayed, I would make just a few observations here at the beginning. In verse 14, Paul says, *"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father."* Just to clarify, this is not the only posture allowed in prayer, but it is definitely appropriate. We have an emphasis here on submission, humility, and the utmost of respect. Paul was coming to God with reverence and awe. In the Old Testament, King Solomon *"stood"* to pray (1 Kings 8:22), King David *"sat"* before the Lord (1 Chronicles 17:16), Jesus *"fell on His face"* as he prayed in the garden (Matthew 26:39). In this passage, though, Paul bowed his knees. My understanding is that Ephesians was most likely written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, described in the last few verses in the book of Acts. He was not in prison (as we understand it today), but he was basically under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier – the ancient equivalent of a GPS ankle bracelet. Can you imagine this? Here is the apostle Paul, chained to a Roman soldier, and he bows down before the Father. The soldier, of course, could not see anything! Paul was bowing down and praying, but there was no idol! What a teachable moment! We understand why it appears that Paul converted a number of those elite soldiers (as explained in the book of Philippians, also written at roughly the same time). Even though chained, Paul bowed his knees before the Father.

And then a second very brief observation here at the beginning, and that is: Did you notice how long this prayer is? When we look at the various prayers all through the Bible, most that I can find are very brief – the prayers of Moses, and Elijah, and Nehemiah – all very short. We think about the Lord's sample prayer in Matthew 6 – that prayer is about 30 seconds long. We think about the real "Lord's Prayer" in John 17, also very brief, no more than 4-5 minutes from beginning to end. We think of the tax collector's prayer in Luke 18:13, *"God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"* That prayer is about two seconds long, and yet that prayer was praised by God himself and lifted up as an example for us to follow. Yes, there were times when men and women of God prayed all night long. But as far as I can tell, when it comes to the prayers we actually have a record of, those prayers are all very brief and directly to the point. The key to an effective prayer, then, is not found in either our posture or the number of words that we speak.

What then, can we learn from Paul's prayer? What did Paul pray for? He prayed for the church! He prayed for the Christians in the city of Ephesus! *"For this reason,"* in light of God's eternal purpose being made known to the whole world through the church, Paul prayed for the Christians in

Ephesus. He prayed for their congregation. And so, for the rest of our time together this morning, I want us to study Paul's prayer. What did the apostle Paul want God to do for this congregation?

- I. First of all, as we find in verses 16-17, Paul wanted these people to be STRENGTHENED WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN.

Right away, then, we are reminded that there is a difference between the inner man and the outer man. We are, of course, very familiar with this distinction, because we normally take care of the outer man very carefully. We clothe it, we feed it, we comb it, we wash it, we dry it, we exercise it, we take it to the doctor – we always seem to be so concerned with the outer man.

And yet at the same time, we also know that there is an inner man. It seems to me that Paul is referring to the soul, to the part of us that will live on long after the outer man is gone. We remember what Paul wrote earlier in 2 Corinthians 4:16, *"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."* And so there is a part of us that grows stronger, even though our physical bodies seem to get tired and fall apart over the years. Several years before he died, I got a postcard from my grandfather, and in that short note he just happened to mention that he would probably never walk again. That is sad, isn't it? Our outer man decays. Our outer man falls apart. But thankfully, we also have an inner man. There is a part of us that has the ability to grow stronger every day.

Unfortunately, though, we sometimes seem to focus more on the outer shell. We think about the way that we pray. Often, we pray for physical needs. But how often do we pray for those with spiritual needs? I remember seeing a cartoon where the preacher is writing all of the prayer requests up on the whiteboard. There are only two mature Christian women in the audience, and in frustration and after writing down a number of items, the preacher finally says, "Does anyone have a non-biological prayer request?" We need to think very carefully, then, about the prayers that we offer. I don't know how it is where you worship, but at the Four Lakes congregation in Madison, I know that we have prayed for peoples' kidneys. We have prayed for hearts, and spleens. We have prayed for eyes, and knees, and hips. We have prayed for feet, and brains, and arms, and stomachs, and intestines. Being in Madison, I will often go to UW Hospital to pray with strangers, to pray with Christians from all around the nation who have come to our city for various surgeries, they come to see world famous surgeons and experts, and by those bedsides I have prayed for parts of the body I had no idea even existed...but how often do we pray about a person's soul? And how much more important is a soul than an appendix?

At the same time, we also know that it is not wrong to be concerned about the outer man. In fact, we realize that we are supposed to be at least somewhat concerned about the outer man – we are supposed to take care of it. This body is the temple of God's Holy Spirit; our bodies belong to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). But at the same time, let us keep our priorities in order. As we woke up this morning and got ourselves ready to come together for these lessons, how much time did we spend preparing our inner selves? We shower and shave, we get a good breakfast, we drive safely, we prepare and protect the outer man, but should we not also prepare and protect the inner man? If our outer shell were to be removed, what would be left? And so for this reason, Paul prays that the *"inner man"* would be *"strengthened with power."*

At the beginning of verse 17, Paul drives home the importance of the inner man by praying, *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”* As I understand it, the word “dwell” refers to somebody making himself at home, it is the idea of settling down and getting comfortable. Sometimes we tell our guests, “Make yourselves at home.” Paul, then, is praying that the Lord Jesus might be able to settle down and make himself at home in our hearts. The Lord wants to be more than just an acquaintance; he wants to move in. We remember what Jesus said in John 14:23, when he said, *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”* That is a powerful verse! Jesus and the Father will make themselves at home in our hearts, if we keep the Lord’s word, if we obey. And so when Paul prays that we might gain strength in our inner man so that Christ will dwell in our hearts, in context, isn’t he ultimately telling us to study and obey the word of God?

Paul, then, prays that the Ephesians would be strengthened with power, and it seems that Paul is encouraging them to shift their focus from the temporary and trivial things in life to those things that are eternal and important – obeying the word of God so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. When we pray for a brother or sister in a challenging situation, then, let us not just pray for hearts and lungs and all of that, but let us pray that we may be strengthened spiritually. Let us pray that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. Let us pray that we may be strengthened with God’s power through His Spirit in the inner man.

- II. As we look back at our passage in Ephesians, we find a second aspect of Paul’s prayer in the last part of verse 17 through the first part of verse 19, as Paul prays that these people would be able to UNDERSTAND THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

So that we can start to have some small clue concerning what the love of Christ is really like, Paul starts out in the last part of verse 17 by praying that the Christians in Ephesus would be *“rooted and grounded in love.”* These are two very closely related ideas, starting with the idea of being “rooted” in love. We can look at the trees and plants at the front of many church auditoriums, and we often have a great example of what it means NOT to be rooted. Often times, those trees and plants look great, but when we get closer and actually touch those plants and try to lift them up, we often find that they are very top-heavy. We have one in Madison that is basically a tree trunk jammed down into a pot full of Styrofoam. There is nothing there. There are no roots. They are not “rooted,” so they fall over very easily.

Paul, though, prays that the Christians in Ephesus would be *“rooted...in love.”* I remember learning many years ago that the roots on the average healthy tree are pretty much the same size underground as the branches and leaves are above the ground – pretty much a mirror image. So, if we see a huge beautiful tree, there is probably the same amount of material underground as there is above ground. And so, with that picture in mind, we think of what King David said concerning the righteous man in Psalm 1:3, *“He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”* In a similar way, we as Christians are to be *“rooted...in love.”* Love is to be the firm anchor of everything we do.

Paul also says that we are to be *“grounded in love.”* The word he uses here refers to the foundation of a building. The idea is that we are to be firmly established in love. We think of what the Lord said at the end of Matthew 7 about the wise man who built his house on the rock. The foolish man’s

house was built on sand, and it collapsed, but the wise man's house was built on a solid foundation, and when the rains came, it stood firm. And again, Jesus compared the wise man to someone who listens to the word of God. In a similar way, we are to be rooted and grounded in God's love. Love is to be the foundation of everything we do.

As Paul says in verse 18, God's love is something that we are to "*comprehend*." The idea here is that God's love is something we are to grab onto, something we are to lay hold of, something that we are to reach out and grab. There is some effort involved. There is some struggle, there is some thought involved.

In verse 18, Paul wants us to comprehend, "*...the breadth and length and height and depth...*" of Christ's love. In doing the research for today's lesson, I ran across dozens of sermons and articles where the entire lesson was based completely on these four directions – God's love is wide (it reaches to all people), God's love is long (it stretches into the future and into the past), God's love is high (it gets us to heaven), God's love is deep (it reaches the lowest of sinners) – and I am sure that all of these statements are true, but I don't know if all of these are lessons that Paul originally intended. One author noted that the love of Christ (illustrated with the cross), points up to heaven, down to earth, and like the Lord on the cross, is stretched out in all directions. Again, a nice visual, but probably not what Paul originally intended. Instead, the main idea seems to be that God's love is huge! When we go to measure something, we want to know its height, and depth, and length, and width. And the same is true with God's love – when we try to measure it, we find that it is unbelievably huge in all directions. "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky." God's love, therefore, is beyond our ability to fully understand.

And this is how Paul leads into the first part of verse 19 as he makes a challenging statement. He prays that the saints in Ephesus might "*...know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge*." Paul wants us to know the unknowable. The love of Christ "*surpasses all knowledge*." Paul uses a word that means, "to throw beyond." We think about playing catch, and somebody throws a ball to us that is out of reach. God's love is like that. It is beyond our ability to understand. It almost seems like a contradiction, but Paul puts it this way to emphasize how large and how amazing the love of Christ really is. He wants us to know what can never be fully known.

I want us to go back and notice a phrase we skipped earlier – notice in the first part of verse 18 that Paul wants us to comprehend the love of Christ "*with all the saints*." The only way to really understand the love of God is to go looking for it together. This is why we come together for worship, and fellowship, and study – all the saints together – Jews and Gentiles, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, the educated and the not-so-educated, from all backgrounds, as John observed in Revelation 5:9, those "*...from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*." We discover God's love together, with "*all the saints*."

While we are on this idea of understanding God's love, can you imagine what it would be like to be a part of a congregation where every member is rooted and grounded in the love of Christ? Can you imagine being part of a congregation where every member truly understands the love of God? How would that affect our congregations? How would that affect our time together? How would that affect how we treat each other? When we truly understand what God has done for us, when

we truly understand the love of Christ, it changes how we interact. It changes how we use our resources.

- III. As we look back at Ephesians 3, I want us to notice a final request in this prayer (right at the end of verse 19), as Paul prays that the Christians in Ephesus would be FILLED UP TO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD.

In some ways, this is a rather strange statement, but Paul wants them to be full of God. Most of us understand what it means to be full. I can remember back when we were first married, as we were paying for Keola to finish her degree at UW-Whitewater. Finances were extremely tight, and I remember one stretch where we went a little more than two months without doing any grocery shopping. Have you been there? I know some of you have been in that position – two months with no groceries. We did have a Kwik Trip card (that was our first charge card together), so we would get an occasional bag of milk and a bag of OJ at the Kwik Trip down the road (hopefully some of you know about the bags of milk at Kwik Trip). But beyond this, we started that two-month stretch with a 50-pound bag of flour, a gallon of generic maple syrup, a gallon of vegetable oil, and a huge bag of sugar. This is what we lived on for two months. I was amazed at what we could make with some of those very simple ingredients. This is when I went to the library and found a recipe for tortillas. I am now the tortilla master. This is when I perfected my pancake recipe. This is when I learned the difference between teaspoons and tablespoons of salt in the waffle recipe. So, it was a time of learning. However, after several weeks of nothing but tortillas and pancakes and waffles, we were getting sick of it, so we saved up our money, and one night when Keola got home from school, we went out to the local Ponderosa. For two kids who just got out college who had been eating nothing but flour and water for a month, it was almost as if we had died and gone to heaven! We went in that place, and we ate like there was no tomorrow! I still remember going out to the car after that meal – we actually sat there in the dark for a few minutes, because I was actually too full to drive! Have you ever been too full to drive? I have never been as full since then as I was that evening. We just sat there in the parking lot at Ponderosa and laughed about how full we were!

Now, I don't know whether we can really compare Ponderosa to God, but I can say that Paul was praying for these Christians in Ephesus to be *"filled up to all the fullness of God."* That is full! With this in mind, I would ask: What is it that fills us up today? So many times it is so easy to get filled up with distractions. We get filled up with the chore of simply existing and surviving in the world. We get full of work, and school, and so many things, even to the point where God can get pushed out very slowly. Sometimes God is even squeezed out by the good things. We remember the parable Jesus told about the man who was giving a big dinner (Luke 14:16-24). The man invited many people, but the people kept coming up with various excuses. The first man said, *"I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused."* The second man said, *"I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused."* Another man said, *"I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come."* There is nothing wrong with buying property, or upgrading our mode of transportation; there is nothing wrong with getting married, but as we learn from that parable, sometimes even those good things can slowly push God out of our lives. Paul, then, prays that we may be *"filled up to all the fullness of God."* Paul would certainly encourage us to have David's attitude in the opening words of Psalm 42 (as we sometimes sing), *"As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you!"* He wants us to be *"filled up to all the fullness of God."*

This morning, if your spiritual tank is only partway full, the apostle Paul has a prayer for you. He wants us to be full of God. Have you thought about the fact that God seems to specialize in filling up those things that are empty? We think about Elisha and the destitute widow in 2 Kings 4. Do you remember Elisha's instructions? *"Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few."* God filled up all of those random pots and pans, and the woman was able to pay off her debts. We think of the Lord out there with the hungry multitudes. Who could feed that many people? And yet the Bible says that all of them *"ate and were satisfied"* and the leftovers were collected in baskets. We think of the wedding in Cana where they ran out of wine, and the Lord God gave the word, and the empty containers were filled to the brim with some of the best wine the headwaiter had ever tasted. We think about the Lord's conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 and his offer to provide that woman with living water so that she would never be empty again. God specializes in taking what is empty and filling it up, *"[For] we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves"* (2 Corinthians 4:7). Paul prays that we would be filled up to all the fullness of God.

### Conclusion:

As we think about Paul's prayer and as we come to the end of this passage, we close with this statement of praise, and we find that God *"...is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."* God doesn't just give us flour and water, but he gives us Ponderosa.

And so with all of this power and potential, we have Paul praying for the church:

- He prays that the Christians in Ephesus would be strengthened with power.
- He prays that they would comprehend the love of Jesus Christ.
- He prays that they would be filled up to all the fullness of God.

As we close, I would encourage all of us to pray this prayer on a regular basis. We can pray this for ourselves. We can pray that we personally would be strengthened with power. We can pray that we personally would be able to truly understand the love of Jesus. We can pray that we personally might be filled up with all the fullness of God. And then, we can also pray this prayer for the congregations where we worship. Let us continue praying for kidneys, and spleens, and bones, and eyes, but let us pray for our spiritual health and strength as well. Let us pray for the health and strength of our churches, *"...to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."*





My wife Ellen and I have lived in Kenora our entire lives and have been married for 32 years. We have 2 sons; Reed and Jedediah.

Ellen and I came to the Lord in 1986. I have been preaching and teaching at the Kenora Church of Christ on a weekly basis since 1989 while also running an automotive business.

I have been semi retired from that automotive business since 2010 but still preach and work with the Church on a volunteer basis.

## Ephesians 4; The Nature of the Church

Before we begin to look at Ephesians Chapter 4, I would like to give you a bit of a report on the Church in Canada as I see it (and hopefully this is realistic and accurate), because it's something I have observed closely over 25 years or more. Coincidentally, I also believe this will tie quite nicely into the text under discussion.

First, please allow me to summarize a little North American history as it applies to this topic. Although completely separate and sovereign nations the United States and Canada share many close similarities. We have the longest (geographical span and time span) demilitarized border in the history of the world. The demographic mix of our populations are quite similar. Both Nations are roughly the same age and settled roughly the same time. The important similarity as it pertains to my point is both the United States and Canada were established (in part) on the basis of religious freedom. During the establishment of colonies on North America, Europe was in the process of grass roots rebellion against the grip of Roman Catholicism and to a lesser extent the Church of England in Great Britain.

Monumental events like the mass translation of Scripture into German and English, the use of the printing press, and the advent of the King James Bible seemed to spring up simultaneously with reformers like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli.

Northern Europe largely became Protestant, Southern Europe largely remained Catholic and fierce contention broke out between the two in Central Europe. Many who wanted to avoid the conflict and yet not fall to compromise fled to North America. Moving very quickly here and giving way to some generalization, not everyone wanted new found religious freedom from Europe because the Spanish brought Catholicism with them to the U.S. while the French brought it to Canada. However both countries were built upon (and would later entrench in their constitutions) the rights of religious freedom. Eastern religions weren't even on the radar here back then. Neither were the modern home cooked and half baked varieties of religion so popular today. The many erroneous denominations that came about during this period were almost all offshoots of Christianity. This era was also fertile soil for the establishment of the Lord's own Church which required nothing more than the Scriptures and a few souls who earnestly sought to do His Will. For 150 years, autonomous congregations of the Lord's Church sprang up all over the United States and Canada (and the entire world for that matter). The

atmosphere of freedom and democracy in North America spawned a worldwide evangelism with our countries and Western Europe as a basis of operation. Now the growth of the modern Church was not without its problems and splits and schisms, but for the most part, the Church here was alive and healthy and doing better than it had in quite some time. Then came WW2. It was probably the single greatest event in recent history that changed modern culture on a global scale. Because of very quick mass population movements (geographically), and because of the brutal nature and scale of that war, attitudes (worldwide) began to shift. Affluence, and the type of freedom affluence brings with it, began to move down the social scale. More and more of the general population were able to make the choices that money could buy. As time marched on, our society became more and more absorbed by materialism. As that transpired, there was and is a direct correlation to a decrease in the Godly attributes possessed by the rank and file population. Our respective governments were constantly redefining democracy and majority rule in such a way as to open up a broad spectrum of moral choice for its citizens. The Bible, which was heavily relied upon to formulate our original constitutions, is now rarely (if ever) consulted during any law making process. On the contrary, the Word of God is widely viewed by the Canadian population (at least) as archaic, regressive and repressive. Groups such as the LGBT in Canada and NAMBLA in the U.S. are lobbying to see it officially labelled as "hate literature".

So now; what's all that got to do with us? Well, the members of the Church do not live in a vacuum. We are subject to the pressures and patterns of society. For 200 years our respective governments (on the behest of its constituents) have created a tone and an environment where the individual has real discretionary power. And we like that. I like that. It's called democratic freedom. I can do whatever I want as long as I don't impinge on the next person's right to do that, and I don't engage in any sort of criminal activity along the way. That's the way it is supposed to work. However, we have gone a little overboard. The unintended consequence from those first days of confederation in Canada has been to leave God behind as well. For Canada at least, what started as a societal drift away from God's authority 100 years ago became a stampede 50 years ago. We have separate schools and private schools where religion is taught, but I grew up reciting the Lord's Prayer in Public School in the 60's. Having recently taught high school, I can tell you for certain that there would be mass revolt over that now. I've witnessed a strange, but sadly predictable phenomenon along these lines. It is this: what we see in society will turn up in the more liberal denominations within 25 years and what we see in those denominations will turn up in most sectors of the Church within 25 years (or at least try to). Now this isn't a hard and fast rule that applies to every single issue and attitude, but it certainly does apply to modern man's reluctance to subjugate himself to the Will of the Lord. What began as a cafeteria approach to God's Word, that is picking what we like and leaving what we don't, has morphed into man creating a whole new menu. Do we have that privilege? Has God delegated that ability? Absolutely not! During those "glory decades" of the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's, society's idea of "Church" went from a chosen faith or an avenue of relationship with God to more or less a "selecting of a service club". Rather than asking "what does God want from me" people were asking "which religion or denomination will allow me the most freedom to do what I want"? Here's where it has led. In my home town, over the last few years, there has been an annual occurrence. And that is that one by one, churches of various denominational stripes are shutting their doors. Very similar to what happened in Europe 30-50 years ago. Now I have mixed feelings here. Am I particularly upset over churches (so-called)

that just don't teach proper doctrine, ceasing to do so? Well, not really. What is alarming however is that the public hasn't got that far enough to know or even care about proper doctrine. All they know is the Church, any church, stands for something that will limit their freedom to chase the devil. Oh society would never put it in those terms and would vehemently deny any spiritual effect to that freedom of choice, but that's where the rubber meets the road. Canadians do not want anyone, even God telling them how to live. I fear for the future of my country based on its rejection of the Gospel in favor of that which God abhors. Currently, (and generally speaking) Canada drinks to excess. Now there's talk of putting wine, beer and liquor for sale in grocery stores. Many of our young people smoke marijuana. The person who will likely (and regrettably) be Canada's next Prime Minister will run on a platform of legalizing and commercializing the sale of pot. A stoned and drunk population does not produce its potential in gross national product and it has no interest in doing the will of the Lord. We sit back, horrified, and watch "what could be" circle the bowl. That's where we are. Now let's back up a couple of thousand years.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, it seems he had a few main points that he wanted to make. Unlike some of his other letters, Paul doesn't address any particular error or heresy. Rather, Ephesians has helped Bible readers through the ages understand God's eternal purpose. The letter explains the relationship between grace, salvation, and God's intention for both the individual and the Church as a whole. Chapter four contains the iconic passage referred to as "The 7 ones of Ephesians 4".

I have a very good and dear friend; a Brother in the Lord from New Mexico. He spent most of his adult life preaching in a town to the west of us in Carman Manitoba. He has passed on now. His name was Don Killough. It's something different now. He taught often on this very subject and helped me see the gravity of these "7 Ones of Ephesians 4" and how they must be applied if we choose to remain part of that "one body". The passage (Ephesians 4:4-7) reads; "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and in you all.

If this sounds fairly exclusive, that's because it is. Is this meant to limit or divide adherence to the body of Christ? Absolutely not! It's meant to unify the body of Christ and it gives us the basis for that unity.

Now we know that Paul here is speaking of the Church when he uses the word "body". We know that from passages like Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 and most plainly Colossians 1:18. He is saying there is but one Church. As a matter of fact "one Church" was predicted in Isaiah 2 and in Daniel 2 and in Joel 2 and then in Acts 2 Peter stood up and announced "this is it"! There are many passages written by Luke, Paul and John that refer to "churches" plural. But they are referring to local congregations of the one larger body or the "whole". It's like when you cut up an orange; you have many slices, but still one orange. They are all still orange. We get that. But we also know that when you look in the yellow pages of any large city, you will find everything from soup to nuts under the heading "church". There is hundreds all teaching something completely different; in essence, defining themselves as something completely different from one another. We get that as well. So really there are many bodies and not just one. And we know this by observation. Yet Scripture says here that there is one body. What's meant by that?

Well, there is one body that belongs to the Lord. The rest do not. That's a message not received well in Canada today. The perception of it is "exclusive and non-tolerant"; don't want to hear it. One thing important to remember here is that there were no first-century denominational churches, just one. There remains only one Church in the universal sense. It was established by God and is ruled by His Son Jesus Christ.

There is one Spirit. Actually there are many spirits spoken of in Scripture. However, here, in this context, it is very easy to recognize that Paul is speaking of the one and only "Holy Spirit" or the third member of the Godhead. Paul names all three of the Godhead here in this passage, yet names the Holy Spirit first. God's people have always been fiercely monotheistic. Since Moses, Jews have recited the Shema Yisrael prayer with the first sentence being taken from Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord". Certain religions (like modern Judaism and Islam) and even some denominations of Christianity have mistakenly taken that to exclude the concept of a triune God. Jesus came along during the fullness of time (Gal.4:4) and explained His relationship to the Father and also with the Holy Spirit so that only in hindsight do we have the level of understanding that we do regarding the subject of trinity. As a matter of fact, the subject of Godhead or Trinity doesn't fit in a box as much as I would like it to. I have never heard it explained exhaustively so that it leaves no questions. It is something that even though we may not comprehend fully, we can apprehend fully. In addition there are some things we can know for sure.

There is only one Holy Spirit. He is a person within the Godhead (Matthew 28:19). And it is this Holy Spirit which has revealed the same message or information to all (1 Cor.2). He reveals it to us, not understands it for us. That's why we can have so many people with conflicting and confusing doctrines in a myriad of different denominations.

There is one Lord; Jesus Christ. And something you can add as a suffix to all of these seven ones is "unto salvation". To the Jews this meant there was no waiting for someone else. Messiah had come. The entire Old Testament was devoted to the idea of "someone is coming". The entire New Testament is devoted to revealing that "someone came".

One of the defining factors of humanity (which separates us from the animal kingdom) is the inherent awareness of a Creator and the desire to establish a relationship with Him. It's interesting to note that wherever correct information falls in short supply or is ignored, man makes up his own gods and his own system of relating to those gods in hope of life beyond this one. Man has always been prone to this; rather than spending the time, effort and research necessary to find that "One Lord", man has been eager to concoct a god within himself, fashion that god with his own hands and then endow that god with supernatural power. Think for a moment though. How can we be sure that this is not possible?

It's like this. We know the Bible emphatically states there is one Lord. Acts 4:12 states plainly "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Our Ephesians passage also reads "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". While He is listed third in this reading, God the Father is the first Person of the

Godhead. He is what we know to be the God of Creation. And again, it is common to man (unless otherwise brainwashed) to ascribe creation to the supernatural. One look at the Universe around us reveals the intelligent design of a Creator. How do we know that there are not "many gods"? Well, how many creations do you see? There is but one, as far as the Hubbell telescope can reach. We know it is one because this one creation works and makes allowance for everything else in it. There is a commonality of architecture between all things living. The building material is called DNA. The blueprints are called RNA. Mosquitoes have both DNA and RNA. Elephants have both DNA and RNA. That doesn't mean one evolved from the other. That's a ridiculous conclusion and a blind leap of faith! A far better explanation is that they had the same architect. Here's an astounding fact for anyone who has doubts concerning the validity of Bible information. The first eight chapters of the Bible is a historical account of the world's genesis. It commits itself over and over on a scientific level. It backs itself into a corner with nowhere to go. Yet (and this applies to the entire Bible), not one claim made in Scripture has ever been proven untrue; not one. On the contrary, every new piece of proven scientific information substantiates the Genesis account. Think now. Think back to the state of our modern post Christian world. For generations now, we have been telling "little Johnnies" in science classes that he evolved from an ape. Then we become horrified when he grows up and acts like one. Western culture has replaced this "One God and Father of all" with the god of naturalism and evolution (where nothing created everything). Morality is a purely subjective thing in our world. There are no absolutes when it comes to right and wrong and we are just now seeing the rewards of this monumental mistake. That's the alternative to "One God and Father of all". It's not within a man to direct his steps.

Alright, so that's the Godhead. Therefore, on account of these facts we have one hope. I have lots of hopes. I hope to have good health and a safe ride home. I hope my sons will live and prosper. I hope my country will survive and remain democratic. That's not the type of hope under discussion. Ephesians 4 talks about the "one hope" above all others. It is the hope that leads to salvation and comes out of it. You have been called to salvation. It was and is a universal call made to anyone who will listen. The call is distinct and particular. We see the Apostles and then those who followed all make the same call. We have no mandate to change that call in any way. That particular call leads to the "one hope" spoken of here. Here's where the rubber meets the road. We can chase selfish gain and indulgence for an entire lifetime, but at the end of the day we will leave this earth with only a hope. We can leave with a whimsical hope or a solid hope based on evidence. Our hope is in eternal life, the resurrection of the body and the realization of heaven. We have the evidence of Jesus Christ who has gone on before. He proved that resurrection is possible and has promised it to His Church. This one hope is only possible through one Lord, one Spirit, and one God and Father.

There is one faith. What a loosely used term in our modern vernacular! Yet Paul tells us that only there is only one faith unto salvation. Nowhere does God's Word acknowledge what we now call "different faiths". If we are to learn the lessons of the Old Testament, they are that our "one God" has no tolerance for different faiths. Islam is commonly referred to by our media and politicians as a "great faith". This seems more in a spirit of appeasement than genuine analysis. However, I have great faith in on-coming traffic. I have great faith in my doctor's diagnoses and even more in my Pharmacist's prescriptions. I place faith in the pilot who flies the jet! Here's the point. Just because we place faith in something doesn't mean that faith is well placed. Quite

often, what we call faith is merely "taking a chance it will be OK". In many respects this "one faith" is blood kin (1st cousin) to the "one hope" mentioned earlier. Something we know for a fact is that we will leave this life as we know it. Either the Lord will come back or we will die waiting. In the twinkling of an eye our hope and our faith will be turned to realization. Do you want to swing out over the fires of an eternal hell on a misplaced faith? This is important enough to where you want to get it right. I make the plea whenever I get the opportunity in my community and it is this; spend the time and give this the research it deserves. More and more this plea falls on deaf ears it seems. OK, so that's the object of our faith. That information was for those that may have placed their faith in anyone but the "one Lord". What about the type or substance of our faith? What constitutes a "faith unto salvation"? Is it something we can take lightly while actually serving the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life? Or... will this "one faith" allow us to attain a level of sinless perfection? Neither scenario is realistic, and here is where every snowflake is a little different. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Do you know what means? You can't hope for heaven while living like the devil. Every Christian should reread the book of James on a very regular basis because it's a reality check on saving faith. Now we know that we are saved by faith but faith without substance is dead.

Apart from God the Father, Paul concludes his list with "one baptism". Now if you talk to just about anyone in any denomination, they will tell you (in essence) that this has to be some sort of mistake here. That's because we know there are lots of different baptisms. The New Testament does indeed speak of more than one. If I may comment here; it amazes me that no English translator of any of the popular Bible translations has had the gumption to translate this koine word "baptizo" properly as "immersion". That would alleviate at least some of the confusion which surrounds Christian baptism. Aside from that issue, at the time of Paul's writing here there was one baptism unto salvation. One read-through of the New Testament is ample to discover the nature and purpose of that baptism. God could have chosen any ordinance to place one into the one Body, but He chose this one. I don't know exactly why, but I suspect it has much to do with the fact it symbolizes the Lord's death burial and resurrection as laid out in Romans 6. People in that day were accustomed to the idea of ceremonial washing and John the Baptist used this very sign to usher in the Messiah. Willing participants able to understand were immersed for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and the result was a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). No other reason is given. No other baptism validates entrance to the Church or Body of Christ. As Paul told the Galatians (Ch.3:26, 27) it consummates the one faith and places us in the one Body. Something we should be acutely aware of is the implications our ancient brethren suffered on account of their being baptized. Being baptized during the first few centuries would almost guarantee a person's persecution. It very often led to their death. It would certainly lead to social ostracism. It usually led to economic hardship. The early Church (first decades) were predominantly Jewish which meant baptism would cause the loss of one's family. Baptism was enacted at great cost. We've somehow lost that. I pray it returns because that which costs little is perceived in turn, to have little value.

That brings us back to our modern day where there is still "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

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## ***Ephesians 5 - Imitators of God***

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Ephesians is almost like a form letter that is suitable for any congregation.
  - 1. As a matter of fact, some ancient manuscripts do not have “at Ephesus.”
  - 2. And one can notice how essential all of this is for any congregation in any state of spirituality.
  - 3. It’s impressive how good the Christian life would still be if this short epistle was our only book to rely upon.
- B. Chapter five is in the middle of a section discussing how the life of the Christian is to be vastly superior to their former life as mere Gentiles.
- C. This chapter is really about focusing on **imitating God** and **walking** in what He loves.
 

*Ephesians 5:1-2- <sup>1</sup>THEREFORE be imitators of God, as beloved children; <sup>2</sup>and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (NASB)*

  - 1. To walk in love is to love what Christ loved.
  - 2. This is to be an offering and sacrifice to God, which is a fragrant aroma.

### I. WE IMITATE GOD BY LOVING PURITY IN LIFE.

- A. It is imitated by eliminating the naming of obviously repulsive aspects of sinful living among the Christian lives in the community.
  - 1. In actions.
 

*Ephesians 5:3- <sup>3</sup>But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; (NASB)*

    - a. Immorality - Gk. *porneia*; any sexual activity with another outside marriage.
    - b. Impurity - Gk. *akatharsia*; the opposite of catharsis/purging. Unclean.
    - c. Greed - Gk. *pleonexia*; From *pleion* where we get *plenty*. Literally, to *have plenty*.
  - 2. Along with words.
 

*Ephesians 5:4- <sup>4</sup>and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. (NASB)*

    - a. Filthiness - indecent, improper, something to be ashamed of when it is exposed.
    - b. Silly talk - Gk. *mōrologia*. It is literally *moronic words*.
    - c. Course jesting - It is from a word that literally means *good at turning*. It’s really someone good at manipulating conversations, like a mocker.

ILL (Illustration) - This is exactly what media stars like Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and Rush Limbaugh produce. They are *spin doctors* who do it with ribaldry. I call it the *neocomockery*, that is, the new form of comedic mocking.
  - 3. There should be better things named among the saints/holy ones.

- a. We should be known for sexual purity, and not ashamed of virginity & chastity.
    - (1. We have to love purity, and be proud of God's purity, even when He we was being cheated on to the highest degree His actions were proper.  
*Ezekiel 16:25-26* - <sup>25</sup>“You built yourself a high place at the top of every street, and made your beauty abominable; and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry.  
<sup>26</sup>“You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry. (NASB)
    - (2. We should have concerned fathers who love to diligently help their children to be pure before marriage, instead of engaging in a “Don’t ask. Don’t tell” policy.
    - (3. ILL - Most sexual encounters happen where? MSNBC Today’s Teens - If you think what today’s teens are doing is surprising, wait until you hear where they’re doing it. They said it was very common for the kids in their schools to be sexually active at home, in the house, where their parents were in the other room.  
 “Some parents just don’t go into their child’s room,” says Elizabeth. “You close the door, O.K., they’re not going to bother you.”  
 Alisha says, “I think some parents are also naive. They just don’t know what goes on upstairs.”  
 Darrin says, “They don’t want to know.”  
 Kate says, “Parents are just trusting their kids.”  
 Does this group think parents are in the loop? Do they get it? “For the most part they don’t,” they agree.
  - b. And we should be known for language that is not negative, but is concerned with thankfulness.
    - (1. I found it unsettling that the word *greed* is just from the concept of *having plenty*. I would have to say the vast majority of American Christians I know certainly have plenty.
    - (2. ***Can you honestly say people would say you are thankful?*** It’s hard in capitalism!
    - (3. What really impresses me, and encourages me, is when I see Christians that resist fads. They don’t care about what other people have. They’ll get it if they think it is prudent.
    - (4. Remember greed amounts to idolatry!  
*Colossians 3:5* - <sup>5</sup>Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (NASB)
- B. It is imitated by exposing evil and recognizing God’s wrath upon impurity.
1. We can **know this with certainty**. That’s strong language!  
*Ephesians 5:5-6* - <sup>5</sup>For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (NASB)
    - a. Why would we have a spiritual inheritance when we want what the world offers?
    - b. There are countless empty words that try to convince us otherwise!
    - c. ILL - Time Magazine - “Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists, who still live with their parents. Why they will save us all.” ***No, they won’t!!***
  2. Imitators of God are the light that instead exposes all of this impurity.  
*Ephesians 5:7-13* - <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not be partakers with them; <sup>8</sup>for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), <sup>10</sup>trying to learn (proving) what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; <sup>12</sup>for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup>But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. (NASB)
    - a. We are now of goodness, righteousness, and truth.
      - (1. We were of darkness, but light shined on us, and is therefore emanating off of



us and illuminating the arenas we participate in.

- (2. And, when we accept the light, it reflects off of us. You can only see something because light reflects off of it. It becomes light!
- b. Therefore, we do not participate in darkness, for it is disgraceful even to speak of such things.
- c. How do we expose things if it is disgraceful to even speak of such things?
- d. I believe the best way to expose (Gk. to *prove in the wrong*) error is to be a beacon of the opposite. The light will shine and reveal the difference. There will be a comparison!
- (1. Don't be ashamed as long as you are not glorifying yourself!  
*Matthew 5:14-16-<sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.  
<sup>15</sup>“Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure (basket), but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (NASB)*
- (2. Blasphemous changes in doctrine concerning things like marriage, divorce, and modesty only expose those specific movements as now a part of the darkness.  
*Romans 2:21-24-<sup>21</sup>you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? <sup>22</sup>You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup>You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? <sup>24</sup>For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written. (NASB)*
- (3. Let us **prove** what the will of God is!  
  - (a. ILL - Song #770 - **Dear Lord and Father of Mankind**
  - (b. The lyrics are ver powerful.  
*Drop Thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess,  
The beauty of Thy peace.*
- (4. It's why it is so important that the brunt of Christian's lives are seen as ordered versus the chaotic aspect of ungodly living.

## II. WE IMITATE GOD BY LOVING SPIRITUALLY PURPOSEFUL LIVES.

### A. We need to wake up and let Christ shine on us.

1. They had some sort of hymn on this.  
*Ephesians 5:14-<sup>14</sup>For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.” (NASB)*
2. Becoming a Christian is indeed the equivalent of waking up from the dead.
  - a. It is the same as saying, “You are who sleeping . . . wake up!”
  - b. We wake up to a new purpose in our lives. **Our God is fully awake to it!**
  - c. We are resurrected from a dead life to a new one.  
*Romans 6:3-6-<sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; (NASB)*

### B. We are then careful to walk wisely with this new purpose.

*Ephesians 5:15-<sup>15</sup>Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, (NASB)*

1. Careful is from Gk. *akribōs*. It is *being accurate and precise*. **Isn't our God accurate**

*and precise?*

2. We make the most of our time as we are surrounded by evil days.

*Ephesians 5:16-<sup>16</sup>making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (NASB)*

- a. Making the most is literally redeeming.
- b. Therefore, we are trying purchase back the days since they naturally become evil.
- c. They are evil, and we will be encountering flaming missiles from the evil one.

*Ephesians 6:16-<sup>16</sup>in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. (NASB)*

- C. Therefore we are commanded to understand the will of the Lord.

*Ephesians 5:17-<sup>17</sup>So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (NASB)*

1. Foolish is literally *without the diaphragm*, which was believed to be the seat of intellectual & emotional activity. It's where we get terms like *gut feelings*.
2. The point is that you can understand the will of God! It is not a suggestion, but a command.

- D. And that will is to be filled with the right things, not things that decrease our accurate walk.

1. Filling our insides with mind altering substances is dissipation (Gk. *asōtías* = *not saving*; prodigal), and is inferior and the antithesis of being filled with the Spirit.

*Ephesians 5:18-<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, (NASB)*

- a. People like to argue over exactly what *drunk* means. It's from the word for *milled wine*.

- b. Alcohol begins to impair judgment at pretty low levels.

- (1. BAC .02% = Drinkers begin to feel moderate effects.

BAC .04% = Most people begin to feel relaxed, mildly euphoric, sociable, and talkative

BAC .05% = Judgment, attention, and control are somewhat impaired. Ability to drive safely begins to be limited. Sensory-motor and finer performance are impaired. People are less able to make rational decisions about their capabilities (for example, about driving.)

BAC .08% = This is legal level for intoxication in some states. There is a definite impairment of muscle coordination and driving skills.

BAC .12% = Vomiting usually occurs, unless this level is reached slowly or a person has developed a tolerance to alcohol. Drinkers are drowsy.

- (2. ILL - It depends on one's body mass. If Susanna had just one glass of wine, she would start to be euphoric and talkative, and with two glasses of wine she would be too drunk to even drive.

- c. With the eventual widespread legality of marijuana we'll soon have people looking to Scripture for excuses to use it, since it's not technically drunk. But it is the opposite of a sober spirit.

*1 Peter 5:8-<sup>8</sup>Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (NASB)*

2. God instead jealously wants us to be filled with His Spirit for comfort and joy, versus substances.

- a. This is done by filling our hearts with the proper music.

*Ephesians 5:19-<sup>19</sup>speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (NASB)*

- (1. We are speaking good words to one another. Words that are greatly assimilated because they are in the form of songs. Do not underestimate the power of songs!

- (2. *Psalms* is a word from the Hebrew language, and *hymns* are from the Greek.

*Whereas a psalm is the story of man's deliverance or a commemoration of mercies received, a hymn is a magnificat, a declaration of how great someone or something is.*

Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

- (3. Many people try to say that *making melody* (Gk. *psallo*) here allows for the use of instrumental music.
- (a. They say this because they incorrectly deduce it would be tantamount to be Paul being redundant, that is, is he commanding them to be *singing and singing*.  
*Ephesians 5:19*- <sup>19</sup>*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (NASB)*
- (b. However, they fail to realize this is the only place in Scripture where this is translated as *making melody*, and there was no need to do that!
- (c. The NASB should have translated it as they do in other places, or as their interlinear describes. It is very close to the word *psalm*.  
*Ephesians 5:19* - *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody (psalming) with your heart to the Lord;*  
*James 5:13* - *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises (let him sing a psalm).*
- (d. I don't think it is really any different than what the sister book of Colossians is trying to say. Singing isn't always associated with thanks or praise. It may be instructing. But *psallo* almost always is used in the context of thanking or praising.  
*Colossians 3:16*- <sup>16</sup>*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (NASB)*  
*Ephesians 5:19*- <sup>19</sup>*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (NASB)*
- (d. Early church writers commenting on these specific verses believed it has nothing to do with a mechanical instrument.  
*Learn to sing psalms (psallein), and you will see the pleasure of the activity. For those who sing psalms (psallontes) are filled with the Holy Spirit, even as those singing satanic odes are filled with an unclean spirit. What is "in your hearts to the Lord"? It means giving attention with understanding. For those who do not pay attention merely sing (psallousi), sounding words while their heart roams elsewhere, - Chrysostom's "Homily" XIX*
- (e. The fact is that it is the Catholic Church that brought mechanical instruments into assemblies. And that took hundreds of years!
- b. The other ingredient to being filled with the Spirit, is to be in a constant state of giving thanks with our mouths to God the Father through Jesus Christ.  
*Ephesians 5:20*- <sup>20</sup>*always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; (NASB)*

### III. WE IMITATE GOD BY LOVING THE RESPECTIVE ROLES WE PLAY.

- A. Do we know what it means to *imitate*?
1. Earlier it said we are imitators of God.
  2. It is from the Gk. *mimētēs*. It is where we get the word *mimic*.
  3. One of the greatest aspects of our existence is that we are imitating God and His eternal principles through the practical day to day living of what seems to be ordinary living.
    - a. We are made in God's image. Gk. is *eikōn*. It is where we get our word *icon*.
    - b. All of mankind is made in the image of God, first representing our dominion over the planet.  
*Genesis 1:26*- <sup>26</sup>*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (NASB)*
    - c. The specific gender of male is representing God's headship.

*1 Corinthians 11:7-<sup>7</sup>For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. (NASB)*

- d. In Ephesians we are going to see what the imagery of marriage is representing.
- B. Here we find earthly marriages are imitating the spiritual marriage between Christ and the church.
  1. The church is subject to Christ, therefore this is to be imitated in marriage.
 

*Ephesians 5:21-22-<sup>21</sup>and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. <sup>22</sup>Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (NASB)*

    - a. The Lord submitted His life for our betterment, and, therefore, we all need to emulate that.
    - b. Vs. 22 actually does not say, “Wives, be subject . . .”
    - c. It intentionally does not show an increase in the type of subjection, that is, *as to the Lord*.
  2. And it’s imitated to the same degree concerning submission.
 

*Ephesians 5:23-24-<sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup>But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. (NASB)*

    - a. *Everything*, means *everything*, unless, of course, it means directly disobeying God.
    - b. A wife who does this is portraying a message. Can you imagine wanting to preach the message that Christ’s bride should be in rebellion to her Husband?
    - c. ILL - I’ve seen some women more submissive to elderships. Yet, who is she to obey most?
 

*1 Peter 3:3-6-<sup>3</sup>And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; <sup>4</sup>but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. <sup>5</sup>For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. <sup>6</sup>Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (NASB)*

*1 Peter 5:1-3-<sup>1</sup>THEREFORE, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup>nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (NASB)*
  3. The man must strive to imitate the same intensity of mission toward his wife as Christ did His wife.
 

*Ephesians 5:25-26-<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; <sup>26</sup>that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (NASB)*

    - a. You’ve heard the phrase, “That’s a hard act to follow.” It is.
    - b. Actually, **we are the act** emulating the great sacrifice of Christ. Men, you must take your role!
    - c. Don’t let the world give you the slightest guilt for playing your role! It’s honorable!
    - d. It’s for an extremely noble purpose, not that you use your headship to make her a slave so you can have all your fleshly toys in life.
 

*Ephesians 5:27-<sup>27</sup>that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. (NASB)*
    - e. As Christ loves His body, the church, the husband must nourish and cherish his wife.
 

*Ephesians 5:28-30-<sup>28</sup>So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup>for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, <sup>30</sup>because we are members of His body. (NASB)*
    - f. God bless the man who nourishes his wife more than his fleshly appetites!

4. Amazingly, even the sexual bond in marriage imitates the passion Christ has for His bride, the church.

**Ephesians 5:31-32**- <sup>31</sup>FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.- <sup>32</sup>This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (NASB)

- a. He says the mystery happening all along in human history is that every single godly marriage has been a preview for Christ's relationship to the church.
- b. And this absolutely includes sexuality, and perhaps it may be THE thing that he is referencing. Being *one flesh* (sexuality) refers to Christ's type of bond with the church.
  - (1. Therefore, how holy should sexuality be?
  - (2. How free from being *naughty* or *dirty* should it be?
  - (3. Never let sinful pornography be something that turns you on in your marriage. Remember, every sexual act is mimicking and portraying Christ's bond with His church.

- c. No wonder fornication is wrong.

**1 Corinthians 6:15-18**- <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your **bodies** are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH." <sup>17</sup>But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. <sup>18</sup>Flee immorality.

- (1. What message does fornicating send versus the message godly sexuality does in marriage?
- (2. It's saying the church can be bonded with someone besides Christ! Not good!
- (3. No wonder homosexuality is wrong. For example, lesbianism is tantamount to saying the church can be one flesh with another church. That's perverted.
- d. Even though he's really been speaking about Christ's relationship to the church, he reminds them it applies to them.

**Ephesians 5:33**- <sup>33</sup>Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect (fear) her husband. (NASB)

## CONCLUSION

- A. You have heard the phrase ***Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.***
  1. This proverb was given by Charles Caleb Colton, in *Lacon: or, Many things in few words*, 1820.
  2. Colton was expressing that, to imitate is to flatter without necessarily being aware one is flattering.
  3. As such, that *artless* appreciation has to be sincere.
- B. Let us all be imitators of God, those who are mimicking Him in absolutely necessary ways.
  1. Let us imitate Him by loving purity in our lives.
  2. Let us imitate Him by loving spiritually purposeful lives.
  3. Let us imitate Him in our holy roles, such as marriage, and proclaim eternal truths.
- C. In doing so we will not just flatter our God, but sincerely honor and glorify Him.





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### **Ephesians 6**

#### **Family Relationship**

Building off the husband/wife relationship, we now transition to the parent/child relationship model found in chapter six. Not every home can be classified as a Christian home even when individual Christians may inhabit a residence. The Christian should design the home to be a dwelling place for God (Eph 2:19-22). The church building is typically viewed as containing and housing God's presence but this is a misunderstanding of God and His attributes. To confine and limit God in this manner is certainly wrong, yet there are countless occasions where I have looked out into the worship assembly and see New Testament Christians yearning for God, finding Him for a brief moment, only to leave Him in the pew. This is the inevitable conclusion when Christians fail to make their home a place where God can reside. "But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Heb 3:6).

That brings us to Paul addressing child behavior in verse one. Though children are identified first, I believe that the parents are the true target audience of this passage. How can a child be expected to obey his or her parents "in the Lord" if the parents refuse to teach their children about the Lord? On occasion, Jesus implemented a subtle way of indirectly addressing a

specific group or individuals. For example, at the conclusion of the parable of the wicked vinedressers (Matt 21:45), the Pharisees perceived that Jesus was talking about them. Sure there are times when a stern rebuke is warranted (see the Corinthian Correspondence and Christ's judgment of the seven churches of Asia Minor Rev 2-3). But there are other times where a more tactful approach must be taken.

How old were these children Paul had in mind? The exact age is imprecise but the range would be from infant to pre adult (Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, 141). We have another letter where Paul gives instructions about the parent/child relationship. Col 3:20a, "Obey your parents in all things." Combining both passages together we can safely conclude that a child has an obligation to obey his or her parents in everything so long as it does not bring dishonor to God. Paul told the church in Ephesus that it is right for a child to listen to their parents. As Christians we should follow God and His will because it is the right thing to do. Paul gives an extra incentive to the Colossians, "For this is well pleasing to the Lord" (Col 3:20b). You obey your parents because it is right and you obey your parents because it pleases God!

To honor (vs. 2) carries a similar idea as obeying in the preceding verse. Though Paul is an inspired Apostle, he establishes this principle by referring to the Old Testament, specifically, the Ten Commandments. Not only was this command the first with a promise, it was the only of the Ten Commands to follow with a promise (Ex 20). By following the counsel of Godly parents, children are most likely to live a long, blessed life. The promise given here is similar to that of the Proverbs; they serve as general principles, not absolute guarantees.

This section concludes with the reminder that a child is not an adult. Becoming guilty of this in today's western culture is much harder than during early Christianity. Jewish culture generally accepted that twelve was the age of adulthood for a male. In our society, I believe we pamper and nurture kids for too long. We do not expose them to hard work, labor, and



responsibility. We do, however, we over expose them to sex and filthy language. For the original recipients, childhood was much shorter and Paul is reminding fathers not to discourage their children from being children.

### **Work Relationship**

The next section depicts the relationship between slaves and masters. Our common view of slavery is most likely not in mind here. Instead, these verses properly describe an employer/employee relationship (Higginbotham, 360). Again, Paul is not giving a commentary on whether he believes slavery is ethical. His purpose is to describe how these individuals are to conduct themselves if they find themselves in this circumstance. Two passages from Philippians come to mind that relate to this current situation. First, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil 2:3). The extra golden rule is to treat others better than how we want to be treated. Second, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil 4:11). Regardless of the circumstance, we need to find a way to be content, faithfully serving our God.

Servants are to serve as if they are serving Christ Himself. If the servant accomplishes these tasks, the Lord will give him a reward. Likewise, masters are to do the same. We could say that the master is a leader and a good leader sets the proper example. Additionally, the status of man has no impact on the way God views His subjects. So we conclude this section by observing that the attitudes portrayed by master and servant are reciprocal.

### **The Armor of God**

True power and strength come from the Lord. Christians are engaged in warfare against Satan and the instruments that he uses. This section prioritizes what the Christian needs for the

battlefield. There has been much written about the wicked forces and where they originate. According to Revelation, Satan gathered one-third of the angels to his side. The heavenly places could be a reference to the origin of these sinister forces. Satan and his contemporaries were cast out of heaven. The heavenly places may serve as a warning to what type of attack Satan is planning. According to the Scriptures, there are three uses for the word “heaven”. The word can be used to describe the sky, the universe, and the place where God dwells (Gen 2:19; Isa 40:22; 2 Cor 12:2). If the first heaven is what Paul has in mind, he is telling us to expect an aerial attack from Satan and his army.

The battle is not physical, it is spiritual. Yet the spiritual battle is linked to wrestling. Wrestling is the oldest sport known to man (Gen 32:24-25). In my opinion, it is also the most physically demanding and requires extreme levels of discipline. This is a close quarter hand to hand battle (Johnson, 205). The training is rigorous and taxes both the body and the mind. If Paul has spiritual wrestling in mind, are we truly prepared and trained to go into battle?

The first piece of the Christian’s armor is the belt of truth. Paul’s frequent imprisonments put him in close proximity with Roman soldiers. These soldiers are most likely where Paul is drawing his analogy. The truth can come from only one place, the word of God. The belt of truth ties everything together in the life of a Christian. The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. The soldier would wear a breastplate to protect his vital organs from being exposed in battle (Reeves, 63). The Christian breastplate is holy living. Righteous living leaves no opening for Satan to expose and attack.

The third piece of armor is the preparation of the Gospel of peace, which covers the feet. The Roman soldier wore a sandal like boot with nails fitted at the bottom giving him good traction (Conley, 298). As we review the wrestling analogy Paul set forth earlier, traction and balance are essential in winning wrestling matches. A weaker physical opponent can defeat a

stronger adversary if he is good at maintaining his balance. Good traction was essential for the soldier when it came to holding his ground or advancing against enemy troops. The shield is the next piece of the Christian armor. The ancient Roman shield was large and rectangular and it could conceal the entire body. The shield is designed to protect the soldier from any projectile weapon thrown in the soldier's direction. Our faith in God supplies us with the protection we need. Just as the military issues the items needed for combat to the soldier, God issues the required gear needed to survive spiritual warfare.

The final two pieces of the Christian armor is the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. The head is the most vital part of the body. The head controls the rest of the body and must be protected. It should be observed that the soldier in mind here is the New Testament Christian. Even though the Christian has received forgiveness, he or she is still expected to do certain things to receive the final prize of eternity. The Spirit uses the word of God. It is this sword that can be used for offense or defense. The word is what we use to give a ready defense (1 Peter 3:15) and it is what we use to attack (Hebrews 4:12).

The Bible contains many paradoxes within its pages. The sword of the Spirit may be one such paradox. On one side, if you were to grab a sword by the blade it will cut you to pieces but if you grab it by the handle you can wield it to victory. The same can be said spiritually, if you find yourself at the end of the blade of the word of God, your soul will be condemned. If you find yourself at the handle of the word of God, it will save your soul. A final note about the Christian armor, ever consider what's missing from the armor? There's nothing covering the Christian's back because the Christian does not run from battle!

## **Concluding Remarks**

The remaining verses show the intimate relationship between the Ephesians and Paul. This is evidenced by Paul desiring to send Tychicus to them shortly. The work of Tychicus encourages both the Ephesians and Paul. Tychicus will preach the Gospel to them and report to them the status of Paul. At this juncture Paul cannot personally visit because he is imprisoned. The letter ends with a blessing of grace upon the recipients.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## **GOD LOVES YOU**

The God of heaven is powerful and wise and loving to reveal His perfect will to man through the creation, the prophets, and especially in His Son, Jesus Christ. After He made everything from the stars to the smallest creatures, then in His own image He created man. We are the children of God. God is not like idols that are made from the mind of man. The worship of idols is an affront to the Creator. And He does not dwell in temples and has no need to be served by human hands. He is the giver of life and from Him all things come. But God does desire that His children love and show Him reverence. He wishes for us to seek Him and turn from the vain things of this world. Thankfully He is not far from each one of us and He sent His Son into this world to show us the way to an eternal reward in Heaven. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and He was risen from the grave after three days. He now is in heaven and rules over the church, His one body. At a time in the future, known only by the Father, He is coming again to save those who have followed Him. This message is for you so you know that if you believe in Him, turn away from sin, and get immersed in water (baptized) for the remission of your sins, you will be saved and added to the church, Acts 2:38-47.

**Thanks for Coming!**

**If the Lord wills,  
next year's lecture will be on  
April 25, 2015**