



A Study of the Book of Ephesians

New King James Version

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PREFACE

When I first decided to write a commentary on Ephesians, I never would have expected the final product to end up being nearly this large. This commentary started as a personal outline that I planned to use while teaching our adult Bible class at the East Albertville church of Christ. However, I eventually realized that I had so much to say on Ephesians that I simply would never be able to cover in three (which became four) months of teaching. In the end, I was proven right, having only covered two and a half chapters of the epistle by the time my final class came about (thank you to every student for your patience with me; you are saints in more way than one). Since I had so much leftover material, I thought it might be a wise use of my time to turn my outline into a commentary and publish it in a more complete form. Whether or not my decision to publish this outline as a commentary was a wise decision worthy of anyone else's time, well, I will leave that to the reader to judge.

This commentary would not exist without the East Albertville elders offering me the opportunity to teach on Ephesians, as well as the continual encouragement they have provided me since I became a member of that flock. I want to personally thank E.R. Hall, Rex Henson, and Sid Rowe for the confidence they put in me by permitting me to offer my understanding of Ephesians from September 2024 to January 2025. I also want to thank each student of the class. Your various comments, questions, and disagreements all prompted me to an even better understanding of the epistle that I would not have had without your contributions. I also want to provide special thanks to several men who – though I personally do not know them (some of which are no longer living) and are never actually cited or quoted within this commentary – were very helpful to my studies. If you are reading this commentary, I highly suggest you read the following men's works over my own:

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/>

Chris Reeves' Commentary on Ephesians (Truth Publications)

<https://truthbooks.com/btb-ephesians-pdf-digital-edition/>

Colly Caldwell's Commentary on Ephesians (Truth Publications)

<https://truthbooks.com/reference-materials/commentaries/individual/ephesians/truth-commentary-ephesians-ibook/>

David Lipscomb's Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians

https://www.restorationlibrary.org/library/BCNTEV4/BCNTEV4_SIPDE.pdf

Lastly, I want to thank my grandfather, Harry Stewart, for everything he ever did in guiding me to obey the gospel. I doubt I would ever have obeyed the gospel if not for him. I love you and I miss you, Ding. I can only hope you would be proud of the man I am today.

Dylan Stewart (October 8, 2025)

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BACKGROUND

Ephesus is mentioned 21 times in the New Testament (**Acts 18:19, 21, 24; 19:1, 17, 26, 28, 34, 35; 20:16, 17; 21:29; 1 Cor. 15:32; 16:8; Eph. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:12; Rev. 1:11; 2:1**). Ephesus was located near the “upper regions” (**Acts 19:1**) of the southwest coast of “Asia” (**Acts 19:10, 22, 26; 20:18**) in modern-day Turkey. Ephesus has been called the “gateway to Asia” because it was located at the crossroads of two major highways running through Western Asia, making it a prominent commercial, religious, and political center of the ancient Mediterranean world (Ephesus.US).

Paul wrote the letter to Ephesus while imprisoned (**Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20**). It is believed that Paul wrote the letter while imprisoned in Rome around 62 AD. This would date the letter probably 23-32 years after the death of Christ and would be about the same period when Philemon and Colossians were written. The epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were each carried by Tychicus and/or Onesimus (**Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9; Phile. 10-12**).

Paul was certainly no stranger to being arrested and imprisoned. He was arrested in Jerusalem (**Acts 21**); he was imprisoned in Caesarea for about two years (**Acts 23; 24:27**); and he was imprisoned in Rome (**Acts 28**), which appears to be the occasion when Paul penned this letter to the Ephesians.

Paul briefly visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (**Acts 18:18-19**). Paul had a more extended stay (three years – **Acts 20:31**) in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (**Acts 19**). When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he found 12 disciples only acquainted with John’s baptism (**Acts 19:1-7**) and not the baptism of the Great Commission; this was probably a result of the teaching of Apollos before Priscilla and Aquila taught him more sufficiently. Paul first taught in the synagogue just like he did on his previous journey (**Acts 19:8-9**), but the audience became so hardened that he left and took the disciples with him (**Acts 19:8-9**). He then went to teach in the school of Tyrannus for two years, where his teaching had a great reach (**Acts 19:9-10**). Paul performed extraordinary miracles (**Acts 19:11**), resulting in books of sorcery being burned (**Acts 19:19**). As a direct result of Paul and the other disciples’ teaching, the word of God grew greatly and “was . . . prevailing” (**Acts 19:20, NASB**). However, things were not all rosy; Paul did face opposition during his third journey.

During Paul’s third journey, Demetrius, a silversmith who made shrines of the goddess Artemis/Diana, caused a riot because Paul’s teaching hurt his business (**Acts 19:23-41**). Artemis was the favorite goddess among the rural populace (Britannica). After calling the elders in Ephesus to come to Miletus, Paul described opposition from the Jews in Ephesus (**Acts 20:19**) and possible (probable?) opposition from brethren in Ephesus (**Acts 20:29-31**). Paul knew that once he left Ephesus, opposition and trouble awaited him in Jerusalem (**Acts 20:22**). However, despite the

opposition and despite some of the difficult things Paul would have taught (**Acts 20:26-27**), the church in Ephesus (at least, for sure the elders) loved Paul greatly (**Acts 20:36-37**).

Whereas Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, Romans, the Corinthian epistles, and the letters to Timothy and Titus provide great insight about Paul's life, his great affection for particular people, his personal and physical struggles while preaching the gospel, and a glimpse at the direct recipients of these inspired letters, Ephesians, on the other hand, stands at the opposite end of the spectrum as one of Paul's most formal and impersonal letters. For example, Paul labored in Ephesus for over two years (**Acts 19:10**), but there are no personal greetings, only broad statements like "peace to the brethren" (**Eph. 6:23**) with no names mentioned. Compare this with the list of names mentioned in **Rom. 16**, **2 Tim. 4**, etc. The impersonal nature of this letter has led scoffers to doubt if Paul actually wrote Ephesians, as well as contributed to the theory that this letter was not intended for one specific church but numerous churches across Asia Minor, as was the case with the book of Revelation (**Rev. 1:4**). I refute both presumptions for at least six reasons:

1. The book of Ephesians has the same "grace and peace to you" greeting as all of Paul's letters (**Eph. 1:2**).
2. If the Bible really is the inerrant word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16**), then we can trust **Eph. 1:1**: "Paul . . . to the saints who are in Ephesus." The author identifies himself again as Paul in **Eph. 3:1**. Plus, first-person pronouns are used in contexts which identify various activities and relationships of Paul (**Eph. 3:8, 13; 4:1; 6:20-22**).
3. Proponents of the encyclical theory seem to ignore the fact that all manuscripts have the same title attached to the book, that title stating, "To the Ephesians." No location besides Ephesus is recorded in any surviving text or manuscript. A similar thing occurs in Romans, wherein some manuscripts omit the words "in Rome" at **Rom. 1:7** and **1:15**, yet we do not doubt that the letter was addressed to the church in Rome. Every New Testament epistle would eventually be read by all Christians in all churches (**1 Cor. 1:2**), but we have no reason to doubt that this letter was foremostly intended for Ephesus.
4. It is likely that the message of Ephesians is a further development of the material in Colossians, building upon the information presented there. If someone besides Paul wrote Ephesians, the author would have fully assimilated Paul's thoughts and themes perfectly, so much so that direct inspiration, therefore, would not be required. Are we prepared to consequently say that someone could pen a biblical letter without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit but match His teachings so perfectly?
5. Ephesians is more of a theological treatise addressing broad principles core to the faith and intended for the universal body (church) of Christ. It is not a personal letter addressing doctrinal error present in the local church, like with the Galatian and Corinthian letters. The church in Ephesus had elders (**Acts 20:28**). One

would think they were addressing whatever specific problems were occurring within the congregation before Paul needed to step in.

6. Paul may have reserved more personal statements/directives for another time. For instance, 1 Timothy, which was likely penned shortly after the Ephesian letter, was sent to Ephesus as well (**1 Tim. 1:3**). When he had last visited with the Ephesians church, Paul warned the elders that "from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them" (**Acts 20:30, NASB**). Things become very personal and directly applicable to the specific church at Ephesus when we consider the primary focus of 1 Timothy is for certain ones to be charged not to teach different doctrines (**1 Tim. 1:3; 4-7, 18-20; 4:1-16; 6:3-10, 17-21**).

The Ephesian letter deals with topics at the very core of what it means to be a Christian, regardless of location, culture, or era. Paul did not write the epistle to necessarily address any particular false doctrine(s) or correct any specific sins. Instead, the letter serves to remind Christians of their spiritual wealth in Christ due to the love, grace, mercy, and kindness of God. The letter is essentially divided into two sections that come together to paint one perfect picture displaying the unity of faith in terms of both belief AND practice by encouraging us to reflect upon our blessings in Christ (**Eph. 1-3**) and recognize our responsibilities to Him (**Eph. 4-6**).

CHAPTER ONE

SALUTATION (1:1-2)

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,”

This is not a statement of pride but one presenting a simple fact. Paul was Christ's apostle, not only sent forth by Him (**Acts 9:15-16**) but also belonging to Him (**1 Cor. 3:1-11; 2 Cor. 10:7**). Paul was “called” to be an apostle (**1 Cor. 1:1**). Paul saw his apostleship as a work, not a glorified position of personal elevation over other Christians (**1 Cor. 9:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:12-16**).

Paul began most of his letters by emphasizing his apostleship (**Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1**). An apostle is a messenger sent on a mission (Strong). Several chapters of 1 and 2 Corinthians show Paul defending his apostleship (**1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 11-13**). Why would such a defense be necessary? When false teachers cannot refute the message, they often try to discredit the character or reputation of the messenger (**2 Cor. 10:10, 13:3; Gal. 4:16**).

Paul not only repeatedly emphasized his apostleship, but he also repeatedly emphasized that his apostleship was by the will of God. Everything – even the appointment of apostleship – happens solely by the will of God (**Matt. 6:10; James 4:15**). Any power that Paul possessed was delegated by the will of God; he did not act on his own. We are completely and utterly dependent on God (**Acts 17:25, 28a**).

“To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:”

A “saint” is one set apart by (or for) God, holy, sacred (Strong). An excellent biblical definition of “saint” is provided in this verse – saints “are” (not were) faithful in Christ Jesus. Therefore, saints are all living faithful Christians. Of course, you cannot be faithful “in” Christ Jesus unless you are actually IN Christ Jesus to begin with, which requires water baptism (**Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27**).

This letter is addressed to strong and faithful Christians. One might think, given that much of the book emphasizes first principles of the gospel, this letter would be addressed to new converts or spiritually weak Christians. Yet, the letter was especially intended for faithful saints. This should help us see that no matter how long we have been Christians, we need to be reminded of and make sure our faith is rooted in the first fruits of the gospel.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul uses some variation of this expression in the opening addresses of all his letters (**Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Gal 1:3; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phile. 1:4**). This is intentional (**2 Thess. 3:16-18**).

“Grace” is virtually the first and last words of the book of Ephesians (**Eph. 1:2, 6:24**). The word “grace” appears 12 times in the book. This epistle is so full of discourse on the subject of grace that it has been called, “The Epistle of Grace.” Peace is conjoined with grace in this verse, meaning true peace comes from being in God’s grace (**John 14:27, 16:33; Phil. 4:4-7; James 1:17**).

“Peace” is the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is (Thayer). Peace sometimes refers to joining with others in true harmony (**Matt. 10:34; Rom. 14:9**). Peace sometimes can refer to an absence of war (**Luke 14:32; Acts 12:20**) or criminal/personal violation (**Luke 11:21; Acts 16:36**). In this verse, it seems to suggest freedom from inner conflict. Spiritual contentment and rest in Christ can exist even in the midst of outer conflict (**Rom. 8:31-39**). John the Baptist said grace and peace came through Christ (**John 1:17**).

Grace and peace are from God “and” Christ. There is a distinction indicated here between God and Jesus Christ. God possesses the authoritative role as “Father” and Jesus holds the subordinate role of a Son (**1 Cor. 11:3**). However, no distinction is made in what they can give because gifts of grace and peace come from BOTH God and Christ. No distinction is made in terms of their nature nor in what they provide, but the distinction that exists is in our relation to them.

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS (1:3-14)

From the Father (v.3-6)

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

Here, we have a discourse on our spiritual blessings. Paul begins by outlining the Author of our blessings (“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”), the nature and sphere of our blessings (“heavenly”), and the Medium through whom we have these blessings (“Christ”). The word “blessed” means worthy of praise (Mounce). God has blessed us in one sense. Therefore, we bless Him in another sense.

Who is “us?” It cannot be in reference to the whole world because sinners are not in possession of “all” the spiritual blessings listed in the succeeding verses. Nor is it in reference to Gentiles because “us” would include Paul, a Jew. Additionally, there were Jewish Christians in Ephesus (**Acts 18:19-20, 24-28; 19:1-8**). “Us” refers back to v.1 – “saints.”

Nothing is said here about material prosperity, yet we are rich. Of course, it is not improper to call upon God for physical blessings because we are taught to pray for our physical health (3 **John** 2), physical safety (**Matt.** 24:20; **Rom.** 1:10), physical nourishment (**Matt.** 6:11), and physical peace (1 **Tim.** 2:1-2). Yet, God is more interested in our spiritual well-being rather than our physical welfare. The spiritual blessing/benefits from God through Christ listed by Paul include:

- The capacity to be holy and blameless (v.4).
- Adopted as sons (v.5).
- Grace freely bestowed (v.6).
- Redemption / forgiveness of sins (v.7).
- Riches of His grace lavished on us (v.7-8).
- Mystery of His will made known (v.9).
- Inheritance (v.11).
- Sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit (v.13).
- God's own possession (v.14).

Since being in Christ is conditional (**Gal.** 3:26-27), the reception of these spiritual blessings in Christ is also conditional.

The expression "heavenly places" is found only in the book of Ephesians, occurring five times (**Eph.** 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). God's blessings for man derive from heaven, lead man to heaven, and await man in heaven (**Phil.** 3:20; **Col.** 3:1-3; **Heb.** 12:23). "Heavenly places" does not merely define the region of origin of our blessings (where/from whom they come). The phrase does do that, but it does a great deal more. It also means that in order to receive these gifts and blessings we must determine to go up to the heavenly places (**Col.** 3:1-2; **Matt.** 6:33). These blessings are not found in earthly things (contrast **James** 1:17 with 1 **John** 2:15-16; also consider **John** 18:36; **Phil.** 3:20).

"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him"

"Foundation" means properly a laying down, a founding, a foundation – as where the foundation of a building is laid – and the phrase "before the foundation of the world" clearly means before the world was made, or before the work of creation (Barnes). **Matt.** 13:35, 25:34; **Luke** 11:50; **Heb.** 9:26; **Rev.** 13:8, all use the phrase "the foundation of the world" to mean the beginning of human affairs, the beginning of the world, the beginning of history, etc. Therefore, this verse conveys the idea that God formed the plan of saving man from sin through His Son before the world existed.

The death of Christ was in the predetermined mind of God as part of His eternal plan thought out before the foundation of the world (**Acts 2:22-23; 1 Pet. 1:20**). A promise was made before there was even time and before anyone or anything was created (**Tit. 1:1**); that promise involved eternal life dependent upon obedience to Christ (**1 Pet. 1:1-2; Heb. 5:9**).

The context emphasizes Christ as the object of God's choice, not specific people ("us"). God's plan was not WHO would be saved but BY WHOM they would be saved – by Christ (**v.3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13; see also 1 Peter 1:20a**). God has not chosen certain individuals to be saved and certain individuals to be lost, but God chose the plan of salvation whereby all men must choose for themselves either to accept or reject (**Rev. 22:17, 3:20; Josh. 24:15**).

God decided long ago that all who accepted His Son would be forgiven of their sins, yet God made man a free moral agent in His own image, thus forcing no one into obedience against their will. The choice of whom we will serve (God or Satan) is ours to make (**Rom. 6:16**). All spiritual blessings listed in v.4-14 are the consequence of God's choice. Whether we accept the terms for receiving these benefits is our choice, which is dependent on our faith (**Eph. 2:8; James 2:24**).

Predestination/Unconditional Election is not taught by this verse. This doctrine contradicts the rest of the scriptures resulting in God being a tyrant (exercising power or control in a cruel, unreasonable, or arbitrary way). **John 3:16-17; Tit. 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9; and Eph. 6:9** plainly and obviously disprove the predestinationist view on this verse. Since Christ is God's "elected" way, all who obey are "the elect" (**1 Pet. 1:1-2, 22; Rom. 8:29-30**). There is an inseparable connection of holiness with the election (**Col. 1:22**).

This verse highlights how sanctification has two aspects: (1) There is what God has done for us – He offers the plan of redemption through Christ (He offers to set us apart). (2) Then, there is what we must do – we must take advantage of the plan of redemption AND live faithfully (we must keep ourselves set apart).

The term "holy" means sacred, physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated (Strong). We are expected to be holy, or "set apart" (**Lev. 20:26**). Holiness is a call (**1 Thess. 4:7**) to imitate God (**1 Pet. 1:15-16; Lev. 19:2, 20:7, 21:8**). Our holiness is identified by our separateness from the world. It is possible to be in the world but completely different from the world (**John 17:14-17**).

To be "blameless" is to be without blemish (Thayer). Ellicot explains that the word "without blame," or "unblamable," is properly without blemish, and the word "unreprovable" more nearly corresponds to our idea of one unblamable—i.e., one against whom no charge can be brought. So, yes, we really can be blameless (i.e. sinless), and we must be (**Rev. 21:27**)! The only way we can be pure and without blemish before God is through Christ (**1 John 2:1, 3:6, 9; Phil. 3:12**). This doesn't mean we are going to be spotless from sin every second of every day (**Rom. 3:23**;

1 John 1:8), but, yes, we really can be blameless, or completely without fault (Matt. 5:48; 2 Pet. 3:14; 1 Thess. 5:23; Psalm 119:1). Through Christ (1 Cor. 1:4-9; Phil. 1:9-10) and His shed blood (Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:5-9), we can have all points of blame (sin) removed. A person can be without blemish when he has been forgiven by Christ and when he has forsaken sin.

“in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself,”

One translation puts it like this: “So he decided long ago to adopt us as his children” (NIRV – translation for ESL readers). What was decided long ago? Those obedient in faith would be adopted as children of God (Gal. 3:26-29). We know the salvation of specific chosen individuals is not what was decided because that would:

- Make God a respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:25; Acts 10:34-35).
- Make God responsible for the damnation of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11).
- Deny that God wants all men to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; Tit. 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:4).
- Deny that Christ died for all (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 John 2:2, 4:14).
- Reject the free will of man (Rom. 6:16; 14:12, etc.).

The source of this adoption is God’s love, its cause is the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the result of the adoption is redemption from bondage to sonship (Gal. 4:5). Again, God has not arbitrarily chosen certain individuals to be saved and lost, respectively.

The “adoption” spoken about here is not the final adoption (Rom. 8:23) but the present adoption into the Christian covenant to await final adoption (John 1:12; Rom. 8:17). In other places, entrance into God’s family is described as occurring by birth/rebirth (John 3:3; Rom. 6:4; 1 Pet. 1:23).

“according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved”

Because of God’s love, good will, and kindness, God chose to adopt people as His children in the “Beloved,” i.e. Christ (Matt. 3:17, 17:5; Luke 9:35). Truly, God’s grace has been freely bestowed upon us (Rom. 3:24, 5:16-18, 6:23, 8:32). However, this does not mean conditions do not exist for taking advantage of God’s grace (Rom. 6:1-2; Heb. 5:9). A God who desires all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and gave His Son (John 3:16) for sinners and enemies (Rom. 5:8-10) is truly a God of grace deserving of all glory and praise! If the doctrine of predestination is true, it is rather difficult to see love, good will, and kind intent from the Father, isn’t it?

A Study of the Book of Ephesians

From the Son (v.7-13a)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us”

Here, the very core of the gospel message is reproduced. Christ is our atonement for sin (**Col. 1:14; Eph. 2:1**); He paid the debt that man could not repay (**Rom. 5:6-11; Matt. 18:22-27**).

The word “redemption” means liberation procured by the payment of a ransom (Thayer). Man separates himself from God by his own sins (**Isa. 59:1-2**). God, through His mercy, prepared how man can be redeemed and returned to fellowship with Him by means of the blood of Christ (**Isa. 53:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19**).

This verse specifies what the redemption is that has been provided – forgiveness. The word “forgiveness” means release from bondage or imprisonment (Strong). Do we really view sin as bondage (**John 8:34; Rom. 6:7, 20a, 22; 2 Tim 2:26**)? We know from **Matt. 6:14** that this redemption (forgiveness of trespasses) is not automatically given to us; we must do certain things (meet conditions) to take advantage of the richness of God’s grace.

The word “lavished” means to make to abound; to furnish one richly so that he has abundance (Thayer). God’s grace has been liberally manifested to us, not conservatively limited. Our redemption / forgiveness is possible due to the abundance of God’s grace (**1 Tim. 1:14**). Man could not save himself by himself; only through God’s grace can man be saved (**Eph. 2:1-8; Rom. 2:4**). This outpouring of grace gives no encouragement to evil and must never be used as an excuse to continue in sin (**Tit. 2:11-14; 2 Cor. 5:21**).

“in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”

To execute God’s plan of redemption required God’s wisdom and His insight. God and Christ hold all wisdom and knowledge (**Col. 2:2-3**), but their wisdom stands in contrast to the wisdom of man (**1 Cor. 1:18-30; Jer. 10:23; Col. 1:9**). The wisdom and insight of God involved in the planning, execution, and revelation of His will to/for man is above human comprehension (**Isa. 55:8-9**).

What is the “mystery” mentioned here? The mystery is the plan of redemption (the salvation of man) through Christ (**Eph. 1:3-8, 3:3-6; Col. 1:25-27, 2:2-3; Gal. 3:22-23**). This mystery is now known, or revealed (**Rom. 3:19-26, 16:25-26; 2 Tim. 1:8-10**). The mystery was revealed through Christ’s word (**Heb. 1:1-2; John 8:31-32**) The whole doctrine of the gospel is called “the wisdom of God in a mystery” (**1 Cor. 2:7**).

God’s plan was to save man through Christ at an appointed/established time (**2 Tim. 1:9**). This mystery was first revealed to the apostles (**Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10**), then it was revealed to “us” (Jews first and then

Gentiles [Rom. 1:16]). It was by God's "good pleasure" that He revealed and executed His plan of redemption for man (Eph. 1:5; John 3:16; Rom. 2:4; Psalm 103:1-4).

"Fullness of times" simply means when the time was right, God chose to act upon His plan of redemption (Mark 1:15). It was when the fullness of time came that God sent Him to earth to save man (Gal. 4:4). No one can possibly explain why God chose the first century as the period in history that encapsulated the fullness of time. We can make some educated hypotheses:

- The Old Law was complete and God went silent for 400 years after speaking through Malachi. People seeking God would have been anxiously waiting for Him to begin "speaking" to them once again (Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 13:10-17).
- The rule of Rome was prophesied in the Old Testament (Dan. 7). Due to the Romans' rule over the eastern hemisphere, the world had become more interconnected than ever before, allowing the gospel to be spread more easily (Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 1:23). For example, Paul planned to journey to Spain (Rom. 15:24); historical records show some of the apostles apparently making similar journeys that far west. Historical records also show Thomas evangelizing and eventually being martyred in India. Some accounts even say he preached as far east as China. Historical records show Andrew traveling into modern-day Ukraine and Russia to preach the gospel. The journeys by the apostles and those they converted seeking to fulfill the Great Commission may have been nearly impossible to achieve without the highway systems that began to be created by Rome in approximately 300 BC. These highways went as far west as Spain, north as Germany and the British Isles, east as Iraq (the Silk Road went all the way to the eastern coast of China [Britannica]), and south as Egypt.

Ultimately, it is by God's wisdom, insight, and kindness that He chose the first century to be a suitable time to execute His plan of redemption (Rom. 5:6, NET).

The word "summing" means to bring together several things under one, reduce under one head (Mounce). All things have been summed up in Christ. Everything is united/headed under Christ, both in Heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:19; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:20-23, 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3).

"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,"

God's will is set forth as acting not arbitrarily but with intentionality and purpose, which extends to His offering of an "inheritance" to those who trust in Him. This inheritance is through Christ and is no normal or routine inheritance. This inheritance is undefiled, imperishable, and reserved for us in Heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-4). This inheritance is the result of God's deliberate foreordination and rests on an immovable foundation that will not crumble as long

as we remain obedient to Him. “We” (saints – **Eph. 1:1**) are the ones granted this inheritance. God provides a divine guarantee of this inheritance by granting saints the Holy Spirit (**Eph. 1:13-14**). The inheritance is what God predestined; He did not predestine specific individuals to receive the inheritance. God purposely determined long ago that this inheritance would be available to all who obey Him.

The phrase “counsel of His will” expresses how God’s decisions are not informed by human counsel or advice. There is no better source of counsel for God than Himself and His will (**Job 12:13, 37:16; Psalm 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:9-10; 1 John 3:20**); He has no need to seek the counsel of man. The affirmation here is not merely that God executed the salvation of man and the provision of inheritance according to the counsel of his own will, but also that He works “all things” according to the counsel of His will; everything is a product of His work (**1 Cor. 12:6**). There is comfort in knowing that God forms and governs things (even undesirable things) after the counsel of His will because this confirms that He does not act arbitrarily (**Rom. 8:28**).

“that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation;”

There appears to be a shift in meaning in who “we” refers to; it no longer appears to be in reference to saints (**Eph. 1:1**). “We who were the first” (NASB) likely refers not just to the apostles but to all Jewish Christians (**Rom. 1:16; Luke 24:47; Acts 2; Acts 13:46**), whereas “you also” (**Eph. 1:13**) likely refers to the Gentile Christians.

Paul spoke of preaching the gospel to the Jews as fulfilling the hope of promise from God (**Acts 26:6-7, 28:20**) while the Gentiles were at one time without hope until they believed and obeyed the gospel (**Eph. 2:11-13**). As free moral agents, the Gentiles “trusted” (believed and obeyed) Christ after hearing the gospel (**Rom. 10:14, 17; John 6:44-45; Mark 16:15-16**).

The term “trusted” in this text implies more than mere belief (**2 Tim. 1:2, GW; 1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 11:6**). You can believe something one day and then change your mind the next, but to put trust in something is to commit to aligning your actions with your belief. Trust indicates that a person places complete confidence in something (God/Christ) and he knows they can rely on them for anything (**Prov. 3:5; Isa. 12:2; Psalm 112:7, 37:5; Jer. 17:7-8**). It is not enough just to believe in Jesus; we have to put all of our trust in Him, which requires us to obey His gospel (**2 Thess. 1:8, John 3:16, 36**).

The redeemed are to bring praise and glory to God – “we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory” (RSV). Contextually, redemption is the reason for celebrating God’s glory; praise should be ascribed to Him due to our salvation (**1 Pet. 1:8-9; 1 Cor. 6:20; Psalm 40:16**). The Christian is to live a life of praise to God because it was to that end that we were created and redeemed (**Eph. 2:10; Isa. 43:7**).

Salvation is not unconditional, which further confirms God does not arbitrarily select people to be saved or lost. Salvation is dependent on hearing the truth and then trusting in Christ (**Heb. 11, 12:1-2**). The phrase “your salvation” implies that salvation requires personal work (**Phil. 2:12; Heb. 2:3**).

From the Spirit (v.13b-14)

“in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

This text shows how all three members of the Godhead have played an important role in redeeming mankind. The Father planned and executed the plan of redemption, the Son provided the blood sacrifice for redemption, and the Spirit seals those who are redeemed.

This passage says Christians are “sealed with the Holy Spirit.” A seal can indicate authentication (**Esth. 3:10, 12; 8:2, 8; Dan. 6:17**), ownership (**Jer. 32:11-12**), security (**2 Tim. 2:19**), or confirmation (**John 3:33**). The Holy Spirit serves as a first installment, deposit, down payment, or pledge from God until we receive heaven – “We have this guarantee until we are set free to belong to him” (GW). This seal occurs in the present and serves to indicate what will happen in the future (“redemption of the purchased possession” is spoken of in the future-tense) if we remain sealed (**Eph. 4:30, 5:3-5**). In other words, the Holy Spirit is given as assurance for the full payment to come later. This is the nature of Christianity (**Heb. 11:1**).

The Holy Spirit (the Spirit Himself) is given to all Christians upon obedience to the Gospel (**John 7:38-39; Acts 2:38, 5:32; Gal. 4:4-6; Tit. 3:4-7; Rom. 8:16, 26-27**). The Holy Spirit serves as a seal and guarantee of salvation for the saints (**Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22, 5:5**). However, when a Christian sins, the Holy Spirit (God’s “seal” of approval) is forced to depart from us (**Psalms 51:11b; 1 John 3:24**). We must never falsely conclude that since a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit that he cannot fall away from God as a lost sinner (**Eph. 5:3-5; Gal. 5:4, 19-21**).

The Holy Spirit is described as the “Spirit of promise.” The Spirit was announced by promise (**Acts 2:16; Joel 2:28; Zech 12:10**). Although a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit is not promised to all who obey the gospel (this was limited to the first century), all who obey Christ will receive a non-miraculous measure of God’s Spirit when they repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (**Acts 2:38-39**). Being sealed with the Spirit should lead us to living by the Spirit rather than living by the flesh (**Gal. 3:14; 5:16-17, 25; 6:8; Eph. 5:18; Rom. 8:1-16**).

We are a “possession” of God; we are not our own (**1 Cor. 3:23**). Christ died to redeem us as His possession (**Tit. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:9**). Specifically, our bodies are the “purchased possession” which will be redeemed on the day of judgment where we will receive a new body (**1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 8:11-23**).

Redemption will be to the praise of God's glory. This is the third time in 14 verses that the phrase "praise of His glory" appears (v. 6, 12, 14). When saints are redeemed and eternally in the presence of the King, this will be the highest tribute to God's glory.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT (1:15-23)

"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:"

In light of ("Therefore") the Ephesians hearing the gospel, believing, and being sealed by the Holy Spirit, Paul prayed often ("do not cease") for these Christians. Paul was grateful for these fellow saints, but his thanksgiving also prompted him to prayer on their behalf. Paul frequently gave thanks for fellow Christians (**Col. 1:3, 9; Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2, 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phile. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:3**). Christians today certainly should imitate Paul's example in often giving thanks and praying for fellow Christians (**2 Thess. 2:13**).

The Ephesians faith and love for the brotherhood (**1 Pet. 2:17**) was well-known. Their faith was obviously publicly known; the Ephesians did not have a "closeted" faith (**Matt. 5:14-16; Luke 11:33; Rom. 16:19**). It is worth noting that there is a distinction made between faith "in" the Jesus and love "for" (towards, KJV) the saints. Faith in Christ and faith in God leads to love for people (**1 John 4:7-16, 19-21; John 13:34, 15:12; Rom. 13:8; Matt. 5:43-48**) and our faith in Christ should lead to living lives defined by love (**Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Cor. 13:1-7**). After all, love is one of defining characteristics in possessing the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22**), and all are known by their fruits (**Matt. 7:16-20**).

Paul "heard of" the Ephesians' faith and love. Questions have been raised asking if Paul actually wrote this letter due to the statement that he "heard of" the Ephesians' faith and love. The argument is that Paul wrote to them as if they were strangers because this language ("heard of") would not be used by a man addressing people among whom he had spent three years of his life. However, there are some blatant flaws with drawing such a conclusion from the employment of this phrase.

1. Paul had been absent from Ephesus for some time (some have estimated more than four years) when he penned this epistle. It is very plausible that he had heard nothing after the time when he bade farewell to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus in **Acts 20**. He could simply be referring to information he had received since leaving Ephesus, similar to what Paul described in **1 Thess. 3:4-6**. Therefore, it is perfectly logical to conclude that Paul did not cease to give thanks for what he "heard" had taken place with the Ephesians in the time since his departure, not their first faith.
2. Are we to presume no new converts were made in the time since Paul's departure? He would have only "heard of" their faith since he never met these people personally.

3. Paul was in prison when he wrote this epistle (**Eph. 3:1, 4:1, 6:20**). People likely would have brought him word on the Ephesians that led to him writing the letter.
4. It appears that Paul never actually set foot in Colossae (**Col. 2:1**) and Paul uses the same expression “heard of your faith” in **Col. 1:4**. On the surface, this would seem to support the theory that Ephesians is not written by Paul since he actually witnessed and had not just “heard of” the Ephesians’ faith. However, Paul uses the same expression “heard of your faith” in **Phile. 1:5** although it seems that Paul had a direct and personal impact on Philemon’s salvation (**Phile. 1:19**). Virtually no scholarly debate exists questioning if Paul wrote Philemon.

The Ephesians were abounding both in faith and in their love for “all the saints.” The phrase “all the saints” could just simply mean that the Ephesians were a very loving group of people. The phrase “all the saints” could also imply that Ephesus was free from the spirit that prevailed in some other churches, where differences in opinion about the necessity of circumcision had interrupted love. As already discussed, the church in Ephesus was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, this phrase could be an allusion to the fact that the Ephesians were not falling into the trap that the Galatian Christians were succumbing to (**Gal. 5:1-15**).

“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”

God is described as “the Father of glory,” or the God and Lord of glory (**Acts 7:2; 1 Cor. 2:8; James 2:1**). He is also described as the Father of Mercies (**2 Cor. 1:3**) and Father of Lights (**James 1:17**).

The word “revelation” refers to a disclosure of truth, instruction, concerning divine things before unknown, especially those relating to the Christian salvation; a spirit received from God disclosing what and how great are the benefits of salvation (Strong). “Revelation” in this verse does not refer to miraculous knowledge or a miraculous method of imparting it. Instead, the word simply expresses the removal of ignorance (**Psalms 119:18**).

Paul prayed for the Ephesians’ wisdom and revelation. He did not pray that God would grant them wisdom and revelation but that God would grant them a “spirit” of such. Most scholars/commentators believe the word “spirit” here refers to the Holy Spirit, but I do not believe this is an accurate representation of the text. It is certainly true that the Holy Spirit works wisdom and gives revelation (**1 Cor. 2:10**), but I believe the “spirit” here refers to the human spirit, or disposition, similar to how the term is employed in **Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 4:21; and 2 Tim. 1:7**. The importance of having an earnest desire (“spirit”) for more knowledge about God and His word even after we have believed and been sealed by the Holy Spirit is made apparent (**2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 4:11-16**).

The condition Paul prayed for is not merely acknowledgment, but “knowledge.” Paul frequently prayed for saints to grow in knowledge (**Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10**). We ought to regularly pray for knowledge (**James 1:5**). However far the Ephesians may have advanced in their knowledge of God, there was still an unfathomed depth of knowledge left to explore.

The word “enlighten” in this text means to illuminate, make to see (Strong). The metaphor of eyes being opened/closed to knowledge is prevalent throughout the Bible (**Psalm 119:18; Matt. 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 26:18; Rev. 3:18; Eph. 5:14**). The heart is key to enlightenment (**Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:9, 4:5; Matt. 6:19-21**). Although enlightenment is occasionally used to represent initial obedience to the gospel (**Heb. 6:4, 10:32**), this passage presents enlightenment as the product of possessing the spirit of wisdom and revelation. This enlightenment is specifically for helping Christians know “what is the hope of His calling.”

The word “hope” means to anticipate, usually with pleasure; expectation or confidence (Strong). Believers united in faith (**2 Pet. 1:1**) are also united in hope (**Eph. 4:4-5**). Recognizing the object of our hope (Heaven) should motivate us to serve God faithfully (**Heb. 6:19; Acts 24:15; Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 1 John 3:2-3**). Hope is a powerful tool (**Rom. 5:2-5, 8:24-25, 12:12, 15:13; Heb. 10:23; 1 Cor. 15:19; Lam. 3:24; Psalm 16:19, 33:22, 130:5**), but hope goes away (is unnecessary) if God arbitrarily chooses those who are saved and lost.

Paul states that the inheritance is revealed “in” (among) the saints. The promise of this inheritance should drive all saints to persevere through any and all trials (**1 Pet 1:3-9; 2 Cor. 4:16-18, 5:1-4**).

“and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,”

Three core elements of the gospel message are presented here: (1) Christ died, (2) Christ was resurrected, (3) after being resurrected, Christ returned to Heaven to reign over His kingdom.

The Greek word translated as “exceeding” is found only in Paul’s epistles, providing further evidence that Paul wrote this letter since it is characteristic of his speech/writing (**Rom. 7:13; 1 Cor. 12:31; 2 Cor. 1:8, 3:10, 4:7, 4:17, 9:14, 11:23, 12:7; Gal. 1:13; Eph. 2:7, 3:19**).

Three interesting words are used here, all to describe the miraculous nature of God. First, there is “mighty,” which refers to dominion, strength, power; a mighty deed (Strong). It is important to note that the Greek word is never used in Scripture to refer to man’s actions (**Eph. 1:19, 6:10; Col. 1:11; Acts 19:20; Luke 1:51; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Pet. 4:11, 5:11; Jude 1:25; Rev. 1:6, 5:13**).

Second, there is “power,” which refers to miraculous power, might, strength (Strong). God is all-powerful; He is capable of more than we could ever imagine (**Eph. 3:16-21**). We know God exerts His power over earthly matters,

but in this context God's "mighty power" was on display when he miraculously resurrected Christ from the dead. Just as God raised the Lord by His power, so too will He raise up the saints by His power (**1 Cor. 6:14; Phil. 3:20-21**). Recognizing God's power displayed through the resurrection of Christ is so fundamental to our faith that without it we are pitiable (**1 Cor. 15:12-19**). Our hope is built on the assurance of us being resurrected like Christ (**Acts 24:15**).

Third, there is "work," or working, action, productive work, activity; confined to superhuman activity in the New Testament (Strong). The powerful working of God brings us from spiritual death to spiritual life (**Col. 2:11-12**).

We learn in this text that Christ is seated in the heavenly places. Elsewhere, we learn that faithful saints sit together with Christ in these heavenly places (**Eph. 2:4-7**). Saints who die faithfully in the Lord will be able to "sit with" Christ on His throne eternally (**Rev. 3:21**). Whereas **Eph. 1:3** uses "heavenly places" to indicate the nature and source of our spiritual blessings, the expression in this verse obviously refers to Heaven as the location wherein Jesus's throne resides and where faithful saints will also eventually reside (**John 14:13**).

"far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come."

Christ has been put in a position of authority over all things. He is currently seated at the right hand of God (**Mark 16:19; Heb. 12:2, 10:12, 1:13; Acts 2:30-33**), reigning on His throne in Heaven (**1 Cor. 15:20-28**).

In everything, Christ has earned the preeminence (**Col. 1:18; Heb. 2:9**) because He is King of kings and Lord of Lords (**Rev. 19:16, 1:5**). Christ's authority is superior to all other authorities, whether celestial or terrestrial. Christ is above all principality and power because He is the fullness of the Godhead (**Col. 2:8-9**) and has disarmed all enemies who can prevent man from serving God faithfully (**Col. 2:11-15; Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 6:10-12**).

The Greek words translated as "principality and power" also appear in **Luke 12:11, 20:20; Tit. 3:11** to identify earthly powers, whereas when the words appear in **1 Cor. 15:24** they seem to indicate more than just earthly powers (**1 Pet. 3:22**). Christ is not only above all principality and power but "far above." His authority and dominion is in effect "not only in this age" but also in the ages to come. An expression similar to "not only in this age but also in that which is to come" is found in **Matt. 12:32** to describe how blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come.

Jesus's kingdom is not to begin at some point in the future as premillennialists claim because His kingdom is already established (**Luke 17:20-21; Mark 9:1; Acts 2:30-33; Col. 1:13**). To deny that Christ is now ruling his kingdom robs Him of His present glory (**Luke 24:26. ISV**).

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

All things have been “put” (past tense – “placed,” ASV) under Christ’s feet. The “feet” represent the lowest position of the human anatomy; to be “under” the feet is to be in total submission and subservience. On occasion, conquerors would literally put their feet on the necks of their enemies as a display of power (**Josh. 10:23-24**). In stark contrast to this, Christ’s authority connotes not only power but also loving provision and selflessness (**Eph. 5:22-25**). The authority of Christ (having “all things put under His feet”) was spoken about prophetically in **Psalms 8:6** and **110:1**. Paul affirms what was spoken of by the Psalmist in this verse, as well as in **1 Cor. 15:27**. Christ’s authority exists not only over the church but over “all things” (the whole of creation) and all flesh (**John 17:1-2**).

Christ is “head” of the church. Headship is a common theme in Paul’s writings (**1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23**). When reading the New Testament in order from Matthew to Revelation, this is the first instance describing Christ as the head of the church and presenting the church as His “body.” The church represents the body of Christ belonging to Him (**Matt. 16:18**). There is only one church built by Christ (**Eph. 4:4**) with only one head over it. It is Christ who “fills all in all.” He is the source of all that is good. Members of the Lord’s body must look to their Head as the source for all righteousness and guidance (**John 14:6**).

The notion of Christians as the “body of Christ” is also found in **Col. 1:24** and **Rom. 12:4-5**. In **1 Cor. 12:27-28**, the terms “body” and “church” are used interchangeably. The “church,” as it is used here, refers to the whole body of saved believers the world over, like in **1 Cor. 10:32** and **Acts 2:47**.

All who are in Christ are known collectively as the church. This body exists as a union of like-minded believers in Christ who fellowship with one another in a living spiritual body (**Acts 2:38-47**). The body is looked upon as a whole unit with Christ as its head (**Eph. 4:15-16, 5:28; Col. 1:18, 2:19**). Of course, the church is not the literal physical body of Christ but the spiritual body attached to its spiritual head. Perhaps the greatest compliment ever given to the church is conveyed by the idea that the church is Christ’s body, that is, a necessary part of Him.

The church represents the “fullness” of Christ. Since Christ is necessary for salvation, being in His church is necessary because the church is the “fullness of Him.” Just as a person cannot be in a saved relationship with the Father without being in Christ (**John 8:24, 14:6**), neither can a person be in a saved relationship with Christ without being in His church.

CHAPTER TWO

A NEW SPIRITUAL POSITION (2:1-22)

Brought from Death to Life (v.1-10)

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world,”

“And you” forms a connection with the previous section to demonstrate how God’s power raised Jesus from physical death (**Eph. 1:20**), “and” God’s power also raised “you” from spiritual death. “You” is likely strictly addressing the Gentile Christians in Ephesus since v.11-22 is directed toward Gentile converts. However, the facts presented in v.2-10 apply to all Christians, whether or Jew or Gentile (**Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28**).

“Trespasses” and “sins” are used distinctly rather than synonymously. The word rendered “trespass” signifies a “swerving aside and falling;” the word rendered “sins” is generally used to denote sin in the abstract and signifies an entire “missing of the mark” (Ellicott). The glory of God must be the target upon which we aim our lives. When we miss the mark, we are guilty of sin. Those who are in sin are “dead.” Sin always results in spiritual death (**James 1:15; Rom. 6:23, 5:12; Gen. 2:17**). All who are capable of choosing between good and evil have been dead in sin, but all can be raised from death and be made alive in Christ (**Rom. 3:9, 23-26**).

The idea of being “dead in sin” is used by false teachers to perpetuate the doctrine of total depravity. Those who cling to this doctrine assert that since man is “dead,” there is nothing a “dead” man can do to bring himself back to life; the Holy Spirit must directly intervene. This “death” is on all people – infant or adult – due to the sin of Adam. However, the word “dead” simply indicates a separation between man and God (**Isa. 59:1-2**), not an incapability of man bringing himself to God.

Whereas physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (**James 2:26; Luke 8:49, 54-55**), spiritual death is the separation of man from God. Furthermore, when a person is spiritually dead, it is the result of his own doing (“your”) and not the product of inherited sin (**Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:1, NASB**). Sin is something we “do” – it is a choice we make (**James 4:17; Isa. 7:16; Ecc. 7:29, 20**). Sin is not something imputed onto us (**Rom. 9:11; Matt. 18:3; Deut. 1:39; Ecc. 7:29; Ezek. 18:20**). Each man bears responsibility for his sins (**2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 4:5; Job 34:10-13, ESV**). It is ironic that **Rom. 5:12**, the go-to verse for those propping up total depravity, makes it abundantly clear that man is not a sinner due to inheriting the transgressions of Adam (**Rom. 5:14**); instead, man is guilty of sin because “all have sinned.”

All are guilty of, at one point or another, walking in sin and disobedience (**Rom. 3:23, 5:12; Ecc. 7:20; 1 John 1:8**). It is only when we realize that we are dead that we can become alive through Christ (**Rom. 6:23**). Just as

God displayed His mighty power through the physical resurrection of His Son, His power is also evidenced through the spiritual resurrection of those who submit to Him in obedience (**Rom. 6:1-12**).

Walking “according to the course of this world” implies following the same pattern as the majority of those who live in this world. To walk “according to” this world means we are walking in harmony with what the world does. We must not be conformed to “this world;” instead, we must be transformed (**Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:8, 2:10; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4**).

“according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,”

With the reference to the “prince of the power of the air,” there is little doubt that Satan is under consideration. The idea seems to be that the Ephesians (and all sinners who have obeyed the gospel) were once under the control of Satan, with him being their leader and prince. The connection of the “world” with the Evil One as its “prince” or “god” is not uncommon in the scriptures. John frequently made the connection of Satan being the prince of this world throughout his gospel account (**John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11**). Paul also described Satan as “the god of this age” (**2 Cor. 4:4**).

Satan is a spirit who “now works in the sons of disobedience.” Satan has never ceased in his pursuit of drawing men away from God (**Job 1:7, 2:2; 1 Pet. 5:8**). Satan is busy; he is always working. I do not know for certain if Satan is physically present on this earth as he once was in the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden, or in some other physical form, but all can be certain that he “now” works in this world.

The phrase “sons of disobedience” tells us that people are children of the person they imitate. One can be a son of disobedience (**Eph. 5:3-7; Col. 3:5-7**) and, therefore, a son of the Devil (**John 8:44; 1 John 3:10**) by walking in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind. Or, a person can be a son of light (**1 Thess. 5:1-10**) and, therefore, a child of God (**John 1:12**) by imitating Him and walking in the light (**Eph. 5:8-14; 1 John 1:7**).

Paul shows that “all” have conducted themselves according to the “lusts” of the flesh (**James 1:14-15; Rom. 3:23**). The Greek word translated “lusts” can be used in a positive sense (**Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23**), but it generally refers to sinful desires (consider **Tit. 3:3; James 4:1**). Such is the case in this passage.

Sinful lusts comes from two sources, according to this text: the “flesh” and the “mind.” “Flesh” indicates physical desires while “mind” indicates intellectual/emotional desires. Having fleshly or intellectual/emotional desires are not sinful in of themselves; the problem lies in what becomes the object of our fleshly and intellectual/emotional desires. We all lust, but our lust in the Spirit must overpower our carnal desires (**Gal. 5:16-25**).

“and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

When Paul states that these Ephesians were “by nature children of wrath,” this does not imply they were born into the world as sinners or with God’s wrath upon them. Instead, sinful conduct comprised their characters for so long that it had become their natural way of living.

The Calvinists argue that “nature” always refers to the natural state at birth and, as result, man is hereditarily born totally depraved. However, the Greek word translated here as “nature” can refer to:

- Something innate or implanted (**Gal. 2:15**). This cannot be what the word means in this verse because man is not innately born with a sinful nature (**Ecc. 7:29a**); he develops a sinful nature by seeking out sinful and wicked schemes (**Ecc. 7:29b**).
- The result of physical law (**Rom. 2:27, 11:21-24; Gal. 2:15**). This meaning is not under consideration in this verse because sin is not transmitted by physical law (**Ezek. 18:20**).
- The physical differences between men and women (**1 Cor. 11:14**). Contextually, it is clear that this particular meaning is not under consideration.
- A habitual practice (**Rom. 2:12-14**), what we might refer to as something being done by “second nature.” This is how the word “nature” is used in this verse.

The Ephesians were not born in sin, but they had made a practice of sinning. They “walked” and “conducted” themselves in sin (**Eph. 2:2-3**), and thereby incurred the wrath of God just as all sinners do.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”

There has been a dark picture painted in the first three verses describing mankind’s sinful and lost condition, but a shift appears at verse four with the phrase “but God.” This phrase appears frequently in the Bible to show God stepping in and acting on behalf of man for his benefit:

- God providing physical salvation (**Gen. 8:1, ESV; 1 Sam. 23:14; Exod. 13:18, ESV**).
- God remaining with us during trials and persecutions and ensuring these things occur for our good (**Acts 7:9; 2 Cor. 7:5-7, ESV; Gen. 50:15-20**).
- God working through man to further His cause (**1 Cor. 3:6**).
- God providing spiritual salvation (**Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4-7**).

This passage and its message describing the salvation of man is wholly dependent on what God has done and what He has provided (mercy, love, and grace). God stepped in to save man because he is totally unable to save himself.

It is astounding that God would still love mankind even though every human with the ability to discern good from evil has rebelled against Him. God loved us and offered to save us when we did not love Him (**Rom. 5:6-11**). God forgives, pardons, and saves by His grace. It is solely by God (not man) that humans can be saved. God forgives and pardons but we do not earn this forgiveness or pardon from sin. It is impossible to earn something that occurs by grace. The ground of man's salvation is God (**Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:8-9**); His grace (driven by His loving mercy) is the cause for salvation.

Paul describes God as being "rich" in mercy. The reminder of God's richness in grace, love, and mercy is especially frequent in this epistle (**Eph. 1:7, 1:18, 2:7, 3:8, 3:16**). The richness of God's mercy is made abundant in the "great love which He loved us." God hates sin but still offers mercy because He loves all of mankind, even sinners (**Psalm 145:8-9; Rom. 5:6-8**). Again, as in **Eph. 1:4**, stress is laid on the love of God as the moving cause of salvation (**John 3:16; 1 John 4:10; Rom. 5:8**).

God, just as He physically brought Christ from death to life and seated Him in Heaven (**Eph. 1:20**), also brings mankind from spiritual death to life and figuratively seats us with Christ. Saints "sit together" with Christ in the heavenly places, indicating a "sharing" is taking place (**Rom. 8:17**). In order to stay seated in the heavenly places with Christ, saints must keep their minds and hearts in the heavenly places (**Col. 3:1-4**).

The conversion and salvation of sinners serve as evidence, or proof, of the mercy and goodness of God ("But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love . . . made us alive together with Christ . . . that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"). What an incredible responsibility saved people carry, to live as an embodiment of God's mercy to the world (**1 Tim. 1:12-17**).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Salvation from sin comes by God's "grace" and man's "faith." Since salvation is by grace, no man should boast or glory because he did nothing to merit God's grace. It is impossible to be saved on our own abilities or merits. No man can boast because God had to intervene ("but God" - v.1) to offer spiritual re-creation after what man brought upon himself through sin (**Eph. 4:20-24; Gal. 6:14-16**).

Salvation (not man's faith) is "the gift of God" (**John 4:10; Rom. 6:23**). Some say the "gift of God" is the gift of faith. They say God opens the hearts of sinners through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit and grants sinners faith. It is certainly true that God and the Holy Spirit operate in the salvation of sinners, but this indirectly occurs through the word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**), and neither God nor the Holy Spirit directly give (gift) mankind the faith to believe the scriptures. God does not give man "faith," He gives man the gift of salvation. However, God's gift of

salvation is conditioned upon man's obedient faith. Neither grace nor faith is imposed upon any man against his free will. God has offered his grace, and this offering should drive men to have faith, but this does not always occur.

It is important to note that mankind is not saved by grace alone, nor is mankind saved by faith alone. If salvation is by grace only, every person will be saved even though the Bible teaches that all men will not be saved (**Matt. 7:13**). If salvation is by faith only, all believers will be saved even though the Bible teaches that all believers will not be saved (**Matt. 7:21-23**). Believers who refuse to obey will be lost eternally (**John 12:42-43; James 2:19**). Likewise, believers who turn back to the world and do not repent will be lost eternally (**James 5:19-20**). Mankind is saved by God's grace and through one's obedient faith (**James 2:22-26**).

This passage makes it clear that man is not saved by works. Salvation does not come from works of the Law of Moses (**Rom. 3:28, 4:1-12**). Salvation also does not come from works of man's own righteousness (**Rom. 10:3; Tit. 3:5**). But we are saved by performing the various works of God (**John 6:28-29; Luke 17:3; Mark 16:16; James 2:14-26**; etc.). We are not saved by works, but through "faith." Sinners avail themselves to the benefits of God's "grace" through "faith" (**Rom. 5:1-2**). While man does not deserve God's grace, he still must obey God to acquire the blessings of His grace. "Faith" is the sinner's response to God's "grace," and saving "faith" obeys God's word (**John 3:36; Heb. 5:9; 11:8; James 2:14, 17, 24**). Obedience is not earning or meriting salvation. Obedience is man's way of receiving the blessings of salvation given by God. When a person acts "through faith" to obtain the "gift" of God, he does not cheapen or earn the unmerited "gift" of God granted by His grace. Instead, the person has simply done what God says in order to obtain the "gift" (**Matt. 7:21; Luke 17:10, Acts 2:37, 9:6, 22:10**); the person is acting upon his faith (**Rom. 6:16-18; Heb. 5:8-9**).

Although we are not saved by works and although we are saved through faith by God's grace, retaining salvation is dependent on a willingness to abound in works saints have been created in which to walk. Christians are "His workmanship," not our own workmanship. We were not created (saved) to fulfill our own desires but Christ's desires. God preordained not only to the original call and justification of sinners through Christ but also predestined the works those reborn would perform. These works further disprove the Calvinistic theories arguing that man lacks free will because these good works are only exercised when man chooses by his own free will to perform them. We are not moved by the Spirit or God to perform these works but choose or choose not to "walk" by our own volition.

Saved people are specifically created "for" (unto, KJV) good works (**Tit. 2:14, 3:8**). While good works in and of themselves cannot save man, they are so vital that God re-created saved men and women specifically for good works. Our good works are the intended result of becoming a new creation, not the cause of the new creation. These works have been a part of God's plan ("prepared beforehand") from the very beginning. God predetermined that we should lead holy lives (**1 Thess. 4:7**).

Good works should habitually be done by us rather than engaging in the habitual practice of sin (**Eph. 2:3; Rom. 6:15-23**). Saved Christians must continually practice the “good works” God prepared for saved people to “walk in” once they have obtained the gift of God’s grace. God’s grace should drive us to do good works (**Tit. 2:11-12**). Saved people were brought from death to life specifically for this purpose – to do God’s good works! If we are not living a life of good works after being reborn, we have no reason to believe that we are still saved by God’s grace. BUT we must never forget that even if we have done all that God has commanded, we are still unworthy servants (**Luke 17:7-10**).

Those Once Far Off Brought Near (v.11-22)

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

There is a call to remembrance beginning at v.11. The truths that Paul presented in v.1-10 are now to be applied directly to these people identified as “once Gentiles in the flesh.” There is no doubt who Paul is addressing in this text – physical and literal Gentiles.

One derogatory label that Jews used to describe Gentiles was the “Uncircumcision.” Circumcision demonstrated the covenant between God and Israel (**Gen. 17:9-14**). Circumcision was honorable only because of the spiritual association (**Rom. 4:9-12**). Yet, many Jews were circumcised only “in the flesh by hands” and not in their hearts, where it was most important (**Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4, 6:10; Ezek. 44:7; Rom. 2:28-29**). Paul makes it clear that although the Jews may label Gentile Christians as “Uncircumcision,” they are no longer uncircumcised, spiritually speaking (**Gal. 5:6; Rom. 2:28; Col. 2:11-12**).

The readers are encouraged to “remember” what they were in the past and consider what they now have in the present (**Eph. 2:1**). The Gentiles, specifically, are called to remember they once were:

- They were “without Christ.” The Gentiles’ former condition was without connection to Christ, even in promise. Now, like all of mankind, nothing but their sins could separate them from Christ (**Rom. 8:31-39; Isa. 59:1-2**).
- They were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” By fleshly birth, the Gentiles were initially excluded from God’s holy nation (**Deut. 7:1-6, 14:2**). Gentiles were specifically prohibited from joining that society and enjoying those privileges except through proselytization.
- They were “strangers from the covenants of promise.” The covenant of promise given to Abraham and the rest of Israel (**Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 9:4**). In contrast to the Jews, Gentiles had no promise of land, no promise

to be a great nation, and no promise that through them all nations would be blessed (**Gal. 3:15-16; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 55:3-5**).

- They were without (“having no”) hope. Although the Jews misunderstood the nature of His kingdom, the Gentiles did not glory in the hope of the coming kingdom of the Messiah like the Jews did (**Acts 13:32-34; 26:7; 28:20**). The Gentiles were also without hope due to their sins (**Rom. 1:18-25; 1 Thess. 4:1-5**).
- They were “without God.” The key reason the Gentiles were once without hope is because they were Godless. The Gentile world was religious but lacked submission to the one true God (**Acts 17:22-23**). Their heathen gods were no gods at all (**Gal. 4:8**). The Gentiles turned away from God and were without the same advantages of the Jews who possessed the Law of Moses (**Rom. 1:21-32, 3:1-2; Eph. 4:17**).

Though the Gentiles were once without Christ, hope, and God, and were aliens and strangers, the next verse tells us what they had become through Jesus Christ.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

“But now” serves as the antithesis to what was stated in the previous two verses (“at that time”). The Gentiles were once without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, without hope, and without God, “but now” had been brought near by the blood of Christ. The Gentiles were lost, “but now” they were reconciled in Christ Jesus. Paul uses the phrase “but now” throughout his epistles to contrast what man was before being brought near by the blood of Christ in comparison to where those who are obedient now stand after acting upon His atoning sacrifice (**Rom. 6:22, 7:6; Col. 3:8**).

This verse not only identifies Jesus as the source of the blessing but also our union and fellowship in Him as the blessing (**1 Cor. 10:16** [NKJV footnote for “communion” reads, “fellowship or sharing”]). There were Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in the local church at Ephesus (**Acts 18-19**). Both nationalities were brought together and reconciled through Christ. Two peoples who were once estranged and divided from each other are now united in the body of Christ.

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

When Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood, He brought “both” the Gentiles and the Jews together, bringing “peace” between them. Christ provides peace through His sacrifice (**Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:1**), but, contextually, “He himself is our peace” (**Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:1-5**).

Peace between God and man is possible due to the cross destroying the “enmity” (sin) between them (**Rom. 5:9-10**). More pertinent to this text, peace between Jew and Gentile is possible due to the cross taking away the “enmity” (Law of Moses) between them. When Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood, He removed “the middle wall of separation” that stood between the Gentiles and God – the Law of Moses.

This passage clearly proves the Law of Moses was no longer active when Paul penned the epistle. Christ “abolished” the Law after it had fulfilled its purpose (**Matt. 5:17-18; Gal. 3:23-25**). The words “law of commandments” and “ordinances” refer to the Law of Moses, which was abolished when Christ died on the cross (**Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:15-17**). The Law of Moses was abolished because it fulfilled its purpose in leading people to Christ (**Gal. 3:23-25**), identifying sin and demonstrating man’s need for forgiveness (**Rom. 7:7-13**), and providing a shadow of the true sacrifice for sin (**Heb. 10:1-4**). When Christ died, the enmity (the Law of Moses itself) also died. The Law of Moses is dead; there is no life to be found in it today (**Gal. 5:1-11**). It was made void (**Rom. 3:31**). The Law of Moses caused (was the source of) enmity between Gentiles and Jews because the Jews had the Law and the Gentiles did not. Once it was abolished, peace was possible.

Christ’s death destroyed all dividing barriers (national and spiritual), bringing all people together into one body upon their obedience to Him (**John 10:16; Gal. 3:28; Acts 10:34-35; Ezek. 37:22**). There no longer is a reason to identify Jews and Gentiles as separate entities in any spiritual sense (**Col. 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 10:17**). By taking away the Law of Moses, a “new man” not marked by earthly boundaries or nationality is available to all people. This new man is neither Jew nor Gentile but a creature made in the likeness of Christ (**Rom 6:4-5**) and unified as “one” in Christ (**Gal. 3:28; 2 Cor. 5:17**).

The cross offers to “reconcile” people to God (**Eph. 4:4; Col. 3:15**). Both Jews and Gentiles (all people) have the opportunity to be reconciled to God through the cross (**Rom. 5:16-18**). If people act upon the offer of reconciliation, they are placed into “one body,” or the church (**Eph. 1:22-23**). Those who have been reconciled to God are responsible for making known the ministry of reconciliation to the world (**2 Cor. 5:18-21**).

“And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

It is possible that Paul is quoting **Isa. 57:19** here. Whatever the case, we see that preaching the gospel and “peace” go hand-in-hand. Peace is offered through the preaching of the gospel (**Eph. 2:17, 6:15; Acts 10:34-37; Rom. 10:14-16; Zech. 9:10**). The gospel call itself is one of peace (**Col. 3:15**).

Those who were “near” refers to the Jews while those who were “afar off” refers to the Gentiles. Both now have access to the Father “by one Spirit.” This access to God is accomplished “through” Christ (**Eph. 3:11-12; John 14:6; Rom. 5:1-2**).

Debate exists concerning whether “one Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit or a united heart/mind among believers, such as what we see in **1 Cor. 6:17**, **Phil. 1:27**. I hold the position that the Holy Spirit is under consideration here for a few reasons:

1. Similar language is used in **Eph. 4:4**, clearly referring to the Holy Spirit.
2. The role of the Holy Spirit in the redemption of mankind was discussed in **Eph. 1:13-14**.
3. The Holy Spirit is a mediator (intercessor) between God and man in other respects (**Rom. 8:26**).
4. This passage teaches that God has offered access to Him through Christ, but how do we learn to take advantage of this offer of peace? Through the Holy Spirit revealing the mind of God to man (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**; **John 15:26, 16:13-15**; **1 Pet. 1:10-12**).
5. Those who are born of the Spirit (**John 3:3-5**) obtain access to God, and those who are led by the Spirit (**Rom. 8:12-14**), filled with Him (**Eph. 5:18**), bear His fruit (**Gal. 5:22-23**), and are unified in Him (**Eph. 4:3-6**) retain access to God.
6. Just as the preceding verses convey the unity of all mankind together under Christ, this verse conveys the unity of the Godhead in the salvation of man, just like **Eph. 1:3-14**.
7. **Eph. 2:19-22** continues the thought of unity and describes citizens, saints, and members of God’s household as being dwelling places of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 6:19**).

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

“Now, therefore” points to the result of the Gentiles receiving and acting upon the same offer of peace and reconciliation through Christ, that result being the Jews and Gentiles unified in the household of God. They are “fellow citizens,” “saints,” and “members.” In other words, they are equal. All who are saved make up the spiritual household (family) of God (**Gal. 3:26-29**). Since all Christians are members of the same house (**Heb. 3:5-6**), mutual affection should abound among all members of this household (**John 13:34-35**; **Gal. 6:10**).

Gentiles are not just citizens but “fellow citizens,” indicating equal privileges, advantages, and access to God. It is worth noting that citizenship implies an existing government/kingdom. If there is no kingdom, there is no citizenship, meaning the Gentiles would still be alienated from God, directly contradicting the entire message of this passage.

In these verses, Paul uses the figure of a “temple” to describe the church. Not only is the whole collection of believers called the temple of God (the church) but saints are also called the temple of God due to Him dwelling in

them via his Spirit. God – through the Holy Spirit – dwells in the temples (physical bodies) of all believers (**1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 3:24; Acts 2:38**). God no longer dwells in a physical house made with hands but in the hearts of His people (**Acts 17:24; John 4:19-21, 14:23; Eph. 3:17**), as always has been His desire (**Isa. 66:1-2, 57:15**).

Christians are not just “of” the household of God but are the very structure itself, both individually (**1 Cor. 3:9, 16**) and as the church (**Eph. 4:11-16**), built upon by the “apostles and prophets” (**1 Pet. 2:5**). The apostles laid the foundation whenever they preached the message of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (**Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:5-11**). Old Testament prophets did not fully understand God’s mystery yet still pointed to Christ and His church (**1 Pet. 1:10-12**). New Testament (first century) prophets, which seems to be who Paul has under consideration in this passage, understood the mystery yet bore the same responsibility (**2 Pet. 1:16-21**). Although the church is built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ remains the “chief cornerstone” (**Psalm 118:22**).

It is worth noting the specific tense of verbs used in this passage showing that Christians and the church’s building and growing is progressive in nature, or ongoing (“being fitted” . . . “being built”), indicating the process of being fitted and built is not complete, nor it is it necessarily ever completed on this side of eternity (**1 Pet. 2:5; 2 Pet. 3:17-18; Col. 2:6-7**).

CHAPTER THREE

THE HIDDEN MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL NOW REVEALED (3:1-13)

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),”

“For this reason” points back to what was discussed throughout chapter 2 (reconciliation in Christ). Paul uses this phrase again in **Eph. 3:14** to circle back around to the point he begins discussing here. He also used the phrase in **Eph. 1:15 (ESV)** and uses it again in **Eph. 4:1**.

Paul refers to himself as “the prisoner of Christ” for the Gentiles. Some translations like the ESV render v.1 as “For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.” Depending on which is the more accurate translation (“a prisoner” versus “the prisoner”), some slightly different conclusions might be drawn. Paul was “a prisoner” of Christ in the sense that he wrote this epistle while imprisoned. If our timeline is correct, he was specifically imprisoned because of his ministry to the Gentiles (**Acts 22:17-23**). Paul was “the prisoner” of Christ in the sense that he was bound to preach (**Eph. 6:19-20; Phile. 1, 9, 13; 1 Cor. 9:16, ISV; Acts 28:20; 2 Tim. 1:8**), specifically to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:15, 26:15-18; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:11-16, 2:9**). Contextually, it seems that this is what Paul is referencing considering God had “dispensed” His grace towards the Gentiles through Paul. Additionally, Paul describes himself – seemingly synonymously with “prisoner” – as a “minister” in v.7. Whatever the case, after describing himself as a/the prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles, Paul enters a digression focused on his ministry that continues through v.13.

By saying “if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,” Paul is not expressing doubt whether they had heard of it or not. Instead, he takes it for granted, or assumes, they understand this already. Paul uses the phrase “if indeed” numerous times throughout his letters and it never appears to convey doubt (**Eph. 4:21; 2 Cor. 5:3; Gal. 3:4; Col. 1:23**). A similar thing also occurs in **1 Pet. 2:1-2**.

Paul’s commission to preach the gospel occurred by the grace of God, which was given to him on behalf of the Gentiles. Paul emphasized God’s grace to the Ephesians, reminding them of how salvation was made possible (**Eph. 2:4-9**), while also recognizing that his stewardship as a minister was also a product of God’s grace towards him (**Rom. 12:3, 6; 15:15; Eph. 4:7**).

Paul’s ministry was the direct result of God revealing to Him exactly what he needed to preach. Although Paul did not accompany the apostles during Christ’s ministry, which was a qualification for apostleship (**Acts 1:21-22**), Jesus Himself appointed Paul to the apostleship (**Acts 9:15**).

Broadly speaking, the “mystery” is the gospel message itself (**Eph. 6:19; 1 Tim. 3:16, KJV**). Even more broadly, the mystery is Christ (**Col. 1:26-27**). However, contextually, the “mystery” mentioned here is the inclusion of Gentiles as one with the Jews in receiving equal opportunity and rights in the salvation offered by Christ (**Eph. 2**). Acceptance of the Gentiles was the key aspect causing God’s revelation to remain a secret for so long. Paul wrote down and recorded what God revealed to him. He had “briefly written already” about this mystery earlier in the epistle (**Eph. 1:9-10, 2:8**); he is now expounding more fully on the revelation (uncovering/disclosure) of this mystery.

The word “revelation” simply means to be uncovered (**Rev. 1:1-3**). This revelation was once a mystery (**Eph. 3:3, 5; Rom. 16:25**), but is no longer such (**Eph. 1:9; Rom. 16:26**). This revelation from God is called “the mystery” (**3:3, 9**), “the mystery of Christ” (**3:4**), “the gospel” (**3:6**), “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (**3:8**), and “the manifold wisdom of God” (**3:10**).

Christians have a revelation from God which they can know and understand. What Paul taught was not impossible to understand. It was simply a message once hidden from man but now revealed (**Gal. 1:11-12**). It is revealed to us when we “read” God’s word. This mystery and the Bible as a whole can be understood. If not, that means God is unjust by requiring obedience to a revelation that is impossible to understand, directly contradicting the words of Christ (**Matt. 7:21; John 12:48, 8:32**). Mankind CAN understand God’s word; the problem is not everyone desires true understanding (compare **Psalm 25:14** to **Matt. 13:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:12-14**).

“which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”

Paul continues his digression by emphasizing how the mystery was purposely hidden (**Col. 1:26a; 1 Pet. 1:10-11**), but “has now been revealed” through the apostles and prophets (**Col. 1:26b; 1 Pet. 1:12**). The source of the revelation is “the Spirit” (**John 16:13**).

The Gentiles being accepted as equals in the Kingdom had been made known in that it had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament (**Isa. 11:10, 49:6, 60:1-3, 65:1; Hos. 1:10, 2:23**). Abraham, David, the prophets, etc. did not know the full extent of God’s grace to the Gentiles. They may have possessed some knowledge about what they prophesied or what God spoke to them, but they did not understand the middle wall of separation would be destroyed and all inequality removed between Jews and Gentiles. The messages were spoken to them by God in a way they did not fully understand. In this sense, the mystery “was not made known to the sons of men.”

Paul refers to three categories of people in this text, all of whom appear to people who were directly inspired and led by the Spirit of God:

1. “Sons of Men”

This phrase is unique to the Old Testament, save for one other appearance in **Mark 3:28**. The phrase frequently appears in the poetic books of the Old Testament. Notably, the prophet Ezekiel is repeatedly addressed as the “son of man” (approximately 90 times throughout the book). I believe this phrase refers to Old Testament prophets. However, many commentators do not believe the Old Testament prophets are under consideration here. Instead, they believe a contrast is being made to the Gentiles’ former condition of being “sons of men” versus them now being “sons of God” (**Gal. 3:26-29**). While this conclusion has merit, it seems to ignore what the immediate context conveys – this information was conveyed to the sons of men “in other ages” (“in other generations” [ESV]).

2. “Apostles”

The original twelve apostles of Jesus, plus Paul and Matthias. Two apostles in specific (Peter and Paul [the latter aided by Silas and Barnabas]) were responsible for revealing that the Gentiles could become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promises of Christ (**Acts 10:34-35; 11:18; 15:12, 15-17**).

3. “Prophets”

New Testament prophets, such as Agabus, Barnabas, Judas, Silas, etc. (**Acts 11:27-28, 13:1, 15:32, 21:7-10; Eph. 2:20, 4:11**). New Testament prophets carried an enormous responsibility in revealing the mind of God to first century Christians and edifying the church (**1 Cor. 14:1-4, 22, 28-31**).

In this passage, Paul reaffirms how his ministry existed as result of God’s grace (**Gal. 1:15-16a**). It occurred by the “effective working power” of God. The Greek word translated “effective” means action, productive work, activity. In the New Testament, this word always refers to superhuman activity (Strong). The working power of God was exercised in Paul’s conversion, in the revelations made known to him, in the miracles God performed through him, and by enabling him to proclaim God’s message. **Gal. 2:8** conveys the same thought that Paul is expressing in this passage. A similar expression is also used in **Eph. 1:19-20** to describe God’s power on display in resurrecting Christ and placing Him on His throne in Heaven.

Paul’s ministry is different than anyone else’s today because he did not need to gradually grow/mature into becoming a preacher of the gospel. Instead, he was “made” a minister, showing God’s direct involvement in appointing Paul to his inspired position (**Acts 9:17, 20; Gal. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:5**). Paul’s ministry was one which required work and service (**Col. 1:24-25, 29**). He did not view the provision of God’s grace as an opportunity to neglect his duties as a servant of Christ (**1 Cor. 15:10**).

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;”

NOTE The words “fellowship” and “through Jesus Christ” appear in the NKJV due to their appearance in later manuscripts. However, it should be noted that older manuscripts do not contain these phrases. For the purposes of consistency in this outline, we will continue examining the NKJV translation.

Paul’s humility is on full display in this text. He considered himself not only “less than the least” of the apostles but less than the least “of all the saints.” He considered himself less than even you and me! Yet, even Paul could obtain grace. Paul’s lowliness of mind (**Phil. 2:3; Mark 9:35**) came from the fact that he did not forget his former condition. He always remembered how he once persecuted and wreaked havoc of the church (**1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6; Acts 8:3**); he always remembered he was a former blasphemer (**1 Tim. 1:12-13**); and he always remembered that he was the chief of all sinners (**1 Tim. 1:15-16**).

God extending his grace to Paul, a once terrible sinner, led to a two-fold compulsion: “I should preach” and “make all see” (bring to light, ESV) the fellowship of the mystery. All who act upon God’s grace should desire to spread the gospel and share in the fellowship of the mystery of the gospel (**Rom. 11:11-12, 15-16**). Although Paul was specifically commissioned to bring light to the Gentiles, or make them to see the mystery (**Acts 13:47**), the passage shows that “all” people can see (understand) the mystery – all can become enlightened. God planned to reveal the mystery since the very beginning (**1 Cor. 2:7-8**). The Gentiles becoming equal partakers in Christ was in the mind of God since “the beginning” and remained “hidden” until Christ accomplished the Father’s purpose laid forth from before the creation of the world.

For a third time now in this epistle, Paul refers to spiritual riches from God available in Christ (**Eph. 1:7, 2:7**). The “riches of Christ” found in the gospel are “unsearchable.” To human reasoning, the wealth and riches in Christ are past fully understanding, both because God has not revealed everything (**Deut. 29:29**) and because we are unable to fully comprehend it (**Isa. 55:8-9**).

Paul states that God “created all things through” Jesus Christ. Here, Paul recognizes the sovereignty of the Godhead based upon the fact that all things owe their origin to Him. All things were made by Christ and without Him was not anything made that was made (**John 1:1-3; Gen 1:26**).

“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,”

“To the intent” indicates what was just stated (Paul’s ministry) exists for the purpose of making the manifold (varied / diverse) wisdom of God known. Paul adds that this responsibility not only rested in his hands but also lies with the church (**1 Tim. 3:15**). Although the church, through preaching the gospel, makes known God’s wisdom to the world, that is not Paul’s point in this particular text. Contextually, the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the church to “principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (**1 Cor. 4:9**). Whereas angels once did not understand the mystery (**1 Pet. 1:12**), they now can see the manifold wisdom of God due to the apostles’ work in the first century and the church’s work while the earth continues to exist (**Eph. 3:21**).

It is important to note that Paul did not say the wisdom of God is evidenced in the imperfect actions and activity occurring within the church. Instead, God’s wisdom is seen in the plan (the mystery) the church upholds. Those who compromise the church are not perfect, but the message they carry, if handled correctly, is perfect (**Psalms 19:7-9**) and can make people perfect, or complete (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).

“according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”

The manifestation of God’s wisdom via the church was part of God’s “eternal purpose,” or plan (**Eph. 1:7-9**), and was accomplished through Christ (**1 Cor. 1:24, 30**). The church was not a substitute for an earthly kingdom because the Jews rejected Christ, as some contend. The church also was not some stopgap measure for another kingdom to be established upon Christ’s second coming, as others contend.

Through Christ and our faith in Him, we can access the Father with “boldness” and “confidence.” Christians can have boldness and confidence because Christ opened the way for man to have access to God (**John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5**). Boldness is not a product of anything within ourselves, but comes from God’s work (**2 Cor. 3:4-6**). Boldness and confidence toward God is not rash nor presumptive. Our access to God is a gift of God’s grace, of which we are undeserving. As such, we approach God with humility, recognizing our smallness and God’s greatness (**Psalms 8:4a**). Nevertheless, we should never be afraid to approach God while we abide in Him. We must, however, always realize that sin, unless repented of, will turn God’s face from us and remove our access to Him (**Isa. 59:1-2**).

“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

Christians in Ephesus were concerned for Paul (**Eph. 6:21-22**). As result, Paul was concerned they might “lose heart.” Paul asked the Ephesians not to be disheartened at his tribulations (presumably his imprisonment at the time of writing the epistle but, more broadly, could refer to all persecution he endured by preaching the gospel to the

Gentiles). Paul's tribulations may have appeared to the Ephesians as an indication of failure in his mission. Yet, quite contrary to failure, Paul's tribulations were an indication of the Ephesians' "glory."

Paul wanted the Ephesians to focus on the "glory" his sufferings would bring them rather than the pain that it would personally bring him (1 Cor. 4:8-13; Phil. 2:17-18). Despite all of his sufferings, Paul refused to lose heart because he knew that he was bringing life to the lost through his ministry (2 Cor. 1:6-7; 4:1, 7-12, 16). All Christians will reap a harvest of "glory" if we do not lose heart (Gal. 6:9; Rom. 8:18).

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH (3:14-21)

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,"

Having ended his digression that started in v.2, Paul circles back around to, seemingly, his original purpose of the chapter: a prayer prompted by God's grace in offering salvation to all men, Christ replacing enmity with peace, the unifying power of the cross, and equality in the household of God.

Paul states that he bowed his knees to the Father in prayer. In this passage, I believe "bow my knees" is a figurative expression to describe Paul praying. However, it being a figurative expression only works because kneeling is indicative of one of the many ways God's people should pray. Kneeling in prayer appears throughout the Old Testament (Ezra 9:5; 1 Kings 8:54; 2 Chron. 6:13; Psalm 95:6, 13:2; Dan. 6:10); it also appears throughout the New Testament (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40). Paul did this regularly (Acts 20:36, 21:5).

Paul states the "whole family" in heaven and earth is named after God. The word translated "family" means lineage, ancestry; a family, tribe (Strong). The idea of carrying the name of God indicates we derive our origin from Him (Gen. 1:26). He is the One from whom our very being is derived (Acts 17:28). However, the succeeding verses seem to imply that Paul is not referring to lineage in a physical sense. God is the source of all human life, but throughout this epistle Paul emphasizes the spiritual family of Christ (Eph. 2:18-19, 3:6, 4:4-6).

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,"

Paul desired for the Ephesians to be strengthened, according to the riches of God's glory, with power through God's Spirit in the inward man. The word "riches," as it has throughout the epistle, denotes "abundance." The idea here is that God could provide all strength necessary for increasing the stability of the Ephesians' inward persons.

Notice that Paul wanted the Ephesians to have inward strength, not outward strength. The inward man is the spiritual part of man, including our intellect, emotions, humility, and morality (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Though the outward man grows old and weakens (the physical body), the inward man stays strong through the power of the Spirit and His

revealed word (2 Cor. 4:1-2, 16). Strength for the inward man increases as our knowledge of and obedience to God's word increases (Col. 1:9-11; John 6:63).

Paul prayed that Christ would dwell in the Ephesians hearts "through faith." Although I believe this epistle provides repeated evidence of the Holy Spirit dwelling personally (literally) in believers (Eph. 1:13-14, 2:22), I believe this reference to the Spirit providing strength and Christ dwelling in believers' hearts through faith refers to Christians allowing the word of God to dwell in them figuratively, such as in Col. 3:16, because the first 13 verses focus on the gospel message (the revealed mystery).

Paul also prayed that the Ephesians' faith would be "rooted" and "grounded" in love. The Greek word for "rooted" means to render firm, to fix, establish, cause a person or a thing to be thoroughly grounded (Thayer). The Greek word for "grounded" means to lay the foundation, ground, settle (Strong). The result of a person taking Christ and His word into his heart is his faith becoming rooted and grounded in love. Love is not itself the root or foundation but the condition upon which growth occurs. A Christian's faith is only satisfactory when it is motivated by and works in love (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:13-14).

Paul did not want the Ephesians to have a shallow love for Christ, but a love that was firmly planted and established. Unfortunately, in Rev. 2:4 we learn how the Ephesians eventually left their "first love" roughly thirty years after they received this epistle. It is sad when a saint leaves his first love, when he no longer finds happiness in spiritual matters and his duty to Christ becomes mechanical and formulaic, or he falls away completely. Friends, if we ever find ourselves in that situation, we must repent and do the first works (Rev. 2:5) by reigniting our love for each other, love for God, and love for truth.

"may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would understand the "width and length and depth and height" of Christ's love. What is fascinating here is Paul essentially prays that the Ephesians would understand what is, by his own admission, impossible to fully understand ("the love of Christ ... passes knowledge"). The phrase "width and length and depth and height" expresses the vastness, fullness, and grandeur of the love of Christ.

- How wide is the love of Christ? The love of Christ is as wide (broad) as the earth itself because it embraces everyone of all ages, genders, languages, skin colors, etc. who are willing to submit to Him (Heb. 2:9, 5:9).
- To what lengths will the love of Christ go? To the end; to death (John 13:1, 15:9-13).
- To what depths will the love of Christ go? To incredibly painful depths (Isa. 53:1-7).
- What, or where, is the height of Christ's love? In Heaven itself (John 17:24-26, 14:1-3).

It is interesting that Paul did not pray that all men would understand the love of Christ, but “all saints,” indicating that even Christians need to be occasionally reminded of Christ’s love and care for them. When downtrodden and burdened by this world and its troubles, how easy it can be to forget the simple truth that Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so (**John 15:9, 3:16**)!

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Paul here acknowledges that there is no limit to the ability and power of God, of which the latter works in His people. God can do much more than we can imagine, greater than we ask, and beyond what we need. The same power of God that did the impossible in raising Christ from the dead (**Eph. 1:19-20**) is working in Christians.

Since God is so great and powerful, He is to be glorified “in the church.” Just as the church is responsible for making known the manifold wisdom of God (**Eph. 3:10**), the source of the glorification of God is also Christ’s church. Glory will be brought to God via the church “to all generations, forever and ever” (**Matt. 6:13, 16:18**). Glory will be brought to God via man individually “to all generations, forever and ever” as well (**Phil. 2:10-11; Psalm 45:17; Rev. 5:13**). Truly, in everything that Christians and the church do and receive in the form of blessings from the Father, all glory should be ascribed to Him (**Heb. 13:15**). We must, however, not only glorify not only in our speech but, more importantly, in our actions (**Heb. 13:16; Matt. 5:14-16; 1 John 3:18**).

CHAPTERS FOUR THROUGH SIX

THE CHRISTIAN WALK (4:1-6:20)

The first three chapters of the epistle deal with key tenants of our doctrine: election, Christ's headship, grace, faith, salvation, equality in the Lord's body, and the revelation of the mystery. The final three chapters contain exhortations for Christians to base their lives and conduct upon these principles of truth. In this section of the epistle, Paul discusses the practical, daily walk of people professing to be in the spiritual family of Christ.

The word "walk" is found several times in this section of Ephesians and refers to the daily conduct and manner of living of Christians (**Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15**). Having described their wealth in Christ (**Eph. 1-3**), Paul now begins discussing the Ephesians' walks in Christ (**Eph. 4-6**). When we understand our riches in Christ, there should be a burning desire to live for Him.

Through the remainder of the epistle, Paul explains various activities and relationships of the Christian life in, such as the local church, the world, the home, and the workplace. Specifically, in **v.1-16**, Paul begins his overview of the walk in Christ by emphasizing the need for Christians to walk in unity. The following phrases in Eph. 4 emphasize unity:

- "Unity" (**v.3, 13**)
- "Bond" (**v.3**)
- "One" (**v.4-6**)
- "Joined and knit together" (**v.16**).

Our world is marked by dissension, division, and strife. Especially in religion, division is rampant, not only in the sense that the world recognizes many gods and man-made religions, but dissension and strife even permeate Christianity and the Lord's church. God did not will religious division, which leads to confusion, but rather peace (**1 Cor. 14:33**). As **Eph. 1-3** has shown, God designed and executed a perfect plan to bring about unity established in Jesus Christ. Man has managed to distort and cause extensive damage to God's perfect plan.

Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Paul again identifies himself as "I . . . the prisoner of the Lord." After identifying himself as a prisoner for Christ, Paul beseeched, or urged, the Ephesians to "walk" in a worthy manner. To "walk" is to maintain a certain manner of life and conduct. Paul's appeal is not simply that the Ephesians would "walk," but that they would walk

“worthy.” Walking worthily indicates a closeness with God. Despite being surrounded by sin, we can, in fact, walk closely with God and walk worthy of Him (**Gen. 5:24; 6:9, 12; Deut. 13:4; Jer. 10:23**). As Paul proves throughout the remainder of the epistle, the way we conduct our lives is just as important as what we believe and teach (**Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12**). Our lives must be consistent with the character of Christ. Our conduct must match the name we wear and we must make every effort to measure up to our heavenly calling (**Heb. 3:1**).

Paul identifies Christianity as a “calling.” The vocation, or calling, of a Christian is, simply put, the job of being a Christian. This vocation is not a part-time job, however; it is the full-time occupation of the God’s people. It is our primary work in life. To identify Christianity as a calling implies that the manner of walking is not of our own design. We have been called by God to a specific manner of living expected by Him (**Col 2:6; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 2 Tim. 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:11-12**). God’s call is to righteous and holy living, which comes through the revelation of the gospel (**2 Thess. 2:13-15**). Walking unworthily and walking in disunity with the gospel brings discredit to our calling. When men choose to walk contrary to gospel call, they force the church to disunify themselves from the disorderly (**2 Thess. 3:4-6**).

Paul uses five different words to describe the worthy walk of Christians who actively promote unity among God’s people:

1. “Lowliness”

The having a humble opinion of oneself; a deep sense of one's (moral) littleness; modesty, humility, lowliness of mind (Strong). This mindset is essential to Christianity (**Acts 20:19; Phil 2:3; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 5:5**). Those who are arrogant see themselves as most important. The lowly and humble Christian, however, sees his Lord, his brethren, unity, and peace as most important. When one proud, arrogant, or self-centered Christian insists upon his own way rather than truth or is unwilling to submit to the judgments of those who rule over him, unity is destroyed (**Prov. 13:10, 28:25; James 4:6**).

2. “Meekness”

An inwrought grace of the soul (Vine). Meekness involves mildness, gentleness, kindness. Meekness is gentle strength (**2 Cor. 10:1; 1 Pet. 3:15**). Everything Christians do is to be done in a manner of meekness (**James 3:13**). Correcting those in error requires meekness (**2 Tim. 2:24-26; Gal. 6:1-2**). All people deserve to receive meekness (**Tit. 3:2**), even those who wrong us. Meekness involves a willingness to suffer wrong without retaliation; it involves a mild and forgiving spirit and a willingness to accept being wronged for the sake of peace and unity (**1 Cor. 6:7**).

3. “Longsuffering”

Patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs (Strong). Christians must walk with a spirit of longsuffering; after all, this is one of the fruits of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22**). Just like lowliness and meekness,

it takes effort to become longsuffering (**Col. 3:12**). We must be longsuffering with our brethren (**1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Tim. 4:2**). If we would be more longsuffering with our brethren, then strife and division would be much less prevalent. God is longsuffering toward us (**2 Pet. 3:9**), so we should be longsuffering toward others knowing that unity is at stake.

4. “Bearing with”

To sustain, to bear (with equanimity [mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation]), to bear with, endure (Strong). To bear with another person requires a great deal of patience because it involves holding back reaction and possessing self-restraint. Forbearance, like patience, requires us to endure the faults of brethren with an attitude of holding up, sustaining, and seeking to help rather than criticizing (**1 Thess. 5:14; Gal. 5:13-15**).

5. “Love”

Benevolence, good will, esteem (Strong). All these godly characteristics (lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance) are to be acted upon in love because love is the bond of perfection (**Col. 3:14**); love promotes peace (**v.2; Col. 3:15**). Godly love is genuine (**Rom. 12:9-10**). It is more than mere emotion. Love seeks the greatest good for others, thus supporting unity (**1 Cor. 8:13**).

Paul urged the Ephesians to make an active effort (endeavor) to “keep” unity. Keeping unity is as important as initially gaining it. Unity is neither obtained nor maintained by accident. Unity occurs when men accept the conditions of Christ’s reconciliation, making all believers one (**Eph. 2:14-18**). But after obtaining this initial unity, it must be diligently kept and guarded.

Unity is oneness. Unity does not masquerade itself as superficial togetherness. Unity takes work and open discussion among believers! I believe the greatest hurdle to unity today is the fact that too many Christians ignore our differences rather than seek to work through them in order to achieve real unity. The problem with this is that unity does not happen unless we recognize and work through our differences! We should never voice our differences in an argumentative, hateful, or abrasive manner (**Eph. 4:15**), but we also must never desire to maintain a false picture of unity where disagreements are never voiced or explored. How can we possibly be of one heart (**Acts 4:32**) today if we choose to ignore our differences as it pertains to Bible matters and truth?

True biblical unity requires keeping our beliefs (doctrine) and practices (our individual walks) in harmony with the revelation of the Spirit. The basis of agreement and unity must be the word of God (**1 Cor. 1:10**). Jesus prayed that His disciples the world-over would be one in God and in Him (**John 17:20-21**). In that prayer, Jesus showed that this unity is only possible if we are compliant with the word of God (**v.6, 7-8, 14, 17, 19**). Therefore, unity is not just a collective obligation, but requires the individual to constantly examine himself.

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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.”

Having established the necessity of genuine love being the driving factor for maintaining peace and unity in the church (v.1-3), Paul now relays the necessity of unity being derived from basic principles of truth (v.4-6). These verses emphasize the need to uphold the truth. True biblical unity is based upon acceptance of the objective truth contained within the Bible and the gospel message. This text shows that Christians cannot involve themselves in error to maintain peace (**Rom. 14:23**); neither can they associate with Christians caught up in sin to keep unity (**1 Cor. 5**).

Attitude and effort are not enough. This passage shows that Christians must also abide in the right doctrine (teaching) and basic principles of truth for unity to be maintained and preserved. Love rejoices with the truth, not in evil and unrighteousness (**1 Cor. 13:5-6**); therefore, love alone is not sufficient. Love, evidenced by lowliness, meekness, forbearance, and longsuffering attitudes, must also be supported by a love for the truth.

In these three verses Paul presents seven “ones” constituting the foundation upon which God creates unity in the church and of which Christians are responsible for upholding to keep unity and peace.

1. “One Body”

Paul has already explained within this epistle that the “body” is the church (**Eph. 1:22-23**), consisting of all saved people (**Eph. 2:16; 1 Cor. 12:12-13**). Though there are many members, all Christians are united in one body and under one head (**1 Cor. 12:20; Rom. 12:5; Col. 1:18**). To be in Christ is to be in his body. Christ is the head of the body. God did not devise a disjointed body. Instead, He designed and implemented a unified body with each member sharing a relationship with the Lord and with each other. This great spiritual body is one. There certainly is no other spiritual body recognized by God and it is not to be divided (**1 Cor. 1:13a**). We are added to the church of the Lord's choice (His body) when we submit to His conditions of salvation (**Acts 2:38, 47b**).

Denominationalism seeks to have one head with many bodies (and many denominations elevate men to an unscriptural level of headship over their false bodies on par with Christ over His true body). The concept of man-made denominations practicing different forms of worship, engaging in different methods of religious “good works,” and believing and establishing different doctrines about Christ, salvation, and the rule of His kingdom contradict the simplicity of God’s design in there being one body. To encourage people to look for the church that is “best for you” or claim that “it doesn’t matter where you go to church” is to promote disunity and discord and, ultimately, deny that there is, in fact, only one body.

2. “One Spirit”

Here, “Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit, or the form of God who has communicated to man literally and miraculously through inspired men (2 **Tim. 3:16**; 1 **Cor. 2:9-13**; **John 16:13**). By one Spirit, we are guided to oneness with God and with fellow Christians through His revelation. With there only being one Holy Spirit, this indicates a unity of revelation (1 **Cor. 12:4, 8-9, 11**). We are provided only one singular rule of conduct that we are to pattern our lives by and constantly measure ourselves against (2 **Tim. 3:16-17**; **Gal. 6:16**).

3. “One Hope”

One “hope” indicates the body being unified in their purpose, aspirations, desires, and goals. This common hope unites us together. People outside the body hope for different things, such as popularity, wealth, an abundance of earthly possessions, and fulfillment of every carnal desire. Christians, however, are unified in their earnest expectation (hope) of everlasting glory. Members of the one body of Christ work together in view of and in fellowship of the same hope (**Heb. 10:19-25**), which is Heaven itself (1 **Cor. 15:19**). All united in the body are ultimately saved by hope (**Rom. 8:18-25**); those outside the body, on the other hand, have no hope (**Eph. 2:12**; 1 **Thess. 4:13**).

4. “One Lord”

This phrase indicates that the body is unified under the authority and leadership of Christ because our hope and our salvation is in Christ. Jesus is the one source of authority; as such, Christians do all in His name (**Col. 3:17**). We accept Christ’s authority as final and do everything to His honor and glory. The church does not make God’s laws; instead, the church is governed by the laws of His Son. Division comes when we follow our own rule and authority rather than submit to the rule and authority of the one Lord of the body, Jesus Christ.

5. “One Faith”

To have one “faith” suggests unity in doctrine. It refers to the system of faith, not necessarily each person’s individual faith (personal walk and dedicated heart to Christ). There is only one faith (1 **Tim. 4:1**; **Col. 2:7**). The apostles all carried this same faith/doctrine (**Acts 2:42**). We too must accept, abide in, defend, and remain united in this one proper and true system of faith (**Jude 3**; **Phil. 1:25-27**).

6. “One Baptism”

Given that there are numerous baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, this expression may seem contradictory. However, there is only “one” baptism under consideration here, and it is the baptism that unifies all believers across all eras of time – the form of baptism that allows entrance into the one body of Christ and provides forgiveness of sins. All Christians are united in the fact that they:

- (1) had their sins remitted through water baptism (**Acts 2:38, 22:16**);
- (2) entered the body of Christ through water baptism (**Acts 2:38, 47b; John 3:3-5**);
- (3) are saved by the blood of Christ through water baptism (**Mark 16:15-16; 1 Pet. 3:21**);
- (4) were been baptized into Christ (**Gal. 3:26-27**).

There is only one baptism that unites believers today. We are not united by Holy Spirit baptism, the baptism of fire, baptism of the Cloud and Sea, or the baptism of John the Baptist. Christians are unified in their obedience to the one baptism required in the Great Commission (**Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16**).

7. “One God and Father”

The fundamental uniting ground upon which everything stated prior hinges is the simple fact that there is only one “God and Father” who is above all, through all, and in all. One God indicates unity of origin and source, as well as unity in whom we worship. Simply put, if there were many gods, there would be no unity in religion! There is only one true and living God (**Jer. 10:10; John 17:10; 1 Tim. 1:17**) who is the Father of all of creation.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’”

The next few verses show how God provided the means to keep the unity of the spirit – through “gifts” given to men in accordance with God’s grace. When Christ ascended, He gave these “gifts” to men. With this expression, our minds are likely drawn to **John 16:17**. While it is true that the Holy Spirit took on a special role in guiding the apostles and New Testament prophets in conveying the mind of God to man upon Christ’s ascension, I do not believe that is what Paul is specifically referencing in this passage. The gifts referenced in this passage are not necessarily miraculous spiritual gifts, but, I believe, refer to the men and women were able to perform these gifts and were responsible for conveying the word of God truthfully and accurately to bring people to a knowledge of the truth and promote unity within the church. These gifts (people) were given upon Christ’s ascension to Heaven. The apostles and prophets, accompanied by evangelists, pastors, and teachers made it possible to attain and maintain unity of the Spirit and unity in the truth via the scriptures. As such, Paul describes these people as “gifts” of God responsible for building the church and individual Christians up into the full stature and measure of Christ.

The quote Paul references in this passage is derived from **Psalms 68:18**, which depicts a victorious return of the Lord. Paul quotes this Psalm at the Spirit’s direction to convey the idea that Jesus’s victorious return to heaven brought about the dispensation of gifts of His grace to His people. The Psalm describes God’s people bringing the ark of the covenant to Mount Zion, and is a psalm of triumph. The Psalm appears to have been written when the ark was removed from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion (**2 Sam. 6:1**) and, on the surface, seems to have no connection to Christ. However, upon closer examination, a connection can be found in Christ becoming the conqueror and captor of all

evil forces upon His ascension, taking captive what had brought man into captivity (**Heb. 2:14-15; Acts 2:22-24; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:15; John 12:31**).

“(Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”

Affirming **John 6:38a, 3:13**, Paul here describes how in order for Christ to ascend to Heaven He first needed to come down to earth to take captive what had brought man into captivity. Christ did not just descend from Heaven to the earth, but He descended into the “lower parts” of the earth. This statement serves as a contrast to what is stated about the Lord’s ascension, which is “far above all the heavens.”

Christ descended from the glories and splendor of Heaven (where we all desire to go) to experience the most loathsome and deepest pains and humiliation on earth (where we all desire to leave). Christ came in the lowest form of servitude, humbling Himself to the worst death imaginable (**Phil. 2:5-8; Isa. 53:2-6**). Despite His humiliation and death, Christ ascended, not only out of the grave, but up through the clouds and to Heaven itself to be seated at the right hand of God (**Heb. 4:14, 12:1-2; Eph. 1:20-21**).

The Catholic church argues that Jesus descended into Hell (the lowest part of earth) when He died. However, this erroneous doctrine is not derived from scripture but, instead, is derived from the Apostle’s Creed, 4th century AD. Jesus did not descend into Hell (gehenna) upon His death, but, instead, His soul went to Hades / Paradise (**Luke 23:43 Acts 2:27, 31**)

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”

The gifts God gave the church are identified in this verse as five categories of people: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These people served the purpose of achieving and maintaining unity in the truth during the first century.

1. “Apostles”

An apostle is a messenger, one sent on a mission (Strong). This broad sense of the word is used of Christ Himself (**Heb. 3:1**), Barnabas (**Acts 14:14**), and James, the brother of Jesus (**Gal. 1:19**). The apostles of Christ in the sense of the men we identify as the twelve apostles (plus Paul and Matthias) were divinely appointed representatives, occupying a special and unique role.

No one could be an apostle unless he had witnessed the resurrection of Christ and/or were personally selected by God for the role (**Acts 1:15-26, 9:15**). These men helped to lay the foundation of the church (**Eph. 2:20**). Unity in the church was and is possible because the apostles were unified in their doctrine (**Acts 2:42**).

However, since no one alive today could possibly be a witness to the Lord's resurrection, neither can anyone today be an apostle of Christ. The apostles completely set in order what the Lord wanted to be taught and practiced by all Christians. They left no successors.

2. "Prophets"

The term "prophet" refers to an interpreter or forth-teller of the divine will (Strong). In the scriptures, a prophet is a mouthpiece for God (**Exod. 4:10-16, 7:1**). In the New Testament, prophets and apostles were closely associated, as seen throughout this epistle (**Eph. 2:19-20, 3:4-5; 4:11**). Like the apostles, the foundation of the church was built upon the words of New Testament prophets (**Eph. 2:19-20**).

Prophets contributed truth to the first century church by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (**2 Pet. 1:19-21**). Such people included Agabus, Barnabas, Judas, Silas, Philip's daughters, among others not specifically named in scripture (**Acts 11:27-28, 13:1, 15:32, 21:7-10**). The work of New Testament prophets was essential because the completed written revelation was not yet available as we have it today. When the completed revelation was finished, the prophets' work concluded (**1 Cor. 13:9-12**).

3. "Evangelists"

An evangelist is a bringer of good tidings, referring to the heralds of salvation through Christ who were/are not apostles (Thayer). Evangelists (preachers) bear the greatest of good news (**Rom. 10:14-15, ESV**). Men like Philip and Timothy are specifically identified in the scriptures as evangelists (**Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5**). In contrast to apostles and prophets, special miraculous knowledge is not essential to being an evangelist. As such, the role of evangelist continues to exist today (**Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 8:1-4**). Sadly, although anyone can become an evangelist, not all preach the truth (**Gal. 1:8-9**).

4. "Pastors"

The term "pastor" refers to a shepherd, protector, and ruler of a flock; tend a flock or herd (Strong). The word "pastor" is used only once in the Bible (NKJV), but the Greek word from which it is translated is found several times, usually translated as "shepherd." Pastors, shepherds, bishops, overseers, elders, and presbyters all refer to the same office.

Whereas any Christian can become an evangelist, not just anyone can become a pastor. Few men ever qualify for such a lofty and vital role within the church (**1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-8**). During the first century, some who were pastors and teachers were surely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Specific supernatural power was not, however, a qualification for overseeing a local church or teaching. As such, this office continues to be vital for maintaining unity within the Lord's body today. God purposefully designed local bodies of the Lord's people to be overseen by pastors (**Tit. 1:5**). To anyone who has ever been a member of a church without

elders, you probably know full-well how easily disunity can creep in to a local body of the Lord's people when no one is shepherding the flock.

5. "Teachers"

A "teacher" is simply an instructor (Strong). Some commentators tend to think that Paul had in mind one role when referring to pastors and teachers (similar language is used in **1 Cor. 12:28** and only refers to teachers and does not include pastors). This may be an accurate conclusion. However, we know that the responsibility of teaching does not rest solely upon the shoulders of pastors (**Heb. 5:12**). All Christians should teach in some capacity (**Acts 8:4; Tit. 2:3**).

As is the case with pastors, there were first century teachers who likely possessed a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit. Supernatural power was not, however, a qualification for becoming a teacher. Instead, the key qualification for teaching is living lives that match what we teach (**James 3:1, 10; 1 Cor. 9:27; Matt. 7:1-5**).

God gave us these gifts (people) for a purpose: "equipping saints for the work of the ministry." There are two different words used in the Greek to designate "ministry." *Evangelistes* indicates the work of preaching the gospel. *Diakonias* indicates the work of serving, which is the term used here. This word indicates service and aid, or supplying things which are needed.

Many times when we think of a spiritual minister, we think only of the pulpit preacher. Of course, this man does serve (hopefully), but he is far from the only minister in the church. Each member of the local body has a responsibility to serve in terms of teaching the lost, encouraging and upholding those among us who are weak in the faith, caring for the needy, trying to restore erring brethren, and comforting those who are downtrodden. The church grows (is built up / edified) and unity is established when every Christian ministers to the needs of one another as we have opportunity (**Gal. 6:10**).

God gave us these gifts (people) for another purpose: the spiritual perfecting / edifying (growth and unification) of the saints. Edification (growth) does not come to all Christians automatically simply because Christ gave us these gifts; we must cooperate and put forth personal, individual effort (**Eph. 4:16; Acts 9:31; Rom. 14:18-19; 2 Tim. 2:15**), and we must strive to be of the same mind / heart (**1 Cor. 12:22-26**). Through teaching the word of God, which was completed and conveyed by the apostles and prophets, upheld by evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and preserved by the Holy Spirit, the church can be built up and united in the faith (**Acts 20:32**). These gifts enabled and continues to enable each member of the Lord's body to attain spiritual maturity and collective unity.

“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”

God also gave us these gifts (people) to help us reach unity in faith and understanding of Christ, bringing us to a state that matches Him. Christ is the perfect standard (**Heb. 2:18, 4:15, 5:8-9**). We are expected to match Him fully in every aspect of our lives because the church is meant to represent the fullness of Christ (**Eph. 1:23**). "The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" establishes the end-goal of our projected growth, with "fullness" implying the complete extent. Therefore, we reach maturity when we attain qualities of Christlikeness. Contextually, Paul is speaking about the perfection of the whole body of Christ, but this maturity and completeness is only possible when each member of the body strives to measure up to the full stature of Christ.

Not every Christian is at the same level in their faith/knowledge (**1 Cor. 8:7a; Rom. 14:1**), yet we all must have the same goal that we work towards every single day (**Phil. 3:12-16**). Individually, we must continually ask ourselves, "How do I measure up to Christ?" (**1 John 2:5-6**), and then continually make improvements whenever we recognize our personal shortcomings (**1 John 1:5-7**). Growth is not accidental nor is it unconditional. If each Christian will use his God-given abilities to fulfill his individual responsibilities to Christ outside the church and then fulfill whatever roles he takes on within the local body, the church will be vibrant, strong, growing, and able to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

The gifts (pastors, teachers, evangelists, prophets, and apostles responsible for upholding the truth) Paul spoke about earlier were provided by God to help each Christian attain spiritual adulthood. Before the New Testament was fully revealed and confirmed, the body of Christ could only have a child-like knowledge (**1 Cor. 13:9-13**), leaving unity a much more difficult task than for us today who possess the completed and confirmed revelation of God. Now, with the perfect and complete word of God at our disposal, perfection / completeness and unity within the body of Christ is more possible than ever before (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).

“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—”

Paul again identifies Christ as "head." Whereas **1 Cor. 11:3** identifies Christ as the spiritual head of men, this epistle repeatedly affirms Christ as the head of His spiritual body – the church (**Eph. 4:15-16, 1:21-22, 5:23**).

The word "children" (or babes) often carries a negative connotation in the scriptures (**1 Cor. 3:1, 13:11; Gal. 4:1-3; Heb. 5:13**). The same negative connotation is present here. In some respects, Christians are to be like children (**Matt. 18:3**). However, Paul warns here that "we should no longer be children," demonstrating weakness and instability in faith and a lack of dedication to the truth.

There will likely always be spiritual babes among us who need to grow (1 Cor. 3:2), but Paul is not strictly speaking about new converts in this context. Even those who are “old” in the faith must make sure they are not still child-like and ensure they have not reverted to child-like tendencies in their faith (Heb. 5:12). When we stop growing, that is when disunity and, as Paul explains here, error and false doctrine creeps into the body.

Two phrases are used by Paul here to indicate the weakness and instability of those who remain children. Such people are (1) “tossed to and fro” and (2) “carried about” by “every wind of doctrine” that comes from wicked and deceitful men. Here, Paul speaks of such teachers who knowingly spread false doctrine (“cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”). A crafty man is one who handles methodically the information and circumstances at his disposal. Their methods are sometimes subtle (like the serpent in the Garden of Eden) as if they are lying in wait to ambush. Such false teachers thrive on those who are spiritually child-like by playing with words to deceive, thereby leading those who are unsuspecting down a path towards eternal death (Acts 20:30; 2 Tim. 3:13).

This passage does not picture the blind leading the blind (Matt. 15:14), but those who can see clearly deliberately leading the blind into eternal damnation. While it is seen as deplorable in our society to even remotely imply that a religious teacher would deliberately and purposefully spread error, Paul warns here and the New Testament repeatedly affirms that we must beware of those who intentionally handle God’s word deceitfully (2 Cor. 2:17; 11:3, 13-15; Gal. 2:4; Col. 2:4, 8, 18; Matt. 7:15). In contrast to the cunning, crafty, and plotting false teachers who handle the word of God deceitfully, we are called to “speak the truth in love.”

The remedy to being drawn away by deceitful and cunning false teachers and the fertile ground upon which growth occurs is a setting where every member of the body speaks the truth in love. By speaking the truth in love, we can grow into the full stature of Christ. Whereas anger, resentment, contempt, bitterness, etc. all tear down, love, on the other hand edifies (1 Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16). We do not sacrifice the truth out of love for people (Gal. 2:11), but neither do we disregard love while standing for the truth (Eph. 4:29).

“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Here, Paul brings up something he already discussed earlier in the epistle, focusing on members of the body being “joined and knit together” (Eph. 2:21) for growth and edification to occur (Eph. 3:17). For growth, edification, unity, love, and truth to abound despite false teachers seeking to draw us away from God, every part of the Lord’s body must contribute. Every “joint” (individual Christian) must do their “job.” One translation puts it like this: “He makes the whole body fit together and unites it through the support of every joint. As each and every part does its job, he makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (GW). Just as each bone, muscle, ligament, etc. holds

the physical body together, so too does each member of the spiritual body play an important function in holding the body of Christ together (**Col. 2:19**). The body needs every member, even the “weaker” parts (**1 Cor. 12:15-26**)!

Walk in Newness of Life (4:17-32)

Eph. 4:17-32 shows how Christianity is more than just wearing a name; it is a way of living that demands we leave sinful living behind us after acting upon the grace of God and submitting to Christ. A complete and comprehensive change of life is required. This passage affirms that, upon obedience to the gospel, a Christian is a new creature (**2 Cor. 5:17**) who must walk in newness of life (**Rom. 6:4**). Members of Christ’s body are called and brought into a special order of being from that which we previously belonged (**Eph. 2:11-13**).

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk,”

Because the Ephesians needed to walk worthy (**Eph. 4:1**) and in unity (**Eph. 4:1-16**), “therefore” they must “no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles,” of which Paul testified in the Lord by inspiration of the Spirit and according to the Christ’s will for man.

Paul’s use of the phrase “rest of the Gentiles” illustrates how Gentiles outside the church walked, providing a warning for Gentiles in the church not to walk like their physical countrymen. The sinful walk of the Gentiles consisted of a mindset and lifestyle in total contradiction to all that is good and right in the Lord. It may be that Paul was intending to specifically address the Gentile Christians in this section and was not addressing the Jewish Christians. However, the instructions in this section apply to all Christians of all ages and nationalities. By using this phrase, Paul reminds the Gentile Ephesians of what they were before they were converted, while also reminding all Christians in Ephesus (both Jew and Gentile) of the sinful walks of people surrounding the entire church.

“in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

In this section of scripture, Paul lays out nine identifying marks of the Gentile walk. This Gentile walk is not strictly limited to the Gentiles outside the body of Christ in Ephesus during the first century. All Christians, before submitting to Christ, could be defined by one or more of these qualities.

1. First, the former walk is identified by “futility” of the mind. Before submitting to Christ, a person’s mental course leads to nothing worthwhile. Lives are wasted on all sorts of things that bear no positive eternal consequence due to a lack of understanding of truth and goodness (**1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 1:21**).
2. Second, the former walk is marked by our understanding being “darkened.” Darkness is brought about by sin. Sin causes our lives to be filled with despair and a complete lack of spiritual insight because the darkness

that sin casts not only permeates the environment of sinners but rests within sinners themselves. The old man loves darkness and glories in being perverted by the darkness (**John 3:19-20**), but the new man must hate darkness and love the light (**Eph. 5:8-10; 1 John 1:6-7**).

3. Third, and the greatest problem of all, the former walk is one that leads to being “alienated from the life of God.” The Gentile Christians in Ephesus were once alienated from God before Christ brought them near through His blood (**Eph. 2:11-13**). All sinners, before submitting to Christ, find themselves in these exact same circumstances. We are not born alienated from God (i.e. totally depraved) but become such through our wicked works (**Col. 1:19-23**).
4. Fourth, the former walk is marked by “ignorance.” In scripture, ignorance is indicative of moral blindness (**Acts 3:17-19**). To be ignorant is to lack knowledge. Often times, however, ignorance is willful and directly results from the love of sin (**1 Cor. 15:34; Rom. 1:18-22; 1 Pet. 1:14-16**). Contextually, such appears to be Paul’s intent in using the term since ignorance is “due to” (ESV) the fifth mark.
5. Fifth, the former walk is marked by “blindness,” or “hardness” (ESV), of heart. When the heart is blinded, it consequently hardens and refuses to accept truth, regardless of how plainly and clearly it is presented (**Mark 3:1-6, 8:14-21**). Sin hardens our hearts (**Heb. 3:12-13**). In order to put away the old man, we must put away our calloused hearts which have been hardened by sin (**Ezek. 36:26-27**).
6. Sixth, the former walk is marked by being “past feeling.” When we walk in sin long enough, our consciences eventually die (**1 Tim. 4:2, NLT**); we no longer feel shame or blush (**Jer. 3:3, 6:15**). The new man must never glory in that which should bring shame (**Phil. 3:18-19; Ezra 9:5-6**).
7. Seventh, the former walk is marked by giving oneself over to “lewdness.” The expression “given themselves over” proves that we are not forced to sin against our will but, rather, do so voluntarily. Lewdness is often associated with sexual sins (**Gal. 5:19; Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:21**) but can also be applied to our speech. Lewdness here seems to indicate all manner of lusts and lack of self-restraint, which coincides with Paul’s description of the eight marker.
8. Eighth, the former walk is marked by working all “uncleanness.” Uncleanness defines the walks of spiritual Gentiles (sinners) and, ultimately, is what keeps them out of Heaven (**Rev. 21:27, ESV**). Faith and obedience to God and His Son, on the other hand, makes us clean and grants us hope of eternal life (**Heb. 10:22-23, NASB**).
9. Ninth, the former walk is driven by “greediness.” The old man is driven by selfishness and an improper regard for others. He wants more riches, more pleasures, more possessions, more adulation, more importance, etc. In contrast to the old man, nothing that the new man does is driven by greed or selfishness (**Phil. 2:3; Luke 9:23**).

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:”

A shift occurs here with Paul no longer describing the godless world surrounding the Ephesians but, instead, focusing on these Christians putting into practice “Christ.” The word “Christ” is a synecdoche (a figure of speech where a part is made to represent the whole, or vice versa) representing the whole of the gospel and doctrine of Christ, as well as His character (**Acts 8:5**). Christianity does not merely consist of discovering who is the Christ but, rather, requires us to apply that knowledge of Him and His doctrine to bring about positive changes in our lives. The Lord’s teaching stands in complete contrast to the walk of the Gentiles. He is not a promoter of vanity, darkness, alienation from God, ignorance, blindness, lack of shame, lewdness, nor uncleanness.

By saying “if indeed,” Paul is not here expressing doubt that the Ephesians had been taught the truth. Instead of saying “if indeed,” one could substitute the word “since” (NLT) and arrive at the correct conclusion. Since the Ephesians had heard and been taught the truth of the gospel, they must walk an entirely different walk than that of the Gentiles. This passage further emphasizes that “truth” can be understood (**Eph. 3:3-4**)!

“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

Becoming a new creation in Christ requires we “put off” our “former conduct,” which is the “old man” defined by corruption and “deceitful lusts.” Like taking off dirty clothes, Christians must lay aside our old conduct and renounce our former walks defiled by sin. The blood of Christ grants us the opportunity to become a new creation fashioned after His likeness, but the blood of Christ does not automatically make us righteous. We must be the ones to put off our old conduct (**Rom. 6:3-4, 11-13; 1 Cor. 6:9-11**). A change of heart must take place regarding sin and, thus, lead to a change of behavior. We also must be the ones who “renew” the spirits of our minds (**Rom. 12:2; John 3:5-6**). The nature of the change demanded by God is a spiritual renewal which takes place in the mind (**Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-3**). Similarly, we must be the ones who “put on” righteousness and holiness (**1 Pet. 1:13-16**).

This text cuts at the very core of the false doctrine of Calvinism. How can someone “put off” the old man if he is unable to exercise free will? How can someone be “renewed” in the spirit of his mind if he is unable to exercise free will? How can someone “put on” the new man if he is unable to exercise free will? Clearly, man must be a free moral agent, otherwise God demands us to do things that we are incapable of performing!

“Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.”

One way a Christian puts off the old man is by putting away the sin of “lying.” As with all traits of the old man, deliberate effort is required in “putting away” lying and the sin of deception. Deception is sinful regardless of whether it is used for the benefit of the one deceiving or the one being deceived. Whether by speaking falsely,

concealing the truth, or misleading others with purposefully vague speech, deceit is a sin (1 **Pet. 2:1**; **Matt. 5:37**). Instead of lying, the truth must be spoken, and spoken in love (**Eph. 4:15**).

Although Christians should be honest in their interactions with all men, contextually, special emphasis is laid upon the fact that Christians are not to lie to brethren (“for we are members of one another”), just like in **Col. 3:9**. Christians are members of the same spiritual body; we should have the same goals, interests, and aims. Why, therefore, would Christians lie to each other?

“Be angry, and do not sin:’ do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”

Paul here quotes **Psalms 4:4** in showing a second way Christians put off the old man – by not allowing ourselves to sin when we become “angry.” This statement is neither a condemnation of anger itself nor is it a commandment to be angry. Instead, the text says that when we become angry, we must ensure that we do not commit sin. This is an example of contingency legislation, such as in **1 John 2:1** and **1 Cor. 7:10-11**.

Many like to point to **Mark 3:5** to defend their actions when they become angry and potentially sin. While it is true that a strong emotional response to sin, hypocrisy, injustice, etc. are all justified (whether we see such evil in others or within ourselves), moderation and self-control are still required. The expression “righteous anger” must never be used as an excuse for sinful anger. Any failure to reason, control ourselves, or forgive others when our anger is aroused is sinful (**James 1:19-20**).

Unchecked anger gives Satan the opportunity to enter our hearts. Remember Cain and Abel? When God showed no regard for Cain's sacrifice, Cain became angry (**Gen. 4:5**). Upon seeing Cain's anger, God warned, "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it" (**Gen. 4:7**). Cain's anger, which was rooted in jealousy, provided Satan the opportunity to crouch at his door. Ultimately, we know that Cain's unchecked anger allowed Satan to throw the door to his heart wide open, leading Cain to kill his brother (**Gen. 4:8**). Cain did the exact opposite of what **Eph. 4:26-27** tells us to do; he became angry and then sinned. We need to learn from the example of Cain and realize that if we do not put away anger as quickly as it enters our hearts (**Eph. 4:31**; **Ecc. 7:9**), we provide Satan with prime ground to plant and harvest sin. We need must put to death the anger that springs up within our hearts, not allowing it to live and grow. We must rule over our spirit (**Prov. 16:32**).

Anger needs to end quickly. If not, it can generate hatred, bitterness, and resentment; it destroys peace, happiness, and unity. Our anger must be controlled and must never prompt us to sin. If we do become angry, we should deal with the anger and its root quickly, then promptly put it away from our hearts to prevent our anger from giving opportunity to the devil and bringing forth fruits of unrighteousness. Lastly, we must not go to bed angry (“do not let the sun go down on your wrath”). Husbands and wives would do well to remember this command. Nothing good comes from sleeping on our anger. Going to bed angry does not lead to us ruling over our anger. Instead, it

usually leads to the exact opposite – our anger will only fester and grow until it consumes everything. Anger should not be lived with continually but, rather, dealt with immediately.

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”

A third way we put away the old man is by ceasing the sin of theft. To “steal” is to take another person's property without permission or legal right and without the intent of returning it. Stealing must be put away because thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God (**1 Cor. 6:10**).

Stealing can take a variety of forms. The most obvious examples would be robbing a bank, breaking into a house, shoplifting, embezzling from an employer, extortion, taking someone's wallet, etc., but there are more passive ways to steal. Consider some examples:

- In a routine business exchange, we can steal by allowing someone to give us too much money in a transaction (e.g. the cashier gives us too much change and we accept it).
- We can steal by not being transparent about a product we are selling.
- We can steal from our employer / customer by not doing the work we are being paid to do (**Eph. 6:5-8**).
- We can steal from our employees when we do not pay them appropriately for their work (**1 Tim. 5:18**).
- We can steal from the government by cheating on our income taxes (**Rom. 13:7**).
- We can steal when we do not pay back our debts (**Rom. 13:7; Psalm 37:21**).
- We can steal from the Lord when we do not give as we have been prospered (**1 Cor. 16:1-2; Mal. 3:8-10**).

Instead of continuing in the corrupt act of stealing which defiles us, we must “labor.” Christians are not to be a lazy or slothful people (**Rom. 12:11; Prov. 13:4**). In fact, a man who is unwilling to work is worse than an infidel (**1 Tim. 5:8**) and does not deserve to eat (**2 Thess. 3:10-12**). Although many brethren have weaponized this truth for political gain, the fact remains that those who are able to work are expected to work. Yet, we do not just work for ourselves. We labor (“work ... what is good”) to give to those who have “need.” The new man is always ready to provide for those who have need (**1 Tim. 5:16; Gal. 2:10, 6:10**).

Although gambling is not necessarily in and of itself a form of theft, this passage would necessarily condemn gambling for the following reasons:

- Making profit via gambling is not a form of “labor.”
- When a man gambles, he is not “doing honest work with his own hands” (ESV).
- Gambling is not “good” since it breeds dishonesty and deception, both marks of the old man (**Eph. 4:25**).

If a person desires to gain monetarily/materially, let him do what this passage says: “labor, working ... what is good.”

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

A fourth way we put off the old man is by not allowing “corrupt speech” to come out of our mouths. The Bible abounds with passages condemning improper speech (**Psalm 10:7; Eph. 5:4; Col. 3:8-9; etc.**). Today, many people subtly use filthy language through words and phrases that exhibit dual meanings or exist as euphemisms. Such words are corruptive. They corrupt our minds by leading us to think about vile things which are neither noble nor pure (**Phil. 4:8**). They corrupt our innocence by causing us to look for double-meanings in words that may carry sexual connotations. They corrupt the minds of those who listen. Possibly worst of all, they corrupt our hearts (**Luke 6:45**).

Instead of corrupt communication, we must ensure that our speech is “good for necessary edification.” How we speak is indicative of how we think. Instead of speaking to spiritually corrupt others, we must speak to spiritually build up those around us. Our speech must abound in grace and be seasoned with salt (**Col. 4:6**), indicating preservation rather than corruption. Our speech must impart grace and not coarseness, crudeness, vulgarity, nor tastelessness. True edification comes from speaking the oracles of God (**1 Pet. 4:11**), but when our speech is riddled with corruptive words, how effective will the oracles of God be upon those to whom we speak (**James 3:10**)?

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Having commanded the Ephesians to put away corrupt speech, Paul warns that, if such speech is not put away, then the Holy Spirit will be grieved. To “grieve” simply means to offend (Strong). Paul has already stated that Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit (**Eph. 1:13-14**). Yet, Christians can grieve the Spirit. When we rebel against God, we grieve His Spirit (**Isa. 63:10**), causing the Holy Spirit to depart from us (**Psalm 51:11b; 1 John 3:24**). This proves that the seal of the Holy Spirit can be broken (i.e. once saved always saved is proven false).

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Paul concludes this section by emphasizing the need for every person who has become anew in Christ to put away several more traits of the old man.

1. “Bitterness”

Bitterness is a spirit of resentment that refuses reconciliation, causing trouble and leading to the other sins listed. Bitterness causes us to become defiled and fall short of God’s grace (**Heb. 12:15**).

2. “Wrath”

The word “wrath” refers to passion (as if breathing hard) ~ fierceness, indignation, wrath (Strong). Paul has already addressed in this section how wrath give places to the devil (**Eph. 4:26-27**); therefore, wrath must be put away.

3. “Anger”

Anger, unless promptly dealt with, can easily cause us to sin (**Eph. 4:26-27**).

4. “Clamor”

The word translated as “clamor” refers to an outcry (in notification, tumult or grief) (Strong). The word here suggests crying out and yelling at those whom our anger and wrath is pointed.

5. “Evil Speaking”

This phrase refers to slander, detraction, speech injurious to another's good name (Thayer).

6. “Malice”

Malice means ill-will, or a desire to injure (Thayer). This term seems to be a summary word including all other types of ill-will like the previous expressions. Thus, anything that would cause a person to view someone negatively or act in such a way towards them must be put away.

The Ephesians were told to remove these sins and replace them with qualities of the new man. Kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness are the opposite of the sins just stated.

Instead of being consumed with malice, bitterness, wrath, and slanderous speech, we must “be kind to one another” because such is the golden rule (**Luke 6:31**). We also must be “tenderhearted,” or compassionate. Christians are to be clothed in compassion (**Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8**). Lastly, in contrast to harboring bitterness, wrath, and anger against those who wrong us, we must forgive one another, “even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Jesus clearly stated that God's forgiveness of us is dependent upon our forgiveness of others (**Matt. 6:14-15**). Being willing to forgive people when they wrong us is truly one of the most difficult things God commands His people to do, but if a person is willing to repent of his wrongdoing, we are required to forgive him (**Luke 17:3**). If we are not willing to forgive one who is penitent, we are unable to have fellowship with God and receive forgiveness from Him. If we want to grow and develop the strength needed to forgive others when they wrong us, we must start with our hearts, and this takes work (**Col. 3:12-13**). The phrase “put on” in this passage connotes a conscience effort in developing the heart that Paul says we must exhibit – a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, longsuffering, and forgiveness. We may never be able to completely discard or overcome our emotions entirely, but our hearts must abound in these unselfish traits. Yet, not only abound in them, but mirror the same mercy, kindness, humility, longsuffering, and forgiveness that Christ Himself possessed as He walked this earth.

Changes must occur when a person becomes a Christian (**Eph. 2:10, 4:22-24**). With some, these changes are more drastic and obvious than others. Regardless, Christians must put away the behaviors of our past when we served ourselves and Satan and, instead, put on the new man in Christ. Doing so is necessary not just these areas but in every part of our lives (**Col. 3:1-7**).

Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

Directly building upon the principles brought forth in **Eph. 4**, Paul continues his theme of the Christian walk in **Eph. 5** by discussing the need to walk in love (**v.1-2**), light (**v.3-14**) and wisdom (**v.15-21**). Christians are not to walk as the world walks (**Eph. 4:17-32**). They are to walk as “imitators of God” and as His “dear children” (**v.1**). When Christians imitate God and walk as the Father directs, we will walk in love, light, and wisdom.

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

“Therefore” connects with the previous chapter where Paul exhorted the Ephesians to kindness and a spirit of forgiveness, and he now entreats them to imitate God, who is always kind and ready to forgive. Jesus used a similar method of teaching in **Matt. 5:43-48**.

The root of the original Greek word translated “imitators” is the source of the English word “mimic.” Thus, the Ephesians were to mimic God as a child would mimic his earthly father. This indicates the nature in which we imitate God, as well as our motive for doing so. It is not enough just to be a respecter of God. We must be an imitator of Him because of the great love He has shown us through His Son. To be like God and determine within ourselves to resemble Him is the sum of our duty in Christ. Although God’s character is beyond our scope of ability to mimic in certain respects, His love and forgiveness (**Eph. 4:32**) are two specific qualities we have been called to imitate. It is impossible to be identified as Christ’s disciple unless love is present and abounds in our lives (**John 13:34-35**).

The specific model of love is found in Christ’s “offering” and “sacrifice” for mankind. Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross was a “sweet-smelling aroma” to God; so too were Old Testament sacrifices (**Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18, 25, 41; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; etc.**). This expression simply indicates God’s satisfaction with man’s obedience to His will (**Ezek. 20:41-44; Phil. 4:14-18**).

While the words “offering” and “sacrifice” are somewhat synonymous, “offering” here seems to be inclusive of the entirety of Christ’s voluntary submission (**Rom. 12:1**) to the Father (His holy life, perfect example, teaching of truth, refraining from sin, as well as atoning death), while “sacrifice” specifically refers to the Lord’s death upon the cross. To draw a parallel, **Luke 14:27** teaches the necessity of the Lord’s disciples presenting their lives as an “offering” for God while **Rev. 2:10** teaches the need for the Lord’s disciples to be willing to “sacrifice” themselves in death to please God. We must be willing to love as Christ loved and sacrifice ourselves as Christ did in service to God (**Gal. 2:20**). Such mimicry will produce a sweet-smelling aroma to God.

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

In addition to walking in love (**Eph. 5:1-2**), Paul desired for the Ephesians to walk in “light” (**Eph. 5:8**). Six sins are identified in these verses that the Ephesians needed to refrain from committing.

1. “Fornication”

This term refers to illicit sexual intercourse in general (Strong). Fornication is inclusive of all illicit sexual intercourse, which would include adulterous affairs, premarital sex, homosexual relationships, bestiality, and all other forms of sexual activity outside the marriage bed between a scripturally married husband and wife (**Heb. 13:4; Matt. 19:4-9**). Fornication is not “fitting for saints.”

2. “Uncleanness”

This word, in a moral sense, refers to the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living (Thayer). Like fornication, this also likely refers to sexual impurity (**Rom. 6:19, 1:24; Gal. 5:19**) to refer to homosexual relationships.

3. “Covetousness”

To covet is to have a greedy desire for more (Thayer). Covetousness is idolatry (**Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5**). Unlike fornication and uncleanness, which are sins against our own bodies (**1 Cor. 6:18**), covetousness is a sin against another person. Contextually, it seems Paul is referring to the lustful and uncontrolled desires in line with the previous two sins. Such greed in obtaining sexual fulfillment was rampant in Ephesus among the Gentiles, but covetousness, fornication, and uncleanness were not to be named among them.

4. “Filthiness”

This term can be defined by obscenity, indecency, baseness (Strong). Contextually, since the next two sins deal with matters of the tongue, it appears “filthiness” here refers to obscene speech (sexual innuendos, double-entendres, etc.). However, “all filthiness” and not just filthy speech must be put away by saints (**James 1:21**) because all sin, in whatever form it takes, defiles and corrupts.

5. “Foolish Talking”

Foolish talking indicates speech that lacks proper thought or care, especially a lack of emphasis on spiritual matters. Such examples might include speaking positively about sin and error, speaking to tear down rather than edify, turning a decent conversation into an indecent direction, or not taking advantage of opportunities to emphasize spiritual matters during a conversation with someone who needs to hear the truth. Speech that flows from our lips without forethought is dangerous (**Matt. 12:36-37**).

6. “Coarse Jestings”

“Crude humor” (ESV) occurs when jokes reference sin in a positive light, contain inappropriate innuendos, or exist at the expense of another person. Notice that Paul lists this sin and foolish talking alongside fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and filthiness. While crude humor may seem minor to us, it lies in the same category as sins like fornication and uncleanness. This sin is serious!

The Ephesians were to avoid each of these sins because they were “saints” and such sins are “not fitting” their vocation as God’s children. Not only were they to refrain from these sins, but such sins should “not even be named among” them. Some contend that Paul is emphasizing that certain sins should not be discussed openly. While **Eph. 5:12** teaches this point in certain respects, I do not believe Paul is emphasizing this same idea here. Instead, Paul stresses the need for every saint to refrain from these sins and underlines the fact that the church should not permit even one person who engages in such sins to be counted as faithful among them, such as what is discussed in **1 Cor. 5**. Sainthood demands that Christians separate themselves from the darkness these sins cast order to remain light in the world (**2 Cor. 6:14**).

Rather than engaging in these sins, the proper action that is befitting of saints is “giving of thanks.” Filthy speech, foolish talking, and coarse jesting are not the language of saints. Instead, praise of God and gratitude towards Him must be our preferred speech (**Heb. 13:15; Eph. 5:19-20**). Our gratitude towards God for all our blessings from Him through Christ should expressing itself in our everyday conversations (**1 Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:17; James 5:13**).

“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.”

The Ephesians were not to be deceived into thinking the evils discussed here and in the previous verses are proper and befitting the Christian walk. To the contrary, such sins and such an evil walk in darkness is completely “out of place” (**NIV**) with the Christian walk. The Ephesians knew this (“you know”), but Paul was clearly concerned that they might be deceived and drawn away from the truth.

Proponents of evil often use cunning and “empty” language to convince people that sin and error is not actually sin and error. Our society is filled with people who deceive the masses using such language. They say such desires (the sins Paul listed) are “only natural.” They say a loving God would never punish people. They say such sins would never separate a Christian from God. They ask, “Where is the grace?” and cry out, “That is legalism!” The Ephesians were warned not to fall into such traps but, instead, recognize the consequences of these sins.

There is no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” for people caught up in these sins. These sins bring “the wrath of God” upon the “sons of disobedience” (**Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6**), which not only refers to the sinful

people of the world (**Eph. 2:2**) but is also inclusive of people within the one body of Christ who have been deceived by Satan and his teachers (**Eph. 5:6-7**). Once a person becomes a Christian, they must become and remain imitators of God rather than fall back into their old ways that instigate the wrath of God (**2 Pet. 2:20-22**). Such sins must remain in the past as part of the old man and not remain with the new man (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**).

The Ephesians were admonished not to “be partakers” with the sons of disobedience, indicating they were not meant participate, share in, become partners or associates with, nor support such evils. It is not only possible for a Christian to lose his soul by committing these sins themselves, but it is also possible for a Christian to lose his soul by partaking in the sins of others (**1 Tim. 5:22**). As such, Christians should never become linked with or bid godspeed to people who can be identified by such sins (**2 Cor. 6:14-18**). After all, if we partake of someone else’s sins, it is only logical that we must also partake in that person’s punishment (**Rom. 1:28-32**).

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

Notice that the Ephesians had not only been in darkness, but they “were” darkness. The Ephesians once practiced the vile deeds mentioned in the previous verses, but a change was demanded when they surrendered themselves to the Lord (**1 Cor. 6:11**), who is the source of all light (**Eph. 5:14; John 8:12**).

The Ephesians were told in the previous verse to have no fellowship with sin, which is darkness, because their state as darkness was past and must not continue. The Ephesians “were” once darkness, but “now” they were “light in the Lord.” All children of God are transferred from darkness to light (**1 Pet. 2:9; Acts 26:15-18**). We do not live in the past nor dwell on our past, but we dare not forget that prior to becoming light, we were darkness, devoid of true goodness and righteousness. Upon being transferred from darkness to light, Christians are to radiate the light of Christ and bring light to the world (**Matt. 15:14-16; Phil. 2:15**). It is impossible to radiate the light of Christ when we fellowship sin.

As “children of light,” Christians have the responsibility to walk in accordance with what provides light – the holy and inspired word of God (**Psalms 119:105**). Having been reborn as children of light, Christians must continually walk in the light and not fall back into darkness (**1 John 1:5-10**). To command Christians to walk in the light implies that children of light can revert to being children of darkness when we disobey God. In other words, the possibility of apostasy is very real! The Calvinists and all other false churches promoting the false doctrine of once saved always saved are proven false yet again.

Children of light are called to produce the “fruit of the Spirit.” Other translations call it the “fruit of the light” (ASV, NASB, RSV). The fruit of the light is found in goodness, righteousness, and truth.

1. “Goodness”

Goodness refers to an uprightness of heart and life ... kindness, beneficence (Thayer). Goodness centers in the heart. To walk properly as a child of light, one must exemplify goodness, which is not indicative of our own standards of goodness but, rather, God’s standards (**2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17**).

2. “Righteousness”

Righteousness is defined by integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting (Strong). Righteousness is the product of goodness. Whereas goodness centers in the heart, righteousness is seen in our actions. Like goodness, what is right and righteous is ultimately determined by God (**Psalm 119:172**).

3. “Truth”

Truth is not merely truth as spoken, but truth of idea, reality, sincerity, truth in the moral sphere, divine truth revealed to man, straightforwardness (Strong). Children of light do not merely know truth; they act upon it. Truth centers in our minds and is conveyed by both our words and actions. Like goodness and righteousness, truth is determined by God (**John 17:17**).

When Christians “walk as children of light” by allowing God’s goodness to rest in their hearts, the righteousness of God to abound in their actions, and the truth of God to live in our minds and be evident in our speech and actions, our lives “prove” (KJV, ASV), or serve as examples of, “what is acceptable to the Lord.” The entirety of the walk of God’s people must be focused upon finding out what pleases the Lord, patterning our lives in accordance with that which satisfies Him, then rejecting everything that displeases Him. Additionally, children of light always test and compare what we see and hear with the scriptures to determine if it is well-pleasing to the Lord (**Eph. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11; Rom. 12:2**).

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”

Paul here describes the attitude children of light must possess toward evil. In contrast to children of God abounding in the fruit of the Spirit / light, Paul describes the works of darkness as “unfruitful.” Works of darkness (sin) are vain and unproductive. They have no positive spiritual benefit, neither to man nor to God. The only fruit darkness produces is death (**Rom. 6:21-23**).

Light and darkness are completely incompatible (2 Cor. 6:14). As such, Children of light must not be in fellowship with children of darkness; we must be separate (2 Cor. 6:17); this includes Christians among us who have been swayed back into darkness (1 Cor. 5:1, 13). When children of light remain in fellowship with darkness, we are at risk of being consumed by such darkness (1 Cor. 5:6). Yet, withdrawal from darkness is not sufficient; Christians must “expose” (“reprove,” KJV) such darkness, even sins that are hidden in secret (1 Cor. 5:4-5; Luke 3:18-20; Mark 6:17-18). Such reproof that is spoken in love (Eph. 4:15) is necessary to hopefully convert children of darkness into becoming children of light.

There is no joy within children of light to speak about the evil works of darkness, especially those things that are so heinous that even the child of darkness keeps them hidden “in secret.” Although many people proudly flaunt their wickedness, many who walk in darkness who have even a remote sense of right and wrong do not want to be reproofed, so they often try to hide their unfruitful works of darkness from others so as not to be exposed and rebuked. The problem, of course, is nothing is hidden from God (Heb. 4:13); that which is hidden will, in the end, be proven to be sinful (John 3:19-21).

The specific details of certain sins done in secret are, in certain senses, shameful to speak of publicly but must still be rebuked in such a way to discourage others from falling into the pit of such darkness. Wisdom and discretion must be used to recognize what is appropriate to openly discuss or leave unmentioned when speaking about certain sins since discussing all of the “dirty details” can serve as a stumbling block to people trying to walk in the light.

“Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’”

Based upon all that is wrong with the works of darkness, Christians must “therefore” remain vigilant and stay spiritually “awake,” not being deceived into practicing the sinful things mentioned previously (Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 15:34). Just as Israel was called to awake from its previous state of darkness and death (Isa. 9:2, 51:17, 52:1, 60:1), so too is every individual called to rise from their slumber through the light provided by Christ (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:6; Eph 2:1). Responsibility rests with those in darkness to “awake” and “arise.” Christ offers to provide light, but man must first awake and arise in order to receive the light of the Lord, completely contradicting the Calvinist theories that man lacks free-will. When man meets his obligations, Christ will shine upon Him.

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Having discussed the need for children of God to walk in love and in light earlier in this chapter, Paul now shifts to discussing the need to walk in wisdom, or “circumspectly.” The word means to do something with precision and attention to detail. It implies a thoroughness and carefulness in action or thought (Strong).

The Ephesians were encouraged not to walk in darkness, but to be spiritually awake (**Eph. 5:8-14**). “Therefore,” Paul exhorted the Ephesians to carefully examine their walk (**Heb. 12:15**). They needed to be careful not to fall back into an unwise and foolish walk of darkness but, rather, walk wisely. Wisdom and walking circumspectly comes by understanding “what the will of the Lord is.” The Ephesians’ former life was an unwise and foolish walk because it displayed a clear lack of understanding of the will of God (**Eph. 4:17-24**). To walk in wisdom and to walk circumspectly, we must walk with the Spirit and allow Him and His revealed word to guide us (**Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 25; Col. 3:16**). It is not enough to know the will of the Lord, we must “understand” it. Understanding indicates obedience (**Job 28:28; Matt. 13:18-23**).

“Time” is presented here as a concept that can be redeemed, or bought back. Paul is not necessarily discussing the need to buy back time we may have wasted in our past walks of sin, foolishness, and darkness, but calls upon us to take advantage of the time (opportunities) God presents to us (**Col. 4:5; Gal. 6:10**). Rather than time, “opportunities” seems to be the more accurate translation since the original Greek word here is not indicative of chronological time (*chronos*) but indicates opportunities (*kairos*). A form of the word “*kairos*” is used in **2 Tim. 4:2** to indicate “seasons,” i.e. opportunities.

Our lives are filled with opportunities to be productive in doing the Lord’s will. At the same time, our lives are filled with opportunities to be unproductive by not heeding and obeying the Lord “because the days are evil.” Evil days can reduce our opportunities to do good, so we must take advantage of every opportunity to do the Lord’s will when those opportunities are presented to us. After all, we do not know if another such opportunity will come again (**Prov. 27:1; James 4:13-17**).

Since the days are evil, we must be extremely careful how we walk. Paul likely was discussing evil times specifically affecting the Ephesians in the first century, but all periods of this earthly life are defined by evil due to the presence of sin (**Gal. 1:4**). Recognizing the evil times in which we live, we must be watchful lest the source of evil devours us (**1 Pet. 5:8**).

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,”

One mark of a foolish walk is evidenced by being “drunk with wine,” wherein is “excess” (KJV) and “debauchery” (NASB, ESV), leading to “reckless living” (CSB). It is impossible to walk in wisdom when our senses are dulled, influenced, and damaged by intoxicants.

We are unwise if we submit to the evil allurements of intoxicating wine to dull our senses of reasoning (**Prov. 20:1**). Yet, we must not only abstain from the allurements of intoxicating wine but all intoxicating beverages, such as beer, whiskey, gin, brandy, etc. (**1 Pet. 4:3**). Intoxicating beverages which alter our mental state is what is condemned in this passage, not just fermented wine.

It is important to note that the Greek verb form translated as “drunk” indicates the process of getting drunk, not just drunkenness.

- To intoxicate, make drunk; passive ... to get drunk, become intoxicated (Thayer).
- To make drunk, an inceptive verb that begins the process of the state expressed in methuo (3184), to drink to intoxication (Vine).
- To intoxicate, make drunk ... the act of making someone drunk or intoxicated ... warning against excessive drinking and the loss of self-control that accompanies drunkenness. The term is used both literally, in the context of physical intoxication, and metaphorically, to describe spiritual or moral stupor (Strong).

So, more literally, Paul says, “Do not even begin the process of becoming drunk or softened by alcohol.” Therefore, the scriptures teach that wise children of God walking in the light must abstain from ever initiating the process of dulling our senses via intoxicating alcohol. That is the only way Christians can remain alert and awake as children of God “filled with the Spirit.”

Both drunkenness and the process leading up to drunkenness are condemned by other scriptures (**1 Pet. 4:3; Luke 12:45-46; Prov. 23:29-33**). In **1 Pet. 4:3**, Peter uses three phrases concerning drinking alcohol: “excess of wine,” “reveling,” and “banqueting.” In all three categories of alcoholic drinking, Peter says it is part of “doing the will of the Gentiles.” As Paul showed in **Eph. 4:17**, Christians must not walk as the rest of the Gentiles. Our desire must be doing God’s will.

Rather than being drunk with wine (spirits), wise people who are walking in the light fill themselves with the Holy Spirit. Christians are “filled with the Spirit” when they are filled with the knowledge of His will (**Col. 1:9**) by allowing the word of God to dwell in them (**Col. 3:16**). Just as the drunkard liberally fills himself with intoxicating spirits, Christians must liberally fill themselves with the Holy Spirit by heeding the words He has spoken.

“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

In contrast to wasting our time by filling ourselves with intoxicating spirits which dull the senses, Christians are called to spiritual activities that show a heightened sense of awareness of God and others, and exemplifies wise uses of the time God grants us. When Christians walk circumspectly by understanding the will of the Lord and filling themselves with the Spirit of God, their lives will be characterized by three notable activities: singing, thanksgiving, and submission.

A Spirit-filled person speaks in “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” Although difficult to fully differentiate these three terms, there are some slight differences worth noting.

- A psalm is a set piece of music, i.e. a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a “psalm”); collectively, the book of the Psalms – psalm (Strong). We know that Paul is not commanding psalms to be sung with instruments accompanying them because he specifies psalms are to be spoken and the melody is made “in your heart.”
- A hymn is a sacred song, song of praise to God, typically more formal and structured than other forms of musical worship, such as psalms or spiritual songs (Strong). The best information we have suggests that hymns were uninspired poetical songs in praise and prayer to God. Nothing in **Matt. 26:30** or **Acts 16:25** suggests anything that hymns would be inspired.
- Spiritual songs refer to songs that are sung to glorify God. The word emphasizes the act of singing as a form of worship and expression of faith (Strong). The heart and mouth are the only authorized instruments under the New Covenant. If Paul intended for the identification of a mechanical instrument (harp, piano, guitar, etc.) in this passage, he would not have strictly stipulated the “heart” as the instrument which makes the “melody.”

A Spirit-filled person is also a person who is filled with gratitude and frequently (“always”) expresses that thanks to God. We are to give thanks “for all things” because all things work together for our spiritual good if we possess the proper love for and obedience to God (**Rom. 8:28**). Our gratitude is directed “to God the Father” (**Col. 1:12, 3:17**) because every blessing is from Him (**James 1:17**), and our thanks is to be expressed “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” All things spiritual are to be done in the name of Christ (**Col. 3:17**). Giving thanks in His name is not simply adding the Lord’s name at the end of our prayers. Instead, it demands a recognition that every prayer is offered through Him, everything we do is by His authority, and every blessing is made possible through Him (**Eph. 1:3**).

Lastly, a Spirit-filled person lives a life of submission. By definition, submission can be voluntary or involuntary. The submission required by the gospel, however, is voluntary, recognizing God’s order and arrangements and being willing to respond to the needs and desires of others. Specifically, Paul here demands that Christians submit to fellow Christians (“one another”). This instruction frequently occurs throughout Paul’s epistles (**Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3**). Peter emphasized this as well in **1 Pet. 5:5**. Just as Christians blend our voices together in song, so too do we blend our lives together in submission to each other and to the order God has arranged. Our submission to each other is in view of and brought about by a “fear of God.”

Walk in Subjection and Love (5:22-33)

Having just described the walk of a Spirit-filled person as a walk defined by submission, Paul begins drawing a parallel between Christ's relationship with the church and the marital relationship to paint an inspired picture of what God demands from the most intimate of all human relationships. Wives are called to be in subjection to their husbands (5:22-24), husbands are called to love their wives (5:25-33), and children are called to obey and honor their parents (6:1-4).

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Just as the church is commanded to be in submission to Christ, Paul commands that wives are to "submit" to their husbands. Wives must submit (follow, honor, and respect) to their husbands "as to the Lord." Wives are subject to their husbands "in everything," or in all areas of the marriage relationship. The obvious exception to this rule comes into play when a husband demands something of his wife that is contrary to the will of God. In such circumstances, the wife must do the Lord's will rather than her husband's will (Acts 5:29). If a Christian woman is married to an unbeliever or an unfaithful Christian, she still must submit to her unrighteous husband, but she must not submit to his decisions in such a way that causes her to sin or partake in his sins (1 Tim. 5:22). A woman in such difficult circumstances carries the difficult task of gently and gracefully submitting to a man who likely has no concern for her spiritual welfare. Yet, her gentle and quiet submission will speak volumes and can have a soul-saving impact on her unbelieving or unfaithful spouse (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Men and women are undeniably on equal spiritual footing (Gal. 3:28). However, God clearly requires women to submit to men (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:12), and specifically requires women be in submission (which is motivated by love) to their husbands (Tit. 2:4-5). The fact that one part of the body has a specific function (the husband existing as the head) does not imply that the other parts of the body are less important or inferior (1 Cor. 12:15-26). Wives are not called to submit to their husbands because God views women as inferior in any way. Rather, God has simply designed a special order where man is the leader and spiritual head of women due to Adam (man) being formed first, then Eve (woman) (1 Tim. 2:13), and Eve, not Adam, being the one deceived by Satan (1 Tim. 2:14).

Submitting to Christ requires a life of submission. A life of submission is not a manner of living that God unfairly requires of women. All Christians, male or female, submit to various rulers, heads, and authorities. Consider the following examples:

- Husbands and wives submit to either by yielding their bodies to each other (1 Cor. 7:4).
- Children must submit to their parents (Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1).
- Bondservants (workers) submit to their masters (employers) (Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Tim. 6:1).

- All people are required to submit to their governmental leaders (1 Pet. 2:13-14; Rom. 13:1, 7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:9-12).
- The church must submit to Christ (Eph. 5:23-24).
- Christians in a local church must submit to their overseers (1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 13:7, 17).
- Christians must submit to fellow Christians (1 Pet. 5:1-5; Eph. 5:17-21; Phil. 2:3).
- All mankind must submit to God and Christ (James 4:7-10, ESV).

Additionally, Paul's teaching in this text is not derived from an "unmarried male chauvinistic" viewpoint, nor does his teaching express a disdain for marriage as many critics have asserted throughout the centuries in attempts to deny the plain and simple message of this passage. Rather, this teaching is consistent with what the married apostle Peter wrote (1 Pet. 3:1-6), as well as what the Lord designed from the very beginning (Gen. 3:16).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones."

Husbands are commanded to love their wives "just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her" (see also Col. 3:19). Christ's selfless, sanctifying, and sacrificial love for the church is the divine example that husbands must follow.

A husband's love must mirror Christ's sacrificial love (John 15:13; Eph. 5:25). This love is sacrificial not only in the sense of being willing to die for the other person but also in the sense of placing the other person's happiness, well-being, and interests ahead of our own (1 Cor. 13:5). Just as Christ gave up His own self-interests for the church and all of humanity (Phil. 2:5-8), so too must husbands be willing to give up their own interests and desires in showing their love for their wives.

A husband's love must mirror Christ's purifying love. Christ provides sanctification and cleansing for the church (each individual Christian) through "the washing of water by the word" (see also Tit. 3:5), which signifies baptism (John 3:3-5; Acts 22:16) and obedience to the gospel message (John 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). A man's relationship with his wife must also be a sanctifying and purifying relationship. A husband should love his wife in a way that lifts up, honors, makes holy, and presents her in a way that mirrors the glory Christ brings to His church.

A husband's love must mirror Christ's caring, supportive, and provisional love (Phil 4:19; Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:33; 1 Tim. 5:18). A husband must view and treat his wife as much more than a cook, sex partner, grocery shopper,

maid, etc. He must “nourish and cherish” her by providing for her needs, ensuring her security, and feeding her physically and spiritually. Similarly, husbands must cherish their wives, meaning foster with a tender and sincere care.

A husband’s love must mirror Christ’s unbreakable love (**Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 5:31**). Marriage is the closest and most intimate of all human relationships. When a man and woman leave father and mother to marry, the couple is joined (or, more literally, glued) together in a bond established by God (**Matt. 19:6**). A husband and wife must be committed to ensuring that nothing and no one ever cause that glue to absolve.

Husbands are to love and view their wives in the same way Christ loves and views the church, with a desire to present her without “spot,” “wrinkle,” and “blemish.” The aim of a husband should be contributing to his wife possessing a “glorious” character. This can be accomplished when both parties recognize the sanctity of marriage and enter this most holy relationship with special care and forethought (**Matt. 19:8; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 5:14**); recognize marriage is divine in its construction and purpose (**Prov. 18:22; Gen. 2:18; Matt. 19:4-5; Gen. 1:28; Heb. 13:4**); and emphasize their spiritual bond (**Ecc. 4:9-12; 1 Pet. 3:7**).

Husbands “ought” to possess this type of sacrificial, purifying, and supportive love for their wives, which is a love that recognizes the wife as being part of his own body. The word translated “ought” indicates the husband is indebted to his wife to love her in this way; such love is due her. Paul states that “we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” “We” is in reference to all Christians who comprise the spiritual body of Christ. The Lord takes special care of His body. So too should a husband take great care of the most special part of his body.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

Prior to marriage, the strongest human relationship in a person’s life is the relationship between that person and his parents / guardians. Upon marriage, this sacred relationship takes precedent over all other human relationships because a husband and wife are “one flesh.” When Paul stated that marriage brings a man and woman together into one flesh, he did not say something new or revelatory. This teaching echoed the sentiments of Christ (**Matt. 19:4-6**) and echoed the words of God at Creation (**Gen. 2:24**).

Paul says here that people are to leave their parents and be “joined” with their spouse. It is worth noting that the terms “joined,” “bound,” and “married” are not synonymous terms. “Bound” is not the same as “married” (**Rom. 7:2-3**); “joined” is not the same as “bound” (**Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 19:6**); and “joined” is not the same as “married” (**1 Cor. 6:16; Matt. 19:6**). Paul, then, by referencing a husband and wife leaving their parents behind and being “joined” together in “one flesh” is referring to the conjugal relationship between the husband and wife. That said, we

must stress, as we tried to emphasize when examining the previous verses, that, upon becoming one flesh, a husband and wife should also have oneness of mind, purpose, and dedication to each other and to God.

The theme of Paul's discourse in **Eph. 5:22-33** is the relationship between Christ and the church. While revealing God's divine plan for marriage, Paul is really discussing the beautiful relationship between the Lord and His body. This "mystery" – the relationship between Christ and His church that parallels the relationship between a husband and wife – is what Paul is revealing in this text. Husbands and wives must respect God's will concerning marriage, thereby showing and love and respect for each other. Each person should work daily to manifest the type of character that makes it easier for their spouse to love and respect.

Walk in Obedience (6:1-9)

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'"

This passage contains one of the rare commands within the Bible that is strictly limited in application to "children." Yet, this command is broadly applicable because all people are children of their respective parents. The word translated "children" is inclusive of all offspring under the care and responsibility of parents. Therefore, until the time when a child leaves the care of his parents, children must submit to their parents.

Children must "obey" their parents. Children must obey their parents because such "is right" and well-pleasing to the Lord (**Col. 3:20**). By obeying their parents, children obey God. It has always been "right" for children to obey their parents (**Exod. 21:15-17; Rom. 1:28-32**).

Specifically, children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." This phrase has various meanings throughout the epistle can indicate:

- Faith and obedience to Christ (**1:15**).
- Christ's body, i.e. the church (**2:19**).
- In accordance with Christ's will and command (**4:17**).
- Being connected to Christ and part of Him (**5:8**).
- In service to Christ (**6:10**).
- For Christ (**6:21**).

Here, debate exists as to what Paul means by instructing children to obey their parents "in the Lord." Some conclude that this means children should obey their Christian parents. Others conclude it is according to God's will that children obey their parents. Another view is that children should obey their parents as long as their parents do not

require them to violate God's commands. There are strengths and weaknesses to each argument. Personally, I do not hold one position as stronger than the others. Each interpretation is supported by other scriptures.

Children must do more than obey their parents. They also must "honor" their parents. The word translated as "honor" indicates value and reverence (Strong). Children honor their parents by obeying them in childhood, then continually showing them respect, kindness, and love, and supporting them in old age and times of need (**1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16; Mark. 7:9-13, NET**). Honoring father and mother "is the first commandment with promise." What does this mean?

Some contend that this commandment (the fifth of the Ten Commandments) is the first to contain a promise. Yet, all of the commandments had the same promise of longevity of life (**Deut. 5:33**). Others argue that this is the first of the Ten Commandments to contain a specific promise. Yet, specific promises are associated with the second and third commandments (**Exod. 20:4-7**). I believe the "promise" refers to the fact that Godly submission and obedience generally leads to a long life (**Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Prov. 3:1-2, 10:27**), while "first commandment" indicates the command to obey and honor parents has always been a foremost concern of the Lord.

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Fathers are commanded to parent their children in a loving and Godly way. They are to bring their children up in the "training and admonition of the Lord." To train a child in the Lord means the parent is cultivating his mind and morals in ways that lead to a Godly life. Admonishing, on the other hand, is inclusive of mild rebukes and or warnings (Strong). There are times where parents must admonish their children. Such is necessary for pointing children toward Godly living. Warnings and rebukes are sometimes necessary. However, to admonish also implies encouragement of good conduct and not just discouragement of poor behavior. The way parents train and admonish their children should always be done in a "nurturing" way (ASV). Special emphasis is placed upon the father for training and admonishing His children in the ways of the Lord. This is only logical since the husband is the spiritual head of his family (**Eph. 5:22-23**).

Fathers must not "provoke," or exasperate, their children. When parents treat their children in an unjust and unreasonable way, they can cause their children to grow discouraged (**Col. 3:21**). When correcting children, truth and correction must always be spoken and acted upon in love. Below are some practical admonitions for parents in hopes of avoiding exasperating their children:

- Show your children that you and your spouse are a unified front.
- Remember children are children (**1 Cor. 13:11**).
- Don't compare your children to other children (**2 Cor. 10:12**).
- Ensure that a punishment never outweighs the "crime" (**Prov. 20:10, 16:11**).

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- Explain why your children's actions are improper rather than simply stating they did wrong.
- Do not strictly punish / discourage poor behavior; regularly praise / encourage good behavior.
- Never pick up the rod when angry (**Eph. 4:26**).
- Regularly show and tell your children that you love them (**1 John 3:18**).
- Realize when to "pick your battles."
- Admit to your children when you make mistakes.
- Recognize where matters of right and wrong have been violated versus when matters of conscience differ (this applies more for older children).
- Remain present in every sense for your children's successes and failures.
- Teach your children by example.

If parents are not careful in how they rear their children, they can cause their children to become bitter and wrathful. May all parents apply Godly wisdom as they navigate the difficult yet rewarding waters of rearing up children in the ways of the Lord.

"Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

It must first be noted that this text does not support the cruel and forced slavery evident in the United States for centuries and still existing in some countries today. This type of slavery violates countless New Testament passages demanding Christ's followers to show love, kindness, and compassion to all people. Additionally, this type of forced slavery violates the attitude required by slave "masters" in this text and in **Col. 4:1**. That being said, slavery itself was never outright abolished by the gospel of Christ. The Law of Moses permitted slavery (**Exod. 21; Lev. 25; etc.**). Even under the Law of Christ, slavery is never condemned. The commencement of the New Covenant did, however, introduce changes in the attitudes of both servants and masters.

Paul states here, as well as in **Col. 3:22**, that "bondservants" are commanded to be "obedient" to their earthly "masters." Yet, mere obedience was not all that Paul instructed. He also stated that this obedience was to be accomplished "with fear and trembling." This is the same manner by which everyone must work out their salvation (**Phil. 2:12**). Additionally, bondservants must serve "in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers God." One who serves with eye-service only works diligently if his master's eyes are on him. In contrast, the type of worker who pleases God is one who serves with humility, sincerity, honesty, cheerfulness, and trust. The same

is true for an employee working for his employer. Ultimately, by obeying our earthly masters, we do the Lord's will (Col. 3:24).

For Paul to provide these instructions, it is necessary to assume there were bondservants in the churches at Ephesus and Colossae, as was the case in other churches (1 Cor. 7:20-24; 1 Pet. 2:18). Yet, this passage, just like Col. 4:1, provides undeniable proof that cruel and enforced slavery is not supported by the Law of Christ. An earthly master is not permitted to act as an unjust tyrant towards his servants (Phile. 8-17). Instead, Col. 4:1 demands masters to act in "just and fair" ways toward their servants. A master must not demand anything from a servant beyond what he would be willing to do himself if the roles were reversed (Matt. 7:12). In fact, we learn in this text that a master must possess the same characteristics as his servants ("And you, masters, do the same things to them"). Such is logical since an earthly master, though he has a position of rank on earth, is just like his servants in being subject to the Master in heaven ("knowing that your own Master also is in heaven") (Psalm 100:3). Just as the servant will stand before the Lord to answer for how he performed his role of servitude, so too will a master stand before the Lord to answer for how he ruled over his servants (2 Cor. 5:10). "There is no partiality" with our Lord.

How we serve our earthly masters will be remembered by the Lord, who will recompense us accordingly (2 Cor. 5:10). If a servant wronged his earthly master, he will be repaid for what he has done; likewise, if a servant faithfully served his earthly master but was wronged by him, he too will be repaid for what he has done (Col. 3:25). Regardless of earthly rank, the Lord will judge all according to the same standards and without favoritism based upon earthly rank (Rom. 2:11; Luke 16:19-31).

Walk Prepared for Battle (6:10-20)

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Here, we see a plea for Christians to fight the good fight of faith. This fight requires great strength (1 Cor. 16:13). However, as has been made evident throughout this epistle, true comes from the Lord ("be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might") and not ourselves (Eph. 1:19, 3:16-17, 20). This is equally true in terms of contending against Satan.

Whether we realize it or not, while living on earth, we live in the midst of a war that never ends (Gal. 5:17; James 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Thess. 3:1-2). Therefore, we must "put on the whole armor of God" to face the adversary. Our enemy, "the devil," has "wiles" – we must not be ignorant of them (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8; Job 1:7, 2:2). Such wiles and schemes can include: blinding us with false doctrine (Eph. 4:14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4); enticing us to indulge our fleshly desires (Eph. 2:1-3), and bringing persecution upon those who are righteous (Eph. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Yet, as this passage proves, we CAN resist the devil; we are not forced to sin against our will (Rom. 6:16-18, 8:35-39).

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

A Christian’s battle is not set against anything on earth, but “against principalities, against powers, against, the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Satan’s strength is not measured carnally because the battle is not one of “flesh and blood” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). We are fighting in a spiritual war against a dangerous enemy (1 John 4:1) who is a tempter (John 8:44) and master at concealing his true identity (2 Cor. 11:13-15, 4:3-4). The battle that Christians fight is all encompassing and all-consuming. It is a fight that never ends (1 Cor. 10:12).

It is worth noting that this passage is one of several New Testament scriptures that necessarily condemn carnal warfare (Matt. 5:43-48). The government has authority to wage war against flesh and blood; individual Christians do not (Rom. 13:1-10). For individual Christians to engage in carnal warfare is to violate countless New Testament principles of love and peace. Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ must love our brothers (1 Pet. 1:22), neighbors (Matt. 22:39), and enemies (Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:20). Paul plainly states here that Christians do not “wrestle against the flesh.” Such wars are not the battles that Christians participate in (2 Cor. 10:4). The battles we fight are “not against flesh and blood.” Rather, the only wars we fight are spiritual in nature, and in those battles we employ the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), not instruments of blood.

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Here, Paul introduces the concept of “the whole of armor of God,” which he will expound upon in the proceeding verses. This armor must be taken up in order for us to “withstand” the “evil day.” The evil day is any time we are presented with a temptation to sin (Eph. 5:16). We must use every tool at our disposal to battle Satan and his minions during evil days. In order say we have “done all” and in order to “stand” during these evil days, we must recognize that we cannot fight the battle alone (Eph. 6:1; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9); we must make preparations (Gal. 6:7-8); we must be determined to overcome the temptations (1 Cor. 15:33); we must look for the way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13); we must look to God and His scriptures for direction (Psalm 119:11); and we must realize that even if we win a battle the war never ends (Luke 4:13).

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,”

Wearing “truth” is a must for a spiritual soldier. God’s word is the source of truth that we look to for girding (John 17:17). Clothing ourselves in truth frees us from the shackles that Satan seeks to bind upon us (John 8:32). We must array ourselves with truth and stand with it. We also must wear “righteousness.” To wear righteousness is to apply truth to our lives (1 John 2:29, 3:7; James 1:22-25; Rom. 6:12-13, 16-18).

“and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

Preparation provided by the “gospel of peace” is a necessary part of the spiritual soldier’s attire. Only the gospel can prepare us for every spiritual battle (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Another key part of the Christian soldier’s defense is the “shield of faith.” Satan tests our faith, but faith is so vital that without it we cannot please God (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6). Faith will motivate us to never give up during our ongoing war against Satan (Heb. 11:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:12).

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

A good soldier must wear his helmet. A soldier of Christ wears the “helmet of salvation.” The hope of salvation reinforces everything we do (1 Thess. 5:8); it keeps us fighting and battling against Satan (1 John 5:11-13, 18-21). A key weapon the Christian soldier needs in his battle is the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” which is the sharpest sword to ever exist (Heb. 4:12). The word of God not only provides offense but also provides defense (1 Pet. 3:15; Matt. 4:1-10). When handled aright, the scriptures make Christ’s soldiers wiser than all our enemies (Psalm 119:98; Tit. 1:9).

Prayer is a powerful weapon against Satan. It is both an offensive and defensive weapon that is equally important to the armor as the shield, helmet, etc. Prayer is vital to the armor of God because it is the Christian soldier’s direct line of communication with our Commander (1 John 3:22, 5:14-15; Heb. 4:15-16). Prayer keeps us “watchful” against the adversary and helps us endure (Col. 4:2; Matt. 26:41). Plus, prayer helps refocus our perspective as the war wages on against Satan (Phil. 4:6-7). Prayer is a weapon without limit (Acts 12:21-24). The early church used prayer as a weapon (Acts 12:1-7). Contextually, Paul uses prayer here as a tool for aiding “all the saints” (1 Tim. 2:1), including himself (v.19-20). Paul often asked for prayers of the saints (Rom. 15:30; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1, 22). He specifically requested for wisdom and opportunities to speak “as I ought to speak,” i.e. speak the right things the right way (Col. 4:2-3; Phil. 1:12-14).

Paul, like all Christians, was an “ambassador” for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). His chains did not distract or prevent him from understanding the great responsibility that he bore in preaching the gospel. Do we possess the same attitude while fighting through our own persecutions (Acts 8:1-4)?

CLOSING REMARKS (6:21-24)

“But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.”

Paul ascribed two complimentary descriptors to Tychicus. Paul described him as “a beloved brother” and “faithful minister.” A similar description of Tychicus is found in the letter to Colossae (**Col. 4:7-8**). Tychicus was an important figure in the first century church. Specifically, he played an important role in Paul’s ministry. Tychicus accompanied Paul during his third missionary journey (**Acts 20:4**); he visited Ephesus on multiple occasions, providing encouragement to the church (**2 Tim. 4:12**); he worked alongside Onesimus to deliver Paul’s letter to the Colossians (**Col. 4:8-9**); and he possibly went to Crete to provide Paul’s orders to Titus (**Tit. 3:12**).

In addition to this letter being intended to provide instruction to the Ephesians, the delivery of the epistle by Tychicus would also provide an opportunity for Paul’s companion to alert the church of his affairs. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know “all things” that Tychicus would convey to them; such news would provide “comfort” rather than cause them to lose heart (**Eph. 3:13**). The bond between the church and Paul was incredibly strong after the three years he labored in Ephesus (**Acts 20:36-38**). Therefore, the Ephesians were likely concerned for Paul’s welfare and Tychicus’s news would surely warm their “hearts.”

“Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

Paul’s final prayer for the Ephesians recorded in this epistle is one praying for “peace,” “love,” and “faith.” As Paul states here, love is “from” God – we are only capable of loving because God first loved us (**1 John 4:7, 19**). One can only imagine the peace, love, and faith that the Ephesians would feel after reading the contents of this letter and being reminded of:

- The redemption each Christian has in Christ (**Eph. 1:3-13**).
- The equality between Jew and Gentile (**Eph. 2:3-7**).
- The love of Christ (**Eph. 3:14-21**).
- Christians’ unified goal of spiritual growth and holiness (**Eph. 4-5**).
- God providing strength to fight against Satan (**Eph. 6:10-18**).

Just as the epistle began with an emphasis on “grace” (**Eph. 1:2**), so it ends with the same emphasis. Such is fitting what has been termed the epistle of grace.

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