

Study Notes



Ephesians

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Introduction

The apostle Paul's epistle to the Ephesians contains 6 chapters, 155 verses, and 3,022 words. This is not a detailed commentary on every verse, but rather a collection of my personal study notes on this great epistle. Due to a busy schedule, time has not been spent on editing for grammatical and spelling mistakes. Thank you in advance for overlooking them. I do not claim complete originality for everything written in these notes. I appreciate the help that I have gleaned from others.

It is my goal in these notes to help you gain a basic understanding of what each passage says and teaches as you study the book for yourself. Of course, this will not be possible unless you personally:

- ✓ Believe the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)
- ✓ Submit to and rely upon its Author (2 Tim. 3:16)
- ✓ Consistently follow His rule of study (2 Tim. 2:15)

The Pauline epistles are not arranged chronologically. They are arranged according to a divine order for the spiritual edification of the Body of Christ. According to 2 Tim. 3:16, we must have doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction to be edified in the faith. The apostle Paul wrote nine epistles by inspiration of God to seven churches (Galatians actually written to a number of local churches in the region of Galatia).

Salvation in Christ

- **Romans** - Doctrine of salvation by grace through faith: justification and sanctification
- **1 & 2 Corinthians** - Reproof for not living by the doctrine of Romans (sanctification)
- **Galatians** - Correction for listening to doctrine not in line with Romans (justification)

Body of Christ

- **Ephesians** - Doctrine of the one Body of Christ: the Head and His members
- **Philippians** - Reproof for not living by the doctrine of Ephesians (lack of unity, members)
- **Colossians** - Correction for listening to doctrine not in line with Ephesians ("not holding the Head")

Coming of Christ

- **1 & 2 Thessalonians** - doctrine, reproof, and correction concerning the coming of the Lord

Taken together, these epistles provide the "form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13) for instruction in righteousness for the Body of Christ in this present mystery age. The apostle Paul also wrote four epistles to individuals. The epistles to Timothy and Titus concern the proper order for the church. The second epistle to Timothy deals with the apostasy of the last days. The epistle to Philemon is fittingly placed last because it illustrates the doctrines of Paul's epistles through a real-life situation.

Apostasy is a willful denial and departure from the truth. It is apostasy in this present age to deny the distinctive message and ministry of the apostle Paul (2 Tim. 1:13-15). Satan attacks the three main doctrines of the church epistles like nothing else. A study of church history shows a clear departure from and resurgence of Pauline truth.

Ephesians is built upon the doctrinal foundation laid in Romans. The last verses of Romans mentions the great mystery that Ephesians unfolds (Rom. 16:25-27). Ephesians is the pinnacle of divine revelation. In Romans we learn that we are crucified, buried, and risen with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). In Ephesians we learn that we are ascended up and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).

The six chapters of Ephesians are naturally divided in half (Eph. 1:3; 4:1) and provided a perfect balance between doctrine and practice:

Ephesians 1-3	Ephesians 4-6
Wealth	Walk
Standing	State
Calling	Conduct
Blessings	Behavior
Riches	Responsibilities

Chapter One

[1] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Paul's name is the first word in every epistle that he wrote (2 Thess. 3:17). God put an emphasis on Paul's distinct ministry. Many of his epistles state something about his apostleship in the first sentence (e.g. Gal. 1:1). He was given a distinct ministry from the twelve apostles and therefore his apostleship was constantly under attack.

All believers are saints (sanctified in Christ). It is God's will that we are part of two churches in this age. We become members of the church which is the Body of Christ upon salvation and we should also assemble together locally with other like-minded believers for service (see also Phil. 1:1-2; Col. 1:1-2).

Commentators make a big deal about the words "at Ephesus" supposedly not being in some of the ancient manuscripts. They talk about how this was to be an encyclical letter. All of Paul's letters were copied and passed around to the brethren (Col. 4:16).

The record of Paul's ministry at Ephesus is found in Acts 18-20. He spent three years there and the ministry continued on after his departure with the help of Aquila and Priscilla and Timothy. There were Gentiles saved after Paul left because he mentions that he heard of their faith (v.15).

Perhaps Paul referred specifically to the "faithful" because in this letter he is speaking to the spiritual saints that can bear the meat of the word, unlike the carnal saints at Corinth (1 Cor. 2:1-8).

By the way, comparing this letter with the letter to the church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) proves that they are different churches under different programs (the seven churches in Rev. 2-3 are future Jewish churches in the tribulation period). For example, compare Eph. 1:3 with Rev. 2:7.

[2] Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace precedes peace (Rom. 5:1). Paul says more about the grace of God than all the other Bible writers combined! Have you ever noticed that Paul never sends greetings from the Holy Spirit? We are sealed with the Spirit (v.13). Compare this with John's greeting to the tribulation saints (Rev. 1:4).

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

We ought to bless God for all His blessings (Ps. 103:1-2)! In vs.3-14 the apostle Paul outlines some (not exhaustive list) of the spiritual blessings we have from the Father (vs.3-6), the Son (vs.7-12), and the Spirit (vs.13-14). Each member of the Godhead is active in salvation. It has been

accomplished and made available by the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Spirit. Each section is one sentence and ends with praise to the glory of God.

Most Christians never come to understand the plain truth of this verse:

- We are blessed with ALL blessings the moment of salvation (Col. 2:10)
- These blessings are spiritual, not physical and material
- These blessings are in “heavenly places,” not on earth (Eph. 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10)

Most professing Christians seem to think they are God’s earthly people in a covenant relationship. They claim the blessings of Deut. 28:1-14, but conveniently forget about all the curses in vs.15-68.

Israel	Body of Christ
Material Blessings	Spiritual Blessings
On Earth	In Heavenly Places
Based on Performance	Based on Position

[4] According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

We are chosen “in Christ” (2 Tim. 1:9). Christ is God’s elect (Isa. 42:1-4). When did we get in Christ? When we trusted Him as Savior (v.13), NOT before the foundation of the world (else we were in Christ, out of Christ, back in Christ). God foreknew that we would trust Christ. Nobody is predestinated to salvation or damnation. Those who are saved are predestinated unto glory. The standing of the Body of Christ before God is that we are holy, without blame, and in His love. We certainly don’t have to keep ourselves in the love of God (compare Jude 21 with Rom. 8:38-39).

God has a twofold purpose that is revealed in His word (v.10; Gen. 1:1).

- 1) **Heaven** (Body of Christ) – planned BEFORE foundation of the world (1 Cor. 2:7), kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:9)
- 2) **Earth** – (Israel) prophesied FROM foundation of world (Matt. 25:34), spoken since the world began (Acts 3:21)

Satan, whose primary habitation is in the heavens, was focused on defeating God’s plan for the earth and had no idea about God’s plan to reconcile the heavens to Himself. Israel will inherit the earth, but we live eternally in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1). We will replace the fallen principalities and powers (Eph. 3:10; Rev. 12:7-9).

[5] Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

The word adoption is not used here in the sense of making someone a child who was not born into the family (always a hindrance to read modern and western definitions into Bible words). We were born into the family of God upon salvation. Adoption, as used by Paul, is about position

rather than relationship. It is the full placement as a son. It has to do with position and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities that come with that position (Gal. 4:1-7).

Being complete in Christ we have this position now, but we have yet to fully enter into the experience of all that it means to be a son of God. The apostle Paul speaks of adoption in relation to the Body of Christ in three passages and applies it in three tenses:

- 1) As to the past, we were predestinated unto adoption (Eph. 1:3-6)
- 2) As to present, we now have the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-6)
- 3) As to the future, we are waiting for adoption (Rom. 8:23)

"Abba" is Aramaic and is an intimate term for father, like our English word "Daddy". This is what Jesus called the Father when He was praying in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:36). We are accepted in the beloved!

Note that predestination is for God ("to himself") and according to the good pleasure of His will (v.9, 11). This does not mean we have no will in the matter. By our will we can only receive salvation: we cannot accomplish it (Jn. 1:11-13).

[6] To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

God made us accepted by His grace (2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:12). Christ is the Beloved (v.7; Matt. 12:18, note beloved and elect). God accepts us as He does Jesus Christ! This has to do with our standing Christ. However, as to our state, we must labor to be accepted as a servant (2 Cor. 5:9; Rom. 14:17-18).

[7] In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

To be redeemed is to be purchased with a price. What was the price? The precious BLOOD of Christ. There could be no redemption without His blood. How many sins did He forgive? ALL of them: past, present, and future (Col. 2:13)! The riches of His grace has given us unsearchable riches (3:8, not measured by human mind, cannot be searched out in OT prophecy).

[8] Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

[9] Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

[10] That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

The mystery was no afterthought or "Plan B." It is His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). It is a demonstration of His great wisdom (Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 2:7). One of our spiritual blessings is knowing the mystery of God's will concerning the dispensation of the fullness of times. Anti-dispensational preachers accuse us of teaching that God failed in trying to establish His kingdom through Israel. They claim Christ preached a spiritual kingdom only and that His promises are

being fulfilled spiritually in the church. Those that spiritualize the scripture tell spiritual lies. Israel failed, not God! He knew they would fall and He planned that through their fall He would reconcile the world to Himself (Rom. 11:11-15, 32-36).

The word “dispensation” is found four times in the Bible (Eph. 1:10; 3:2; 1 Cor. 9:17; Col. 1:25). A dispensation is simply a dispensing of divine revelation. It is a dealing out, administration, or economy. Some think the dispensation of the fulness of times refers to the kingdom age. I believe it is the eternal state after the creation of a new heaven and earth. There is one family of God (Eph. 3:14-15), but there will be a distinction throughout eternity between the things in heaven and earth. All the redeemed are “in Christ”. A person can only be “in Adam” or “in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:22). Christ is the foundation to both programs (“chief corner stone”, Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6). So, the fact people were in Christ before Paul (e.g. Rom. 16:7) does not prove the Body of Christ began before his ministry.

Notice the absence of “things under the earth” in v.10 (Phil. 2:10; Col. 1:20). There is no universal salvation. Those who die lost will remain lost for eternity.

[11] In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

How amazing that we Gentiles, who were strangers from the covenants of promise, have obtained such a glorious inheritance (Eph. 2:11-13)! Every member of the Body of Christ has a guaranteed inheritance in Christ. However, we may add rewards to that inheritance (Col. 3:24).

[12] That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

That Christ would save us and give us a glorious inheritance is to the praise of His glory. All we did was trust Christ (depending not on our works, but His perfect and finished work).

[13] In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

[14] Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Salvation is in a Person (“In whom”). We are saved by grace the moment we believe on Christ. To believe on Him is not merely a mental assent that He is the Savior. It is to TRUST Him alone as your personal Savior.

This is a great verse to explain how to be saved. We hear the word of truth, believe it, and we are immediately sealed with Spirit. What is the gospel of OUR salvation? It is the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4). In “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) we must rightly divide the different gospels revealed in scripture. There is only one gospel by which we are saved in this age (Gal. 1:6-12). The word of truth for

Israel to be saved (Acts 2:38) is not the word of truth for all men in this age of grace (Acts 16:31; 1 Cor. 1:17).

The Spirit of God does various things for us upon salvation. He:

- 1) Circumcises (Col. 2:13)
- 2) Regenerates (Titus 3:5)
- 3) Baptizes (Col. 2:12)
- 4) Indwells (1 Cor. 3:16)
- 5) Seals (Eph. 1:13; 4:30)

A seal speaks of ownership, a finished transaction, and security. We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). By the way, that Paul calls Him the “holy Spirit of promise” does not mean he is referring to the prophesied baptism WITH the Holy Ghost (Lk. 24:49). There are two different spiritual baptisms as we shall see in chapters 3 and 4. What he means by “promise” is explained in v.14. An earnest is a promise to complete a transaction.

According to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, the word *earnest* means, “First fruits; that which is in advance, and gives promise of something to come. Early fruit may be an earnest of fruit to follow. The first success in arms may be an earnest of future success. The Christian’s peace of mind in this life is an earnest of future peace and happiness. Hence earnest or earnest-money is a first payment or deposit giving promise or assurance of full payment. Hence the practice of giving an earnest to ratify a bargain. This sense of the word is primary, denoting that which goes before, or in advance. Thus, the earnest of the spirit is given to saints, as a pledge or assurance of their future enjoyment of God’s presence and favor.”

The earnest of the Spirit guarantees our future glory (2 Cor. 1:22; 4:13-5:8). We are awaiting the redemption of our body. We are the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23).

**[15] Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,
[16] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;**

Paul was always thankful to hear about the testimony of real Christians. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love unto all the saints are hallmarks of authentic Christianity.

In the first part of this chapter (vs.1-14), the apostle Paul mentions seven spiritual blessings. In the latter part of the chapter (vs.15-23), he prays for the Body of Christ regarding these blessings. He does not pray that we would be able to obtain these blessings, but rather that we would know that we already have it all in Christ!

Due to their ignorance of the Pauline epistles, most believers today are seeking for things they already have in Christ and are therefore not enjoying the Christian life as they should be. They lack peace and joy because of their failure to know and believe who God has made them in Christ. For example, most believers are trying to obtain blessings (v.3), forgiveness (v.7), and acceptance (v.6) from God when He has already given us these things in Christ.

The first three chapters reveal doctrine about the Body of Christ:

- Chapter 1 – Our spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ
- Chapter 2 – How we are made members of the Body of Christ
- Chapter 3 – The Body of Christ was a mystery revealed through Paul

There are two prayers in this first section and they are both about believers having a spiritual knowledge of the truth set forth in these chapters (1:15-23; 3:14-21). The prayers in Paul's prison epistles are spiritual (see also Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-14). We may pray about physical things, but surely the emphasis in our prayers should be on the spiritual. Spiritual knowledge of God is our greatest need!

[17] That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

[18] The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

[19] And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

The knowledge Paul is talking about is a spiritual knowledge that only comes by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-16). Many churches today are caught up in the vain philosophy of, "Know thyself," but Paul prays that we would know:

- **God** (v.17) – Our great goal should be, "that I may know him" (Phil. 3:10).
- **The hope of HIS calling** (v.18a) - There is one hope of our calling (Eph. 4:1, 4). Our calling is "high" (Phil. 3:14) and "holy" (2 Tim. 1:9). We are called by Paul's gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). The Body of Christ is a called-out assembly. We are assembled in Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). Yet, many claim that a church can only be local. Our hope is to be caught up and glorified with Christ in heaven (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:1-4; Titus 2:13). Our position is eternal in the heavens (Eph. 2:6-7; 2 Cor. 5:1). The hope of Israel's calling concerns a kingdom on the EARTH. The far majority of believers today think they have the hope of Israel's calling.
- **The riches of the glory of HIS inheritance in the saints** (v.18b)
- **The exceeding greatness of HIS mighty power** (v.19)

The apostle Paul was given a twofold ministry for this present age: to every creature with the gospel (Col. 1:23) and to the church with the mystery (Col. 1:24-29). Satan knows what God is doing in this age and is working to keep the lost blinded to the truth of the gospel of grace and believers blinded to the truth of the Body of Christ. Based on Paul's prayer (v.18), it is possible for believers to be blinded to spiritual truth. What blinds believers to God's truth? Very often it is the religious TRADITIONS of men (Col. 2:8).

[20] Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

[21] Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

**[22] And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,
[23] Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

Most people seem to be only interested in what the power of God can do FOR them in a visible and tangible way. God is not doing signs and wonders in this age. However, His mighty power is at work IN us spiritually (Eph. 3:20). We have the resurrection power of God that enables us to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-4).

Christ went down into the lower parts of the earth (Eph. 4:9), but is now exalted far above all heavens (Eph. 4:10). He is seated far above all principality, power, and might, and dominion; both visible and invisible (Col 1:16). As members of His Body, we are seated with Him and will reign with Him over all things eternally.

The first church that I ever “joined” was a Baptist church. They taught me as a young Christian that there is only a local and visible church on earth that is entered through water baptism. The Lord used vs.22-23 to show me that there is one true spiritual church made up of all believers in this age. It is the church, which is the Body of Christ. There are many local churches, but there is only ONE BODY (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4). Christ fills all the members of His Body with all spiritual blessings. All believers in this age are baptized by one Spirit into this one Body upon salvation (1 Cor. 12:13).

Chapter Two

The first chapter was about our **possessions** as members of the Body of Christ. This chapter is about our **position** as members of the Body of Christ. The first chapter was all about what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ. In this chapter, we learn how we become members of the Body of Christ. It is not by anything that we are or that we can do. It is totally by the GRACE of God! Only God can take a dead sinner and make him a living saint. There is a stark contrast between the way this chapter opens and closes. Those who were once a habitation for the spirit of Satan (v.2) are made to be a habitation of God through His Spirit (v.22).

The first part of the chapter deals with sinners as individuals (vs.1-10) and the later part with Gentiles as a group (vs.11-22). Both passages outline themselves:

- I. Who we were (vs.1-3)
 - II. But God (vs.4-9)
 - III. Who we are now (v.10)
-
- I. In times past (vs.11-12)
 - II. But now (vs.13-18)
 - III. Ye are (vs.19-22)

[1] And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
[2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
[3] Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

We should not dwell on our past, but it's good to remember where we were and how God saved us (Titus 3:1-7). The Bible has nothing positive to say about the flesh (see Rom. 1-3, bad news before the good news). All lost sinners are dead in trespasses and sins. There are different kinds of death mentioned in the Bible and none of them mean annihilation. Death is a separation. Paul is talking about spiritual death, which is separation from the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:17-19). Those who die physically in a lost condition will suffer the second death (Rev. 20:14-15).

Notice three destructive forces that worked in our lives as lost sinners:

- 1) World – The course of this present evil world is according to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16).
- 2) Devil – It is a course that is set by Satan who is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan's primary habitation is in the second heaven (Eph. 6:12). He is cast out in the midst of the tribulation period (Rev. 12:9). Satan is a spiritual being. If we are going to stand against him, we must put on the spiritual armor of God and use the spiritual weapon of the word of God.

- 3) Flesh – This verse defines lusts as desires. The flesh desires to fulfill its desires in an unlawful manner. We are sinners by nature (Rom. 5:12). It is in our human nature to disobey God. You don't have to teach your children to sin (Ps. 51:5). Children of disobedience are children of wrath (Eph. 5:3-6).

Notice the "we all" in v.3. George Williams (1850-1928) wrote, "The Apostle Paul prior to his conversion lived a blameless life of religious rectitude; the Ephesians prior to their conversion wallowed in an appalling abyss of idolatry and obscenity. Yet the Apostle says that there was no moral difference between him and them. They were all alike corrupt by nature, they were all alike dead in sins, sons of disobedience, led by the spirit of Satan and under the wrath of God (vs.1-3). These are facts revealed by the Holy Spirit Who is infallible; but these are facts that man denies, and the assertion of which enrages him."

[4] But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

[5] Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

[6] And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

[7] That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

[8] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

[9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

"But" is a little word that makes a big difference in the Bible, especially when it says, "But God!" God makes all the difference. When a sinner trusts Christ for salvation he is instantly quickened (made alive spiritually), raised up, and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-4). Our position will be in heavenly places throughout the ages to come (as trophies of His grace). All of this is accomplished by spiritual baptism (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5). Ephesians is further revelation from Romans which taught us that we are crucified, buried, and risen with Christ (Rom 6:3-6). How could a righteous God do such wondrous things for unrighteous sinners? It is because of Christ (Eph. 4:32; Rom. 6:23).

Note: "with Christ" (v.5); "in Christ" (v.6); "through Christ" (v.7).

- Rich Mercy – He never runs out! He has enough mercy to save any sinner! God's mercy may be defined as an outward manifestation of His pity and compassion by which He relieves the misery of the sinful and suffering in their distress. Mercy presupposes misery. Mercy is God NOT giving man what he deserves.
- Great Love – Proven by the cross (Rom. 5:8).
- Abounding Grace – Grace has to do with what God freely gives us in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 8:9). Grace and works are mutually exclusive in our salvation (Rom. 11:6; Titus 3:5). We cannot earn salvation by merit or forfeit it by demerit. God has always been gracious, but there is a difference between grace in a dispensation and a dispensation of grace (Rom. 5:20-21). Noah found grace (i.e. favor) because he was perfect in his generations (Gen.

6:8-9). Paul is the pattern of salvation for this present age (1 Tim. 1:11-16). Does “that not of yourselves” refer to salvation or faith? Both. We are justified by the faith of Christ.

[10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Good works do have a place in salvation. The problem is that many put them in the wrong place. Good works are not the means of salvation: they are the fruit of it. You can't even do good works unless you are saved (Rom. 8:8-9). Salvation is not reformation of the old nature, but a creative work of God (4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17). We do good works through Christ in us (Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13). God did not save us to just keep us out of hell. He saved us unto Himself (Eph. 1:4-6; Titus 2:11-14).

[11] Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

[12] That at that time ye 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:

In latter part of this chapter (vs.11-22), the apostle Paul shows the clear dispensational change in Gods dealings with the Gentiles in this present age. God never changes in His person, principles, and promises (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8), but He does change in His dealings with man. The Bible is a complete revelation, but it was given progressively and not all at once. All scripture is profitable for us, but in order to gain the profit from God's word that He has placed in it for us we must study it His way (2 Tim. 2:15). All the Bible is the word of truth, but we must recognize and consistently maintain the divisions that God put in His word if we are going to understand it. What was truth for Israel under the law may not be truth for the Body of Christ under grace. This is the dispensational approach to Bible study.

A “dispensation” (used 4 times in the Bible, all by Paul) is basically a dealing out, distribution, or dispensing of something. It is an administration. Dispensations are not periods of time. Ages are periods of time (“other ages,” “ages to come”). Dispensations operate within ages. Each dispensation revealed in scripture is marked by five things:

- 1) Divine revelation (bring clear changes in God's dealings with men)
- 2) Human spokesman (e.g. Moses and Paul)
- 3) Human responsibility to the revelation (a testing)
- 4) Human failure (every dispensation ends in apostasy except the last one)
- 5) Divine judgment

It is not enough to be biblical. We must also be dispensational. For example, tongues are biblical but not dispensational for today. It is dangerous to misplace things in the scripture. In the context of 2 Tim. 2:15 the apostle Paul warns about the dangerous doctrine of saying that the resurrection is past already (2 Tim. 2:16-18). Those false teachers were putting a biblical subject (resurrection) in the wrong place.

Notice the dispensational phrases in this chapter:

- time past (v.11)
- But now (v.13)
- ages to come (v.7)

The New Testament is arranged according to this dispensational order:

- I. Time past (Matthew through early Acts)
- II. But now (Romans through Philemon)
- III. Ages to come (Hebrews through Revelation)

The terms “circumcision” and “uncircumcision” identify a basic physical, racial, and social distinction; one that was in the flesh and made by hands. In times past the Gentiles were spiritually alienated from God and thus said to be “without Christ.” That was their condition because they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” and “strangers of the covenants of promise.” The physical distinction only pointed to the more important spiritual alienation the Gentiles occupied in times past. Gentiles could come to God, but they had to come through Israel (e.g. Ruth). Gentiles were not blessed if they did not first bless the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:3; Num. 24:9). God gave circumcision to Abraham (Gen. 17) as a sign of the covenant that He made with him and his seed after him. It was an outward sign of the spiritual privilege God had given to them and was a required mark of their identity and covenant privileges. It was the beginning of a middle wall of partition that God put up between Israel and the nations (Num. 23:9). When He revealed the law through Moses, that wall was strongly reinforced (Deut. 4:5-8). Therefore, when we find God making this distinction in the scripture we KNOW that we are not reading about this present age. Most Bible believing Christians understand this about the Old Testament, but few understand that is also the case with the Gospels and early Acts (Rom. 15:8; Matt. 10:5-6; 15:24; Lk. 24:34; 24:47; Acts 1:6; 2:14, 22, 36; 3:19-26; 11:19). This distinction will once again be in place after the rapture of the Body of Christ.

[13] But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

[14] For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

[15] Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

[16] And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

[17] And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

[18] For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

This is one of several very significant “but now” passages in Paul’s epistles (see Col. 1:24-26 for another example). The Body of Christ was a mystery (or, secret) that was first revealed to Paul. Some try to use this passage to teach that the Body of Christ began historically AT the cross. Not everything that Christ accomplished through His cross was revealed or carried out at that time. For example, He destroyed Satan through His death and resurrection, but Satan is still loose and at work (Rom. 16:20). The Body of Christ is made possible “by the blood of Christ” (v.13) and “by

the cross” (v.16), but entrance into this Body is “by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6) and “by one Spirit” (v.18; 1 Cor. 12:13).

The main characteristic of the Body of Christ is not that we are “in Christ,” but that we are made “ONE NEW MAN”. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Col. 3:11). We are not under the ordinances of the law (Col. 2:8-17). How could God reconcile both Jews and Gentiles in one body before He cast away Israel (Rom. 11:15)? Peter was not referring to the Gentiles in Acts 2:39, but to the scattered tribes of Israel (Dan. 9:7, afar off geographically). If Peter knew the truth of the one Body of Christ in Acts 2, explain his attitude in Acts 10. The only place in the Bible where read about Jews and Gentiles being in one spiritual Body is in Paul’s epistles. It is in his epistles alone that we find the specific doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church which is the Body of Christ.

[19] Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

[20] And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

[21] In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

[22] In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Instead of aliens and strangers, we are now fellowcitizens with the saints! We gained this status WITHOUT Israel. In times past the Gentiles could only come to God through Israel.

There is one household of God made up of all the saints who are redeemed by the blood of Christ (Eph. 3:15). But in this household, there is a difference between Israel, Gentiles, and the Body of Christ. Christ is the chief corner stone to both the kingdom church (1 Pet. 2:4-12) and the Body of Christ.

The “apostles and prophets” Paul is referring to are ones that Christ sent after He ascended to heaven (Eph. 3:5; 4:8-12). Christ is the one foundation, but Paul was the first to preach Him according to the revelation of the mystery (1 Cor. 3:10; Rom. 16:25).

Chapter Three

In chapter one we discovered some of our spiritual blessings as members of the Body of Christ. In chapter two we learned how we were made members of His Body. In the first part of the third chapter Paul shows that the Body was a mystery that was first revealed through him.

This passage is a key in understanding Paul's distinct message and ministry as the apostle to Gentiles in this age of grace. If words have any meaning, there is a dispensational difference between the ministry of the twelve apostles and the ministry of Paul.

Consider these basic distinctions:

- 1) The twelve were chosen by Christ on earth (Lk. 6:13-16), but Paul was chosen by Christ from heaven (Acts 9:3-6).
- 2) The twelve were appointed to lead Israel (Matt. 19:28), but Paul was appointed to lead the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24-26).
- 3) The twelve represent the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28), but Paul represents the one Body (he was both a Hebrew and a Roman citizen, Phil. 3:5, Acts 22:28).
- 4) The twelve knew Christ on earth (Acts 1:9), but Paul knew Christ from heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-3, 1 Cor. 15:8).
- 5) The twelve were sent to proclaim and offer the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 10:7, Acts 3:19-21), but Paul was sent to preach the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).
- 6) In the kingdom commission water baptism was required and signs were the evidence of salvation (Mk. 16:15-18), but Paul was not sent to baptize (1 Cor. 1:17) and he knew the signs would cease (1 Cor. 13:8-13).
- 7) The ministry of the twelve was based on covenants and prophecy (Acts 3:19-26). After Israel is blessed, the Gentiles receive blessings through them. The ministry of Paul was based on a mystery (Rom. 16:25-26, Eph. 3:8). The Gentiles blessed through fall of Israel (Rom. 11:11-12, 15) and there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the body (Gal. 3:28)
- 8) The twelve restricted their ministry to the circumcision after God raised up Paul. Their leadership decreased as Paul's increased (Gal. 2:1-9). Paul overshadowed the twelve after Acts 7 when Israel officially rejected the kingdom. From Acts 13 on, Paul is the focus and his ministry is magnified.

[1] For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

It was Paul's ministry among the Gentiles that led to him becoming a prisoner (Acts 22:17-24). He considered himself a prisoner of Christ instead of a prisoner of Rome (Eph. 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8; Phile. 1, 9). In v.14 Paul will resume what he started to say in v.1 ("For this cause") before he went on a divine digression in vs.2-13.

[2] If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

Here we are nearly 2,000 years later and the majority of professing Christians still haven't heard of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given through Paul to the Gentiles! Satan has

been working hard to keep people blinded to this vital truth. God dispensed the message of grace through Paul's ministry (1 Cor. 9:17; Col. 1:25) and the grace that he needed to make it known (vs.7-8). He needed much grace because he suffered much to fulfill his ministry.

[3] How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

[4] Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

[5] Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

The glorified Christ from heaven literally appeared to Paul in order to directly reveal the mystery to him. His knowledge in the mystery of Christ may be understood when we read the scriptures that he wrote by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 2:7). The mystery of the Body of Christ was kept secret in other ages, but it is now revealed to our understanding by the Spirit as we read what Paul wrote. The "apostles and prophets" (v.5) he referred to were those who ministered to the Body of Christ. The mystery was revealed to them "by the Spirit" when they heard Paul; which is a different thing than Christ revealing the mystery to Paul first.

[6] That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

That Gentiles would be saved was not a mystery. There examples of it in the Old Testament (e.g. Ruth) and the the prophets spoke of it (e.g. Isa. 60:1-5). The mystery that Christ revealed through Paul is that believing Gentiles would be fellowheirs (Eph. 1:11) in the SAME BODY. In time past the Gentiles were only blessed through Israel, but now we are blessed without Israel. Israel does not have a position above the Gentiles in this age. All believers are made members of the same spiritual Body (Eph. 2:13-16). The Body of Christ is one new spiritual man in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:27-28). We become members of this Body "by the gospel." This is obviously referring to the gospel that Paul received by revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). We are made partakers of the Holy Spirit of promise when we believe Paul's gospel (Eph. 1:13). Most Christians believe the Body of Christ began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). How could the Body of Christ begin before the gospel, that we must believe in order to be in the Body, was revealed?

[7] Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

The apostle Paul was given a twofold ministry: to every creature with the gospel (Col. 1:23) and to the Body of Christ with the mystery (Col. 1:24-29). He was able to finish his course (2 Tim. 4:7) by the grace and power of God.

[8] Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

That Paul had much to say about himself and his ministry did not make him an egomaniac because he wrote by inspiration of God. Paul magnified his office as the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), but he knew that as a man he was nothing. He knew that he did not deserve to be an apostle (1 Cor. 15:10) and he considered himself to be “less than the least of all saints.” His ministry was totally by the grace of God.

The unsearchable riches of Christ concern spiritual truth that cannot be found by searching the Old Testament or fully grasped by the human mind.

[9] And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

The “fellowship of the mystery” is our unity as the Body of Christ. It was the goal of Paul’s ministry to make all men see this blessed truth, but sadly most believers today seem to be blinded to it. The mystery was not hid in the Old Testament, it was hid in God. No one knew it until God revealed it through Paul. Yet, many preachers claim to find this truth in the Old Testament. If words have any meaning, the mystery cannot be found in the scriptures written before Paul. Therefore, we know that the Body of Christ is not the subject of what transpires in Acts 1-8 because those events were in accordance with what the prophets spoke about since the beginning of the world (Acts 3:21).

That the Godhead created all things, both visible and invisible, by Jesus Christ proves the deity of Christ.

[10] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

[11] According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

The mystery of the Body of Christ is a great demonstration of the wisdom of God. In this age angels are not teaching us, but we are teaching them. The mystery was not some kind of emergency plan that God came up with after Israel fell. We are His eternal purpose that He planned before the world began but kept secret until after Israel fell.

[12] In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

What an amazing statement! As members of the Body of Christ we have boldness and access with confidence in the presence of God (Eph. 2:18). What a contrast with how God dealt with Gentiles in time past! We do not have this privilege because of our faith. We are justified by the faith of Christ (Gal. 2:16). We are to live by the faith of Christ (Gal. 2:20). We have access by the faith of Christ. Yes, we must place our faith in Christ. However, our spiritual blessings are based upon what Christ accomplished by HIS faith for us.

[13] Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Christ suffered to purchase our salvation and Paul suffered to proclaim it (Col. 1:24). It was Paul, not Peter, who filled up the afflictions of Christ for the Body's sake. Peter suffered, but for a different ministry. By the grace of God, he never fainted in all his tribulations (2 Cor. 4:15-18). He encourages the Body of Christ not to faint at his tribulations. Some were ashamed of his chains (2 Tim. 1:8). It was for our eternal glory that Paul endured all the things he faced (2 Tim. 2:10).

In the latter part of this chapter we find Paul's second prayer which concludes the doctrinal section of the epistle. Paul's prayers for the Body of Christ recorded in his prison epistles are all about spiritual things. He does not pray that we would receive things we don't have, but rather that we would understand and enjoy all that we do have in Christ.

[14] For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

[15] Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

Bowing the knees in prayer is a symbol of humility (Acts 20:36). It is not necessary to always bow the knees when praying (Neh. 2:4). The most important thing is to bow the heart in true humility before God. Scriptural prayer is to the Father, in the name of the Son (Eph. 5:20), and in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18). All believers are in the same spiritual family of God (Gal. 3:26). Christ called the Father "Abba" when He prayed (Mk. 14:36). The Spirit of Christ in us gives us that same intimate access to the Father (Gal. 4:6).

[16] That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

How does God strengthen us with might by His Spirit in the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16-18)? By the word of God (Col. 3:16). Yet, Christians spend much more time praying about the outward man which is perishing.

[17] That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Christ is in every believer (Col. 1:27), but does He dwell in our hearts in the sense of making Himself at home there?

[18] May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

Most take this to be referring to the love of Christ, but v.19 seems to differentiate the love of Christ from what he is talking about here. I think he is referring to the mystery (vs.8-9). The mystery is not something that can't be known, but rather a secret that was hid in God and has now been revealed. God wants us to see it and comprehend the dimensions of it:

- ❖ Breadth – ALL men
- ❖ Length – eternal purpose
- ❖ Depth – based on the deep love and grace of Christ
- ❖ Height – heavenly places

[19] And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

How can we know something that passes knowledge? It passes human knowledge, but we may know it by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:9-13). Christ is the fulness of God (Col. 1:19; 2:9). We are to seek to live a FULL Christian life (Eph. 5:18; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-11). If you are filled with the things of the flesh and the world you will not desire to be filled with things of God (Prov. 27:7).

[20] Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

[21] Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

These last two verses of the chapter divide the book in half. The first half is about our standing or position in heavenly places and the last half is about our state or practice on the earth. In first three chapters, believers are edified as to our spiritual wealth as members of the body of Christ. In the last three chapters, we are exhorted as to what our spiritual walk should be in light of that standing (Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). As we read the first three chapters we wonder how it is that God could give sinners like us such great blessings. Then as we read the last three chapters we wonder how it is that we can live up to the standard of life that He has set for us. The answer is in vs.20-21.

This “present evil world” must end. The “world to come” is without end. In the “world to come” (Heb. 2:5; 6:5) Israel will reign on earth and we will reign in heavenly places (Eph. 1:21; 2:6-7).

Chapter Four

In the first three chapters, we were edified by the knowledge of our spiritual wealth in Christ. In the last three chapters, we are exhorted to have a spiritual walk through Christ (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). In these chapters, Paul exhorts us concerning the good works that God has ordained for us to walk in (Eph. 2:8-10). Many try to separate doctrinal teaching from practical preaching, but they go together and both are necessary. The strength of application is a solid doctrinal foundation. Sound doctrine has a life changing effect when it is believed and obeyed (Rom. 6:17).

[1] I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

The law commanded, but grace beseeches. To “beseech” basically means “to plead with.” Paul used that word about twenty-three times in his epistles, which is fitting since he is the apostle of grace.

The word “vocation” refers to our calling. We must know the “hope of our calling” (Eph. 1:15-19). We have a “high” (Phil. 3:14) and “holy” (2 Tim. 1:9) calling. The goal of spiritual growth is getting our state lined up with our standing. In order to do that we must first know what our standing is, which is why Paul dealt with that first in this epistle. How can we walk worthy of a vocation that we are ignorant of? To walk worthy of our vocation is to live in a way that is becoming to the sound doctrine we profess to believe (Titus 2:1, 10; Phil. 1:27).

**[2] With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
[3] Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

This is how the members of the Body of Christ are to treat one another (see also Phil. 2:1-5; Col. 3:9-15). Believing Jews and Gentiles now have a common bond in Christ (Eph. 2:11-18). A true spiritual knowledge of all God has done for us by grace in Christ Jesus should humble us. Our high calling demands a lowly walk! A superficial knowledge will just puff us up (2 Cor. 12:7). Knowledge without charity is nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). We cannot make the unity of the Spirit (positional standing), but we must endeavor to keep it in our practical state.

**[4] There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
[5] One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
[6] One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

This passage is often misused to teach that all professing Christians should be ecumenical and come together in unity despite doctrinal differences. God is not asking us to form some kind of unity, but rather to recognize the unity that He Himself has made in Christ. This is the unity of the Spirit and not the uniformity of the flesh (the Roman Catholic Church is a unified religion of the flesh).

There are seven spiritual things listed here that form the basis of the unity of the Spirit. The number seven is God's number of perfection. Ephesians is the pinnacle of revelation for the Body of Christ, like the book of Revelation is for Israel. The number seven is used repeatedly in both books.

The first chapter revealed seven spiritual blessings and the last chapter speaks of seven pieces of spiritual armor. In between we find the sevenfold unity of the Spirit.

- 1) **One body** – There are many local churches (Rom. 16:4), but there is only ONE Body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13; Eph. 2:16; Col. 3:15). There are many Christian organizations, but there is only one spiritual organism that is being built by God in this age.
- 2) **One Spirit** (Eph. 1:13; 2:18; 1 Cor. 6:17) – The Holy Spirit baptizes, regenerates, indwells, and seals every member of the Body.
- 3) **One hope** of OUR calling (Titus 2:13; Phil. 3:20) – Christ catching us up to heaven before the tribulation period begins is the heavenly hope of the Body of Christ. Paul instructs us to look for Christ from heaven, not the antichrist from earth.
- 4) **One Lord** – Christ is the Head of the one Body (Eph. 1:20-23 Col. 1:18).
- 5) **One faith** – “The faith” (e.g. 2 Tim. 4:7) is the body of doctrine revealed in Paul's epistles for the Body of Christ. This “one faith” reveals the “faith of Christ” by which we are justified. Our faith is to be based upon this “one faith.”
- 6) **One baptism** – There are various baptisms in the Bible (see Matt. 3:11 for three baptisms in one verse), but there is only one that makes us members of the one Body (Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12). The baptism by the Spirit that takes place upon salvation and puts us into the Body of Christ is the only baptism that matters today. How sad it is that the professing church is greatly divided over a water ceremony that God never even commanded the Body of Christ to practice! The apostle Paul never commanded water baptism like Peter did (1 Cor. 1:17).
- 7) **One God and Father** – He is above, through, and in all believers. God is not the Father of the lost (Gal. 3:26). The Father, Son, and Spirit are all in the believer.

Notice that the three members of the Godhead are mentioned in vs.4-6, and that Christ is central. The trinity is found in every chapter of this book (1:3-14; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 5:18-21; 6:18), which is fitting since Ephesians is the pinnacle of divine revelation.

[7] But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

[8] Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

[9] (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

[10] He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

[11] And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Unity (vs.1-6) does not negate diversity and individuality. In the one Body of Christ there are many different members. Paul was given the measure of grace needed to fulfill his ministry as the apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; Eph. 3:7-8).

The Body of Christ had sign gifts during the transition period of Acts, before Israel was officially set aside as a nation (1 Cor. 1:22) and the Bible was complete. The sign gifts such as miracles, healing, and tongues have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

The gifts mentioned in this passage are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. Notice that Christ gave these apostles and prophets from heaven. This tells us that Paul is not referring to the twelve apostles because Christ called them when He was on earth. The gifts of apostles and prophets are not for today (they were foundational, Eph. 2:20). The apostles were men that saw the Lord, were personally chosen and sent by Him, and that had the signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12). When the apostles died, they were not replaced. There is no longer a need for prophets because we have the complete revelation of scripture.

There is still a need for evangelists and pastors and teachers. However, nobody today is given supernatural enablement like what occurred before the Bible was completed. The scripture is sufficient for the work of the ministry (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Of course, we must depend upon the Spirit, but He is not coming upon people for power like he did in the Acts period. The primary responsibility of an evangelist is to go to an area where the gospel is not being preached and start a church through an evangelistic ministry. The primary responsibility of the pastor and teacher (pastors are teachers) is to ground the saints in the faith by faithfully feeding them the word of God and leading by example. Not all believers are evangelists, but we should all do "the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5).

In v.8 Paul cited scripture from the Psalms and made a spiritual application. The verse he cited (Ps. 68:18) is not a prophecy about the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:5). It is from a Messianic Psalm about the victory the Lord will give Israel in the Kingdom. We may also make spiritual applications so long as we don't contradict sound doctrine. However, Paul also changed the word of God, which we never have a right to do ("received gifts for men" vs. "gave gifts unto men"). He wrote by inspiration and God alone has the right to change His words.

He who humbled Himself to not only descend to the earth but to also die on the cross and go down into the lower parts of the earth has ascended up far above all heavens and exalted above all principalities and powers (Eph. 1:19-23). In contrast, Satan said, "I will ascend into heaven," but he will be brought down into the pit and then the lake of fire.

The Bible reveals some of the activities of Christ during the three days and nights that He was in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40):

- He went into paradise the day He died (Lk. 23:43) – this refutes "soul sleep"
- He preached to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3:18-20; 2 Pet. 2:4-5)

- Some say that He was tormented in the fires of hell. His soul went to hell (Acts 2:27), but in the OT all souls went into the heart of the earth upon death. He paid the full price of our sins on the cross.

[12] For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

[13] Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

[14] That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

[15] But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

[16] From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

This passage is all one sentence and concerns the ministry.

- **The purpose of the ministry gifts (v.12)**

Christ gave these gifts that the saints might be perfected to do the work of the ministry so that the Body of Christ will be edified (built up). What is meant by perfecting? The strengthening and completing of the saints (2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9). We will not be sinlessly perfect until the rapture, but in the sense of spiritual growth we may be perfect in this life (Phil. 3:12-16; 1 Cor. 2:6). What do evangelists and pastors use to perfect the saints? The word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God is NOT giving any new revelation today. The word of God fully equips us to do the work of God. It is important to understand that God would have every member to have a part in the edification process (v.16).

- **The goal of the ministry (vs.13-14)**

This is the mark we are pressing toward (v.13), but it will not be fully and finally reached until the rapture. That is when will all the saints be in agreement concerning the one faith and we will all become a perfect man with a full knowledge of the Son of God as the Head of the one Body. The goal is Christ- to know Him and be conformed to His image. We begin the Christian life as babes and we are to grow into spiritual manhood (1 Cor. 14:20). We begin with milk, but we must go on to the meat of the word (1 Cor. 3:1-2). The stronger we are in the faith the less likely we will be deceived by the false doctrines of men. There is a difference between changing because you are growing in your knowledge of the truth and being tossed to and fro with every new doctrine you hear. Satan, that great deceiver, has his ministers ready and waiting to deceive the saints (2 Tim. 3:13). Those that are tossed to and fro are not rooted and grounded (Col. 2:6-10). The faith refers to the sound doctrine of the word of God in general and the body of truth revealed through Paul for the Body of Christ in particular.

- **The motive in ministry (vs.15-16)**

Those that walk after the flesh bite and devour one another (Gal. 5:14-15). Love (fruit of the Spirit) seeks to build up. Anybody can tear down, it takes a spiritual saint to build up. Love must be our motive in ministry (1 Cor. 13). The saints cannot grow without the truth (1 Tim. 4:6). Notice that the Body is to "increase." Growing Christians reproduce themselves. All true ministry in the Body comes through the Head and works through the members (Col. 2:19).

[17] This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

[18] Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

[19] Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

The emphasis throughout the remainder of the epistle is on how we ought to walk in our daily life. On the basis of our position in Christ ("therefore," v.17), we need to "work out" our own salvation by faith (Phil. 2:12-13). There is no excuse for the Body of Christ to walk as "other Gentiles walk." When Paul tells us how to live, he is careful to say that he is doing so "in the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:1-2). In other words, he is not merely speaking as a man to other men, but the Lord is speaking through him to us. The word "henceforth" means from this time forward (Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:15). Paul challenges us to live differently on the basis of who we are in Christ.

The lost Gentile world walks in the vanity of their mind (Rom. 1:21). The root reason that they walk with a seared conscience (without feeling) and have given themselves over to unrestrained lust, uncleanness, and greediness is that they have a darkened understanding because they are separated from the life of God (dead in sins, Eph. 2:1-3). They are spiritually blind and do not have the knowledge of God. The Body of Christ is in the light and has the knowledge of God. Therefore, we should certainly walk differently than the lost world. What we are in our heart will show up in our walk.

[20] But ye have not so learned Christ;

[21] If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

Have you heard the voice of Christ speaking to your heart? I'm not talking about an audible voice. His voice is heard today by His Spirit making His word real to our heart. That is why the scripture is called "the word of Christ" (Col. 3:17). Paul referred to his own inspired writing as "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3). The words of Christ are not only found in the Gospel records. There is a difference between His earthly ministry to Israel and His heavenly ministry to the Body of Christ. So much for red letter Bibles! Christ gave the church pastors and teachers, but every Christian is personally taught of God (1 Thess. 4:9). I am concerned about those who can't seem to live right without someone else always prodding them.

[22] That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

[23] And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

[24] And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The old man is the flesh and the new man is who we are in Christ. In the KJB the word conversation refers to the whole manner of life and is not limited to our words. Actions speak louder than words (1 Pet. 3:1-4, "BEHOLD your chaste conversation"). We are not exhorted to improve the old man because it cannot be changed from carnal to spiritual (Rom 8:8). When we got saved our flesh didn't. It is corrupt and will be until death or the rapture. Christ defeated the flesh for us (Rom. 6:6). We were put in the new man (the Body of Christ, new creature) upon salvation (Col. 3:9-11). In this passage, Paul is exhorting us to put off and put on in a practical sense. This is done by being renewed in the spirit of our MIND (Rom. 6:17; 12:1-2). We are to learn the doctrine, believe it with all of our heart, and live it out through our body (1 Thess. 5:23). The walk of the new man is in righteousness and TRUE holiness. We are His "workmanship, CREATED unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). If there is true holiness, there must be false holiness. The unbelieving Pharisees appeared holy but were corrupt in heart (Matt. 23:27).

[25] Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

[26] Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

[27] Neither give place to the devil.

[28] Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

[29] Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

[30] And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

[31] Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

[32] And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

This passages shows us what it looks like practically to put off the old man and put on the new man.

OLD MAN

Lying

Sinful anger

Giving place to the devil

Stealing

Corrupt communication

Bitterness, wrath, etc...

NEW MAN

Truth

Righteous anger

Giving place to God

Honest labor

Words of grace that edify

Kindness, forgiveness

That the Spirit of God can be "grieved" proves that He is a person of the Godhead and not some kind of force. We grieve Him when we give place to the flesh and the devil. Thank God, we cannot

grieve Him away because He has sealed us until the rapture when we will get a glorified body! Verse 30 is a great verse on eternal security. The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul (1 Sam. 16:14), but He will not depart from a member of the Body of Christ.

Christ conducted His earthly ministry under the law (Matt. 5:17). He taught His disciples that God would not forgive them if they did not first forgive others (Matt. 6:14-15). He taught the Body of Christ something different through Paul (v.32)! We are to forgive because we have been forgiven. That is the difference between law and grace (Rom. 6:14). The fact that all of our sins were forgiven the moment we trusted Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Col. 2:13) also means that we don't have to continually confess our sins TO BE forgiven. How should we deal with sin in our lives as Christians? We should repent of our sins because we love the Lord (2 Cor. 7:10) and thank God that we ARE forgiven. Many misuse 1 Jn. 1:9 to teach that believers must confess their sins to be forgiven, but John wrote that to lost Jews in the tribulation period. The apostle John was an apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:9) and did not write to the Body of Christ. If we had to confess sins in order to be forgiven, what would happen if we died with unconfessed sins? Think it through.

Chapter Five

In the first half of this chapter (vs.1-21) the apostle Paul exhorts the saints to walk in love (v.2), light (v.8), and circumspectly (v.15). The latter half (vs.22-33) deals with Christian marriage.

The real Christian life is more than a profession, it is a practical walk. A walk implies some things:

- ✓ Life – dead men can't walk (Eph. 2:1)
- ✓ Liberty – those that are bound can't walk (Rom. 6:17)
- ✓ Light – we don't walk in darkness because we wouldn't know where we are going (v.8)

[1] Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

[2] And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Modern versions change “followers” to “imitators.” The greatest imitator of God is Satan (2 Thess. 2:4), but he certainly doesn't follow God. Satan has imitation bibles that his imitation preachers preach out of to imitation Christians. We need real Christianity, not an imitation! The children of Satan follow their father (Jn. 8:44). As followers of God we need to forgive (the “therefore” points us back to 4:32) and love as He does. We can only do this by His Spirit in us, not by trying to imitate Christ in our flesh. Asking, “What would Jesus do?” while trying to imitate Him in the flesh is ridiculous. The flesh cannot be like Christ (Rom. 7:18; 8:8)!

We are not to selfishly absorb all of God's blessings like a sponge. We are to be a channel that He can work through. It is a great blessing to be forgiven of all our sins. We are to forgive others even as God has forgiven us for Christ's sake. It is a great blessing to know the love of God. We are to love others even as Christ has loved us.

Notice that love is something we are to WALK in. Many talk about love, but not many walk in it. There is a vast difference between human love and God's love. We learn some things about real love in this context. It is:

- Sacrificial
- Not based on performance of the object (Rom. 5:8)
- Speaks the truth (Eph. 4:15)
- Righteous (vs.3-21)

The sacrifice of Christ is the only payment God accepts for sin. The proof that He accepted the payment is the resurrection. He will not accept your works! The work of Christ was a sweet smelling savor to God. The works of the flesh have a foul odor of "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

[3] But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

[4] Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

[5] For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

[6] Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

God sets a high standard for His children (“let it not be once named among you”). We know that Paul is talking about the lost world that are still in their sins in v.5 because he calls them “children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). We are not living in the time of God’s wrath, but we must warn the lost of the wrath they will face if they die lost or if they are left behind after the rapture.

The words “becometh” (v.3) and “convenient” (v.4) have similar meanings. Both refer to that which is fitting, proper, or suitable. In this passage, Paul mentions six things that are not fitting, proper, or suitable for a Christian to partake in and then mentions something that is; giving thanks. Thanksgiving is an integral part of the Christian walk (Col. 2:6-7). Thankfulness is a mark of true spirituality (vs.18-21). In light of ALL that God has done for us (Eph. 1-3), it is convenient for us to constantly be giving Him thanks. So, an unthankful Christian is very inconvenient.

In v.4 we are told what kind of talk is not convenient for saints, and the kind that is. The Christian walk is more about what we do than what we don’t do. Upon salvation God took us out of the old man (flesh) and put us in the new man (Body of Christ). We must practically put off the old man and put on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). This should show up in our words (Eph. 4:25, 29). Corrupt communication comes from a corrupt heart (Eph. 4:22; Matt. 12:33-35). Jestering is also corrupt communication. Jestering is not merely humor, it has to do with telling stories for the purpose of diversion and merriment. Much of what is called preaching today is jestering. Bad doctrine is also corrupt communication (opposite of edifying, 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 2:7-8). If you really believe the sound doctrine of the word of God, you will talk about it (2 Cor. 4:13).

[7] Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

In salvation, we are reconciled to God and therefore He no longer sees us as “children of disobedience.” As children of God we are followers of God (v.1), but because we still have the flesh it is possible to be partakers with this present evil world. We do this by having fellowship with the world instead of separating from it. If we don’t stand against sin and separate from it, we are partakers with the world even if we don’t do everything they do. In other words, even though we are not of the world we can be an accomplice with the world. Does your walk condemn or condone the world (Heb. 11:7)? Sadly, lost sinners can point to many professing Christians and say, “They are not much different than me!”

Of course, separation from the world doesn't mean we don't have compassion on the lost. The separated Christian is not to look down on the world with an “holier than thou” attitude. We are sinners saved by grace! True biblical separation is not isolation, but contact without contamination. We must work to reach the world, but we will not reach the world by being like the world! A ship in the water is good, but water in a ship is a major problem. A lack of true

biblical separation hinders the cause of Christ. It greatly reduces the power and effectiveness of our testimony and witness.

[8] For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

[9] (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

[10] Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Before salvation we were dead in sins and in spiritual darkness (Eph. 4:18). When we believe the light of the gospel we become children of light "in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:5). God is light (1 Jn. 1:5) and we are in Him. That is the standing of every believer. However, we must learn to walk in the light (i.e. the truth of God's word, Ps. 119:105). We are to put on the armor of light (Rom. 13:12) and shine as lights in this dark world (Phil. 2:15). Those that walk in the light bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This ninefold fruit (character of Christ) is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. What is your standard for what is acceptable? The sincere Christian that walks in the light seeks to prove with his life what is acceptable to the Lord.

[11] And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

[12] For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

[13] But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

[14] Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

What fellowship does light have with darkness? None (2 Cor. 6:14-18)! The light of our righteous walk (by Christ in us) should reprove those around us that walk in darkness. Our presence should make them feel ashamed (so much for "seeker sensitive" church services). Worldly "churches" literally and spiritually dim the lights to make sinners feel comfortable. Usually people try to hide their sin (but no secret place with God, Jer. 23:24). We are living in an evil day in which sinners boldly proclaim and promote their sins. Lost sinners and carnal believers don't like the light of God's word because it manifests their dark heart and reproves them. They want to be comforted and not convicted. I think that v.14 is a verse that many believers today need to take heed to because they seem to be asleep to spiritual things (Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:33-34). We need to wake up and turn on the lights!

Reference Bibles usually say v.14 is a general citing of Isa. 60:1, but the more I think about it the less I think Paul is quoting from the OT in this verse. God is saying through him that we need to wake up and shine HIS light. There is often a need for spiritual revival in our life. As to our standing, we are spiritually awake, alive, and in the light. But as to our state, we may walk like we are spiritually asleep, dead, and still in darkness (1 Tim. 5:3-6). Sleeping Christians are lethargic if not unconscious to spiritual realities and responsibilities. Dead Christians are those that walk after the flesh instead of in the Spirit. We must personally choose to wake up. Nobody can do it for us. Under the kingdom program it is required to be wide awake watching for the coming of the Lord in order to enter the kingdom (Matt. 24:42-25:13). In this age of grace, every member of the Body of Christ is going up in the rapture to be glorified with Christ whether they

are sleeping or watching (1 Thess. 5:5-11). Some teach that carnal believers will be left behind at the rapture to be chastened in the tribulation. That would be a rupture, not a rapture!

[15] See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

[16] Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

[17] Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Those that are wise know the will of God and walk according to it. We don't have to find the will of God because God has revealed it in His word. But it requires spiritual understanding to know it (Col. 1:9). We are living in enemy territory and therefore we must walk circumspectly (carefully, cautiously, looking all around). Yet many seem to be careless and casual instead of cautious about their Christian walk. The world, Satan, and our own flesh is against us and we would be fools to not take that seriously (Prov. 22:3; 27:12). Standards of biblical separation do not make us spiritual, but spiritual saints will have standards so that they will not make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom. 13:11-14).

To redeem the time is to buy it up so not to waste it (Col. 4:5). We redeem the time by doing the will of God. It is one thing to know the will of God, but it is something else to actually DO IT (Ps. 143:10). There is plenty to distract and cause us to waste time in these evil days in which we are living. We must determine with a purposed heart to invest our time in spiritual things that will count for ETERNITY (like Bible study and evangelism). We know that it is the will of God for souls to be saved and learn the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). What kind of time are we investing in the work of the ministry? Sadly, most are wasting time instead of redeeming it!

[18] And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

[19] Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

[20] Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

[21] Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

In this one sentence Paul describes true spirituality. We are not to be controlled by the flesh (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:12), but by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in every believer (Rom. 8:9), but we are only as filled with Him as we are yielded to Him. We are only as filled with Him as we are filled with the word of God (Col. 3:15-17, note the similarity with Eph. 5:18-21). Paul also exhorts us to be filled with "all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19) and the "fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11). Obviously, we will not apprehend such goals in this life, but we need to press toward the mark (Phil. 3:12-14).

Notice that signs and wonders are not mentioned regarding the fulness of the Spirit. Under the kingdom program of Israel (as in Acts 2), the Holy Ghost CAME UPON people and supernatural manifestations (signs) were the evidence. Not so today! Spiritual saints don't speak with tongues (signs have ceased, 1 Cor. 13:8-13), but with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Verse 20 describes true thanksgiving:

- ✓ When (always)
- ✓ What (all things)
- ✓ Whom (unto the Father)
- ✓ How (in the name of or Lord Jesus Christ)

The flesh wants to do anything but SUBMIT to others (v.21). Submission is an evidence of true spirituality (Phil. 2:1-5). The fear of God is a moral principle that still applies in this age of grace (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12).

[22] Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

[23] For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

[24] Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

[25] Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

[26] That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

[27] That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

[28] So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

[29] For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

[30] For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

[31] For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

[32] This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

[33] Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Immediately after talking about being filled with the Spirit, the apostle Paul exhorts us concerning Christian marriage and the home (Eph. 5:22-6:4). This tells me several things:

- We should not expect our spouse to fill the void in our heart and life that only God can fill. Too many enter marriage thinking it will bring the ultimate purpose and satisfaction. It is the most blessed of human relationships, but we were created first and foremost for God.
- The test of true spirituality is how we behave every day in the home among those that know us best (not for just a few hours at church).
- Our marriage and family must be built on the foundation of our relationship with God. We cannot consistently live up to God's standard for the home without His Spirit. Think about it! Wives, you are to submit to your husbands in everything as unto the Lord. Husbands, we are to love our wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. We are to nourish and cherish our wife as being part of our own body.

Practical Applications:

- Marriage is a ministry, each must submit to the needs of the other (v.21). The wife has a need to be loved, protected, and provided for. The husband has a need to be respected and followed. This is God's design (two become one). Marriage is a divine and sacred institution. Nobody can improve on the plan of the Designer!
- We must focus on our RESPONSIBILITIES, not RIGHTS. Paul didn't say, "Husbands, you have a right for your wife to be submitted to you so make sure she is!"
- Paul addresses the ones under authority first (wives, children, servants) knowing it is a great temptation of the flesh to resist authority.
- Marriage must not be a performance based relationship (love gives without expecting).
- KNOWING this passage will not give us a great marriage, OBEYING it will.

Contrary to popular opinion, this passage does not teach that the church is the bride of Christ. In the doctrinal section of the epistle (chapters 1-3) Paul emphasized that the church is the BODY of Christ (1:22-23, 2:16, 3:6; 4:4). This passage is in the practical section of the epistle (chapters 4-6). Paul uses the relationship between Christ and His church (one body) to teach about the marriage relationship between believers. It is important to note the little (but very important) word, "AS". Nowhere in the passage does he say that the church is the bride of Christ. In fact, the term "bride of Christ" is not in the Bible.

The teaching is simply as follows:

I. Christ and His church are one body (1 Cor. 12:12-13)

- a) Christ is the head of this body
- b) The church is to submit to its Head
- c) Christ loves the church as His own body, we are part of Him

II. In the marriage relationship the husband and wife are one flesh (v.31).

- a) The husband is the head of this one body
- b) The wife should submit to her husband as she does to Christ
- c) The husband should love his wife as his own body (nourish), she is part of him

"This is a great mystery" (v.32) – The mystery of the church is not that it is the bride of Christ (the "bride" is no mystery for it is in prophecy), but that it is the BODY of Christ (3:3-6).

The traditional view among Christians is that the church of this present age is the "bride of Christ". The Baptist Briders actually believe and teach that only members of the local Baptist church (that is just like theirs and supposedly can be traced back to John the Baptist) are in the bride of Christ! They claim that of you are saved you are in the family of God, but if you have not been water baptized in a church like theirs you are not in the bride of Christ.

The apostle Paul is the divinely appointed spokesmen for this age, so if the Body of Christ is the bride of Christ we should expect to find him teaching that in his epistles. He does not teach that in Ephesians 5. What about other passages?

➤ **Romans 7:1-6**

Paul used marriage as an illustration to explain how we are free from the law. The woman is set free from her husband by death. A husband and wife are one flesh. Death dissolves that union. The application is that our old man is crucified with Christ and therefore we are free to be joined to Christ. Upon salvation, we are spiritually circumcised (Col. 2:10-11) and are loosed from the flesh. The husband does not represent the law, but the flesh. The flesh was condemned by the law, but now that the flesh is dead, we are in Christ who fulfilled the law and that means we are dead to the law! Marriage is used in this passage for the purpose of illustration. This passage does not doctrinally teach that we are the bride of Christ. If it were to be taken literally that would mean that we were married to our flesh before salvation. Since we are one with the Lord, our relationship may be LIKENED to marriage.

➤ **2 Corinthians 11:1-4**

The false teachers that sought to influence the church at Corinth against Paul and his message boasted themselves as being the true messengers of God. Paul used the foolishness of boasting to make a point (vs.16-21). He declared his responsibility for them in vs.1-3. He had godly jealousy for them (they were his converts). He likened his responsibility to that of the one who espouses a bride to a bridegroom. In the Jewish culture this man had the responsibility to make sure the bride stayed pure during the betrothal. He knows that Satan can appear as an angel of light and that he has ministers that appear as apostles of Christ (vs.13-15) and his goal is to deceive and corrupt the church. Paul wanted the church to stay doctrinally and morally pure. The word "AS" in v.2 tells us that Paul is speaking figuratively. Paul also tells the same church that he is their father (1 Cor. 4:15). He told the churches at Galatia that he was their mother (Gal. 4:19). If this passage is doctrinally saying that the church is the bride of Christ it would mean that Paul himself is not in the bride.

Because most Christians think we are the bride of Christ they wrongly read themselves into the bride spoken of in Revelation (19:1-11; 21:1-2, 9-14). The book of Revelation is a PROPHECY (1:3). It is based on OT prophecy and is the consummation of God's prophetic kingdom program concerning Israel and the nations. If people would lay aside preconceived ideas received by religious tradition and consider the following scriptural points, I believe they would understand who the bride of prophecy is:

- ✓ Israel became the wife of God under the old covenant (Jer. 2:1-2)
- ✓ She constantly committed adultery against Him with her idolatry (Jer. 3; Ezek. 16)
- ✓ After much longsuffering, God gave her a bill of divorcement (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8)
- ✓ He promised to betroth her again as a virgin bride (Isa. 54:6-8; 62:1-5; Hos. 2:14-23)
- ✓ Christ presented Himself to Israel as a Bridegroom, but was rejected by her (Jn. 1:31; 3:29)
- ✓ When He comes again she will receive Him and be His bride and wife (Rev. 19:7-11)
- ✓ This relationship will remain in the eternal state (Rev. 21:1-2, 9-14)

I am not suggesting that the Body of Christ will not have access to the new Jerusalem, but why do most Christian's believe that this city primarily belongs to us? The number twelve is stamped

all over the city (there are 7 twelves in the description of the city). This number is not associated with the ONE body of Christ but the TWELVE tribes of Israel. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the twelve gates of the city and the names of the twelve JEWISH apostles of the Lamb (Matt. 19:28) are on the twelve foundations. And yet Christians, in their usual selfish approach to the Bible, want to steal this city from Israel! It is the new JERUSALEM, not the new Atlanta!

What's the big deal? Am I being petty by making this an issue? If we are the bride of prophecy that would mean:

- We will not be permanently joined to the Lord until the second coming (Rev. 19:7)
- We must faithfully endure to the end to be part of His bride (Rev. 3:4-5; 19:8)
- We make ourselves ready by our righteousness (Rev. 19:7-8)
- We replaced Israel and God was not faithful to His promises to them

Those who teach the Body of Christ is the bride of prophecy are guilty of replacement theology.

Chapter Six

In the latter part of chapter five, the apostle Paul dealt with Christian marriage, and now in the beginning of chapter six he deals with the relationship between children and parents in the Christian home. I believe it is given in that order on purpose. The best thing we can do for our children is have a strong Christian marriage. It is very sad to think about the fact that most children today, even in churches, are being raised in homes that do not have both a godly father and mother.

[1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

[2] Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

[3] That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

[4] And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

- **Children (vs.1-3)**

The children were in the assembly with their parents because Paul speaks directly to them knowing that they would be present when this epistle was read publicly. Children must be trained to listen to the word of God with respect. Families should not be split up every time they come to church. It is good for the whole family to be together in the assembly.

To obey “in the Lord” means to obey as unto Him, recognizing that He set them in authority over you. Disobedience to parents is SIN (characteristic of the last days, 2 Tim. 3:2). Of course, all authority is conditioned on God’s authority.

It is not enough to go through the motions of obedience. You are to HONOR your parents. The Bible doesn’t say obey and honor them if you think they are worthy of it. You are to do it as unto the Lord. WHY (the favorite question of children)?

- ✓ It pleases Him (Col. 3:20)
- ✓ It is right
- ✓ It will be well for you. It is the first commandment with a promise attached to it (Ex. 20:12). Notice that Spirit changed “the land which the LORD thy God give thee” to “on the earth” since Paul wasn’t writing to Israel.

- **Parents (v.4)**

The fathers are addressed because they are the head of the home. The father and mother must work together as a team, but the father must take the lead in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. There is a negative and positive admonition here.

1. Provoke not – by harshness and hypocrisy
2. Bring them up – purposeful and active, not passive
 - a) Nurture – discipline that builds and is motivated by love
 - b) Admonition – words of correction and instruction

It should be the goal of Christian parents to lead their children to Christ and help them grow strong in a real relationship with the Lord (2 Tim. 3:15). Concerning the salvation of children, we must be very careful. The goal is not getting them to ask Jesus into their heart (where's that in the Bible?). They must know they are a sinner under the condemnation of God and trust Christ alone to be reconciled to Him. We must faithfully give them the gospel of Christ and trust God to use it in their hearts.

[5] Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

[6] Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

[7] With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

[8] Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

[9] And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

All believers have the same spiritual standing in Christ, but while on earth there are still distinctions that matter. That is why Paul, in this epistle that emphasizes the spiritual unity of the Body of Christ, is careful to exhort wives to submit to their husbands, children to obey their parents, and servants to obey their masters (standing, Eph. 1-3; state, Eph. 4-6).

Have you ever noticed all the scripture in Paul's epistles in which he exhorts servants to be good servants and to serve their master as unto the Lord? He also exhorts masters to be good to their servants and to remember that they have a Master in Heaven (Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1-5; Titus 2:9-10; Phile.). Paul never tells servants to run away or masters to get rid of their servants. In the epistle of Philemon, Paul writes to a faithful believer who owned servants. He had led one of his run-away servants (Onesimus) to Christ while in prison. Paul sent him back to his master with a letter in which he beseeched Philemon to receive Onesimus back. Since the fall of man slavery has existed in this world and it still exists today. Many people groups have been enslaved. Some historians have estimated that half the population of the Roman Empire was composed of slaves with no personal rights. No doubt the message of true liberty in Christ appealed to the servants that heard Paul and his co-laborers preach the gospel. Many servants trusted Christ and were in the churches that Paul wrote to. More than likely, they were tempted to use their newfound freedom in Christ as an excuse to disobey and defy their masters.

The Bible uses the word "slave" once, and "slaves" once. It does not use the word "slavery". However, it uses the word "servant" 460 times and "servants" 441 times. If you study all that the Bible says about this issue you will learn that there were some things about it that were different from what we might think with our modern and western mindset.

According to the Law of Moses, God allowed Israel to have servants, but they were not to be mistreated (Lev. 25:39-46). This proves that having servants was not evil in and of itself, otherwise God would have prohibited it. We should not judge an institution by its abuses. For

example, governments often abuse their authority: does this prove that the institution of government is evil? The word of God does teach that it is evil to "steal" a man and sell him as a slave (Deut. 24:7; 1 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 18:8-15). The Body of Christ is not a nation, we are all servants of the Lord and should not desire to own servants.

The apostle Paul did not preach a social gospel. The church has not been called to make the world a better place to go to hell from! This world cannot and will not be a righteous and peaceful place until the Prince of Peace comes and establishes His righteous kingdom! This present evil world will come to an end when Christ comes again. We are called to get sinners saved out of this present evil world. Paul didn't try to overthrow the Roman government (Rom. 13:1). If Paul would have told servants to run away it would have been against the law, endangered the servants, and worst of all HINDERED the gospel. Paul considered the furtherance of the gospel to be much more important than his rights or even his life. For Paul, it was all about personal responsibility and not personal rights (1 Cor. 7:20-24). We have been BOUGHT with a price (1 Cor. 6:20) and we are to be servants of God (which is much better than being a servant of sin). By sending Onesimus back to his master Paul knew that he was not obeying the Law of Moses (Deut. 23:15; Rom. 6:14).

Believing masters that were kind to their servants and treated them well would have a great opportunity to lead them to Christ (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1). Believing servants that diligently served their master well (even if mistreated) would be a powerful testimony for Christ (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25). A saved servant has spiritual freedom and contentment in Christ and that is what matters most (1 Tim. 6:1-8). When the Lord comes, all believers will be glorified with Him!

We can apply the passages concerning masters and servants to employers and employees.

Employees:

- ✓ Obey your authority at work
- ✓ Seek to please your authority
- ✓ Do not disrespect your authority
- ✓ Do not steal from your employer
- ✓ Be a faithful and honest worker
- ✓ Serve your employer with singleness of heart, as unto Christ and not as men-pleasers
- ✓ Whatever you do, do it heartily

Employers:

- ✓ Always keep in mind that you too are under authority
- ✓ Do not threaten your workers
- ✓ Give to your workers what is just and equal

[10] Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

[11] Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

[12] For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

As Paul concludes this great epistle, he warns us about the spiritual warfare we face as members of the Body of Christ. If we are going to serve God, we must fight the good fight of faith as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3). We are not to be focused on fighting against flesh and blood enemies. Satan uses men (Eph. 4:14), but we must see beyond the people he uses and understand what he is doing in opposition to God's purpose and plan. There is a vast spirit world that is invisible (Col. 1:16) to our physical eyes, but we can know the truth about it from the word of God. The principalities (territories of a prince), powers (authorities), and rulers (princes) that we fight against has to do with spiritual wickedness in high places.

Satan always opposes what God is doing, and how he works is always in accordance with how God is working. When Christ was on the earth doing visible signs and wonders, Satan's opposition was also visible. God is working spiritually, not visibly, in this present age. Therefore, Satan is also working spiritually and not visibly. Paul warns us again and again about spiritual deception (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:13). If we fail to put on the whole armor of God, we will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (clever tricks designed to deceive).

Ephesians opened with our spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3) and now it closes with our spiritual battle in high places. Israel is God's earthly people. The Body of Christ is His heavenly people (Eph. 2:6). God gave Israel a piece of land and they had to fight flesh and blood enemies to possess and enjoy what was already theirs. Likewise, God has given us "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" and we must fight spiritual enemies to appropriate and enjoy what is already ours. Just as Israel was to fight their enemies by depending on the power of God, we must be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" if we are going to stand against our enemies. In the book of Exodus, God redeemed Israel out of Egypt. In the book of Joshua, He brought them into the land of promise. In between those books (book of Numbers) we see that Israel failed to possess their land at the first because of unbelief and therefore wandered in the wilderness. The book of Romans teaches us about our redemption by the blood of Christ. The book of Ephesians teaches us about the spiritual blessings God wants us to walk in and enjoy. In between those books, we learn that it is possible for believers to not appropriate who they are in Christ because of unbelief and therefore wander in a spiritual wilderness (1 Corinthians and Galatians).

[13] Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

[14] Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

[15] And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

[16] Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

[17] And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

[18] Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

[19] And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

[20] For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Paul liked to use metaphors. I am sure that he was very familiar with the armor of a Roman soldier (he was probably being guarded by one as he wrote this epistle). In this passage, he uses the pieces of the soldier's armor metaphorically to teach about the spiritual qualities we must walk in each day if we are going to stand in the evil day. The picture is that of a soldier fully dressed in armor and standing ready to fight.

Notice how Paul called it the WHOLE armor of God. He mentions seven pieces (the number of perfection). If we leave off a piece, Satan will find that opening. It is God's responsibility to provide the armor, but it is our responsibility to put it on. A spiritual war against spiritual enemies requires spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:3-6). To put on this spiritual armor is to put on Christ (Rom. 13:11-14). As to our standing, we put on Christ the moment of salvation. But as to our state, we must put on Christ by faith in our daily walk. We are to "stand" (mentioned 3 times) and "withstand" (to oppose and resist).

1) Loins girt about with truth

The soldier's loins was girt about with a strong leather belt that held other pieces of his armor together. The truth is foundational to the whole armor of God. Christ is the truth (Jn. 14:6) and the scripture is the truth (Jn. 17:17). Satan is a liar (Jn. 8:44) and he deceives through counterfeit (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 14-15). We must be grounded in the truth (Eph. 4:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:13-17). If it were not possible for believers to be deceived, why did Paul say again and again "be not deceived"? We must be genuine and sincere in our Christian walk (Eph. 6:24; 2 Cor. 4:2). Satan can spot a fake.

2) The breastplate of righteousness

The breastplate covered the vital organs of the heart and lungs. Without a breastplate, the soldier would not last very long in the battle. We cannot stand against the devil and his army without righteousness. In another passage, Paul refers to the "armour of righteousness" (2 Cor. 6:7).

- Positional - righteousness of Christ given to us by faith (Rom. 3:22)
- Practical - righteousness of Christ through us (Rom. 6:12-18)

3) Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace

The right shoes were important for a soldier. Warfare was often hand to hand combat. The soldier's shoes had nails in the heels to give him traction. The application is that we must be prepared to preach the gospel (Rom. 1:15-16; 10:15) no matter where we are. Paul was faithful to preach the gospel to kings and servants alike. Satan is working to keep the lost blinded to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4-6). We should pray about getting souls saved (1 Tim. 2:1-4), but let's put feet to our prayers (1 Tim. 2:5-7)! It is the "gospel of peace" because it is the good news of how sinners can have peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

4) The shield of faith

The soldier's shield was large enough for him to hide behind when fiery darts were shot at him. Notice the priority of the shield, "Above all." Faith is essential to operate all the other pieces. That it is why it is the central piece listed. Satan and his soldiers will shoot fiery darts of doubts, fears, lies, and many other evil things. Faith in God's word will quench ALL the fiery darts! We are saved through faith, and we must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). The shield is not our faith, but the object of our faith (Ps. 33:20; Prov. 30:5).

5) **The helmet of salvation**

Obviously, the helmet was an absolute necessity for the soldier to protect the vital organ of his brain. Assurance of salvation is essential to being a good soldier of Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:5). By comparing scripture with scripture (1 Thess. 5:8-9), we learn that the helmet of salvation is the knowledge of our blessed hope. We are to be looking for Christ to come and catch us away to heaven before the prophesied tribulation period ever begins. Our rapture was a mystery revealed to Paul (1 Cor. 15:51) and is only found in his epistles (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Phil. 3:20-21). Many preachers today are teaching that the Church will go through some, or even all, of the tribulation period because they do not rightly divide the word of truth.

6) **The sword of the Spirit**

This is our main offensive weapon. With this sharp sword, we may cut spiritual enemies (Heb. 4:12; Ps. 149:6). That God promised to provide us with the sword of the Spirit proves that we still have the inspired word of God today. Satan hates the word of God and has attacked it from the beginning (Gen. 3:1). He wants to replace our sharp sword with something else. Most professing Christians today are using a butter knife (corrupt modern versions) instead of a two-edged sword (the pure King James Bible). Among those that use the sword of the Spirit, many do not know how to handle it (Heb. 5:11-14; 2 Tim. 2:15). With the sword of the Spirit we may:

- a) Defeat temptation (Matt. 4:1-11; 1 Cor. 10:13)
- b) Evangelize the lost
- c) Build believers up in the faith

7) **Praying always**

We need constant communication with our Captain. Prayer is both a defensive and offensive weapon. Praying in the Spirit is not praying in some kind of unintelligible "prayer language." All believers are "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9, 14-16). The ministry of the Spirit has been emphasized throughout this epistle (1:13-14; 2:18, 22; 3:5, 16; 4:3, 30; 5:9, 18; 6:17-18). Real prayer is a spiritual labor that the world, flesh, and devil will oppose (Col. 4:12). We are to pray ALWAYS with ALL prayer and ALL perseverance for ALL saints. Paul requests specific prayer for boldness to speak the "mystery of the gospel." In Colossians, he requested prayer to for boldness to speak the "mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:2-4). This corresponds with his twofold ministry (Col. 1:23-29). Satan hates these mysteries and is actively opposing those who labor to make them known. We need to pray for boldness to keep speaking the truth in the face of his fierce opposition.

[21] But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

[22] Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

[23] Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[24] Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Tychicus was a faithful co-laborer with Paul (Acts 20:4; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12). That Paul requested the prayers of the saints at Ephesus, and that they were concerned for him, illustrates the great truth of this epistle: ALL THE SAINTS ARE IN ONE BODY.