



The Book of Ephesians

An Outlined Study

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The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 1

Paul, during his imprisonment in Rome, wrote four letters or epistles. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Those four books, in that order, will serve as the continuation of the study of the Book of Acts.

The internal evidence of Paul being in prison when he penned this letter is easily seen in such passages as Eph 3:1, 4:1 and 6:20.

By way of introduction, we know that Paul visited the city of Ephesus during his second evangelistic trip (cf Acts 18:18-21) and then again on the third trip (cf Acts 19:1). From his “own hired house” in Roman confinement he writes his longest (by far) “prison epistle” to those saints in Ephesus. This letter is intended to emphasize the church of Christ as the body of Christ with Him as the head.

There were no problems mentioned so this letter is a letter of encouragement. It stresses the blessings to be found in Jesus Christ.

The letter to the Ephesians, particularly the first three chapters, has been described as “the profoundest truth ever revealed to men...”

- I. Paul’s greeting (1, 2).
 - A. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” was Paul’s common way of beginning a letter (he used similar wording in the first verse of nine of the thirteen letters he wrote, e.g., Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, etc.).
 1. It appears Paul’s apostleship was challenged in the first century and has been challenged in most eras since then (cf 1 Cor 9:1).
 2. Paul’s apostleship was by “the will of God.”
 - a. He was not appointed an apostle by men, but by God (cf Acts 9:15; 26:15, 16).
 - b. He was an apostle by God’s will, not by his own merit.
 3. “Saints” is the most often used term for members of the Lord’s church in scriptures. All Christians were/are saints (Catholic canonization notwithstanding).
 - a. “And to the faithful” may refer to additional people, other than those in the city of Ephesus, who would also read the letter (cf Col 4:6; 1 Thess 5:27).

b. Not two different classifications of people.

B. Grace and peace occur together in many passages of scripture. In every passage in which they both occur grace is always before peace, e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3, etc.

Note: The only exception is in Romans 16:20 where they occur in two different sentences within the same passage.

1. Real peace is precluded by the grace of God (cf Rev 1:4).
2. Real peace come only through obedience to Jesus Christ our Lord (cf Col 1:20).

II. Spiritual blessings are “in Christ” (3-14).

A. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs 3) is a call for us to praise or eulogize God (cf Mk 14:61; 1 Pet 1:3).

1. We most often ask for blessings rather than giving our blessing (a word which means *to praise*) to God the Father.
2. Paul is encouraging the readers to give thanks or praise to God for the blessing of His son coming into this world (cf Ps 72:19)
3. The spiritual blessings that God has bestowed upon us have two qualifications:

a. They are “in heavenly places.”

1. The spiritual blessings of God are in heaven (the heavenlies) where Christ now abides (cf Phil 3:20).

Note: “Heavenly places” is used five times in this letter, and nowhere else in the New Testament (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10 and 6:12. In 6:12 it is translated “high places,” (KJV) but is the same word in the original). Each time it occurs the word *places* is italicized, which means it is a supplied word by the translators.

2. In a very real sense we operate in two realms as Christians. We are here, in this terrestrial, mundane sphere, but we are also seated with Christ (Eph 2:6).

Note: The blessings Paul writes of can only be enjoyed by those who have accepted the doctrine of Christ through obedience. Proper acceptance requires one to rise above earthly pursuits and carnal appetites. Hence, we live in this world, but we are not part of this world (cf Rom 8:1).

3. The “heavenly places” of this verse does not refer to the church in the primary sense. It has more to do with direction than location. The Greek Lexicon translates this word as *above the sky or celestial*.

b. They are “in Christ.”

1. The Bible declares there is only one way to get “in Christ” (cf Gal 3:27-29).
2. The converse must also be true; refusing to be baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) leaves one outside of Christ, shrouded in sin (cf Acts 22:16).

3. Being “in Christ” mean that the Ephesians Christians (and us) are lifted above the commonplace. This world is not our home.
- B. Some have been predestinated to be the children of God from the foundation of the world (vss 4-6).
1. This predestination does not mean God had included some and excluded others. It means He has predetermined what it will take to be one of His children. We then decide if we are willing to meet the requirements in obedience (cf Rom 6:17; Heb 5:9).

Note: The Calvinistic view of predestination (God has selected some and excluded others at His will) cannot be true. Even the Calvinists do not believe this doctrine. If so why do they:

 1. Preach the gospel (Rom 1:16)?
 2. Teach repentance (Lk13:3)?
 3. Teach God’s word saves (James 1:21)?
 4. If there is nothing one can do, why do anything at all (Heb 5:9)?
 5. How can men have the power to become the children of God if they are powerless (Jn 1:12)?
 - a. “The foundation of the world” goes all the way back to pre-Genesis time (cf Jn 17:5, 24).
 - b. God knew what it would take to obtain salvation before He spoke our world into existence (cf 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9).
 - c. Jesus, the Christ, was/is God’s plan so we can be classified as both “holy” and be “without blame” before Him (cf Eph 5:27; 1 Thess 3:13).
 - d. God, the Father, arranged for Jesus to be sacrificed as “the Lamb of God” so that we could be reconciled to Him (cf Jn 1:29, 36; Rom 5:10).
 2. Adoption (vs 5) means legally made children (cf Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5).
 - a. Paul includes himself in this adoption by using the words “us” and “we” (vss 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 have “us”; vss 7, 11, 12 have “we”).
 - b. No person on earth (Jew or Gentile) is exempt from meeting the predestined requirements.
 - c. In Verse 6 Paul emphasizes grace. God gives grace. We are the recipients of that grace. A true blessing (cf 2 Cor 4:15).
 - d. Grace is often defined as unmerited favor. In other words, we get what we do not deserve.
- C. Redeemed through the blood of Christ (7-10).
1. Redemption has a two-fold implication: it means something that was once possessed is lost, and a price was paid to purchase it back (cf Isa 59:2; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:18, 19).
 2. It cost the Son of God His life to pay the price for our sins.
 - a. Why would He do that for us?
 - b. By the richness of His grace (cf Rom 2:4; 9:23).

- c. The word “abounded” in Verse 8 describes the lavishness of God’s grace upon us. According to Strong’s it means *superabound* [sic] or to *be in excess* (cf Rom 5:20).
 - d. “Prudence” is the practical application of the wisdom for our salvation. It should be thought of as proper understanding of spiritual matters.
 - e. God not only thought of our salvation, He did what was necessary to provide for our salvation (cf Rom 11:33).
3. The word “mystery” (vs 9) *means to reveal something that was once unknown* (cf Matt 13:11; Rom 16:25, 26).
 4. We often refer to the three dispensations of the Bible, i.e., the Patriarchal Dispensation, the Mosaic Dispensation and the Christian Dispensation. This is where the idea originates.
 - a. The “dispensation of the fullness of time” simply refers to the last dispensation (cf Gal 4:4).
 - b. God waited until all things were ideal for the advancement of the saving gospel.
 1. The Romans had provided a quality road system to travel on. They also provided a universal law under which their citizens enjoyed unparalleled protection.
 2. The Roman army was ubiquitous and powerful. That made for generally peaceful travel on land and on the seas.
 3. The Greeks had provided a universal language to simplify the proclamation of the gospel.
 4. The Babylonian captivity had provided the synagogues which were used by the early disciples to worship in and teach from.
 5. Never before had the world been so ready for the gospel of salvation to be spread.
- D. In him we have the guarantee of our inheritance (11-14).
1. The five word grouping in verse 11 “we have obtained an inheritance” comes from a single Greek word, which means *a portion* or *an allotment*.
 - a. In “the song of Moses” he refers to the people of the nation of Israel as God’s portion and Jacob as the lot of his inheritance (cf Deut 32:9).
 - b. There is a contrast and a connection between Israel and the New Testament church (see vs 12; cf Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29).
 - c. Biblical predestination was covered on pages 2 and 3.
 2. The greatest single purpose of mankind is to glorify God (cf Isa 43:7; Rom 15:6; Eph 3:21).
 3. “Who first trusted in Christ” (vs 12) probably refers to the Jewish anticipation of the coming Messiah.
 - a. This would certainly include Simeon and Anna (Lk 2:25-27; 34-38), but should not be limited to just those.
 - b. Daniel’s vision included the Messiah some 600 years before His birth (cf Dan 9:26, 27).

- c. In a very real sense we can see the Messiah in the prophecy of Gen 3:15 and possibly even in Adam's statement in Verse 20, which was made before she gave birth.
- 4. Paul compares the Christians at Ephesus with the Jews who trusted God to fulfill His promise.
 - a. It would be important for them to understand that there were no second class Christians. The cross of Christ leveled the field (cf Rom 10:12).
 - b. Two important factors concerning the word of God are coupled together in Verse 13; hearing the truth and then believing the truth (cf Jn 20:31; Rom 10:17).
 - c. God's power to save is contained within the engrafted word (cf Rom 1:16; James 1:21).
 - d. The word "sealed" means *to mark for security or to stamp, as with a signet* (cf Matt 27:66, also see Acts 2:38, 5:32).
 - e. The "Spirit of promise" is our earnest or our pledge, but this does not necessitate miraculous signs (cf Lk 1:15; Jn 10:41).
 - 1. Think of "earnest" as a down-payment. If the regular payments are not made then the earnest is lost, i.e., vehicle, house, etc.
 - 2. The application to our spiritual lives is obvious. We pledge to God our lives so we might have eternal life with Him. God will not take away His earnest, but we can neglect proper payment.
 - 3. The word "sealed" comes from a Hebrew word (pledge) which is found twice in Gen 38:17, 18.
 - f. Verse 14 is a beautiful passage which reiterates God's promise of our salvation because we are ransomed souls (cf 1 Jn 3:1).

III. Paul prays for those who will read his letter (15-21).

- A. Paul does not stop giving "thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (cf Phil 1:3, 4; 2 Thess 1:3).

Note: The words "Cease not" do not mean Paul was in a constant state of prayer twenty-four hours a day. That would leave no time for the other obligations. Neither does it mean Paul was in what some call a *prayerful attitude* twenty-four hours a day. Prayer is an overt act that requires actions.

- 1. Verse 15 mentions "after I heard of your faith," Paul had not been in Ephesus since Acts 20, near the end of the third evangelistic journey (cf Acts 20:1).
 - a. Later in Chapter 20 (several months later, see Acts 20: 2, 3) Paul did counsel the elders from Ephesus in the city of Miletus (cf Acts 20:17).
 - b. That was the last contact Paul had with the congregation in Ephesus for several years, as far as we know from scripture.
 - c. Those years (possibly three or more, depending on when he penned this letter) would include his trip on to Jerusalem, his arrest and confinement in that city. His subsequent confinement in Caesarea, plus the length of time it took to get to Rome with the shipwreck and being castaway on Malta (cf Acts 28:11).

2. What did Paul hear about the saints in Ephesus? He heard of their “faith” and “love” (cf Eph 3:17; 6:23).
 - a. Their faith was “in the Lord Jesus” (cf Gal 5:6).
 - b. Their love was “unto all the saints” (cf 1 Thess 4:9).
- B. God, the Father, is the One who hears and answers prayer. Therefore, praying to anyone or anything else is futile and unscriptural (cf Lk 11:1, 2).
 1. Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians was two-fold:
 - a. To receive the spirit of wisdom (cf James 1:5; 3:17).
 1. This is most likely not a prayer for the Ephesians to receive the Holy Ghost (they were already baptized believers, Acts 2:38), but rather to have a spirit or desire to understand what had been taught (cf Col 1:9, 28).
 2. This prayer is applicable to twenty-first century Christians.
 - b. “And the revelation in the knowledge of him” (cf 2 Pet 1:3; 3:18).
 1. The word “knowledge” goes beyond the common word for knowledge. It indicates a complete or thorough understanding.
 2. The NASV translates the word as “know fully” in 1 Cor 13:12.
 - c. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (vs 18) is a beautifully worded way of expressing what Paul just recorded in Verse 17.
 1. Jesus quoted Isaiah to say our eyes can be “closed” (cf Matt 13:14, 15).
 2. Near the end of His earthly ministry Jesus again quotes from Isaiah about “blinded” eyes (cf Jn 12:40).
 3. Many years later Paul would write to the Romans cautioning them about “darkened” eyes (cf Rom 11:10).
 Note: All three of these New Testament references (*closed*, *blinded* and *darkened*) are taken from the same passage of scripture in Isaiah 6:9, 10.
 - C. The enlightening of understanding (vs 18) has a three-fold application:
 1. “Enlightened” in “the hope of his calling” (cf Phil 3:14).
 2. “Enlightened” in “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (cf Acts 20:32; 26:18).
 3. “Enlightened” in “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (cf Col 1:29; 2 Thess 1:11).
 Note: Power is used twice in this verse. They are from two different words. The first one is *dunamis*, from which we get our words dynamo and dynamite. The second word will be explained under c., 3.
 - a. Not only hope now, but hope of eternal joy if we follow our understanding (cf 1 Cor 15:19; 2 Tim 1:12).
 - b. The riches of his glory are to be found in the saints.
 Note: We cannot expect God’s riches if we are not counted, by God, to be in the saints. Everything He promises in the New Testament is promised to the church of Christ and nowhere else (cf Rom 16:16).
 - c. The greatness of God’s power to believers is revealed in three extraordinary words in Verse 19:
 1. “Working” is the word we get *energy* from (cf 2 Thess 2:11).

2. “Mighty” is a word that is used to increase the emphasis of His power (cf Eph 6:10).
 3. “Power” is *kratos*. It means great strength (cf 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11).
 4. The mighty energy and power of God can be known by His children through prayer.
- D. The dynamic power and working of God was demonstrated (wrought, or worked, NKJ) in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ (cf Rom 1:4).
1. The “right hand” is a place of honor and authority (cf Ps 110:1).
 - a. Peter quoted this passage on Pentecost (cf Acts 2:34, 35).
 - b. This is the glory and position that Jesus prayed for just before His death (cf Jn 17:1-5).
 2. “Heavenly *places*” would be the same as Verse 3. See page 2 for that discussion.
 3. “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” is simply a parallel passage to Matt 28:18.
 - a. Some have tried to make it classifications of heavenly beings, but that approach seems to make the passage unnecessarily hard (cf Col 1:16).
 - b. In His exalted position on “the right hand” He is “far above all” powers, celestial or terrestrial (cf 1 Pet 3:22).
 - c. Paul ends Verse 21 with the thought of Christ having all power now (middle of the 1st century) and will never be replaced by a greater power until the destruction of the world (cf Matt 25:31-34; 1 Cor 15:24).
- IV. Jesus is the head of the church (22, 23).
- A. The last two verses of this chapter expand upon and reinforce what Paul had previously recorded for the Ephesians to consider (cf Col 2:10, 19).
1. The risen Christ was not given the exalted position of “the head over all things to the church” as a gift.
 Note: The “all *things*” (the word *things* is supplied by the translators) goes far beyond the church. The universe is subject to the risen Christ (cf 1 Cor 15:57; Heb 2:8)
 - a. He voluntarily left heaven to come down to this earth and live as a man among men (cf Jn 1:14; Phil 2:5-8).
 - b. He was tempted by every possible temptation which befalls mankind while here (cf Matt 4:1; Lk 4:13; Lk 22:28; Heb 4:15).
 - c. An interesting way to look at the paramount incarnation of Jesus’ short sojourn on earth is to observe it from this perspective:
 1. What if He fully understood the possibility of a weak moment or small lapse in judgment could mean total failure for the human race (cf Lk 22:28)?
 2. That same possibility would eliminate His chance to return to heaven, for He would be a sinner without “a Christ” to intervene for Him.
 3. What if coming to earth was a very serious risk? That gamble involved His living as a man for some thirty-three years on earth without sin, dying

as a pure sacrifice and trusting in the power of the Father to resurrect Him from the dead.

4. What if He was gambling that He could do it because we needed His sacrifice? He put His eternity on the line for our hope of eternity. His position was not a gift, He earned it with valor.
 5. From this perspective understanding what Jesus put on the line for us should inspire us to live the very best we can to show our gratitude for His effort.
 6. Is it possible that He was able to remain true and sinless because He knew the magnificence of the reward?
2. “Church” (vs 22) is the first time Paul uses the word (ekklesia) in this letter. He will use it eight additional times as he encourages the Ephesians to subject themselves to His leadership (cf Matt 16:18, 19).
- B. The church and the body are connected in parallel just as the church and the kingdom are connected in the passage from Matthew above (cf Col 1:18).
1. The head is incomplete without the body just as the body is incomplete without the head.
 - a. The church is described as “the fullness of him” (cf 1 Cor 6:15; Col 2:9, 10).
 - b. This makes the church the manifestation of the fullness of Christ, which is how the chapter started; “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (vs 3).
 2. What Paul wants the readers to see is the love and care Christ will have for His body (church) since it is His body.
 - a. Just as we protect and nourish our bodies He will do the same.
 - b. He stands ready to supply for His body (us) whatever help we need to glorify Him in our conduct and actions (cf Eph 5:30).

Ephesians 2

For by grace we are saved through faith

- I. Those who were once dead in sin are alive in Christ (1-3).
Note: Chapter two deals with the same subject that Paul introduced in Verse 19 of the first chapter. He is exemplifying “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” through His mercy, love and grace (vss 4, 5).
Note: Someone has said, “Those born once must die twice while those born twice must die but once.”
- A. Paul connects the power of God to raise Christ from the dead with the same power to quicken (make alive, NKJ) all who are dead in sin (cf 1 Cor 15:45).
1. “Who were dead” refers to a state of spiritual death outside of Christ (cf 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 3:14).
 2. Paul records that the Ephesians were dead “in trespasses and sins,” which are two words that refer to the same thing (cf Col 2:13).
Note: By using these two words Paul incorporates all intentional and unintentional offences. Ignorance is no excuse.
 3. The word “walked” (vs 2) is an indication of the manner of life for the Ephesians (cf 1 Jn 1:7; 2 Jn 6; 3 Jn 4).
 4. This former walk was according to:
 - a. “The course of this world” indicating the general lack of regard for following God’s laws of conduct and obedience (cf Gal 1:4; James 4:4).
 - b. “The prince of the power of the air” refers to the devil’s power in this world (cf 2 Cor 4:4).
 - c. Jesus often referred to Satan by the description of “prince of this world” (cf Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
Note: “Of the air” possibly refers to the devil’s cunning way of whispering in our ears to do what we know we should not do (cf 2 Thess 2:8, 9).
- B. In contrast to the quickened (alive) Paul mentions the “spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (cf 2 Pet 2:14; 1 Jn 3:10).
1. Our “conversation” (conduct, NKJ) has changed because of our understanding of what God has done for us through Christ (1 Jn 2:8).
 2. We were all in the same condition. Lost. Lost in sin. Lost in our fleshly desires (cf Gal 5:19-21).
 3. Such low aspirations for being created in the image of God.
 4. Christians have to overcome fleshly desires and impulses of the mind.
 - a. It was in their past (cf Eph 4:22; Col 1:21).
 - b. The words “by nature” refer to the former conduct or common practices of the unconverted (cf Rom 2:14).
- II. God makes us alive together through grace (4-10).

- A. Even though mankind has “desires of the flesh” and are “by nature the children of wrath” (vs 3) the God we worship is “rich in mercy” and has “great love” for us (cf 1 Pet 1:3; 1 Jn 4:10).
1. Verse 4 begins with an emphatic “but.” That “but” allows man to reverse the course that has been chartered in verses 1-3.
 2. In man’s darkest hour our great God extends hope to combat our total ruin (cf Rom 6:23).
 - a. “Rich in mercy” means He does not give us what we deserve.
 - b. Love is the motive for God doing what He did for us.
 - c. Mankind tends to love those who love them, God’s love is not selective. He loves us even when we are opposed to Him (cf Rom 5:8).
 3. To make sure the readers understand our desperate condition (vs 5) Paul pens that we “were dead in sins” (cf Rom 5:6, 10).
 4. He did not leave us in that condition, but quickened us (see vs 1) through Christ (cf Jn 6:63; Rom 8:2).
 5. Then, parenthetically inserted, are the words “by grace ye are saved.”
 - a. The grace of God is how we are brought out of the condition of being dead in our sins (cf Rom 11:5, 6).
 - b. To word the same sentiment differently, grace is how God brings us into a state of salvation (cf Titus 2:11).
 - c. Mercy is not getting what we deserve, grace is getting what we do not deserve.
 Note: Some define grace as unmerited favor. The Greek word *charis* is as polymorphic in the original language as “grace” is in English (see Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, pages 169-171).
 6. “Raised us up together” (vs 6) connects the Christian together with Christ in being raised up (cf 1 Cor 15:20).
 - a. Christ was raised up from the grave by the power of God (cf Acts 2:32; 13:30).
 - b. Paul made the connection between Christ being raised up and Christians being raised up after being buried in His likeness in Rom 6: 1-5 (cf Col 2:12, 13).
 Note: The same power that raised up Christ (1:20) is exercised in raising up Christians from our lost condition.
 - c. The opportunity for us to sit together in heavenly places is ours only through the kindness and grace of God in Christ.
 Note: “In the ages to come” may indicate that Paul did not anticipate the eminent end of this world, as some have mistakenly taught. Future “ages” would be able to benefit from God’s kindness in Christ (cf Eph 3:21).
- B. Verse 8 begins with “For by grace ye are saved through faith.” Verse 9 begins “Not of works” which ties back to being saved.
1. This means that mankind does not have the ability to save itself.

- a. Salvation is a gift from God, we do not deserve it, but He gives it (offers it) to us anyway (cf Rom 6:23; 2 Cor 9:15).
 - b. Yet, mankind must have faith and must obey the gospel to obtain this gift (cf Gal 3:14; Heb 5:9; 1 Jn 5:10, 11).
 2. If we could save ourselves we might have reason for boasting. Since that is not the case we are all on equal ground in our need for God's saving grace (cf Rom 11:6; 2 Tim 1:9).
 - a. Every generation of godly people must be reminded that we can never live good enough to deserve a place in heaven (cf Rom 3:23).
 - b. A proper understanding of God's word will eliminate boasting or glorying in our minds (cf Rom 3:27).
 3. "For we are his workmanship" reemphasizes our lofty position is only obtained by what Christ has done for us (cf Phil 1:6; 2:13).
 - a. The Greek word for "workmanship" is used in Rom 1:20 where it is translated "the things that are made" (cf Eph 3:9).
 - b. In Rom 1:20 Paul is writing of things created at "the beginning," here he is writing of things created new in Christ, unto good works (cf Matt 5:16).
 - c. The idea of "works" is often misunderstood in our modern religious world. The term is used differently throughout the New Testament:
 1. In a positive way:
 - a. Acts 9:36; Dorcas was a woman full of good works.
 - b. 2 Cor 9:8; The Corinthians were to abound to every good work.
 - c. 1 Tim 6:18; That they may be rich in good works.
 - d. 2 Tim 3:17; The scriptures furnish us with all good works.
 - e. James 2:14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26.
 2. In a negative way:
 - a. Rom 3:27; Boasting because of works.
 - b. Rom 4:2; Attempting to be justified by works.
 - c. Rom 4:6; Righteousness without works.
 - d. Gal 2:16; Not justified by the works of the law.
 - e. Gal 3:10; As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.
 3. Understanding the context is paramount in discerning what is meant by the word "works" in scripture.
 4. This all means that man does not have the ability to save himself, but salvation is a gift of God through Christ. We will show what that gift means to us by the things we do for others, in His name (cf Titus 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14).
 5. Our walk, as Christians, has a direction (cf 1 Jn 1:7; 2:6).
- III. The Gentiles' moral condition prior to conversion (11, 12).
- A. "Remember" (vs 11) is to remind the Gentiles of their hopeless condition before their conversion to Christ (cf Jer 14:8; 17:13; Jn 4:22).

Note: “*Physically* they lacked the ancient sign of the covenant; *politically* they had no part in Israel’s national or religious life, and *spiritually* they had no knowledge of the true God.”¹

1. It is always good for us all to be reminded where we once were without Christ.
2. We were once physically, politically and spiritually inadequate.
3. The extreme prejudice the Jewish nation harbored against all the Gentile nations was ingrained in them from their early years.

Note: “The Jews said that God created Gentiles as fuel for the fires of hell, that of all the nations God made, He loved Israel alone, . . . that it was not even lawful to aid a Gentile woman in labor because it would only bring into the world another Gentile. The barrier was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, a funeral for that boy was carried out. Even setting foot in a Gentile’s house defiled a Jew.”²

4. Unity in Christ was the only hope to eradicate this innate prejudice (cf Jn 17:20, 21; Eph 4:3).

B. Paul lists (vs 12) a five point summary of the Gentiles’ previous (before the church of Christ came into existence, Acts 2:41, 47) foreboding condition:

1. “That at that time ye were without Christ”
2. “Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”
 - a. The words “being aliens” are translated as *alienated* in Eph 4:18. The NASV translates the words as *excluded* in both passages.
 - b. The same word is used in Col 1:21 with reference to the separation from God that sin causes (cf Isa 59:2).
 - c. The word “commonwealth,” which is used with reference to their kingdom or government, is used only one other time in the New Testament, with reference to the Roman chief captain’s highly desired *freedom* or citizenship (cf Acts 22:28).
3. “Strangers from the covenants of promise.”
 - a. The promises were made to Abraham (cf Gen 12:1-3; 17:1, 2).
 - b. The covenant was made with the Hebrew people (cf Ex 24:7, 8).
 - c. All of the great and precious promises God made with the Hebrews were unknown by the Gentile nations (cf Rom 3:1, 2).
4. “Having no hope.”
 - a. Before God’s gift (vss 4, 8) most of the world was without hope.
 - b. Many teach that the rest of the world continued under the Patriarchal law after the special covenant was given to the Hebrew people. Why then are the Gentiles classified, by inspiration, as being without hope and without God?
5. “Without God in the world.”

¹ George E. Harpur, A New Testament Commentary, Ephesians, page 174

² William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, page 125

- a. Generally speaking, the Gentile world worshipped many gods (cf Acts 16:17; 1 Cor 8:4, 5).
 - b. Paul's point is not that they could not know God, but that they had no real knowledge of Him.
 - c. The words translated "without God" are from a single Greek word *atheos*, which is our word atheist.
6. The Gentiles were truly in a sad condition before Christ. How thankful we should be for God's grace and mercy (vs 5).

IV. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile through Christ (13-18).

Note: This next passage will deal with what God has done for the Gentiles who were once "far off." The word "now" (vs 13) refers to the gospel dispensation (13-15).

A. The sacrificial blood of Christ is the factor that brought, or allowed, all of mankind near to God (cf 1 Tim 4:10; Titus 3:4).

- 1. Through His atoning blood we are:
 - a. No longer separated from God (cf Rom 3:25; 5:9).
 - b. Dead to the world, but alive in Christ (cf Rom 6:11).
 - c. No longer without hope (cf Heb 6:19, 20).
 - d. Now spiritual Israel (cf Gal 3:9, 16).
 - e. Understanding that it was the sacrificial blood of Christ that did all this for us should sharpen the focus of our weekly observance of the Lord's supper (cf Acts 20:7).

- 2. "Peace" is the emphasis of this passage of scripture. Paul will mention peace in verses 14, 15 and 17.

Note: In the original language the word *peace* is used twice in verse 17. It should read, "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and peace to them that are nigh."

- 3. "For he is our peace" refers to God being at peace with us through the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf Isa 9:6; Micah 5:5a).
- 4. He made both (Jew and Gentile) one by breaking down the wall (fence or hedge) that separated the two.

- a. It is true that there was a wall of separation in the temple at Jerusalem that divided the Jews from the Gentiles, but that wall would have little or no significance to the members of the church of Christ in Ephesus.

Note: The literal wall of separation in Jerusalem would not be torn down for another eight or nine years (if written in 61 or 62 AD) from the writing of this letter, yet Paul speaks of it as past tense. Therefore, this is not a reference to the temple or a literal wall. The barrier was the old law.

- b. God, through Christ, did not bring the Gentiles into the Jews. Neither did He bring the Jews into the Gentiles. He made something new in Christ (cf Gal 3:26-29).

Note: The word for "new" (vs 15) is *kainos*, which means *a new kind of thing* (Barclay).

- 5. In His crucifixion (vs 15) Christ abolished (took away) the Old Law of Moses.

- a. The Old Testament Law was done away with because it had fulfilled the intended purpose (cf Matt 5:17; Gal 3:19, 23, 24).
 - 1. The old law was a good law (cf Rom 7:12).
 - 2. The old law was misused by the Jews as a source of contempt, and a source of hostility by the Gentiles. God removed it to make room for a better law (cf Heb 7:22; 8:6).
 - b. Christ is not only our peace, He is also our peacemaker, regardless of nationality or race. One shepherd, one church, one body, one people (cf Acts 17:26; 2 Cor 5:16a).
- B. One body through the cross.
- 1. Reconciliation of both (Jew and Gentile) is what Christ accomplished on the cross (cf Rom 5:10; Col 1:21).
 - a. Not into “a” body, or into “some” body, but into one body (cf Matt 16:17-19).
 - b. The word “one” (heis) means *one in contrast to many*³.
 - 2. It was difficult (and still is for many) to live without walls being erected, i.e., socially, nationality, racially, etc. (cf Gal 2:11, 12).
 - a. Christ died to remove barriers (cf James 2:1-4).
 - b. “He might reconcile” (vs 16) are from a single word which means *to completely change from one form to another*⁴. It is a stronger form of the common word to reconcile.
 - 3. What would be the natural result of comprehending this reconciliation? Peace in the brotherhood (cf Acts 10:34-36; Rom 5:1).
 - 4. The “afar off” and “them that were nigh” (vs 17) reiterates the “both” of Verse 16 and again the “both” in Verse 18.
 - 5. Verse 18 mentions all three members of the godhead.
 Note: In every verse in this section Paul mentions the collectiveness of Christianity. Not two or more, but one blended together. That important thought will continue in the next section.
- V. The unity of the Ephesians is described allegorically in four ways (19-22).
- A. They enjoyed full citizenship (vs 19a).
- 1. This is the point from Verse 12. They were once aliens, but now they are citizens (cf Phil 3:20). Paul gives them the bad news then the good news.
 - 2. Foreigners in a nation are without the privileges and protection of the natural born citizens (cf Lev 25:23; 1 Chron 29:15).
 - a. Paul was emphasizing that the Gentiles were not second class citizens compared to the Jewish Christians.
 - b. In a real sense our citizenship is not of this world (cf 1 Pet 1:17; 2:11).
 - 3. This would be easily grasped by those who were under Roman law and citizens of Rome (cf Acts 22:25-29).

³ Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words, page 137, 138.

⁴ Ibid., page 261

- B. Part of the one household of God (vs 19b)
 - 1. The human family is held together by love. How much more so the family of God (cf Gal 6:10; Eph 3:15).
 - 2. The household of God is equal to the church of God (cf 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17).
 - 3. The Ephesians were not strangers or servants in that household, but sons and daughters of the family (cf Heb 3:5, 6).
 - 4. As children they now had access to the Father in ways those outside the family did not enjoy (cf Gal 4:6).
- C. Part of a building (vs 20).
 - 1. “B” was referencing the members in a house, “C” is the house itself. They (we) are stones in the building.
 - 2. The proper foundation has been put down, our lives add stones to the structure of the building (cf 1 Pet 2:4, 5).
 - 3. Christ is the “chief corner stone” which Jesus said of Himself in Matt 21:42 (cf Ps 118:22; Isa 28:16; 1 Pet 2:6).
- D. Part of the holy temple (vs 21).
 - 1. Fascinatingly, the “holy temple” will not be a completed building until the return of Christ and the end of all terrestrial things (cf Rev 21:1, 14).
 - 2. This “holy temple” was started in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41, 47).
 - 3. Sometime later (possibly Acts 18:19) the preaching of the gospel converted the Ephesians and they added another part to the “holy temple.” Not a different temple, but an addition to the same one.
 - 4. All this was done based on the “chief corner stone” who controls all the lines, angles and building material of the edifice.
 - a. The words “fitly framed together” (being built together, NKJ) are from a single Greek word used only here and in Eph 4:16.
 - b. The word means *carefully jointed together, as in expert carpentry work.*
 - c. Those who are Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female are all perfectly jointed together in Christ (cf Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).

Ephesians 3

The revelation of the mystery.

- I. The minister to the Gentiles (1-7).
 - A. Part of God's plan for salvation to all mankind was the dispatching of the apostle Paul to the Gentiles (cf Acts 9:15; 13:2, 3; 22:20, 21).
 1. "For this cause" (reason, NKJ) refers to the Gentiles' equality in the one body, along with the Jewish converts (cf Eph 2:11-13).
 2. Paul was Rome's prisoner, specifically Nero's prisoner, yet he considered himself to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ (cf Eph 4:1; 6:20).
 - a. In the four letters we often call the "prison epistles" Paul mentions either chains or bonds in each of them (cf Phil 1:13, 14; Col 4:18; Philemon 13).
 - b. He states that he did this "for you Gentiles" (vs 1).
 - c. He was arrested and held captive because he insisted the Gentiles were saved and on equal status with the Jewish Christians.
Note: Since the Jews had rejected Jesus as Christ and the old Jewish religion was defunct (nailed to the cross, Col 2:14), this would make the Gentiles "preferred" over the rebellious Jews (Acts 13:46; Rom 11:11-13).
 3. Paul was given a special "dispensation," which means he was given the gospel to give it to the Gentiles (cf Gal 1:16; 2:7-9).
 - a. The word translated *dispensation* carries the idea of dispensing, as in a steward. Both the NAS and ESV use the word "stewardship" here.
 - b. It comes from a word which means the *administration of a household* (Strong's #3622). Paul uses the same word with reference to the qualifications of elders in Titus 1:7.
 - c. Paul was not asking them if they had heard (vs 2), but was reminding them of the fact that they had heard it from his own mouth (cf 2 Tim 1:11).
 - B. Paul reveals that it took a revelation from Christ for him to understand the saving gospel had to be preached to the Gentiles (cf Acts 26:17, 18; Gal 1:12).
 1. "Mystery" probably refers back to 1:9 and the fact that salvation was "made known" to the Gentiles (*something that was once unknown*, see page 4, cf Rom 16:25).
 2. While "the mystery" may refer to 1:9 there is no way to know if the first part of the parenthetical phrase *as I wrote afore in a few words* (vs 3) refers to 1:9 or something else.
 - a. The statement is certainly ambiguous.
 - b. There were an unknown number of epistles written by Paul (and possibly others) that were not preserved for posterity (cf 1 Cor 5:9).
 3. Preaching the gospel to the Gentile world was a new concept. The Lord was clear that the gospel was for the entire world (cf Matt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47).
 - a. The fact is that the Jewish Christians ignored their marching orders and basically disobeyed their commander (cf Col 1:26, 27).

- b. Paul's specific commission rectified the problem (cf Rom 11:13; Gal 1:16).
 - C. Paul continued the thought of "as I wrote afore..." with "when ye read, ye may understand." Whatever Paul meant by "wrote afore" he is stating that they could understand it. Therefore, it also applies to us. If we read we will understand.
 - 1. This may possibly be a reference to reading the other letters written to neighboring congregations (cf Col 4:16).
 - 2. The important point is that knowledge was to be gained by reading.
 - 3. Specifically, Paul says the knowledge will be in connection to the "mystery of Christ" (cf 1 Cor 4:1).
 - a. If we use Colossians as a commentary on Ephesians we can conclude that Paul is referring to Christ dwelling in these Christians (cf Col 1:27).
 - b. They (we) were once classified as without hope (Eph 2:12), now they have "the hope of glory."
 - 4. The context is dealing specifically with Gentiles, Verse 5 should be kept in that context. The "mystery" is not a general revealing of God's plan for salvation, but rather the specific plan to include Gentiles in full fellowship.
 - a. Since "now revealed" (vs 5) is used the "prophets" likely refer to prophets of the New Testament church (cf Acts 15:32; Eph 4:11).
 - b. Inclusion of the Gentiles was revealed by many before the church was established, (Isa 49:6; 56:6, 7), but never taught as clearly as now (cf Acts 11:18; Rom 16:25).
 - c. Ever generation of the church has had to fight difficulties of one kind or another. For the first century church one of the great difficulties was Jewish Christians' prejudice. Otherwise, there is no point in penning Eph 2:14-16 more than three decades after the church was established.
 - d. The promise was made to Abraham and was to include all "families" (cf Gen 12:3).
 - e. No people, either individually or collectively, were to be subservient. All were made children via adoption, and therefore heirs (cf Gal 4:7).
- II. The unsearchable riches of Christ (8-13).
 - A. Paul declares himself to be "less than the least of all saints" (cf 1 Cor 15:9).
 - 1. This self-degradation probably stems from Paul's days as Saul the persecutor of the church (cf 1 Tim 1:13, 15).
 - 2. Paul is not trying to draw attention to himself, he is trying to emphasize the great grace available in Christ.
 - 3. As Saul of Tarsus he made havoc of the church (cf Acts 8:3). Havoc can be defined by what inspiration says about Saul's actions as recorded in Gal 1:13, 23.
 - a. He was the worst of the worst and God, through Christ, still found sufficient grace for him. What joy for us all!
 - b. The phrase "less than the least of all saints" is unique to this verse.

- c. It shows an exceptional amount humbleness from possibly the greatest man the church has ever known.
 - 4. Paul was conscripted into service by the very One he opposed, and God's grace allowed him to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ" among the Gentiles (cf 1 Cor 15:10).
 - a. The word "unsearchable" means *past tracing out* (Vines). What God had planned to do for us through Christ was past finding out until it was revealed. Paul's message was to reveal it (Rom 11:33).
 - b. The Jews could not (totally or fully) have known God's plan for including the Gentiles. The Gentiles could not have fully known either.
- B. Paul then explains God's plans with the use of the words "the fellowship of the mystery" in verse 9.
 - 1. The words "to make all men see" literally means *to turn the light on* (Robertson) as used in Eph 1:18 and Heb 10:32.
 - 2. "Fellowship" is translated in other versions by the word *dispensation* (see ASV), which does not help at all. The ESV uses nine words to translate a single Greek word, but they got the meaning right; *bring to light for everyone what is the plan* (of the mystery).
 - 3. Paul felt that he was privileged to "bring to light" the mystery. He mentions this mystery twenty times in six books, e.g., Col 4:3.
 - 4. The New Testament abundantly declares the world was made through Jesus Christ (cf Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:16, 17; Heb 1:2).
 - a. What is not clear is why the basic fact of the creation is inserted at this point in Paul's letter.
 - b. Possibly Paul is building a correlation between the magnitude of the original creation and the sure and undeniable salvation of all men and nations, i.e., if God can create this amazing world and all that it contains He can unquestionably plan for the salvation of all mankind, including the Gentiles (cf Rev 14:6).
 - 5. Angels, as created beings, did not possess omniscience. They, therefore, were watching with elevated interest the multifarious expansion of the church of Christ.
 - a. As the gospel was preached to all, the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus was revealed (cf Rom 11:33).
 - b. We should not think it strange that angelic beings are interested in the affairs of men (cf Lk 15:10; 1 Pet 1:12).
- C. Based on our faith in Christ we have access to God the Father through the one and only mediator (cf Jn 14:6).

Note: The rejection of Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, by any world religion eliminates the possibility of the followers of that religion to access the God of heaven. This would include, but not be limited to; Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam (or Muhammadanism), Satanism, etc.

1. This is why our prayers are offered in Jesus' name. It is because of Him we have the possibility to come before God with our petitions and supplications (cf Jn 15:16; 16:23, 26; Rom 1:8).
 2. "Boldness" (vs 12) is the idea of plain speech (cf Heb 4:16; 10:19).
 3. As Christians we can talk plainly to God (cf Heb 13:6).
 - a. Paul did not want the Gentiles to become discouraged because of his incarceration (cf Col 1:24; 1 Thess 3:2, 3).
 - b. He did not want them to "faint" or lose heart (cf Heb 12:3).
 - c. Discouragement is as contagious as encouragement (cf Isa 40:30, 31).
- III. Advancing toward spiritual maturity (14-21).
- A. "For this cause" (reason, NKJ) ties these words back to the same words at the beginning of the chapter. For the actual "cause" we need to digress to Chapter 2; the peace and unity ushered in by Christ.
 1. "I bow my knees" is more than merely acceptable posture for prayer, it universally shows reverence (genuflection, see Rom 14:11).
 - a. We can offer prayer in just about any physical posture we desire.
 - b. There are examples of prayer being offered while standing (cf Matt 6:5; Lk 18:11). While kneeling (cf Acts 9:40; 20:36. While lifting up hands (cf 1 Tim 2:8) and possibly other positions (cf Rev 5:8, 14).
 - c. The outward posture is far less critical than the inward attitude. Reverence, humbleness and awe should permeate our being as we approach Him in prayer.
 - d. For this great man of God, dropping to his knees to implore the Father on behalf of his friends at Ephesus was as humble as he could be.
 - e. Whatever position causes a Christian to be the most reverent is the position we should assume in prayer.
 2. "Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" that the Ephesian Christians be strengthened (cf Phil 4:13; Col 1:11).
 - a. The significance of Verse 15 is that the Father makes the family. The context demands that the logic of the same Father would make one family of Jews and Gentiles.
 - b. Paul goes beyond the terrestrial considerations and includes the family (or branch of the family) in heaven.⁵
 - c. We must guard against making "is named" (vs 15) the name Christian. Those in heaven when Paul penned these words were not members of the church of Christ, therefore they were/are not Christians (cf 1 Pet 4:16).
 - B. Paul petitions the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Ephesians might be strengthened in the inner man (vs 16).

⁵ The whole family of angels in heaven, saints in Paradise, and believers on earth is named (of the Father); being "the children of God," a more honorable title than children of Abraham, and depending on him as the Father of the family. John Wesley, One Volume Commentary.

1. Every human is a composite being. We have the physical, outward element observed by the world daily, and the inner element, which shall live on in eternity.
 - a. It is this inner portion that Paul prays to be strengthened in these Christians.
 - b. Paul asks for this prayer to be answered “according to the riches of his glory” (cf Phil 4:19).
 1. God can answer our prayers from His abundant supplies (cf Matt 7:7, 11).
 2. Why do we ask so little of one who can do so much? His abundance is inexhaustible (cf Mal 3:10).
 - c. The source of the strengthening was “by his Spirit” to the inner man, or the spiritual man.
 1. The Holy Ghost, in the miraculous form, was available to the first century Christian. They had a need then that has been fulfilled via the inspired words of our New Testaments today (cf 2 Pet 1:2, 3).
 2. Many claim the direct operation of the Spirit on the hearts of humans today. If those today who make such a claim still sin, whose fault is it? Such claims make the weakness and sins the fault of the Godhead (cf Rev 2:4, 5).
 Note: The letter ends with the responsibility resting fully upon each individual Christian to properly arm themselves (Eph 6:13-17).
 3. The Spirit revealed the truth to those men who faithfully recorded that truth (cf Jn 14:26; 2 Tim 3:16, 17).
 4. The Spirit will give us strength as we learn and adopt the teachings of the New Testament (cf Rom 10:17; 2 Tim 2:15).
 Note: As our knowledge increases our convictions are strengthened. As our conviction grows our determination is magnified (cf Col 1:11-13).
 5. Belief in Christ and being baptized for the remission of our sins does not necessarily mean a person is growing properly. Notice what Paul wrote to members of the church of Christ in the region of Galatia, Gal 4:19.
 - d. Paul desired that Christ dwell (not be a visitor) in the hearts of the Ephesians by faith.
 Note: The word “dwell” is a compound word meaning *to house permanently* (Strong’s #2730).
 - e. Paul uses both “rooted” and “grounded” to show strength and stability. One metaphor is from agriculture and one from construction (cf Prov 12:3; 1 Cor 3:11).
 - f. Paul will use the idea of this stable foundation for the next statement he makes.

2. Verse 18 begins with “May be able” which has a more powerful meaning than the KJV inserts. It means *to have full strength*. This strength would come from the stable foundation of the last verse.
 3. Paul then lists the four dimensional love that God has for mankind:
 - a. Breadth (width, NKJ)
 1. As broad as all humanity.
 2. Jn 12:32
 - b. Length
 1. It is ongoing.
 2. Matt 18:22
 - c. Depth
 1. Measured from the top to the bottom.
 2. Rom 11:33
 3. Sins run deep, God’s forgiveness runs deeper.
 - d. Height
 1. Same measurement, but measured from the bottom to the top.
 2. 2 Thess 2:4

Note: The measurement of a well is determined by perspective. If you are at ground level the measurement is depth, if you are in the well the measurement is height. Same measurement, different perspective.
 - e. Three of these four dimensions are recorded in John’s description of the New Jerusalem (cf Rev 21:16, see note above), which may be what Paul wants them to envision. Use that vision as an incentive.
 1. Today we might sing with our young children about God’s love being “deep and wide.” That is Paul’s point.
 2. His love is not one dimensional, not reserved for one people or one culture. It is all encompassing.
 - f. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the love of Christ, which was beyond knowing, or at least the magnitude of it was beyond knowing.
 1. Maybe the best explanation is an illustration: What would your feelings be toward a person who kills your son? Some would say, “Away with him.” Others might find compassion and say, “I forgive him.” But who would say, “Let this person become my son instead.” That is what God has done for each of us (cf 1 Jn 3:1, 2).
 2. Even if we cannot comprehend every facet of God’s love we should believe He loves us, embrace it and trust it (cf Phil 4:7).
- C. This prayer is drawn to a conclusion by giving praise to the supplier and sustainer of all blessings (cf 1 Cor 2:9).
1. With reference to what God is able to do for us in this life Paul uses an interesting phrase in Verse 20.
 - a. “Exceeding abundantly” (exceedingly abundantly, NKJ), which is a strong expression of largeness, excess and abundance (cf 1 Tim 1:14).

- b. Adam Clarke described it as, “superabundantly above the greatest abundance.”
 - c. F.F. Bruce said it was “another one of Paul’s super-superlatives, coined to express God’s capacity to transcend all that we ask or think.”
 - d. Paul is trying to fill the readers mind with the abundance of what God has to offer His children. He is praising the power of God.
2. “The power that worketh in us” is the same power discussed in 1:19, 20.
 - a. The power that made us alive (cf Eph 2:1).
 - b. The power that saves us (cf Rom 1:16).
 3. The purpose of the church (the body of Christ) is to glorify God.
 - a. The church’s work is to spread the gospel (cf Mk 16:15, 16).
 - b. The church’s work is to edify the saints (cf 2 Tim 3:16, 17).
 - c. The church’s work is to share in benevolence (cf Gal 2:9, 10).
 1. If the church branches off into human wisdom it is no longer honoring or glorifying God (cf 1 Cor 2:4, 13).
 2. Any departures from His commands dishonors Him, e.g., Moses, Nadab and Abihu, etc. God classifies departures as disobedience.
 - d. No other institution is authorized to glorify His power and abundance.
 4. In each successive generation, “world without end” (cf Jude 25).
 - a. The church has a glorious position in God’s eyes. It needs to be exalted in the eyes of every member (cf Eph 3:10, 11).
 - b. It will endure as long as this world endures.
 - c. Israel of old, as God’s chosen people, had an expiration date. The Jewish religion was designed to bring people to the church (cf Gal 3:24, 25).
 5. Paul ends Chapter 3 by expressing the super-abundance of God and the great blessing of being part of the church that glorifies Him.

Note: The subject of the church (the body of Christ) will carry over into the next chapter.

Ephesians 4

Unity

The remainder of the book is the practical application to glorify God through the church.

- I. Our calling (1-6).
 - A. He mentions he is a prisoner in Verse 1 as he did at the beginning of Chapter 3.
 1. He viewed himself as a prisoner because of his stand for the truth of the gospel (cf Philemon 9).

Note: For information about Paul being a prisoner see page 16.
 2. Paul uses the word “beseech” to help encourage the Ephesians to walk worthy of the life in Christ.
 - a. Paul used this word often in his letters, e.g., Rom 12:1, 1 Cor 4:16, 2 Cor 5:20, etc.
 - b. It is a word filled with kindness, tenderness and concern.
 - c. He did not order them or demand them to walk worthy (as an apostle he could have commanded, cf 2 Thess 3:6) rather, he compassionately urged them to walk worthy (cf Philemon 10).
 - d. Those who are already trying to walk worthy do not need to be commanded, they need to be encouraged (cf Eph 3:16; Col 1:11).
 3. His desire was for them to “walk worthy of the vocation” which was before them.
 - a. The word “vocation” (calling, NKJ) literally means *they should lead a life worth their calling*.
 - b. There can be little doubt that this vocation, or calling, refers back to Eph 1:18 and 4:4 (cf Col 3:15).
 - c. There is an honor associated with being in heavenly places that directly affects every part of our daily lives. Christianity is not a burden, it is a vocation, a calling (cf Rom 8:30).

Note: It has been said that if we understand the vocation of this verse then everything else in this life will automatically become secondary to our Christianity.
 4. What will it take to answer the call of our calling in a worthy fashion?
 - a. Paul lists that we do it with lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearing one another (humility, gentleness, patience and showing tolerance, NAS).
 - b. These three characteristics are to be performed with “forbearing,” which means to endure in them.
 1. Lowliness (humility) was no more practiced in the first century than it is in the twenty first century. It is hard to find humble people.
 - a. If we properly understand humility will strive to compare our lives and attitudes with Jesus, not with our fellow humans. That will makes us humble.

- b. Self-examine requires that our standard be the highest standard (cf 2 Cor 10:12).
 - 2. Meekness (gentleness) is not weakness, but rather strength under proper control.
 - a. Meekness is the proper use of emotions. Not easily provoked. Ready to yield rather than to cause trouble (cf Gal 5:13).
 - b. In our worthy walk as Christians we must learn to deal with people with meekness and fear (cf 1 Pet 3:15).
 - 3. Longsuffering (patience) has two meanings.
 - a. Normally we associate the definition with not giving up, never willing to admit defeat, even in the midst of setbacks.
 - b. The word also carries the thought of non-retaliation. To the person who understands the vocation wherewith we are called retaliation becomes insignificant (cf Col 3:12, 13; James 3:15-17).
 - 4. “Forbearing one another in love” is the practical application of exercising humility, gentleness and patience in our calling.
- B. Incorporating the attributes listed in Verse 2 will contribute to unity and peace among brethren. Unity is God’s order. (cf 1 Thess 5:13; Heb 12:14).

Note: Modern day preachers in the church of Christ use the following passage to plead for non-denominational Christianity. Paul’s plea had a different design, he was pleading for no divisions within the existing church of Christ. Paul will record, through inspiration, God’s “one-derful” plan for unity.

Note: There is always the danger of discord when people from diverse cultures and backgrounds are brought together. Paul is insisting that the “bond of peace” be the controlling factor in Ephesus.

 - 1. “One body” (vs 4).
 - a. We have established in Chapter 1 that the body is the church (cf Eph 1:22, 23; 5:23).
 - b. The “one body” indicates that the Jewish Christians did not have a body and the Gentile Christians another body.
 - c. The “body” is composed of the saved, all the saved (cf Acts 2:47).
 - d. It is important for the reader (first century or twenty-first century) to understand that the church (body) is essential for salvation.
 - e. As in biology so it is in scripture, one body, by necessity, can have only one head (cf Col 1:18).
 - 2. “One Spirit” (vs 4).
 - a. This is a reference to the Holy Spirit (Ghost), the third member of the godhead. In staying with Paul’s theme of unity the one Spirit would guide the one body (cf Eph 2:22).

Note: All three members of the godhead are mentioned in this passage; Spirit (vs 4), Lord (vs 5), God (vs 6).
 - b. Conflicting teachings cannot come from one Spirit (cf Jn 17:20-22).

- c. A common Spirit will lead all members in a common direction, with common instructions (cf 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:1).
 - d. We do not have access to the miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit today, but we can be guided by Him through the Spirit inspired word (cf 1 Pet 1:22, 23).
3. “One hope” (vs 4).
- a. All who are directed by the one Spirit have hope. Not a hope, but the hope, singular (cf Tit 3:7)
 - b. His hope is centered in answering the calling of Verse 1.
 - c. Hope is the desire for something coupled with the expectation of receiving, or obtaining it (cf Rom 8:24, 25).
 - d. This “one hope” may be a reference to eternal life in general, or it may refer to the resurrection for the dead (cf Acts 23:6; 26:6-8).
 - e. We will all stand together and share the glory of that one hope (cf Rom 5:2; Col 1:27).
4. “One Lord” (vs 5).
- a. The context dictates Paul is referring to Jesus Christ, the governor of the body (cf Acts 2:36; Rev 17:14).
 - b. Having the same Lord should bind people (in this case Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians) together (cf Rom 10:12).
 - c. This would be true concerning any and every type of prejudice the church might face. Having one Lord should pull us together (cf Gal 3:28).
 - d. The word “Lord” in this passage means *supreme in authority* (Strong’s #2962). We have the chance to voluntarily honor Him as Lord now or be forced to honor Him at the end (cf Jn 13:13; Rom 14:11).
5. “One faith” (vs 5).
- a. Paul continues his urgent plea for unity by stating the singularity of acceptable faith. We live in a world of many faiths. Paul wrote that unity requires all true believers to be in one faith.
 - b. The faith Paul mentions is more than just a belief that Jesus is the Son of God (cf James 2:19).
 - c. The concept of “your faith” or “my faith” is completely foreign to the Bible (cf 2 Pet 1:1).
 - d. The unity of the one faith requires like-mindedness based upon biblical truth (cf Phil 1:27; 2:2).
6. “One baptism” (vs 5).
- a. When Paul wrote this letter from his hired house in Rome there was only one baptism.
 - b. There had been others in the past:
 - 1. John’s baptism (cf Lk 3:7; Acts 19:2, 3).
 - 2. Holy Ghost baptism (cf Matt 3:11; Acts 2:4).
 - 3. The baptism of fire is yet future.

4. Baptism for the remission of sins was the one and only baptism pertinent as Paul penned this letter.
5. This one baptism was one that was to last until the end of the world (cf Matt 28:18-20).

Note: There are several other baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, none of which is the one baptism Paul is referencing here.

7. “One God” (vs 6).
 - a. Paul’s plea for unity culminates in emphasizing unity associated with God.
 - b. Four salient points are stressed in Verse 6 concerning the unity of one God:
 1. “Father of all” (cf Mal 2:10; 1 Cor 12:6).
 2. “Who is above all” (cf Rev 4:8-11).
 3. “Through all” (cf Jn 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16).
 4. “In you all” (cf 1 Jn 3:24; 4:12, 13).
 - c. Unity is desired and expected within the church. Unnecessary divisions are folly and weakens the church’s influence and impact on the world. Jesus prayed that His followers would be one as He and the Father are one (cf John 17:21).

Note: The scriptural basis for pure Christianity lies in the seven fundamental unities mentioned by Paul at the beginning of this chapter.

II. Spiritual maturity in the first century church (7-16).

Note: Beginning here and continuing until the end of this powerful letter Paul is instructing the Christians at Ephesus that they (and all Christians) have the responsibility to mature as well as obligations that must be fulfilled.

A. The source of the gifts (7-10).

1. Grace is the gift. Christ is the giver of the gift (cf 2 Cor 10:13).
2. The church at Ephesus was young, possibly only about ten years old (established near the end of the second evangelistic tour), and they did not have our advantage of a completed Bible to help them mature (cf Phil 4:19).
 - a. It is likely that the “gift” mentioned in Verse 7 is the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost to aid them in spiritual maturity (cf Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7).
 - b. God supplies all we need, but their circumstance was different than what we face today. The scriptures furnish us with all necessary instruction (cf 2 Tim 3:16, 17).
 - c. Paul begins the verse with “But unto every one of us is given...” which is meant to show the Ephesian Christians that even in giving of the gift no one was left out.
 1. The gifts were not all the same, but everyone shared in the gifts. Unity.
 2. Those gifts, working together in the members, made the church of Christ at Ephesus complete (cf Matt 25:15).
 - d. Verse 8 deals with the ascension of Christ to allow the Holy Ghost to descend as a comforter to the Apostles (cf John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

Note: Every time the term “comforter” is used in the New Testament it is always with specific reference to the apostles, never to the general membership of the church.

- e. “He led captivity captive” (vs 8) refers to a conqueror’s parade. The captives are paraded before the people to accentuate the victory. In this case our Savior conquered death and the grave to return to heaven (cf Col 2:15).
 - 1. There is an interesting change in Verse 8 from the Psalm quoted. The Psalm has it as “received gifts” rather than “gave gifts” (see Ps 68:18).
 - 2. Christ is the conquering King of His kingdom and the Spirit is the guiding force of the subjects (cf 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Pet 1:21).

B. The variety, purpose and cessation of the gifts (11-13).

- 1. We normally think of spiritual gifts very differently than what Paul records in Verse 11. It is obvious that Paul is referring to people at work in the church rather than the gifts themselves. Notice the four categories listed:
 - a. “He gave some, apostles.”
 - 1. This would refer to the official office of an apostle. Only 14 men held this office throughout the annals of time.
Note: All of these men were selected by Jesus personally, with the exception of Matthias, who was selected by the Father (cf John 15:26, 27; Acts 1:21-26).
 - 2. It would have been a great gift and comfort to have an apostle to help guide the congregation in Ephesus.
 - b. “Some, prophets.”
 - 1. The prophets were inspired to make known the will of God (cf Acts 21:8, 9; 1 Cor 14:28, 29, 32).
 - 2. Probably used to forth-tell rather than fore-tell, thus speaking forth the truth as it was revealed to them (cf Acts 15:32).
Note: Some had the ability to fore-tell (cf Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11).
 - c. “Some, evangelists.”
 - 1. A person who was especially endowed with the ability to share the word of God with others.
 - 2. Only two men were given this name by inspiration; Philip and Timothy (cf Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5).
 - 3. It would have been a special blessing for the members at Ephesus to have evangelist among them to share and spread the message.
 - d. “Some pastors and teachers.”
 - 1. Those endowed by the Holy Ghost to feed and teach the flock.
 - 2. The shepherds, the bishops, the pastors are to be the teachers.
 - 3. This would have been important in the young church at Ephesus with the conflict and controversy of prejudice.
 - 4. When the church was growing its strongest we did not have preaching schools, we had elders who taught the young men of their own

congregations to be preachers and then sent them out to do the work of an evangelist (cf 1 Pet 5:2, 3).

2. All this was done to assist the saints in spiritual growth.
 - a. Paul lists three reasons for these gifts to exist:
 1. “For the perfecting of the saints.”
 - a. To help instruct the saints in the complete will of God.
 - b. “Perfecting” only occurs in this passage, but the root word is found in such verses as: 1 Cor 1:10, 2 Cor 13:11, Heb 13:21, etc.
 2. “For the work of the ministry.”
 - a. There was a special work done at Ephesus by those endowed with the Spirit “of the ministry.”
 - b. “Ministry” is the common word used for ministering and administration, but at Ephesus it carried something additional because of the gifts mentioned in the passage.
 3. “For the edifying of the body of Christ.”
 - a. The word “edifying” is the same as building up. (cf 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Cor 14:3, same word for building and edification).
 - b. The building up of the church was important to the godhead.
 - b. These gifts were given for a specific period of time, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith...” (vs 13).
 1. The system of faith for salvation is universal (cf Jude 3).
 2. The scriptures guide mankind in understanding and obeying God’s will, but they did not have our advantage of a completed book (cf Phil 3:15).
 3. The miraculous age had an expiration date. Eph 4:13 is the date stamp. The word “Till” is an adverb of time (cf 1 Cor 13:9, 10).
- C. The importance of these gifts in spiritual maturity (14-16).
 1. The importance of these gifts to the Ephesians (and probably to other congregations of the 1st century) were manifold:
 - a. No more immaturity.
 1. “Be no longer children” refers to an immature Christian (cf 1 Cor 3:1; 13:11 [4x in vs]; Heb 5:13).
 2. We must be skilled enough and sufficiently mature enough to handle false doctrine and false teachers.
 3. Without the aid of the Bible the Ephesians could depend on those who were gifted.
 - b. No more instability.
 1. “Tossed to and fro” like on the waves of the sea (cf James 1:6).
 2. We can be anchored with the full knowledge of God’s word, they could not. These gifts were vital.
 - c. No more gullibility.
 1. Some wily teachers had deceived some of the saints with lies (cf Gal

5:1, 7).

2. With these gifted saints in place they could verify the teachings and not be deceived (cf Heb 2:4; 1 John 4:1).

2 The human body is used to explain the proper function of the church (cf Col 2:19).

a. The body, working in choreographed synchrony, is a model for the church of Christ. Each member doing the task designated for the good of the body (cf 1 Cor 12:12, 20).

b. The gifts bestowed on the early church allowed it to function efficiently. If every member did their part the end result would be a body that glorified the head (cf Col 1:18; 2:19).

III. Putting off the old man and putting on the new (17-24).

A. With the word “therefore” Paul returns to the exhortation of Christian unity, which was his subject at the beginning of this chapter (Eph 4:1).

Note: “This I say” was a common expression of the mighty apostle (cf 1 Cor 1:12; 15:50; 2 Cor 9:6; Gal 3:17; Col 2:4).

1. Paul uses the word “testify” as something he did, not the Ephesians. The same word is translated as “charged” in 1 Thess 2:11. It means *to take to record*.

2. The charge was that henceforth they do not walk as other Gentiles walk (cf Eph 2:1-3; Col 3:5-7; 1 Pet 4:3, 4).

a. They had come out of that life.

b. They no longer walked in “the vanity (futility, NKJ) of their minds” (cf Acts 14:15).

c. Christianity, properly taught, believed and practiced, will correct the evil in our lives (cf 1 Cor 6:11).

3. The Gentiles suffered by having their “understanding darkened” (vs 18), which means they may have had worldly knowledge, but lacked the rudimentary understanding of God’s revelation (cf Rom 1:21-23).

a. This ignorance stemmed from the “blindness” or hardness of their hearts. Blindness means *to cover with a callous* (Vines).

b. Sin can harden the heart (cf Matt 13:15; John 12:40; 2 Pet 2:14).

c. “Past feeling” (vs 19) means to become apathetic. Most of the Gentiles were lost in their sins and they did not care.

d. Paul then uses three strong words to describe these Gentiles: lasciviousness, uncleanness and greediness (vs 19).

1. Lasciviousness is unbridled lust (cf Gal 5:19).

2. Uncleanness is moral impurity

3. Greediness is the desire for more, and in this passage probably refers to sensual or sexual indulgences (cf Rev 18:3).

B. The contrast (But ye, vs 20) between the old and the new is that the new have been taught differently in Christ (cf Rom 6:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12).

1. These Gentiles had heard Jesus (by the preaching of the gospel) and had accepted the truth to their own salvation (cf 1 John 5:20).

2. Paul used “Christ” in Verse 20 and “Jesus” in Verse 21. Possibly referring to the man “Jesus” who lived and died, yet was resurrected from the grave, becoming the Christ. The Ephesians believed the historical facts of His life (cf 1 Pet 1:21).
 - a. Their belief in the resurrection would make putting off the former life easier. God resurrected Jesus and has promised to resurrect me (cf Col 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10).
 - b. The word “renewed” (vs 23) is used only here in the New Testament. It means *to make new*, as in regeneration (cf Gal 6:15; Col 3:10).
 - c. How is it possible to take off the old man and put on the new man when formerly they were controlled by the lusts of the flesh? By determining that the “spirit of your mind” would change your life (cf Rom 8:6; 1 Pet 1:13).
 - d. To live the Christian life we have to make a concerted effort, a commitment of the mind, to honor our contract with God (cf 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Jn 3:9).
3. The concept of putting off the old man and putting on the new man is the characterization of us striving to be godly after the example that Jesus left for us (cf 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 2:10; 1 Pet 2:21).
 - a. Becoming a new man is God’s doing.
 - b. Living as a new man is our doing.
4. There was a fundamental difference between the Gentile’s life and the Christian’s life. The difference is still relevant today.

Note: In this section the inspired apostle has dealt in general terms, the putting off of old characteristics and ignorance. In the following section Paul will explicitly deal with sins that will help Christians to move forward in their walk.

IV. The contrast continues with some inspired specifics (25-32).

- A. “Wherefore” (Therefore, NKJ), because the old man has been put off and the new man has been put on.
 1. Because the old man is put away we will not lie.
 - a. A lie is a statement that is intended to deceive.
 - b. Lies are almost universally accepted on our world, but God has always condemned them and He demands more from us (cf Col 3:9; Titus 1:12; Rev 21:8; 22:15).
 2. Because the old man is put away we will not stay angry.
 - a. The new man will strive to avoid anger (cf Ps 37:8; Prov 19:11; James 1:19).
 - b. It is not always easy to avoid anger, even Jesus was angry at ignorance and injustice (cf Mk 3:5; 10:14; Jn 2:13-15).
 1. God was angry with Moses (cf Deut 4:21).
 2. God was angry with the people (cf Deut 9:8).
 3. God was angry with Aaron (cf Deut 9:20).

- c. If anger does happen in the new man it cannot abide. It can poison the mind if not quickly removed.
Note: This principle is based in the Old Testament law of settling matters (cf Deut 24:15).
 - d. Handle your anger quickly (cf Prov 14:29). Because the old man is put away we will not give place to the devil.
 - e. This passage is directly connected to Verse 26 and the releasing of anger.
 - f. If we stay angry we voluntarily give our minds as a workshop for the devil's activities (cf 2 Cor 2:10, 11).
3. Because the old man is put away we will steal no more.
- a. Taking property that does not belong to us has been a problem in every generation (cf Ex 20:15; 21:16; Hosea 4:2; Jn 12:4-6).
 - b. Paul is saying that these new men should stop stealing and start working (cf 1 Thess 4:11, 12; 2 Thess 3:11, 12).
- B. The words we speak are just as important as our actions.
1. Because the old man is put away our words should be used for edification.
- a. The new man will speak good words for good use (cf Matt 12:35; James 1:26).
 - b. The word "corrupt" means *rotten, like putrid fruit* (Robertson's).
 - c. Paul is telling these new men at Ephesus that they should treat one another fairly. Do not speak evil, speak good words about each other, building up one another and the church (cf Rom 14:19; 1 Pet 2:12).
 - d. "Minister" (impart, NKJ) is the word for "give", or "grant" (same word used in Eph 4:7, 8 and 11).
 - e. The words we use with each other should impart grace (benefit or favor) to our brethren.
2. Because the old man is put away we cannot grieve the Spirit of God.
- a. Unrighteous, unholy words, unchristian actions will cause the Spirit to be saddened (cf 2 Cor 2:2).
 - b. Paul, it appears in this verse, is specifically referring to the words Christians use. We are to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet 4:11). Unkind words are not from the Spirit.
 - c. Possibly a reference to Isa 63:10.
 - d. Grieving the Spirit would be equal to grieving Jehovah (cf Ps 78:40; 95:10; Acts 7:51).
3. Because the old man is put away Paul lists other attitudes that should also be put away from us:
- a. Bitterness; *spitefulness or harshness* (cf Rom 3:14; James 3:14).
 - b. Wrath; *fury, bursts of fury* (cf Col 3:8).
 - c. Anger; *hostile anger* (cf Ecc 7:9).
 - d. Clamour; *hostile outcry of passion* (only translated as clamour here; cf Heb 5:7; Rev 21:4).

- e. Evil speaking; *injurious speaking toward brethren, whether the words are true or not*. Paul is condemning the attitude of evil toward those of the brotherhood (cf James 4:11).
 - f. All malice; *evil mindedness*. As Paul ends this list of characteristics the old man has put off, he mentions malice, which here means *the bitter and unjust habits of mind* (cf Prov 6:19; 26:20).
4. Because the old man is put away we need to put on:
- a. Kindness; *pleasant, gracious*. Christians courtesy is being Christ-like even when we are bearing the wrong (cf Lk 6:35; Acts 28:2; Rom 12:10).
Note: We will not always be treated fairly or kindly, even by brethren. Our obligation is to conduct ourselves as the new man, not the old man.
 - b. Tenderheartedness; *a disposition of compassion and mercy* (the only other time the word *tenderhearted* is used is in 1 Pet 3:8, where it is translated *pitiful*; cf Matt 18:33; James 5:11).
 - c. Forgiveness; *to bestow a favor*. Because of what God has done for us through what Christ endured, we should, in similar fashion, be willing to pardon our brethren (cf Lk 17:3; Acts 2:38; 1 Jn 1:9).
- C. As faithful Christians the Ephesians had continuing responsibilities to themselves and to the members of the church.
- 1. They were to be examples of developing the finer traits of living as Christians.
 - 2. They were to put off the old man and allow the new man to show forth.
 - 3. They were to develop the right attitudes in dealing with other members.
 - 4. Paul will take the foundation of this chapter and use it to discuss the moral issues of the next chapter.

Ephesians 5

Walking in love; marriage is symbolic of the church.

- I. The character of believers (1-5).
 - A. Be followers (imitators, NKJ) of God (therefore) is tied to “forgiving one another” in Verse 32 of the last chapter (be as forgiving as God is forgiving).
Note: This is a poor place for a chapter break.
 - B. “As dear children” refers to the kind of imitators we are to be.
 1. Children will naturally attempt to imitate their parents (or some adult). We, as Christians, have God as our Father, that is whom we should strive to emulate (cf Lk 6:35, 36).
 - a. We are all going to copy ourselves after someone. Why not imitate the original (divine and perfect) rather than a flawed copy (cf 1 Pet 1:15, 16; 1 Jn 4:11)?
Note: This knowledge puts additional pressure on parents. We must live in the fashion that we want our children to live.
 - b. The context requires us to ask ourselves how God conducts Himself toward us, and then we should act in the same fashion toward our brethren (cf 1 Jn 3:1, 2).
 2. As dear children, “walk in love.”
 - a. It is possible that earthly parents can be poor or disappointing examples occasionally. This is never true of our heavenly example (cf Matt 20:28; Heb 4:15).
 1. Notice inspired instruction for our “walk” from a positive perspective:
 - a). Walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4).
 - b). Walk after the spirit (Rom 8:4).
 - c). Walk in honesty (Rom 13:13).
 - d). Walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7).
 - e). Walk in good works (Eph 2:10).
 - f). Walk in wisdom (Col 4:5).
 - g). Walk in truth (2 Jn 4).
 - h). Walk after the commandments of the Lord (2 Jn 6).
 2. Now notice our “walk” from a negative perspective:
 - a). Walk NOT after the flesh (Rom 8:4).
 - b). Walk NOT after the manner of men (1 Cor 3:3).
 - c). Walk NOT in craftiness (2 Cor 4:2).
 - d). Walk NOT by sight (2 Cor 5:7).
 - e). Walk NOT in the vanity of the mind (Eph 4:17).
 - f). Walk NOT disorderly (2 Thess 3:6).⁶
 - b. This example was culminated in His sacrifice, which is termed “an offering” (vs 2).

⁶ Goebel Music

1. Noah did this in a literal sense (cf Gen 8:20, 21).
 2. The nation of Israel did it in a literal sense (cf Lev 1:9, 13, 17).
 3. Jesus' atoning sacrifice became the last literal sacrifice God required (cf Heb 9:12; 10:12).
 4. Our "offering" is to "walk in love" (cf 1 Thess 2:12).
 5. This "sweetsmelling" aroma, which raises up to our Father, is pleasing to Him because it indicates obedience to His will. The culmination of this obedience was demonstrated by Jesus the Christ in His offering. His life was not taken, but rather, given as an offering (cf Gal 1:4; 2:20; Eph 5:25; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14).
- C. In verses 3 and 4 Paul switches from this delightful theme of God's children walking in love to a list of vices commonly practiced by pagans.
1. In Verse 3 Paul list three words (sins) that should "not be once named among you."
 - a. "Fornication."
 1. Fornication is a broader term than adultery (Mk 7:21) that includes all unlawful sexual intercourse, within the context it would have to do with those things associated with pagans (cf Acts 15:20, 29).
 2. It is used in a literal and in a figurative sense throughout scriptures (literally) 1 Cor 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2 (figuratively) 10:7, 8 (metaphorically) Rev 17:2, 4; 18:3.
 3. It is the word Jesus uses in Matt 19:9 (porneia) as the one and only reason for divorce. Even then God does not want divorce, he wants people to repent and work things out (cf Mal 2:14-16).
 4. Under the Old Testament Law the Jews were considered the spouse of Jehovah (cf Jer 3:6-10). Therefore, worshipping at any other altar was spiritual fornication. The same principle is true for the "bride" of Christ.
 Note: There was an obvious problem with fornication among the 1st century Gentiles. Christians had/have to live differently than those around them.
 - b. "All uncleanness."
 1. This would be unnatural and perverted indulgences (cf 2 Pet 2:10).
 2. It can be used of physical uncleanness or moral uncleanness (physical) Matt 23:27; (moral) 2 Cor 12:21.
 - c. "Covetousness."
 1. Is the desire to have more (greediness), whether the desire is good or bad (the good, cf 1 Cor 12:31; 14:39; the bad, Lk 12:15; 2 Pet 2:14).
 2. It is unbecoming for God's people to be covetous (cf 1 Sam 8:3; Jer 6:13; Lk 12:15).
 2. In Verse 4 he lists three more words:
 - a. "Filthiness."
 1. Any vile thing, words or action (cf 2 Pet 2:7).

2. The word means “to shame or disgrace” (Vine’s).
 - b. “Foolish talking.”
 1. Senseless or frivolous talking (cf James 3:5-8).
 2. Such as might be characteristic of fools.
 - c. “Jesting.”
 1. Witticism in a vulgar sense (Strong’s).
 2. The word was once used for quick movements, but later it came to mean smuttiness or vile language (cf Ecc 10:13).
 - d. These six words, Paul warns, are “not convenient” (NKJ, which are not fitting) for the Christian character.
 - e. Proper words and character for the Christian is the giving of thanks (cf Col 3:17).
 - f. Paul is most concerned that the Ephesian Christians do not demonstrate conduct that would be considered inappropriate by those who observed them.
- D. In Verse 5 three examples are given of those who will have no inheritance in the kingdom.
1. “Whoremonger,” (NKJ, fornicator) which denotes a man who indulges in fornication⁷ (cf 1 Cor 5:9-11).
 2. “Unclean person,” which refers to moral purity (cf 1 Cor 7:14).
 3. “Covetous man,” which means one who is eager to gain or is greedy. To have what belongs to others⁸.

Note: All three of these words can be, and probably should be in this case, related to idol worship. Notice the word “idolater,” which means “an image worshipper⁹.”

II. True followers of Christ will walk as children of light (6-14).

- A. When Paul records, “Let no man deceive you” he is probably referencing the Gnostic teachers of the early centuries.

Note: Gnosticism (briefly stated) is the belief that salvation is obtained through a secret knowledge by which individuals come to know themselves. All matter is corrupt and, therefore, could not have been created by God. There was no harm in indulging in fleshly desires since the body is utterly corrupt and beyond redemption anyway. This was the “modern thinking” of Paul’s day.

1. People are often tempted to rationalize sin (cf Col 2:4, 8).
 - a. “Everyone’s doing it...nobody cares...you’re only young once...you only live once...you’ve got to have some fun once in a while...etc.”
 - b. These might be a balm for our sore conscience, but they will not remove the sin (cf Prov 28:13).
2. Sin brings “the wrath of God” (cf Rom 1:18; Col 3:6).

⁷ Vines, Vol 4, page 125, “ pornos”

⁸ Ibid, Vol 1, page 253

⁹ Strong’s #1496

- a. The wrath of God is made daunting by examples in the Old Testament, i.e., the flood of Noah's day (Gen 6); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), etc.
 - b. He is no less formidable in this dispensation (cf Jn 3:36; Rev 14:10). He still hates sin.
- B. Paul's sage advice in Verse 7 is not to partake in sin.
1. Since it is common knowledge that God's wrath will be poured out on those who practice sin, do not get caught up in them (cf Phil 2:15).
 2. It should frighten us to think we might be found in sin.
 - a. The time and date of His return and the end of all things terrestrial is unknown (cf Matt 24:36).
 - b. To avoid living in fear we should practice living without sin.
- C. The Ephesian Christians had once been in darkness, now they were not classified as being "in light", but rather they were light (NKJ, you *are* light), and Paul urges them to live worthy of their new direction (cf Col 1:13).
1. Three examples of the fruit borne of this light are listed.
 Note: The KJV has "Spirit" in Verse 9. In every other passage where this Greek word is used it is translated as "light" with but two exceptions. In both of those passages it is translated as "fire."¹⁰ It would do no harm to the beginning of this verse to translate it "For the fruit of light is..."
 - a. Goodness, in contrast to wickedness (cf Rom 15:14).
 - b. Righteousness, in contrast to injustice (cf 1 Tim 6:11).
 - c. Truth, in contrast to lies or hypocrisy (cf Eph 6:14).
 2. These three characteristics would show fruit of walking as children of light (cf Jn 8:12; 12:36, 46).
 - a. This conduct would serve as a test or as proof of a worthy life.
 - b. This inspired letter would serve as the standard for their Christian lives.
 Approximately 2,000 years later it is still the same, unwavering standard.
- D. In contrast to this fruit is the "unfruitful works of darkness," which produces nothing of lasting value or quality of life (cf Rom 6:21; Gal 6:8).
1. The sins listed in verses 3-5 were to be reprov'd (exposed, NKJ) rather than fellowshiped.
 - a. We should not limit this admonition to pagan worship. It is a shameful thing for one who has come out of darkness to get caught up again in that darkness (cf 2 Pet 1:4; 2:20-22). How quickly some forget.
 - b. Having "no fellowship" (vs 11) is closely connected to the "not...partakers with" (vs 7). Vine's gives these two phrases the same definition¹¹, i.e. "joint partaker."
 2. Verse 12 probably has specific reference to the secret sins involved in pagan rituals (cf 2 Cor 6:14; 1 Pet 4:3).

¹⁰ Mk 14:54; Lk 22:56

¹¹ Vines, Vol 3, page 161, 162

- a. We should see from this that it is not enough to silently ignore sin. We must be willing to speak out against sin (cf Gal 6:1; 1 Tim 5:20).
 - b. We are not being helpful or kind to sinful men if we allow them to feel that they are safe in their sinful condition. Like a cancer, sin has to be removed (cf Ps 119:22, 29).
 - c. The “shame” might refer to the lewdness and lasciviousness associated with pagan worship. Many of these Ephesians would have come out of that environment (cf 1 Cor 4:14; 6:5).
 - d. The word “secret” (vs 12) means *private*. Probably referring to sins committed in the dark corners of the pagan temple (cf Lk 8:17).
 - e. No New Testament writer ever failed to expose error. No New Testament teacher should ever refrain from exposing error (1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Rev 3:19). We are here to save souls, not to make the lost feel good about their undone condition.
3. Verse 14 is a quote from an unknown/unrecorded source. Paul was inspired, so he did not ‘misquote’ Isaiah or anyone else.
 - a. “Awake thou that sleepest” (vs 14) is addressed to those who were practicing sin and still lost in error (cf Rom 13:11, 12).
 - b. In the depths of darkness Christ shall give the necessary light (cf Jn 8:12; 2 Cor 4:6).

III. We must regulate how we walk (15-21).

A. Paul instructs the saints in proper conduct and responsibilities (cf Phil 1:27).

1. Walking suggests movement, moving forward and making progress in their lives (cf Col 1:10).
 - a. Paul contrasts this forward movement with “not as fools,” (vs 15) which seems to be a strong statement (cf Gal 3:1).
 - b. Probably referring to a lack of earnest consideration in matters so vital for unity in the church (cf Col 4:5).
Note: The word “circumspectly” means *accurately, carefully, diligently*.¹²
 - c. Proper conduct, carefully thought through, will cause the church to move forward. Foolish conduct can and will harm the church.
 - d. Conducting our lives “as wise” means we will pay attention to what is going on around us and move forward with understanding.
2. “Redeeming the time” (vs 16) deals specifically with taking advantage of opportunities. Once an opportunity has passed it is gone (cf Gal 6:10).
 - a. The responsibilities of a Christian to redeem the time are manifold:
 - 1). To God; He has work for us to do.
 - 2). To family; provide, protect, train, show example.
 - 3). To others; hospitality, benevolence, teach.
 - 4). To self; study, pray, grow, develop spiritually.

¹² Vines, Vol 1, page 25

- b. In general, the Christian is exposed to evil each day, which is dangerous for our eternal souls (cf 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5).
Note: The word “redeeming” is a term that comes directly from the market place. It deals with purchasing something that is seasonable.
 - c. For those who received this information in the 1st century the meaning might be more immediate (“because the days are evil”), e.g., Nero’s persecution of Christians, destruction of Jerusalem, etc. (cf Eph 6:13).
Note: This could be a possible explanation of “the time is short” in the context of 1 Cor 7:29.
 - d. Because the days are evil, and the opportunities are “seasonal,” we need to see the greater need for our teaching the gospel and of saving souls.
 - e. Christians have a serious responsibility toward those outside the body of Christ (cf Matt 5:13, 14; Rom 2:19, 20).
- B. The “Wherefore” (Therefore, NKJ) of Verse 17 calls the Ephesians to understand the will of the Lord (cf Ps 119:130).
- 1. Paul has cautioned them not to walk as fools (vs 15) and here (vs 17) they are to be “not unwise.”
 - a. The converse of being “unwise” would be “understanding what the will of the Lord is.”
 - 1). This would require wanting to know His will (cf Jn 7:17; Col 1:9).
 - 2). A willingness to accept the truth (cf Acts 17:11, 12).
 - 3). Being unwise is contrasted to understanding. Being drunk is contrasted to being filled with the Spirit (vs 18).
 - b. Regulating how we walk (our conduct) would include abstaining from intoxicating drink, “wherein is excess.”
 - 1). “Excess” in the KJV is translated by *riot, debauchery, dissipation, ruin, etc.*
 - 2). Probably a direct reference to heathen temple worship practices, but the evils of beverage alcohol are too well documented to ignore (cf Prov 20:1; 23:29-35).
 - c. Being filled with the Spirit would indicate proper conduct.
 - 1). Not filled with spirits, but filled with the Spirit.
 - 2). These Ephesians had Christ dwelling in their hearts (Eph 3:17) and had been sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30). I believe Paul is saying that every part of their lives was to be permeated by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. In that context, the well-regulated Christian may express joy via song (cf James 5:13).
Note: The phrase ending Verse 18 and beginning Verse 19 are separated by a semi-colon (comma, NKJ) not a period. This indicates the elements of these two verses are part of a unit.

3. “Speaking to yourselves” requires words (speaking to one another, NKJ). It comes from a verb which means *to talk*.¹³ Reciprocal action. The first three words of this verse eliminates choirs, mechanical instruments of music, humming or anything else that is non-verbal.
 - a. Psalms may be the use of Old Testament psalms adapted as songs, e.g., compare the beginning notes of Psalms 1 and 2 with Psalms 3 and 4.
 - b. Hymns may be songs primarily to praise.
 - c. Spiritual songs may be songs relating to spiritual up-lifting.
 - d. There is little, if any, difference in these three designations.
Note: The point is to contrast this behavior with the drunken excess of Verse 18.
4. Since the type, or kind, of music in our worship services has been the point of much contention over the years, it would be good to carefully consider the scriptures on this subject. The following is a list of every passage the New Testament has on the subject of music:
 - a. Matt 26:30
 - b. Mark 14:26
 - c. Acts 16:25
 - d. Rom 15:9
 - e. 1 Cor 14:15
 - f. Eph 5:19, 20
 - g. Col 3:16
 - h. Heb 2:12; 13:15
 - i. James 5:13
 - j. Rev 5:8, 9; 14:2, 3; 15:2, 3 (Heavenly, not earthly)
5. All of the Ephesians were to actively take part in “making melody...to the Lord.”
 - a. The required instrument designated by inspiration is the “heart” (cf Isa 65:14; Matt 15:8).
 - b. The use of mechanical instruments of music has a much deeper principle than the instruments themselves. It is the attitude toward the Bible and allowing the inerrant word of God to govern us.
- C. The “giving thanks always” was the best example the Ephesians could demonstrate. Not being fools, unwise or drunken with wine and excess.
 1. If we keep this phrase in context it appears the giving of thanks is associated with their singing.
 2. Our access to the Father is only through Jesus the Christ. We need to give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is often done in the songs we sing.
 3. Verse 21 ends the sentence with the idea of submission to one another.

¹³ Strong’s # 2980

- a. “In the fear of the Lord” remains a healthy mental position in every age (cf 2 Chron 19:7; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pet 2:17).
 - b. The idea of doing all these things out of reverence for Christ might be Paul’s way of tying his instructions together.
 - c. Paul had just stressed that Jesus had become a servant of all (cf Mk 10:45).
- IV. The relationship of Christ and His church explained by the illustration of husband and wife (22-33).

Note: Through the rest of this chapter, and on into the first nine verses of the next chapter, Paul will instruct the Ephesians on three pairs of relationships in the ancient household: wives to husbands, children to parents and slaves to masters.¹⁴ These teachings are part of what he taught in Eph 4:1, “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye were called.” They had to be different now that they were Christians. The husband and wife relationship is the subject before us beginning with Verse 22.

A. “Wives, submit yourselves...” (22-24).

1. There has never been an effective social unit that did not have a leader.
 - a. We know this to be true in the home, the military, business, schools, clubs and even in the natural world, e.g., bees, ants, canines, lions, horses, etc.
 - b. God has established that the man (male) be the head of the family unit. This arrangement was established all the way back to Eve’s temptation in the Garden (Gen 3:16).
 - c. To argue against this or to try and usurp this arrangement is to argue with God. We are to conduct ourselves “...in the fear of God” (vs 21).
2. Staying within the context, the submissive wife would show the heathen observers a peaceful and harmonious family unit in the Christian home.
 - a. Subjection does not mean inferiority (cf Gal 3:27, 28).
 - b. Christ is not inferior to the Father (cf Jn 1:1, 14).
 - c. Subjection does mean cooperation to a greater end. Just like on the job or in school, everyone has to answer to someone (cf 1 Cor 11:3).
 - d. The lack of voluntary subjection has caused many problems in the family unit. “My rights” should be substituted with “my duty” because of the worthy walk (cf Titus 2:4, 5).
 - e. As Yoder put it, “There is no ‘difference in worth’ but in the family, for its order and its unity, there must be leadership, and the responsibility of leadership is that of the husband and father.”¹⁵
3. “...as unto the Lord” (vs 22) does not mean that the husband takes on the same deference as Christ, but that deliberate subjection to her husband is the duty they owe to the Lord (cf Col 3:22, 23).

¹⁴ In all three cases the one who is to be submissive is mentioned first.

¹⁵ J. H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, page 185.

4. God has designed the family to be a happy place. Following His instructions will not only makes a Christian home a slice of heaven on earth, it will show the world what a better place this can be if Christian principles guide all of us. Note: The wife ought to think of her husband as the greatest guy on earth. She should do more for him than any other. She should look her best for him, have her best personality and disposition for him. He should be her earthly focus.
 5. The motivation for voluntary submission by the wife is stated in Verse 24.
 - a. In the beginning she was created from man and for man, to be his “help meet” (cf Gen 2:18, 23).
 - b. The church places itself in subjection to Christ. The wife does the same thing because it is right to do so (cf 1 Pet 3:1, 2).
Note: 1 Pet 3:1 probably has reference to wives married to non-believers. The admonition to be in submission to the husband would apply in that situation as well. All the more reason to choose carefully who you marry.
 - c. A wife that will not submit to her husband is like a church that will not submit to Christ. A futile and unsatisfactory situation.
- B. “Husbands, love your wives...” (25-27). The duties of the husband.
1. The strongest love ever demonstrated is the love Christ had/has for the church. There is no danger in loving your wife too much (with the one possible exception of loving her more than God).
 - a. He willingly gave Himself for the church (cf 1 Jn 3:16; Rev 21:2).
 - b. Using Christ as the example, the husband should understand his duty to support and provide for his bride. To go before her in danger or peril, to be ready to save her in dire situations.
 2. Man has the God-given right to be the king of his castle as long as he treats his wife as the queen! She is not his servant, but his partner in the worthy walk of Christianity.
Note: The love of Christ for His church is such that He feels Himself incomplete without her (cf Eph 1:22, 23).
 - a. The husband has duties that must be fulfilled: to take the lead, to give direction and spiritual guidance (cf 1 Pet 3:7).
 - b. A husband not willing to take care of his obligations has missed the point of this passage, the example of the worthy walk.
Note: “Only so far as the husband shows the like love in perfect sympathy, in chivalrous forbearance, in abhorrence of tyranny, in willingness to self-sacrifice, has he any right to claim lordship”.¹⁶
 - c. It is an ignorant husband, in deed, who demands his wife be in subjection to him, when he has not placed himself in subjection to Christ.
 3. Christ gave Himself in death on the cross to “sanctify and cleanse” (vs 26) His beloved church (cf Acts 26:18; Heb 10:10).
 4. This was accomplished by two agencies:

¹⁶ Ellicott’s Commentary

- a. “The washing of water” which refers to the act of baptism (cf Jn 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).
 - b. “The word” which likely has reference to the spoken word. At the time of the writing of these words, there were few inspired letters and they were scattered over a large geographical area. The members at Ephesus were converted by the spoken word (cf Jn 15:3; 1 Pet 1:23).
 - c. Verse 26 is a reiteration of what Jesus said while He prayed for His apostles (cf Jn 17:17).
5. All brides want to look beautiful on their wedding day. Great effort and expense go into the bride’s preparation. The results are often spectacular!
- a. A close examination of Verse 27 reveals that all the preparations of the glorious church to be Christ’s bride were done by Him (cf Jude 24)!
 - b. The church, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (vs 27) is probably a reference to the wedding garment (cf Rev 7:14).
- C. The husband’s love needs to be sensitive (28-30).
- 1. A loving husband is sensitive to the needs of his wife because they have become one flesh (cf Gen 2:24; Col 3:19).
 - 2. The husband has different needs than the wife.
 - a. Men seem to have the need to feel important, successful and accomplished.
 - b. Wives who take the time to compliment their husbands of their hard work and extended hours of effort are showing wisdom.
 - c. By showing he is important she is fulfilling a real need in his life.
 - 3. Wives, on the other hand, need to be shown love and tenderness, to be told they are loved and then have that love demonstrated.
 - a. Husbands can get so wrapped up in the providing and protecting part of marriage that they neglect the love and tenderness part.
 - b. When a man properly loves his wife it is a demonstration of his love for himself, for she is truly part of him (cf Gen 2:21-23; 1 Cor 11:8).
 - c. Paul did not say that Christ was *as* the head of the body (vs 23), but He *is* the head of the body. The husband is connected to the wife in the same vital manner.
 - d. The word “nourisheth” means to *nurture, of the care of one’s own flesh.*¹⁷
 - e. “Cherisheth” means *to soften by heat; then to keep warm, as of birds covering their young with feathers.*¹⁸

Note: The tense of both words is present tense, continuous. Once we start the nurturing and warming in the marriage relationship we never allow it to stop. Christ is our example of continuous care for His bride.
- D. The sustaining love of marriage is in reality a metaphor for the sustaining relationship of Christ and His church (31-33).

¹⁷ Vines, Vol 3, page 118

¹⁸ Ibid, Vol 1, page 184

Note: The English word “sustain” carries three definitions: *to carry (to bear on the shoulder or support the weight of); to nourish; to defend*,¹⁹ which would be applicable to both the husband to his wife and Christ to His church.

1. The marriage relationship supersedes all other earthly relationships because the man and woman become one flesh.
 - a. This is a quotation from Gen 2:24, which both Jesus and Paul had taught previously (cf Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16).
 - b. Since Paul refers to the creation account of the husband’s leadership in the home, this is not a cultural teaching, as some would suggest.
Note: The word “man” in Verse 31 is the word for mankind, not the word for male of the species.
 - c. The husband and wife have entered into a full and total commitment to their partner. All other earthly relationships are now classified as lesser relationships. Similar to Jesus’ statement as recorded in Matt 10:37.
2. “Mystery” does not mean mysterious, but, rather, previously unrevealed²⁰ (cf Eph 6:19; Col 2:2).
 - a. The husband, as the head, demonstrates sacrificial love. An example of the church and its head (cf Isa 54:5; 62:4, 5; Rev 19:7).
 - b. Since inspiration uses marriage to illustrate the connection of Christ to the church is there any wonder why God hates divorce (cf Mal 2:16; Matt 19:3-6)?
 - c. “The divorce evil may be considered as our greatest social peril. This evil threatens the dissolution of the family, the disturbance of society, the perversion of the institution of marriage, and the spiritual development of the people of God.”²¹
Note: The divorce rate in America for first marriage, vs second or third marriage. **50%** percent of first marriages, **67%** of second and **74%** of third marriages end in divorce, according to Jennifer Baker of the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology (emphasis in original, jb).²²
 - d. Paul’s objective is to direct the readers mind to the lofty relationship between Christ and the church.
3. To paraphrase Verse 33, Paul is saying, “Yes, I am dealing with Christ and His church, but everything I have said about the marriage relationship is true.”
 - a. The practical application for the wife is to reverence (respects, NKJ) her husband in the same fashion the church is to reverence Christ (cf Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:6).

¹⁹ Webster’s New World Thesaurus, pages 732, 733

²⁰ Vines, Vol 3, page 97; “...it denotes not the mysterious, but that which, outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known by Divine revelation...”

²¹ H. Leo Boles, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, page 17.

²² According to Sarah Jacoby (2/2/2017) the two most important factors in avoiding divorce is waiting until you are at least 25 years of age and earn a college degree before you marry.

- b. The practical application of this information to the husband is to love your wife. In every way we see Christ providing for, protecting and defending the church, we should do the same for our wives (cf Col 3:19).
- c. Let us pray for husbands and wives who will look to God's word for guidance and instruction in their daily lives.

Ephesians 6

Additional relationships and the Christian conflict

Note: In the beginning of this chapter Paul will continue the instructions of “submitting yourselves,” which he began in Eph 5:21.

- I. The relationship of children and parents (1-4).
 - A. Our Father in heaven expects obedience (cf Matt 7:21; Jn 14:15).
 1. He has always required children to obey their parents (cf Deut 21:18-21).
 - a. The obvious reason for a child to obey their parents is the experience the parents have gained by living longer than the child (cf Lk 2:51, 52).
 - b. On average, about 25 years more life experiences allows them to have wisdom far beyond what the child knows (cf Prov 1:8; 30:17).
 - c. Being disobedient to parents receives some of the harshest condemnations listed in scriptures (cf Rom 1:30; 2 Tim 3:2).
 2. “In the Lord” has reference to proper conduct within the Christian’s home. That is who he was writing to and what the context demands (1:1).
 - a. As long as a child lives in the home they are obligated to obey their parents.
 - b. Why? “For this is right.” Col 3:20 is a parallel passage.
 - c. When children obey their parents it makes the household run smoother and sets a good example for others to see.
 - d. We cannot set a poor example and expect to have a good influence on those outside the body. The family government is designed to mimic the Divine government of the church.
 - B. “Honor” (vs 2) includes respect, reverence and obedience.
 1. Honoring parents is “the first commandment with promise.” A reference to the 5th of the Ten Commandments listed in Ex 20 (cf Ex 20:12).
 2. The words “with promise” probably refer to the first commandment with a promise attached to it.
 3. Verse 3 is additional information to Ex 20:12, which is recorded in Deut 5:16, the second time the Ten Commandments are listed by Moses (Mk 7:10).
 - C. In the child/parent relationship there are responsibilities for the parents also (cf Col 3:21).
 1. Specifically, this verse refers to the actions of the father. In first century culture the man was in charge of every aspect of home life.

Note: Every time this Greek word is used in the New Testament (419x) it is translated as father(s) with the exception of Heb 11:23, where it is translated “parents.”

 - a. The children were required to be obedient, but they were not to be goaded into resentment or discouragement.
 - b. The translators inserted the words “to anger” in Col 3:21. The words are not in the original, but the word “provoke” carries this thought, as does the word “wrath” in Eph 6:4.

2. Instead of provoking a child to wrath they should be brought “up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (cf Heb 12:7-10).
 - a. Nurture means *training* (NKJ). They should be educated to know God’s will in their lives.
 - b. Admonition means *instruction*.
 - c. We could paraphrase this as ‘fathers, give them the instruction and the correction to cause your children to show good Christian upbringing’ (cf Prov 4:1-5; 2 Tim 3:16).
 - d. The greatest teaching tool a man possesses is his example.
- II. The relationship of servants to masters (5-9).
- A. Paul addresses his third common household situation of this chapter, the servant or slave/master relationship. In light of the context we should probably think of converted slaves (bondservants, NKJ, which means they belonged to their masters, not merely employed by them) in the home.
- Note: According to Barclay there were approximately 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire at this time²³. It has also been suggested that as much as 25% of the population (one out of every four people) in Italy were slaves during the time Paul wrote this letter.²⁴
1. The apostle Paul was a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not a minister of politics. The Bible does not directly endorse, oppose or condemn slavery (cf Col 3:22; 1 Tim 6:1). It simply deals with it as a matter of fact.
 2. Slavery has been commonplace from the beginning of humans dealing with humans.
 - a. Under the Law of Moses a man could sell his daughter into slavery (cf Ex 21:7; Neh 5:5).
 - b. A widows children might be sold into slavery to pay their father’s debts (cf 2 Kgs 4:1).
 - c. A man could even sell himself into slavery (cf Lev 25:39, 47).
 - d. The standard price of a slave was thirty shekels of silver (cf Ex 21:32).
 - e. More often than not the slaves were captured from war.
 3. Paul tells those who were Christian slaves how to conduct themselves as representatives of the Lord’s church.
 - a. Be obedient (cf Titus 2:9).
 - b. Respect your masters according to the flesh (cf 1 Pet 2:18).
 - c. Serve your masters as you would serve Christ (cf Col 3:23).
 - d. “Eyeservice” denotes service only given under the master’s eye. Diligently performed when he is watching, but neglected in his absence.
 - e. This, of course, can be carried over into every aspect of the Christian’s standard of work and service in any age.

²³ Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, page 212

²⁴ Scheidel, Walter, “The Roman Slave Supply,” page 6

Note: Earnest efforts are offered to an earthly master, but Paul says our attitude is with “fear and trembling” that we please our heavenly Master.

B. Paul also addresses proper conduct in the masters, or owners (cf Col 4:1).

1. Members of the church of Christ, as slave owners, were required to demonstrate proper treatment.
2. Masters were to be motivated by the same principles of right conduct, i.e., “the same things unto them” (cf James 2:13).

Note: The gospel has the power to enable believers to live noble lives regardless of their legal or social standing (cf 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28).

- a. “Forbearing threatening” (vs 9) or stop threatening the slaves with punishment. The Greek word means to *relax* or *loosen*.²⁵
- b. The masters had a Master in heaven to answer to.

Note: A paraphrasing of the thought here might be “both their Master and yours is in heaven.”

3. God does not look upon our earthly position. He looks at the inward person (cf Rom 2:11).
4. Paul deals with this point in 1 Cor 7:21-23. If a person was a slave and had a chance to become free they should exercise that opportunity. If not, then they should take heart that they now belong to Christ.

Note: Slavery was a hot issue in this country in the middle of the 19th century. Our pioneer preachers did not ignore the issue, they preached what God’s word said and encouraged the brethren not to allow this issue to divide the church of Christ. That powerful preaching worked. We were one of the very few religious groups that did not allow slavery to divide us during or after the Civil War.

C. Suppose that Paul would have advocated the slaves revolting in the Roman Empire. It would have created a chasm between the masters (Christians) and the slaves (Christians) that would have never been bridged (not to mention a generally detrimental name throughout the Empire for the church of Christ). Instead of dividing the church Paul advocated peace and respect, and by the power of the gospel the problem was eradicated and eventually dissipated through its teachings (cf 1 Pet 1:17).

Note: “It is interesting that no inspired writer ever made an attack on slavery as an institution. They did not command, or even suggest emancipation; but they did teach a spirit which ultimately destroyed the system by peaceful means.”²⁶

1. This passage (verse 5-8) deals with servants or slaves while only one verse deals with masters (vs 9).
2. Why so many verses for slaves compared to masters? It is a lot harder to be the servant. He was offering them the resources to deal with the injustices they had to endure (cf 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:9).

²⁵ Barnes, NT Commentary

²⁶ Gullledge, Dennis, The Book of Ephesians, page 219

- D. All of these principles will apply to a study of the book of Philemon. Philemon was a church of Christ slave owner and Onesimus was his runaway slave, converted to Christ by Paul in Rome. The book deals with proper conduct between these two for the glory of Christ (cf Philemon 9, 10, 15, 16).
 Note: It is possible for these very circumstances to exist today. An estimated 35.8 million people today are enslaved. The nation of India has 14.3 million slaves and China has 3.2 million. As the gospel spreads in these countries it is possible that some would find themselves in exactly the situation Paul is addressing.²⁷
- III. The Christian soldier preparing for war (10-13).
- A. “Finally, (drawing the letter to a close) my brethren, be strong in the Lord” (cf 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:8).
 Note: Paul takes all of the classes of people he has been directing since Chapter 5: wives and husbands (5:22-33); children and parents (6:1-4); servants and masters (6:5-9) and puts them together in the same class, they were all soldiers. They all had to bravely stand up and fight.
1. To tell someone who is not strong to be strong simply will not work. So Paul gives a way for all people to be strong, no matter who we are, we can be strong “in the Lord” (cf Eph 1:19; Phil 4:13; 1 Pet 5:10).
 2. We are to “gear up” for our battle with the devil.
 Note: Paul used most of Chapter 4 telling us to put on the new man. Here he tells us to “put on the whole armour of God.”
 - a. It is not a carnal war we fight (cf 2 Cor 10:3, 4).
 - b. We must be prepared to fight a “good warfare” (cf 1 Tim 1:18).
 - c. Good soldiers of Christ will suffer hardship for their Commander-in Chief (cf 2 Tim 2:3).
 - d. Our service requires the avoidance of any entanglement in the affairs of this world that will keep us from proper service (cf 2 Tim 2:4).
 - e. We are to resist the devil rather than surrender to him (cf James 4:7).
 3. “You’re in the army now,” prepare for spiritual conflict.
 - a. “Wiles” (vs 11) could be translated *method of trickery*. The word is only used here and Eph 4:14 (cf Mk 13:22; 2 Cor 11:13-15).
 Note: The word “wiles” (schemes, NASV) is the word we get *method* from. It refers to a crafty, deliberate strategy in seeking out our most vulnerable point. There is great folly in underestimating our foe.
 - b. The more serious we are about serving God the harder the devil will work to get us to give up, i.e., surrender or desert our post.
 - c. It was after His baptism that Jesus was confronted by Satan (cf Mk 1:12, 13; Col 1:13).
 - d. His trickery and deception will be different against each soldier. He will allure with pleasures, or cast away our concerns as harmless. He will find the weakest link in our individual armor and hammer away at it.

²⁷ Hess and Frohlich, 2014, www.usatoday.com,

4. Satan has many tricks and deception to either penetrate our armor or to get us to lower our armor so he can attack.
 - a. Satan tries to get us to distrust God (cf Gen 3:1-4).
 - b. Satan tries to get us to give up by making life hard (cf Job 1:6-12; 2:4-7).
 - c. Satan tries to get us to trust ourselves (cf Matt 23:29-31).
 - d. Satan uses peer pressure (cf Mark 14:54, 66-72).
 - e. Satan tries to get us to be worldly (cf Rom 12:2).
 - f. Satan tries to attack through doctrinal confusion and false teaching (cf 1 Tim 6:3-5).

Note: Abraham Lincoln once said, “I am not so concerned if God is on our side, but whether we are on God’s side.”

B. Our war is not with flesh and blood (humans), but with spiritual evil in the Christian religion (cf 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2).

1. Paul specifically writes that our fight is not with humans. The battle is with the devil and his agents (cf 2 Cor 10:4).
 - a. While Jesus was on earth He often referred to the devil as the prince of this world (cf Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
 - b. Paul and John reiterated the same thought (cf 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Jn 5:19).
2. Consistency requires us as students to understand that “principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places” are not people, but the devil’s trickery in spiritual matters.

- a. “High” (heavenly, NKJ) is the same word translated as “heavenly” in Eph 1:3, 20; 2:6 and 3:10.

Note: This Greek word is used 20 times in the New Testament. In every case it is translated as either heavenly or celestial, except here.

Note: It is possible that the KJV translators were contemplating the “high places” of the OT in Verse 12 (cf 2 Kgs 18:4; 2 Ch 21:11; Jer 19:5).

- b. In order for us to fight this battle Paul will insist we dress in the panoply God supplies (cf 2 Cor 6:7).
- c. This battle the Christian soldier must fight is ‘heaven or hell’ combat. It is far more important than ‘life or death.’
- d. “Having done all, to stand” means that with God’s armor, properly arrayed, we withstand the assault. We stand victorious over our spiritual enemy (cf Col 4:12).

Note: The key word in this section of scripture is the word “stand.” It is used three times (once with a prefix, to make it “withstand”). To “stand” in no way indicates an assault or an attack by Christians. Instead we are to defend, to hold the citadel of our soul (cf Rev 6:17).

IV. The specific equipment of the Christian soldier is enumerated (14-20).

Note: Paul begins Verse 14 with the established principle of “stand.”

- A. At the writing of this letter Paul had probably been chained to, or was at least in the close company of Roman soldiers for three or possible four years,

consecutively. His words are inspired, but he also had first-hand knowledge of how armor worked (cf Acts 28:16, 20; Phil 1:13; Col 4:18; Phile 10).

1. “Having your loins girt about with truth” (cf Isa 11:5).
Note: The girdle was of supreme importance to the soldier. Not only was it the place to carry the sword and other equipment, but it united the rest of the armor and gave support and strength to the soldier.
 - a. The girdle Paul writes of is not made of leather, it is made of truth (cf John 8:32; 17:17)!
 - b. The truth of God’s word produces a truthfulness and honesty in His soldiers. Living without deceit and hypocrisy (cf 2 Cor 4:2).
 - c. We are to encircle ourselves with truth and cinch it up tight to encase us from attack (cf 1 Pet 1:13).
2. “Having on the breastplate of righteousness” (cf Isa 59:17).
 - a. The breastplate covered the soldier from neck to waist, therefore protecting the vital organs.
 - b. Not a breastplate of brass or iron, but rather a protective plate of righteousness in our conduct (cf Ps 119:172; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7).
 - c. Our righteous character is necessary to defend ourselves from the devil. A defect in our character, a lack of commitment to our Lord, will be the opening Satan is looking for to pierce our armor (cf 1 Kings 22:34).
3. “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” would be foot-wear offering firm footing in the conflict.
 - a. The Christian soldier was to stand and fight, so solid footing would be necessary (cf Rom 5:2).
 - b. The word “preparation” means *to make ready* (Robertson). That would be preparedness for the onslaught of our adversary (cf Lk 22:31; 1 Pet 5:8).
Note: Heavy-soled, hobnailed sandals were issued to the Roman soldiers for sure-footedness in battle (*caliga*).
 - c. The word “peace” in this verse probably means the peace of mind we have that furnishes us with courage and alacrity in the defense of our souls (cf Rom 5:1; Phil 4:7; Col 3:15).
4. “Above all, taking the shield of faith” which would stop the enemy’s fiery darts.
 - a. “Above all” means *over all the rest of the armor* (Clarke). The shield the Ephesians would see in their minds would be a large, oblong object that would offer protection to all the rest of the body.
 - b. Paul makes sure they understand he is not talking about a literal, door shape shield. He has reference to their faith (cf 2 Cor 1:24; 1 Pet 5:8, 9).
 - c. The word “darts” means any type of projectile, e.g., an arrow, spear, stone, javelin, etc. Basically, any assault that can be hurled at you.
 - d. In our world we do not have to guard against literal projectiles, but we do have to guard against many things that could harm or damage our faith:

- 1). Words (usually from fellow Christians) that would discourage us or make us feel like abandoning our faith.
 - 2). Impurity in fellow Christians.
 - 3). Doubt, fear and disappointment.
 - 4). “The wiles of the devil” will come in many forms. Our “shield of faith” is how we will quench them or deflect them away.
5. “And take the helmet of salvation” (cf 1 Thess 5:8).
 - a. The helmet would be protection for the head. It would be unsafe to face the enemy without head protection.
 - b. Paul specifically mentions this is the helmet of salvation, or maybe more properly stated, the assurance of salvation, which gives us confidence (cf Col 1:12-14).
 - c. The daily struggle with the devil warring in our lives requires steadfastness. We need to be reminded of our salvation in Christ Jesus in order to continue the fight (cf Rom 2:7).
 6. “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” which is our only weapon in this fight (cf Heb 4:12).
 - a. It is the sword of the Spirit because it comes from the Spirit.
 - b. It is the only weapon Jesus used against the devil’s temptations (cf Matt 4:1-11).
 - c. For our own defense we must be able to use the sword of the Spirit properly (cf 2 Tim 2:1).
 - d. We often sing of the panoply of God. This armor is what that means.
- B. Praying will have an active part in our successful fight against the wiles of the devil (cf Phil 4:6).
1. Paul included four “all’s” (always) in this passage:
 - a. Always (cf 1 Thess 5:17).
 - b. In all prayer and supplication (cf Phil 4:6).
 - c. All perseverance (cf Lk 18:1).
 - d. For all saints (cf 1 Tim 2:1).
 2. Then Paul requests prayers for himself, which was common for him to do (cf Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1). What did he want them to pray for?
 - a. That he might boldly preach the gospel (cf Phil 1:20; 1 Thess 2:2).
 - b. This was written while a prisoner in Rome (cf Acts 28:31).
 - c. He did not pray for deliverance from danger or suffering. His request was for the advancement of the saving message (cf Acts 4:29; 9:29).
 - d. The “mystery” was how God included the Gentiles in the saving gospel of Christ, as we discussed in Chapter 3 (see pages 16-18).
 3. Paul declares that he is an “ambassador in bonds” (cf 2 Cor 5:20).
 - a. An ambassador is a highly regarded representative of a government.
 - b. The word used here has the same root word, in the original, as the word “elder” in most New Testament passages (cf 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5).
 - c. It appears Paul is referring to himself as old or mature (cf 1 Tim 5:1, 2,

19; Philemon 9).

V. Paul's final words are of peace, love and grace (21-24).

A. Paul had a close and personal relationship with these brethren. He was in Ephesus on his 2nd and 3rd evangelistic journeys (cf Acts 18:18-21; 19:1; 20:31).

Note: He, most likely, spent more time with this congregation than any other.

1. Tychicus was a faithful and trusted messenger who would carry this letter to the Ephesians and also the letter to the Colossians (cf Col 4:7).
 2. When Tychicus would arrive in Ephesus he would tell them of Paul's condition and circumstances in Rome.
 - a. He was from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4) and was therefore, going home (cf 2 Tim 4:12).
 - b. Titus 3:12 indicates the trust Paul had in this man as a minister. Either he or Artemas would fill in for Titus on the island of Crete.
- B. Paul ends the letter by expressing three qualities or attributes he wished for the Ephesians through prayer.
1. "Peace," which is a word that means *all prosperity* (Strong's).
 - a. He wanted them to continually increase and to grow stronger in the Lord (cf Rev 1:4).
 - b. In staying with the context of the letter, peacefulness in these brethren would eliminate discontent and rivalry in the congregation.
 2. "Love with faith." As Christians, love springs forth from faith (cf Gal 5:6; Philemon 5).
 3. "Grace" is for those who love our Lord Jesus Christ and continue to obey and follow Him.
 - a. Ending a letter with the grace of God being mentioned is characteristic of the apostle (cf Col 4:18; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15).
 - b. "In sincerity" means *in incorruptibility* (Clarke). The demonstration of the proper Christian walk (cf Titus 2:7).
 4. Then the prototypical ending, "Amen." So be it.