

EPHESIANS, QUEEN OF THE EPISTLES

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Chapter 1

Riches in Christ

Ephesians 1:1-14

We will study one of Paul's great epistles, his letter to the Ephesians. This is one of Paul's best-loved epistles. Read what some of the commentators have to say about this epistle to the Ephesians. One commentary calls it "the queen of the epistles," another, "the sublimest communication ever made to man." A third calls it "the crown and climax of Paul's theology" and a fourth one says that "this epistle is the most comprehensive statement of the Christian religion."

What is so special about this epistle that we should spend the next 12 studies going through this book in detail? First of all, this is Paul's prison epistle. He is writing to believers who were discouraged because of his imprisonment and here he gives them in the first part of his epistle, the wonderful truth as it is in Christ. Then, he speaks,

in the second half, in terms of Christian living and the fruits of our salvation in Christ. In this introduction study, we will look at the first 14 verses of Ephesians, chapter one.

It would be helpful if you would turn to your Bible and follow with me what Paul is saying to us in this wonderful epistle recorded for our benefit. In the first two verses of this letter, Paul introduces himself to the ones to whom he is writing this letter. In verse 1, he says:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God....

What is Paul saying here? First of all, “Paul” was not his original name. His parents gave him the name “Saul,” very likely after the first king of Israel since Paul was of the same tribe as King Saul, a Benjamimite. That is found in Philippians 3:5. But Paul himself, after his conversion, chose the name Paul. Why?

The word Paul in Latin means “small” or

“little.” This is how he thought of himself after he discovered the wonderful gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul refers to himself as “the least of the apostles” and yet he was a mighty instrument of God. He says, “Paul, that means little, but an apostle of God.” The word “apostle” simply means “one who is sent out as an ambassador” or “one who is given a special task” and Paul was called to proclaim the gospel in a very special way to the Gentile world. But please notice, he is not an apostle by self-appointment. He says he is an apostle of Jesus Christ “by the will of God.” There were some who opposed his message of grace alone who accused him of being a self-appointed apostle in order to undermine his message of grace alone. But Paul makes it clear here; he is an apostle chosen by God Himself.

Then, the second half of verse 1 is:

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.

The word “saints” simply means “holy ones.”

It is used nine times in this epistle and we shall see in our study that those who are in Christ are saints, not because of their performance, but what is true of them in Jesus Christ. Now that last phrase or that statement, “in Ephesus,” in the second half of verse one is not found in some of the older manuscripts. So it is believed that this epistle was addressed really as a general letter to the people of Asia Minor. But whatever it is, this is an inspired letter written by Paul to Christians living in his day and which has special significance even to us today.

Now having said this, in verses 3 to 14 Paul expounds to us the riches in Christ and that, of course, is the title I have chosen for this first study.

To appreciate what Paul is saying, we need to understand what that phrase “in Christ” means. There is a key phrase that runs through Paul’s epistles. If we were to take this phrase out of these writings, there would be very little left of Paul’s exposition of the gospel. This recurring phrase, which is the central theme of Paul’s theology, is

the expression “in Christ” or “in Christ Jesus.” Now this phrase is sometimes expressed by other similar phrases, that is, “in Him” or “by Him” or “through Him” or “in the Beloved” or “together with Him” or “in whom.” These are all synonymous terms applying to the “in Christ” motif or idea.

The truth behind this phrase was first introduced by Christ Himself when He told His disciples, “Abide in Me.” These are the undergirding words of the gospel and if we do not understand what the New Testament means by this expression “in Christ,” we will never be able to fully understand and appreciate the unconditional good news of salvation which the New Testament defines by the word “gospel.” There is nothing we have as Christians except that we have it in Christ. Everything we enjoy and everything that we hope for as believers, whether you talk of the peace in justification or the holy living in sanctification or the redemption from this corrupt body which will take place at glorification, all of that is ours always in Christ. Outside of Him we have nothing but sin,

condemnation, and death.

This expression “in Christ,” however, is rather a difficult phrase to understand. Just as “you must be born again” was mindboggling to Nicodemus, so likewise the concept of “in Christ” is very difficult for us to understand. This is true especially of the Western mind which puts so much emphasis on the individual. The question that is often raised in our minds is, “How can I, as an individual, be in somebody else? And worse still, how can I, born in the twentieth century, be in Christ who was born and lived almost two thousand years ago?” This makes no sense to our Western way of thinking. But what does Scripture mean when it tells us that we were together with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and now are sitting in heavenly places? (We will find this in Ephesians 2:5-6.) What does Scripture mean by that? Because we cannot fathom these facts, we tend to ignore or skim over that phrase, “in Christ.” Yet the whole understanding of the gospel hinges on our understanding the significance of these two vital words, “in Christ.”

This “in Christ,” idea or motif is based on what is known as “Biblical solidarity” or “corporate oneness.” Therefore, if we are to come to grips with this phrase, we must first understand what the Bible means by solidarity. If we look at our Bibles carefully, we will discover three facts, three fundamental truths that the Bible reveals.

1. Fact number one is that God created all men in one man. We were not created as individuals. We were created corporately in one man and that is Adam. So when we look at the phrase “in Adam,” it means the corporate man in one man. In fact, the word “Adam” in Hebrew has a collective significance. It is a corporate word; it means “mankind.” We will look at two statements from Scripture, one in the Old and one in the New Testament about this first fact. In Genesis 2:7, we have recorded for us the creation of Adam. In our English Bibles it says:

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath

of life, and the man became a living being.

After God had formed Adam from the dust of the ground, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, but, in the original Hebrew text, the word “life” is not in the singular like it is in your English Bibles. It is in the plural. God breathed into Adam the breath of “lives.” The lives of the whole human race were created in one man. In fact, going to the second text in the New Testament, Acts 17:26, we are told that God, created out of one, the whole human race that is on this earth:

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

So the number one fact is that all men were created in one man. In Romans 5, remember, when Adam sinned, all sinned in him and all stand condemned in him. Why? Because we were implicated in his act of sin. We were in him.

2. This brings us to fact number two: Satan ruined all men in one man. Let me remind you of Romans 5:12:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned....

Sin entered the world, the human race, by one man. Romans 5:18:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

By one man's disobedience, condemnation came unto all men, the judgment of condemnation came to all men. In 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, we are told that "in Adam, all die." Why? Because when Satan touched Adam before he had any children, he touched the human race in Adam.

3. But fact number three is the wonderful good

news of the gospel. God redeemed all men in one man, Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, God joined two natures together — the divine and the human — in one person in the womb of Mary: the corporate life of the human race, which we all receive from Adam, and the divinity of Christ. Thus, at the incarnation, the whole of the human race, you and I and every human being from Adam to the last person, were put into Christ. Christ became the second or the last Adam, or the second or the last mankind. Just as we were in Adam, God by His act of incarnation through the Holy Spirit, put us into Christ so that we were corporately in Christ at the incarnation.

This did not save us, but it qualified Christ to be our substitute and our representative. Now, by God's act, we are in Him and what He did, we did in Him. In a nutshell, this is the good news of salvation. We are laying the foundation to our study which is the "in Christ" motif. 1 Corinthians 1:30:

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus,

who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

The “him” refers to God the Father, the “you,” which is in the plural form, refers to us and, of course, Christ refers to the Son of God, the second Person of the Godhead. Paul is saying here that “God took us and put us into Christ Jesus.” This took place at the incarnation. By doing this through His life and death, Christ became for us wisdom, which means “special knowledge from God.” Christ became for us our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. Salvation full and complete was obtained for us in Jesus Christ, beginning with the incarnation, through His life and at the cross. At the incarnation, we were joined to Christ. By His life and by His death, Christ gave us a new history, a history in which we stand perfect before God and His holy law.

With this background, let us now look at chapter one of Ephesians and see the wonderful truth that Paul is revealing to us. Ephesians 1:3:

Praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Please notice the past tense: “has blessed us.” In the original, it is in the past historical tense, something that took place once and for all in the past. Then in verse 4:

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

There you have the “in Christ” motif: “he chose us in him before the creation of the world.” So your performance and my performance had nothing to do with this. It has to do with God’s choice and He chose you, He chose me, He chose all mankind to be in Christ before the creation of the world, that we should be “holy and blameless in his sight.” Do you know that while you and I are one hundred percent sinners by nature and terrible sinners by performance, in Christ, we are holy and without blame because in His history we have not sinned even once, in His death we have

met the justice of the law which is upon us. Verse 5:

[In love] he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will....

We were God's children by creation, but, when Adam sinned, he not only brought the sentence of condemnation upon us but he sold us to Satan. We became Satan's property when Adam sinned. This is what Satan claimed in one of Jesus temptations in the wilderness. You will find this in Luke 4:5-6:

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to."

Because of the redemption that we have in Christ, we are now joint heirs with Christ. We have become His adopted children. By this joining with Christ, we become one with Christ. Since

Christ is the Son of God, we become, by this union with Christ, sons and daughters of God.

Now, please remember, this passage is addressed to believers who have accepted the truth as it is in Christ. You see, God redeemed all men in Christ. This is His gift to mankind. But unless you accept this gift, the privileges of the “in Christ” motif are not yours subjectively. But here Paul is addressing believers who have accepted Christ and he is saying to them that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ; we have been chosen to be spotless and blameless in Christ even before Adam was created and, of course, we were predestined in Christ to become the adopted children of God. In the Bible days, as it is in our country, an adopted child has all the legal rights of a natural child. Then in verse 7, we have this wonderful statement:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace....

These are sublime words. In Christ, not in ourselves, not in our performance, not even what God does in us, but in Him, in His holy history, we have redemption through His blood, that is, through His sacrifice, the forgiveness of sins, because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin and, when Jesus died on the cross, that cup is able to forgive us of all our sins. That was what Jesus introduced in the Lord's supper: "This cup represents My blood, which is shed for the remission of sins." And, in Jesus Christ, we have not only positive righteousness but we have forgiveness of all sins, not because we deserve it but because of the tremendous riches of His grace.

Well, what else does Paul say? Let us go to verse 8:

[God's grace] that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Here is Paul telling us that this knowledge — that is what the word "wisdom" means, the Greek

word means “special knowledge” (Remember what Jesus said to the Jews in John 8:32: “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”) — this special knowledge is the knowledge, the truth as it is in Christ, for this truth is our only hope, our only salvation. And in this knowledge we have the love and the redemption abounding from God towards us. Ephesians 1:9:

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ....

I want to pause here because there are three main pronouns that you will find in this epistle to the Ephesians. First of all, there is the “you.” When Paul uses the word “you” in this epistle, he is referring to the Gentile world. When he uses the pronoun “we,” he is referring to his fellow Jews, including himself. But here in verse 9, he is using the third pronoun, “us,” and the word “us” refers to Jews and Gentiles. So what Paul is saying in verse 9 is, “Having made known to us, Jews and Gentiles, the mystery of his will according to his

good pleasure which he purposed in himself.” You see, the gospel was presented to the Jews and to the world through the Jews, in a type form through a promise and there were many hidden facts that were not fully revealed, were not understood by God’s people before the Christ event. But since the cross, the mysteries of salvation have no longer been hidden from us. It is now brought out into the open. And that mystery, of course, is the “in Christ” motif, the new history that God has given you and me and every man in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is this wonderful truth? The truth is that [John 3:16]:

...God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

But God’s desire is that nobody should perish, that all should come to repentance, that whoever believes should not perish but have eternal life. This was God’s purpose right from the foundation

of the world. You see, Adam's fall did not take God by surprise, but God has something wonderful for you and me and, as we see in Romans 5 what God has done for us, what God has obtained for us in His Son Jesus Christ, is something far greater than what we ever had in Adam even before the Fall. Oh, I tell you, in Christ we are not third-class citizens like we were in Adam. You see, in Adam we were number three. God is, of course, always number one; the angels are number two; and we were created a little lower than the angels. But, through the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ which God obtained in Him, we have been raised, not back to the position that we lost in Adam but we have been raised to sit with Jesus Christ in heavenly places, which means that we are above the angels. We are joint heirs with Christ. We shall rule with Him; we shall reign with Him. That is the wonderful privilege that the New Testament brings to us, the mystery that was hidden in the past but now has been made manifest. Look at verse 10 of Ephesians 1:

...To be put into effect when the times will have

reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

It is only in Christ that we have the blessed hope. Those who are in heaven, like Moses and Elijah, those of us who are waiting for Him and for His second coming, will all be joined together and rejoice in salvation which God obtained for us in Christ.

Listen to verse 11:

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will....

Salvation from beginning to end is all of God. We are simply the recipients of His love, His mercy, His grace, and all we can say with Paul is, “Thank you, God, for Your unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ.”

Verse 12:

...In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

“We who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” Paul is writing to first century Christians and he is saying, “We were the first ones who trusted in Christ beginning with the disciples, then with the Gentiles after Pentecost and, of course, the Jews, too, all of us,” Paul says, “praise God for His glory.” Look at verse 13:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit....

Keep in mind, this is a prison letter. Paul is not concerned about himself. He is writing to people who were discouraged, people, as we shall see when we get to chapter three, who began to think like this, “If God cannot protect the great apostle Paul who is now languishing in a Roman prison,

what hope is there for us?” And Paul says, “Look, I am in prison because God wants me there.” You will discover in this epistle Paul never refers to himself as a prisoner of Rome but as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. But, above all, Paul is saying here in this first part of Ephesians 1 that our security, our anchor is in Christ and this security has been sealed by the Holy Spirit who was given to us to keep in mind the hope of our salvation in Christ who is the guarantee. Paul says in Ephesians 1:14:

[The promised Holy Spirit] who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession — to the praise of his glory.

When Christ comes the second time, salvation will become reality. It is a hope but it is a hope that is guaranteed. It is not a hope that is bothered by the “maybe” problem. There is no “maybe” in Christ. Our salvation is guaranteed in Christ for, in Him, we have a history that fully satisfied the law of God in terms of its positive demands as well as in terms of justice. In Christ, you and I have

salvation full and complete and it does not matter what our situation is. Let us hold on to this truth. It is the most glorious truth in Scripture. It is the central theme of Paul's theology and it is my prayer that you shall know this truth and this truth will set you free, free from guilt and condemnation, free from distress, free from anxiety, free to live a happy, glorious Christian life. This is my prayer for you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 2

Spiritual Wisdom

Ephesians 1:15-23

In our last study on this tremendous epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, what many call the queen of Paul's epistles, the most comprehensive statement of the Christian religion, we looked at the tremendous riches that we all have in Christ. We discovered that 2,000 years ago, God took you, He took me, He took every human being, He took the corporate human race that needs redeeming and joined us, put us into Christ so that, at the incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, and the human race became one and Jesus Christ became the God-man. He became the Substitute and the Representative of the human race. Then we discovered that, by His perfect life and His sacrificial death, by His doing and by His dying, He rewrote the history of the human race and gave us a new status in which you and I stand reconciled to God. We stand justified before the law of God.

We discovered the wonderful truth of the “in Christ” motif, which is the central theme of Paul’s theology.

After reminding his readers of this wonderful truth in chapter one of Ephesians, verses 3-14, he now turns in verses 15-23 and prays for spiritual wisdom for his readers. Keep in mind that his readers were Christians who were becoming discouraged because this is one of Paul’s prison letters. He is languishing in a Roman prison. He is not concerned about himself because he knows in whom he believes, but he is concerned about his flock, since he has the heart of a pastor. Paul is not just a theologian; he is above all, a pastor and he is concerned about his flock who are becoming discouraged and who are losing their confidence in Jesus Christ. So, first of all, he reminds them of the riches that they have in Jesus Christ and to give this up would be the most foolish thing anyone can ever do.

Having reminded them of the wealth they have in Jesus Christ, that they are sitting in heavenly

places in Christ, that they have been blessed with every spiritual blessing pertaining to heaven, that they have been adopted as sons and daughters of God, that they are joint-heirs with Christ — having revealed this wonderful truth, he now turns in verse 15, chapter 1 which will be our study. I have entitled this study “Spiritual Wisdom,” and this is how he introduces his concern. If you have your Bible, it would be helpful to turn to it because it is what the Bible says that has power, not what the speaker is saying to you. Get the truth from the Word of God itself. It has power. The Word of God is powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword says Hebrews. Ephesians 1:15-16:

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Oh, the heart of a pastor constantly praying for his flock! But I want you to notice in verse 15 he brings out two vital, important characteristics of every true believer. Every true believer is:

1. a person whose faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and
2. has a love for his fellow saints in the same way that he loves himself.

These are the two characteristics of a true Christian. In fact, these two are really the fulfillment of the law of God.

Turn to 1 John 3:23 and notice how John puts it there, the two basic requirements that God requires from each one of us:

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

If you take these two fundamental characteristics of a true Christian, you will discover that these two are in perfect harmony with the spirit of the Ten Commandments, the moral law of God.

The moral law of God is also divided into two

parts. The first four commandments of the Ten Commandments has to do with our relationship with God and when you have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ you will have no other gods before you. You will rest totally in the finished work of Jesus Christ. You will not take His name in vain because He is everything to you.

Number two, when you accept Jesus Christ by faith, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in you and He brings to you an ingredient that you and I cannot generate in and of ourselves because of our sinful condition. That ingredient Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 by the Greek word agape, the self-emptying, self-sacrificing, changeless love of God which, by the way, Paul will explain in more detail in chapter three of Ephesians and we will study that when we come to it. But Paul is saying that the outward evidence of a truly converted Christian is that he has loved his brother and even the man of the streets as he loves himself.

The greatest proof that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation is when we are redeemed

from selfishness, which is the basic element of our sinful nature, and learn and practice love for each other as Christ loved us. These are the two characteristics, Paul says, of a true Christian. And Paul is saying to these people that he is writing to, the Ephesians or to the Christians in Asia Minor, “Look, when I heard of these two characteristics in you, I realized that you are really born again Christians and I have not stopped thanking God for the power of the gospel that has touched your lives. And I mention you constantly in my prayers.” Oh, what a wonderful pastor Paul was. Paul thanks God for the fruits of the gospel in the lives of those for whom he worked. Verse 17:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Now I have already mentioned in our last study that the word “wisdom,” the Greek word *sofia*, means special knowledge and that special knowledge is what we discovered in our last study,

the “in Christ” motif. The “in Christ” motif is the truth as it is in Christ, the truth that qualifies you and me for heaven, the truth that sets you free, the truth that is the most powerful weapon against the wiles of the devil. All the wealth of the believer is in Christ and, in Christ, you and I are the sons and daughters of God. You and I in Christ are sitting in heavenly places. You and I in Christ are joint heirs with Christ, are adopted children of God, and we shall reign with Him and rule with Him when He takes us to heaven. And Paul’s prayer is that his readers would have this knowledge ingrained in their hearts, stamped into their hearts with a hot iron, branded with this truth so that we will never forget it, the revelation that is the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the truth that is in Him.

You cannot come to the knowledge of the gospel through your intellectual powers, through your education, because the gospel is not a philosophy. You cannot come to the knowledge of the gospel by the scientific method because the gospel is not human science. It is the truth as it is in Christ that comes from God to you and me

through the convictions of the Holy Spirit. It comes through Revelation and that is what Paul is saying, “You have been given the revelation of the truth and my prayer is that you cling to it that you will never forget it, that it will constantly be manifested in your lives.” Then he goes on in verse 18:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints....

All the wealth that you and I possess in the world is nothing. The true wealth is in Christ. Let me put it this way. The most valuable thing that Christians possess today is not their bank account, it is not their property, it is not all the material things that you possess that you admire and enjoy because all these will be burnt up one day. What then is the greatest wealth of a believer? It is something that you cannot touch; it is not tangible; it is something that you cannot see; it is something that is in your heart and that is your faith in Jesus

Christ.

The righteousness that qualifies you and me for heaven, the righteousness that presents us perfect and blameless before God, is always in Christ, never in us. Not even what Christ does in us contributes towards that righteousness that qualifies us for heaven now and in the judgment. It is always in Christ. And where is Christ? He is in heaven where no thief can enter. It is guaranteed. But the faith that makes that righteousness yours, the faith that makes the justification you have in Christ effective in you is not in Christ; it is in you. That Satan can touch and that is the greatest desire of the enemy of all souls whom we call the devil. The moment you accept Christ, while you are a citizen of heaven and salvation is guaranteed, please remember, you are still living in enemy territory and Satan will do his very best to destroy that faith so that you will be deprived of the joy of salvation that is yours in Christ.

So Paul is praying to his flock and through his flock to us, because this book was recorded for us,

he is praying that the eyes of our understanding, the eyes of your understanding, he is using the eyes as a model of a window that brings into your mind the truth as it is in Christ. Without Christ, we are in darkness; we are groping hopelessly in darkness, without hope, without peace, full of distress, full of guilt. But when the eyes of the windows, of our faith are opened and in comes the truth as it is in Christ and you and I become enlightened, that is what Paul is saying in verse 18 of chapter one of Ephesians, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. We saints are the wealthiest people in the universe because we are joint heirs with Christ.

In 1 John 3, the apostle John — the beloved John — tells us that it does not matter what we are but, when He comes, we shall be like Him. Why? Because we have become the sons and daughters of God and joint heirs with Christ. That is what Paul says in Romans 8:17, we are “co-heirs with Christ.” This is our hope; this is our inheritance and let nobody rob you of this, says Paul.

Then in verse 19 of chapter 1 of Ephesians he adds:

...And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength....

Now there are two words here in the Greek that are translated by the same English word “power” so I need to explain what Paul is saying here. The first usage of “power,” in “his incomparably great power,” is the Greek word *dynamis* from which we have the English word “dynamite” and dynamite is powerful. It can blow you and me to pieces; it can blow our buildings into pieces; it can blow whole mountains out of existence. And that is what Paul is saying, “God’s incomparably great power.”

Have you discovered the power of God? Let me give you an example of God’s power. Man has created many wonderful things. Science today has discovered for us many wonderful things and produced many wonderful things so that life has

become wonderful today in the 20th century. But do you know man cannot do anything without pre-existing matter. But when God created this world, He spoke. His breath is creative; His breath is energy; His breath is power; it is dynamis, it is dynamite. He spoke and it happened. It is hard for the scientific mind to understand this but we, by faith, believe the worlds were formed without the use of any pre-existing matter. This is what Hebrews 11 is telling us in verse 3:

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Faith in a God that has power in His very breath that He can create something out of nothing. This is the power that will raise us from the grave. When a person dies and is buried, after some time his flesh is eaten up by worms. All that is left is bones, but when Christ comes and He says, "Arise," His breath is energy; it is power; it is creative power. You and I who are sleeping in Christ, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 50

onward, will rise up incorruptible and then we who are alive will be changed “in the twinkling of an eye.” 1 Corinthians 15:53:

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

That is the power, the exceeding power that is available to you and me in Christ and, of course, towards us who believe according to the working of his mighty power.

The second use of “power,” in “That power is like the working of his mighty strength,” is *ischys*. What this actually means is the “mighty energy,” God’s breath is power and His mighty energy. Science is desperately trying to figure out what life is made up of and they have tried various methods but life is energy and the source of energy is God. This energy is available to you in a mighty way to those of you who believe. Because of this mighty energy, mighty power which He revealed, listen to Ephesians 1:20-21:

[That power is like the working of his mighty strength,] which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

You know, the power of sin is death; the wages of sin is death; the greatest manifestation of the power of sin is death. How many of you, how many human beings have in and of themselves conquered death? The answer is no one, because sin is greater than you and me. But God allowed our sins, your sins, my sins to put Christ in the grave, but you know something? Our sins could not keep Him there and, when the third day came, He conquered the grave and, in conquering the grave, He conquered sin, your sins, my sins. So when Christ was raised from the dead, God revealed to the universe, He revealed to this doomed world, the power of the gospel in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus hung on the cross, He said to His Father, “Father, forgive them,” referring to those who were crucifying Him, “forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” [Luke 23:34]. God was willing to forgive the Jews for crucifying their Messiah. God was willing to do that. They had not reached the point of no return, but after Christ rose from the dead, there was no longer an excuse for rejecting Him because the resurrection of Christ was the greatest proof that He was the Messiah. Only the Messiah could be raised from the dead. Only the Messiah who was God in human flesh could conquer the grave. And when Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father (as Romans 6:4 says), He revealed the power that is in Him; He revealed the truth that Jesus was the Savior of all mankind, that He condemned sin in the flesh and left it in the grave.

Paul goes on. Christ redeemed us, was raised, and was taken to heaven far above all principalities, that is, in verse 21 of Ephesians 1, and power and might and dominion and every

name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Oh, Christ is pre-eminent, dear reader. Christ is the ruler of the universe; He is the King of kings and no power is greater than Him. He has subdued all the power that can be mustered by Satan. He conquered the evil one and set us free. And now He is at the right hand of God interceding for us, making available for us His Holy Spirit, sending His angels to minister to us. What a wonderful Savior we have. I do not know about you, but I am excited about this wonderful epistle and this wonderful message that Paul is expounding here in the book of Ephesians.

And so I read in the concluding verses of chapter one of Ephesians, verses 22 and 23:

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The church is described in the New Testament as the body of Christ. Christ is the Head, we are

the body. The body receives its direction, its power, from the Head and the Head of the Christian, the Head of the church is Jesus Christ and He is the Head of the universe. Everything is under His feet and so, when the Bible says that Christ is the King of kings, we are kings of whom He is the King. We shall reign with Him one day; we shall rule with Him. We are His disciples, we are His followers, we are part of Him, we are under grace and grace is the power, the energy of God, not only which saved us in Christ but which is now available to us. And we are the body of Christ, verse 23, “which is his body,” the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Everything that is true of the body is true because of the Head.

Let me conclude this wonderful truth. In this chapter one of Ephesians, Paul first of all introduces or reminds his listeners, because Paul has already preached the gospel to his readers, of the riches in Christ. Paul tells them that, in Christ, they are sitting in heavenly places. They have been blessed with every spiritual blessing pertaining to heaven. They have been adopted as sons and

daughters of God. They have now become one with Christ and now they are forgiven; they are righteous; they stand justified; they have a peace; they have a hope; they have an inheritance that is greater than anything that this world can offer.

Paul goes on, in the second half of this chapter one, to pray, praying to his God that this flock of his, which includes you and me, may understand this truth as it is in Christ. We may be filled with the truth as it is in Christ so that we may be filled with the fullness of God; we may understand the power of God, the energy of God, that is available to you and me.

Now Paul is saying he wants the body, the church, to experience this power because the source of our power is not our promises; it is not our resolutions. Our hope, our security, our power for living the Christian life, our inheritance — all of it is in Christ. As I mentioned in our last study, there is nothing that you and I have, nothing in this world and the world to come apart from Jesus Christ. Outside of Him, we have nothing but sin,

condemnation, and death. In Christ, we are forgiven; in Christ, we stand justified; in Christ, we have been reconciled to God; in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us to be our Comforter, to seal and guarantee our salvation, to give us strength, power, energy to live the Christian life, to remind us that we are God's children.

Everything is ours in Christ and, therefore, it is my prayer that none of us will give up this hope. It is my prayer that you will accept this wonderful truth as it is in Christ. It is my prayer that you will be blessed with this special knowledge, with this wisdom from above, this revelation of the truth as it is in Christ, that you may enjoy with me the inheritance, the hope, the joy of being a Christian, the knowledge that one day you and I will sit at the right hand of God with Jesus Christ, reigning with Him, ruling with Him, free from all that sin has brought to us — the curse, its condemnation, its effect, its sickness, and death. All of it will be taken away because Jesus has conquered sin; He has conquered the grave. He was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father. It is my

prayer, my sincere prayer, that this wisdom, this knowledge will become yours, not only for a season, but permanently, that you will always hold on to your position in Christ, that your faith shall endure unto the end.

Before Jesus left this earth, He said to His disciples in Matthew, chapter 10, verses 16 to 22: “You will be brought before the councils; you will be persecuted; you will be flogged; you will be mistreated; you will be thrown into dungeons; you will be fed to the wild animals, all kinds of terrible things you will face, but I am with you.” Don’t give up your faith for only the one whose faith endures to the end will be saved. In Hebrews 10, verse 35, the writer of Hebrews tells us:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

Then in verse 38 of chapter 10 of Hebrews he says:

But my righteous one will live by faith. And if

he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.

But his prayer, as Paul's prayer is here, is that we shall believe unto the saving of our souls and that which makes my faith strong, unshakable, is the wisdom, the knowledge that in Jesus Christ I have an inheritance, I have a hope guaranteed that can never be destroyed by Satan and it is my prayer that we shall hold on to this truth that our faith will not waver until that day when Christ will come. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 3

Unconditional Good News

Ephesians 2:1-13

In our very first study of this tremendous epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, what many scholars call the queen of the epistles, we studied together the first 14 verses of chapter one in which Paul expounded to us the riches we have in Christ. Remember in verses three to six, Paul told us how we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, how He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, how He predestined us to be His adopted sons and daughters and how we have been accepted and forgiven in Jesus Christ.

As we turn in our study today to chapter two of Ephesians and the first 13 verses, we will discover that Paul is expounding in greater detail this wonderful truth of God's unconditional good news in Christ. In fact, that is what I have entitled this present study "Unconditional Good News,"

because that is what the gospel is. God unconditionally saved you and me and we shall see this in more detail as we look at this passage.

Keep in mind that this epistle was written by Paul while he was in prison. He is writing to men and women, to believers, who were becoming discouraged because of his imprisonment. The purpose of expounding this wonderful truth in Christ, this unconditional good news, is to establish the believers so that their faith becomes unshakable. And if there is ever a time that we Christians need to have a faith that is unshakable, it is today, because as we look at the events of this world, the future looks bleak. But my dear reader, there is hope for you and me and that hope is only as our faith is resting on that Rock, Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that, as we look at our study today, Ephesians two, verses one to 13, you will discover a truth that will make your faith so strong, so unshakable, that nothing will sway you from your hope, your assurance in Christ.

Paul begins chapter two in the first three verses

by pointing out man's predicament, our universal sin problem. In Paul's epistle to the Romans, he spent chapter one, verse 18 right up to chapter three, verse 20 on the universal sin problem and how he concluded that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. They are dominated by sin; there is none righteous; there is none that doeth good, not even one. Then, in chapter seven of Romans, verse 14, he made this statement:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

He said, "The law is spiritual, but I" — and that "I" is the corporate I, the universal I, the human race I — "am sold as a slave to sin." And that is what he does in the first three verses of chapter two of Ephesians. He paints this dark, dismal, hopeless picture of mankind. Why? For two reasons.

1. Number one is to destroy all confidence in ourselves. Our faith must never be in ourselves. We are not saved because of our faith. Nowhere in the New Testament is this taught. The New

Testament teaches that we are saved by faith or through faith. Faith is only an instrument or a channel by which we receive salvation but the Source of our salvation, the cause of our salvation is the object of faith which is Jesus Christ. We must never look at ourselves for any hope. Not even what God does in us contributes towards our ticket to heaven. We are saved, as we shall see today, entirely by grace. Paul has to destroy all confidence in self before he can offer us the good news of salvation.

2. Of course, the other reason is that when you discover your total sinfulness, the gospel becomes more desirable. How many of you would accept a plate of food after you came out from a banquet? There is no desire for you to eat any more because your stomachs are full. But if I offer you a plate when you haven't had any food for the last 15 or 16 hours, you will accept it with delight. God is painting this dark, dismal picture of mankind through Paul's writings so that the gospel may become desirable and He may destroy any lingering of legalism that may be creeping into

your lives.

With this in mind, with this introduction, let us turn to the first three verses of chapter two of Ephesians. If you have your Bible, dear reader, please turn to it. I want you to discover this truth from your own very Bible so that this message comes to you, not from me, but from God Himself. All I am is a tool, an instrument that is expounding to you the matchless charms of our Lord Jesus Christ. What does he say in verse one? Now I am reading from my New International Version. You follow in your translation, whatever you have, and this is what Paul says in verse one:

As for you...

I am going to pause here because the next three words in the New King James Bible say, “He made alive,” and those of you who have the King James will also have the same thing. But you will notice something very unique about those three words: they are in italics. Do you know what that means? When you find any italic words in the King James

or the New King James versions of the Bible, it means that this is a scribal addition. It was not in the original and it should not be here really because it distorts Paul's thought. What Paul really said is, "You who were dead in trespasses and sins." Now who does he mean by the word "you"?

Let me remind you what I said in a previous study. In the book of Ephesians, the "you" refers to the Gentiles and the "we" which he will use in verse three, refers to the Jews, his fellow men and the "us" in the book of Ephesians normally refers to both Jews and Gentiles. Now this is not dogmatic. There are some times when he will use the word "we" referring to the Jews and the Gentiles but, as a general rule, the "you" refers to the Gentiles, the "we" refers to the Jews and the "us" refers to both Jews and Gentiles, the corporate man. Here is verse one again, in its entirety:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins....

So Paul is saying in verse one, "You Gentiles

who were dead in trespasses and sins.” What he means is that you are by nature spiritually dead and incapable of doing anything but sin. And then he says in verse two:

...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

In other words, “You are not only sinful by nature but you are sinners by performance.” Of course, our performance is simply the fruits of what we are. When I plant an apple tree, there is nothing else I expect from the apple tree but apples. Likewise, since you and I are born and are by nature sinners, our performance, apart from grace, is nothing but sin. This is what Paul is saying to the Gentiles, “You are a bunch of sinners. There is nothing good in you, not one of you are living a holy, righteous life. You are incapable of doing that because you are dead in trespasses and sins.”

But now, in verse three, he turns to his own fellow Jews and he says (if your translation uses the word “flesh,” the word here means sinful human nature):

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

In other words, not only are you Gentiles a bunch of sinners but we Jews are in the same boat. We belong to the same category. We, too, have been fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. We are by nature sinners and we are by performance. Please notice how Paul ends verse three:

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

You and I are born in the camp of sin. Our very nature is dominated by sin. We are ruled by sin as Paul said in Romans 3, verse 9:

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

And if you turn to 1 John, chapter 5, verse 19, the apostle John says the same thing:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

We are under sin and we are under the evil one, which is the devil. There is no way you and I can escape apart from Jesus Christ. That is our predicament. There is no hope for you except through Jesus Christ. “We are by nature the children of wrath just like you Gentiles.”

Having painted this dark, dismal, hopeless picture of mankind, Paul now, in verse four of Ephesians two, turns to the wonderful, unconditional good news of salvation. In verse

four, he tells us the ground of our salvation is not our goodness but the love and mercy of God. Look at verse four of Ephesians two:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy....

The word “but” at the beginning means “in complete contrast to our sinful state and our inability to save ourselves.” Oh, I thank God, He is rich in mercy. “Because” — that’s the cause — “Because of His great love.” Have you got it?

Remember, His love is unconditional. It is this agape love which loves us unconditionally. It is a love that is uncaused; it loves the bad; it loves those sinners. As Paul brought out in Romans 5, verses 6-10:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in

this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life?

While we were helpless, while we were ungodly, while we were sinners, still sinners and while we were God's enemies, we were, past tense, reconciled to God by the death of His Son." And, of course, those statements made by Paul are in the context of verse 5 of Romans 5 which says that the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit:

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

And here Paul again in Ephesians 2, verse 4, says that the source, the cause of our salvation is God's love:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy....

But the fact that God loves you and me, unconditionally, is not enough to save us. And so, in verse 5 and 6, he expounds the facts of salvation. How did God save you? Not only did He love us unconditionally, not only is He rich in mercy, but He also did something. Love is meaningless unless it is followed by action. And verses 5 and 6 of Ephesians 2 is dealing with God's action which saved you and me. Listen to verse 5:

...Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

Here the “we” refers to Jews and Gentiles. Even when we human beings were incapable of doing any righteousness, even when we were helpless in terms of inability to save ourselves, God made us alive together with Christ. That is a powerful, tremendous statement. First of all, the

word “made” is in the past historical tense. It is something that took place in the past and, therefore, here Paul is not talking about our subjective experience as Christians. He is not talking of our new birth experience. He is talking of a truth that took place in Christ.

To understand what Paul is saying, we need to go back to Genesis and the Fall of man. When God created Adam and Eve, not only did He create them in His image, but He created them to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We human beings were created as a temple of God but, when Adam sinned, he turned his back to God. He became self-dependent and the Holy Spirit left him and his life was plunged into darkness. In other words, at the Fall, our first parents died spiritually, not physically, but spiritually. And since God created man to produce of his own kind, since Adam and Eve had no children when they fell — all their children were born after the Fall of Adam and Eve — therefore, they were born spiritually dead. That is what Paul is saying in chapter 2, verse 1 of Ephesians. You and I were born spiritually dead.

Now, in order to save us, God had to first qualify His Son to be our Savior. Legally, no law will allow one person, especially an innocent person, to bear the guilt and punishment of a guilty person. You cannot transfer guilt and punishment. Likewise, legally, you cannot transfer righteousness. So before Christ could save us, He had to qualify to be our Savior. He had to qualify to be our Representative. He had to qualify to be our Substitute. How did God qualify Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, to be our substitute and Savior?

Well, very simple. He took the divine life of His Son, which the Son had given Him through the self-emptying that Paul talks about in Philippians 2, verses 6-8, Christ emptied Himself, handed Himself over to the Father and the Father, through the Holy Spirit, took the divine life of Christ and, through a miracle, united the divine life, that divine nature, with the corporate human life of yours and mine, that needs redeeming, in the womb of Mary so that, in the incarnation, divinity and our

corporate humanity were joined together in one Person. This, of course, is a great mystery. The Christian church wrestled with this for over 400 years and, finally, in the Council of Chelcedon came up with this creed: that Christ was fully God and fully man in one Person. This was called the “unipersonality of Christ.” This cannot be explained. It is a mystery but this is what happened at the incarnation: divinity and our corporate humanity that needs redeeming were joined together in one Person in the womb of Mary.

The moment that took place, the human race, in Christ — this is not subjective, this is an objective truth — the human race, in Christ, was made spiritually alive because the Holy Spirit was now joined back to the human race in that incarnation experience. Then Paul adds in chapter 2 of Ephesians, verse 5:

It is by grace you have been saved.

That simply means that we did nothing to

deserve this. Grace is unmerited favor. In fact, grace is more than that. Grace is God doing something wonderful to His enemies. While we were still enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Romans 5, verse 10:

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life?

That is grace. Paul has already told us about this grace in chapter 1 of Ephesians, verse 7. Let me remind you what he says:

In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace....

By His grace, God took you, He took me, He took the corporate man and He took His Son and joined us together and, when that took place 2,000 years ago, the human race was made spiritually alive in Christ. This did not save us but this

qualified Christ to be our Savior because He and we became one.

Paul puts it beautifully in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30:

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

I mentioned this when we dealt with the “in Christ” motif in chapter one of Ephesians. I am simply repeating a truth that you need to be clear on. God took us and put us in Christ and, by doing that, God made Christ to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our all. That is what he is saying.

Now, as I mentioned, this union of divinity and humanity did not save us. It simply qualified Christ to be our Savior. In fact, this union made Christ the second Adam. Keep in mind the word “Adam” in Hebrew has a collective significance. It means mankind. Just like the whole human race

was in Adam when he sinned and, therefore, stands condemned, likewise now, God put the whole human race into Christ so that His history may be our history. By His perfect life and by His sacrificial death and by His resurrection, He brought to the human race the wonderful truth of salvation. That is, He gave us a hope that nothing else could give us. And that, of course, is in verse 6:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus....

Having united us in Christ, having lived a perfect life and having died the wages of sin, in verse 6, Paul tells us, “And God raised us up.” He raised us up but please notice He did not raise us up as individuals but He raised us up corporately together, and that together means together with Christ. Since we were united with Him in the incarnation, then His life becomes our life, His death becomes our death, His resurrection becomes our resurrection and, thus, He raised us up together with Christ and made us sit together with Christ in

the heavenly places.

There is a statement that Peter makes that I would like you to read that says basically the same thing. Listen to this, 1 Peter, chapter 1 and verse 3. Listen to what this great apostle Peter says about this wonderful truth:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....

“In his great mercy” — have you got it? This is the wonderful, unconditional good news of salvation.

Well, we must go on. Now, in verse 7 of Ephesians 2, Paul turns to the subjective, to the future, that in the ages to come, in verses 5 and 6, he is telling us about an objective truth that took place in Christ 2,000 years ago. Then in verse 7, he says:

...In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

In other words, as Paul brought out in Romans 8, verses 21 to 25, we Christians who have accepted this good news are not saved in the fullness in reality. We are saved by faith today. We stand justified by faith today, but one day Christ is going to come and He is going to take us to heaven. Remember what Jesus said to the disciples in John 14:1-3? He says:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Those are the exceeding riches we will see one day but right now we have a hope in our Lord Jesus

Christ. Our salvation is guaranteed in Him and one day, it doesn't matter what we are now, but one day when He comes, we shall be like Him.

Then in verses 8 and 9, Paul reminds his readers that they must never look at themselves for security for salvation. What does it say in verses 8 and 9 of Ephesians 2? This is what he says:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

Please notice, salvation is more than a provision. It is an actual fact. God actually saved us by grace. This salvation, of course, is a gift and has to be received and this reception is called faith. Paul says we are saved by what God did in Christ and this salvation becomes ours through faith.

The grammar meaning in the Greek is that “it” in “it is the gift of God” refers to “grace.” Grace is a gift. We are saved through a gift because of God's abundant mercy because of His great love

for us and because of His redemptive activity in Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. In Christ, God has obtained salvation full and complete and the reason why that salvation can be yours is because you were in that humanity of Christ that obeyed the law perfectly. You were in that humanity of Christ that died on the cross.

That famous scholar, Bruce Westcott, says that Christ was not just one man among many men but that all men were in Him so that we were organically united to Him. As we accept this truth, His death becomes our death, His life becomes our life, His resurrection becomes our resurrection, His ascension becomes our ascension, His sitting in the heavenly places at the right hand of God becomes our position, too. And, in the ages to come, we will discover this wonderful wealth but, right now, we accept it by faith.

Then Paul adds in verse 9, “not by works.” Our contribution is nil when it comes to our salvation. We have not made one iota of contribution towards our salvation. We are saved

entirely by grace, “not by works, so that no one can boast.” But Paul is aware of our problem. He is aware that we Christians, even though we are saved by grace, even though we stand perfect in Christ, we have had no change that has taken place in our nature. Yes, when we accept Christ, when we experience conversion, when we have repented, there is a change of mind.

In Ephesians 2:3, Paul tells us that in our sinful state, both the sinful nature and the mind, were in harmony. But in a Christian, the mind has made a U-turn. It no longer is in harmony with the flesh. It has turned to God; it has accepted Christ as its righteousness. The Greek word used here means “a change of mind.” But the nature remains sinful just as it was before our conversion. Therefore, we have a nature that is not only sinful as believers, but we have a nature that still loves to sin. The gospel is not only unconditional good news, it is dangerous news because we can take this good news and say, “Since I am saved by grace, it doesn’t matter what I do.” This is called “cheap grace.”

So in verse 10, Paul says:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Notice, we are saved by grace but we are not only saved to go to heaven; we are saved to do good works which God prepared beforehand, that is, in Christ, but now, since we have accepted Him, should walk in it.

Now, we will look at the concluding verses of this section we are studying, verses 11 to 13:

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in

Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Here Paul is making a tremendous statement. He says the salvation that God obtained in Christ is not only reserved for the Jews. That was the mistake the Jews made.

Oh, my dear reader, the gospel is all inclusive. Salvation of the Gentiles was not an afterthought. The Jews, unfortunately, did not see the salvation of the Gentiles in the Old Testament. It was there. But Paul is saying that this unconditional good news of salvation is not limited to the Jews. It is not limited to the Gentiles. It is not limited to the elect. It is a gift for all mankind but it has to be received. It is my prayer that you will receive this truth and rejoice with me in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 4

Christ Our Peace

Ephesians 2:14-22

In our last study, where together we looked at that beautiful passage of Ephesians, chapter two, verses one to 13, Paul told us three things concerning the unconditional good news of salvation. In the first three verses of chapter two, he told us that both Jews and Gentiles are dead in trespasses and sins, that we are by nature the children of wrath. This is something that we all need to discover. An unbeliever is not a sick person but a dead person. He does not need resuscitation but he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. That is our natural condition.

Then, in verses four to 10, Paul expounds so beautifully the wonderful unconditional good news of salvation, that together with Christ we were

made alive, together with Christ we were raised up, together with Christ we are sitting in heavenly places, that the anchor of our hope, of our salvation, is not in us but in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ. He took humanity unto Himself and He gave us, by His life, death, and resurrection, a new history, a new status in which mankind no longer stands condemned but justified. As Paul said in Romans 5, verse 18:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Then in verses 11 to 13, Paul told us that this wonderful salvation was not something reserved only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles, since both have sinned and come short of the glory of God, since there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the eyes of God. Man's only hope, be he either a Jew or Gentile, is Jesus Christ and redemption through Him.

Now, we are going to turn to chapter 2, verse 14 right up to verse 22 where Paul deals with Christ as our peace. The word “peace” is used in two senses by the apostle Paul. In Romans 5, verse 1, Paul told us that being justified by faith we have peace with God:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

Jesus came to bring peace between sinful man and a holy God and through the gospel and through the acceptance of the gospel, through justification by faith, that great truth that Luther discovered and recovered from the Dark Ages, that truth is what gives us peace with God.

But now, in chapter 2 of Ephesians, verses 14 onwards, Paul is not talking about our vertical peace between sinful men and a holy God but he is talking about a horizontal peace between men and men. Let us read it and follow what Paul is saying and once again, if you have your Bibles, dear

reader, please turn to it. I want you to discover this truth from your own Bible. Ephesians 2, verse 14:

For he himself [that is, Christ] is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility....

The “our” here refers to Jews and Gentiles. In fact, he brings this out in verse 17. What does he say in verse 17?

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

The “far away” refers to the Gentiles and the “near” refers to the Jews. Let us go back to verse 14:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility....

There was a problem that existed in the Old Testament. God had given the Jews instruction

that they should not be unequally yoked with the Gentiles. But the word “Gentiles” in the Old Testament and, even in the New Testament, is used in two ways. The word “Gentile” can mean a non-Jew but the Bible also uses the word “Gentile” to refer to the unbeliever. And what God meant in the Old Testament is not that, “I am reserving salvation only for the Jews.” God’s plan was salvation for all people, right from the very beginning. So when He used the word “Gentile” in the Old Testament, He was not referring to the non-Jew but to the unbeliever. What He meant is, a believer and an unbeliever should not be unequally yoked because a believer belonged to the kingdom of God; an unbeliever belongs to the kingdom of Satan, this world. These two are enemies, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are enemies because their rulers are enemies. There is a controversy between Satan and Christ. There can be no compromise and, therefore, that is the instruction that God gave.

But unfortunately, Judaism took that word “Gentile” and applied it to the non-Jews. They

looked upon the Gentiles as dogs, as unclean men and women with no hope of salvation. Because of this, they built in their temple a partition wall and today archeology has discovered the inscription that was posted on that wall that Paul is referring here to. Let me paraphrase that inscription. This is what it said: “No foreigner may enter within the barricade,” that is, beyond this wall, and the word “foreigner” refers to the non-Jew, the Gentile. “Anyone — that is, any Gentile — who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.” In other words, any Gentile who went beyond that partition wall, which was reserved only for the Jews, was punishable by death. Why? Because the Jews had taken the word “Gentile” and, instead of applying that to unbelievers, they applied it to those who were not descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In chapter nine of Romans, Paul made it very clear that the mistake of the Jews was that it is not the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that makes true Israel, but it is the qualities of these three men that qualifies one to be an Israelite. In

other words, Abraham stood for faith and, if you have the faith of Abraham, then you are Abraham's seed. Isaac stands for being born from above and, as Paul says to the Gentiles in Galatians 4, we who are born from above belong to Isaac. And, of course, Jacob really refers to those whose faith endures unto the end. In other words, if you have the faith of Abraham, if you have experienced the new birth, the birth from above as Isaac was born from above, and if your faith endures unto the end, then you belong to Israel. But the Jews applied the word "Israel" only to those who had the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul is saying here that this false teaching has been removed through Jesus Christ. Why? Because, in the incarnation, He took unto Himself, not only the Jewish nation, but He took the whole human race unto Himself as we saw in our last study. God took the corporate life of the whole human race, from Adam to the last person, because, even though we belong to different nations and tribes and kingdoms and countries, we share a common life.

The human race is the multiplication of Adam's

life. When God breathed into Adam the breath of life, the Hebrew text in Genesis 2:7, the word “life” is in the plural: “lives”:

...The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [“lives”], and the man became a living being.

In Acts 17, verse 26, Luke tells us that out of one, God created all the nations that dwell upon the earth:

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

The human race shares a common life or, as we would put it from the Word of God, the human race is a multiplication of Adam’s life. God took that corporate life of the human race and joined it to Christ in the incarnation. Then, by His perfect life and His sacrificial death and His resurrection, He

gave us a new hope, a new history, a new status in which we have salvation, full and complete. That is the redemption of the gospel; that is the unconditional good news. And in that redemption, all distinction between Jew and Gentile was removed. As Paul says in Romans 3, verse 22-23, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile:

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

Both of us have sinned; both of us keep on sinning; we are together become unprofitable but, in Christ, we were brought together. The middle wall of partition was removed.

Look at Ephesians 2, verse 15:

[14: For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,] by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and

regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,....

The enmity that existed because of the misinterpretation of that wall was removed at the cross and God removed every barrier between men and men. Today the world is torn up into all kinds of factions. The Middle East is torn up between the Israelites and the Palestinians. The people in the former Yugoslavia are torn up and there is this terrible ethnic cleansing that is taking place there that really is a contradiction of the gospel. The world is divided into all kinds of races, color divisions. Folks, the gospel removes all human barriers. As Paul says in Galatians, chapter 3, verse 28:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In Christ there is no male; there is no female; there is no Jew; there is no Gentile; there is no slave; there is no master. In other words, there is no educated or uneducated. We are all one in

Christ. That is the wonderful good news of the gospel. He has brought peace, not only between sinful men and a holy God but He has brought peace between men and men. It is only the gospel that can bring peace to this human race that is torn apart with all kinds of factions.

And so I read in verse 16 of Ephesians 2:

...And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

The cross of Christ has removed all barriers, all enmity between men and men and, therefore, verse 17 adds:

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

He came and preached peace to you who were far off (you Gentiles) and to those who were nearby (the Jews). For through Him through Christ we both, Jews and Gentiles, have access by one

Spirit to the Father. The life that you and I were born with is a life of self, and where self dominates mankind, you have divisions, all kinds of divisions, all kinds of factions. But a Christian has surrendered that self life to the cross. A Christian is a person who has been born again. A Christian is a person who says with Paul, Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

And, my dear reader, Christ lives in you and me through the Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 8, verses 9 and 10 that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Christ:

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet

your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Therefore, the new birth is essential for the gospel to be made effective in your life and my life. As Jesus made it clear to Nicodemus, unless you are born from above, you cannot inherit the kingdom of God. John 3:3:

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

As a Christian, it doesn't matter whether you are a Jew or Gentile, you have now received the Spirit as the source of your life, that eternal life that God gave you through His Son, Jesus Christ. In this life, which is dominated by love that seeks not its own, this life controlled by that unconditional love, removes all barriers between man and man.

It is my belief that, if we want peace in America, if we want to remove the racial barriers, the barriers between black and white, between the majority and the minority, we cannot do it by

legislation. We cannot do it by marches. The only source of removing the barriers between man and man, the only source of peace between man and man is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through the cross of Christ that the enmity that exists between men and men for whatever reason, can be removed. It is Christ who is our peace. And so, if we want peace in America between the various ethnic groups, if we want peace between the majority and the minority, the solution is to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. No human effort, no humanistic method can solve this problem. I can guarantee you, no human solution is available to mankind. Why? Because Paul made it clear in this epistle and the other epistles: we are slaves to sin; we need a deliverer. It is our slavery to sin that brings the faction between men and men.

It is my prayer that we will turn to the gospel as man's only solution of bringing peace in America and in the world.

But let's go on. In verse 19 of Ephesians 2,

Paul goes on now by pointing to Christ as the cornerstone. Listen to what he says, verse 19 of Ephesians 2. Remember, the “you” is referring to the Gentiles:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household....

We have become one. Jews and Gentiles have equal rights in this new kingdom that God has prepared in Jesus Christ — no distinction between Jew and Gentile, no distinction between male and female, no distinction between rich and poor, no distinction between black and white. We are all one in Christ. That is the wonderful truth of the gospel.

Not only do we have salvation in Jesus Christ, not only can we do good works in Jesus Christ, but in Jesus Christ we have peace, not only between God and man but between man and man.

It is important that we understand what Paul is

saying here. Listen to verse 20 now:

...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Please remember, the “prophets” here is referring here to the Old Testament. The Old Testament, just as the New Testament, taught universal salvation. In other words, salvation that was planned from the foundation of the world was planned for the whole human race. This is what the prophets taught; this is what the apostles taught, but Christ Jesus is Himself the chief cornerstone. What does he mean by this? Well, let me explain because most of our houses here are built out of wood, but in the tropics, in the Middle East where wood is very difficult to get since most of the Middle East is semi-desert, wood is a luxury. Besides, because of its warm temperatures, we have the problem with termites. So the houses in the days of Christ were built out of stone. Labor was cheap and so the stonemasons would carve the stones into squares and build the houses out of

stone. Now the first thing they did after they laid the foundation was to lay the cornerstone. By this cornerstone, everything else was measured. They would lay this cornerstone and then tie a string from the cornerstone to the other end of the building and then place the other stone. And then they would tie a string on the other side at right angles so that everything was measured by the cornerstone.

What Paul is saying is that our Christianity, everything that we hope for as Christians — whether we talk of our peace in justification or the holy and righteous living in sanctification or when we talk of the changing of our corrupt nature to incorruption at the second coming of Christ which the New Testament calls glorification — all of this, has its source in Jesus Christ. Everything must be measured by Jesus Christ — our thoughts, our direction, our ambitions, our desires. Everything must be Jesus Christ. In other words, a Christian is a person who says with Paul, “For me to live is Christ.” He is the cornerstone and since, in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile,

that must be the basis of our unity, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets but Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.

The prophets offered us salvation as a promise. The apostles pointed to Christ as our salvation but it is Christ who is the cornerstone. What the apostles and the prophets simply did was to point us to Christ, the prophets by a promise, the apostles by the historical truth of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So the church here is defined by Paul as a building. Look at verse 21. In verse 20, Christ is presented as a cornerstone by which every other stone is measured and placed. Now in verse 21, he says:

In him [that is, in Christ] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Every believer has a vital part in the temple of God and when the New Testament talks about the

temple of God, it is not talking about buildings. The tragedy of the Christian church is somewhat the same as the Jews. The Jews put emphasis in their temple. You remember what Jesus said to the Jews in John, chapter 2, verse 19:

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

The Jews missed the total point of Christ’s statement. They said to Him,

“It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

But Jesus was not talking about the building. He was talking about His body. Even His disciples failed to understand this truth because, as I read John 2, it tells me that only after the resurrection the disciples remembered those words and realized that He was not talking about a building, He was talking about His body. John 2:21-22:

But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

It is not a building that makes up a Christian church. We have some beautiful churches here in America. I look at the Washington Cathedral, that beautiful edifice. Oh, what a wonderful building it is. You go to Europe and see those beautiful cathedrals that were built in the Middle Ages. But many of those buildings are empty. Very few people go to church today. In Europe, it is just a small percentage. In America, it is a higher percentage but the majority of the people stay at home. The building is not the church; the church is men and women who are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, who are joined together with Christ as the cornerstone. And it is God's desire that the church grow up as a building in perfect harmony with the cornerstone. It is God's purpose that the church, Jews and Gentiles, are perfectly united together.

When you look at the corner of a building, the stones are interlaced so that the bonding will be

very strong. And in the church, the bonding between all groups, all ethnic cultures, should be bonded together in one. Yes, we may not see eye-to-eye in many things, but in the church there must be unity in spite of diversity because the gospel is the power of God, not only to save us from the condemnation of the law, not only to save us from the guilt and punishment of sin but from sin itself which has divided this world into all kinds of factions and which is the cause of all the wars and strife that we are seeing and listening to on the news.

Listen to the concluding verses of this section, Ephesians 2:22:

And in him [that is, in Christ] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Christianity is a growing experience. Oh, what a wonderful message this gospel is. We have tried, as human beings, every single method to bring unity in this country. We have tried legislation; we

have tried marching; we have tried all kinds of educational programs; and everything seems to be failing. Passing laws has not solved our problems. Using force, using authority, using police force has not solved our problems. Education has not solved our problems. Human gimmicks have failed. Every method that we have tried has failed to produce a united nation. There is only one way that you and I can be united genuinely. It is through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ because the enmity was removed at the cross. The middle wall of partition between men and men was totally eradicated at the cross. The curtain between a holy God and sinful man was torn apart from top to bottom, says the gospel records (Matthew 27:50-51, below, also in Mark 15:37-38):

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.

There is no barrier between a holy God and sinful man in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And there

is no barrier between men and men through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is my prayer that as we understand this truth, this truth will set us free, free from the factions and the divisions that have been produced even in the Christian church. You know, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, Paul divides Christians into two camps. He calls one group carnal Christians, babes in Christ, and the other spiritual. One of the evidences of a carnal Christian is there is jealousy; there is division; there is strife within the church. If there is strife within the Christian church, if there is division, it is because we are still carnal. And Paul is saying, "Please, how long are you going to remain carnal?" It is time that the church grows up into Christ. It is time that the Christian church understands the full implications of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not enough to raise our arms and say, "I am saved." The world needs to see the power of the gospel in your life and in my life.

I will conclude with these words of Jesus Christ. John 13, verse 35:

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Or in other words, when you have unity within the church. It is my prayer that this truth will set you free, that no longer will there be any division in your church, in my church, that we shall be one in Christ and the world will see the power of the gospel bringing all kinds of ethnic groups, all kinds of cultures, all kinds of races, all kinds of colors united by the blood of the Lamb. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 5

The Divine Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-12

The book we are studying is Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, what many commentators refer to as the Queen of the Epistles. Many scholars feel that in this epistle is to be found the most comprehensive statement of the Christian religion. That is one of the reasons why we are studying this wonderful epistle of Paul.

We have already seen, in the last four studies (the first two chapters of this epistle in which Paul expounds with clarity the fundamental truth of the gospel), the essential message of salvation as it is revealed in the history of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, of course, the key phrase or statement in these first two chapters is to deal with that central theme of Paul's theology, which is the "in Christ" motif.

In chapter 1, verses 3-14, he has told us that, in

Christ, we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing pertaining to heaven, that we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we have been accepted by God in Him, that we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God through Jesus Christ. We have received redemption through His blood.

Then, in chapter 2, he goes on to explain how this took place by a wonderful miracle: God took the corporate life of the human race that He came to redeem and took the divine life of His Son and united these two natures — the divine and the human — in the womb of Mary. Thus, this qualified Christ to be our Substitute, our Representative. By doing this, Christ did not save us but He qualified to be the second Adam. We are told that in Christ we were made alive together with Him; we were raised together with Him and we are actually sitting in heavenly places together with Christ.

Now we will turn to chapter 3 and the first twelve verses. I have entitled our study, “The

Divine Mystery.” This section of Ephesians may be divided into two parts. Verses 1 to 7 of chapter 3 of Ephesians may be described as the mystery revealed and verses 8 to 12 is the purpose of that mystery. What is this divine mystery?

The divine mystery, which was somewhat suppressed by the Jews in the Old Testament, is that God included the Gentiles in the plan of salvation. This was somewhat kept a secret in the Old Testament times. In fact, there was a barrier that was built by the Jews in the Sanctuary, in their temple, which disallowed any Gentile to go beyond that barrier. We saw this in our previous study.

Paul here is showing the Gentile world that the salvation of the Gentiles was not an afterthought. There are many statements in the Old Testament that clearly reveal that God had the Gentiles in mind when He sent His Son to save the world. In other words, in Jesus Christ, God has given all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, a new history, a new status, in which we stand justified. That is God’s gift to mankind. That’s the unconditional good

news of salvation that we find in this wonderful gospel that Jesus asked His disciples to proclaim to all mankind.

Let me give you a couple of statements from the book of Romans where Paul quotes the Old Testament, clearly indicating that the Old Testament did include the Gentiles in the plan of salvation. In fact, one of the key promises that God made in the Old Testament was to Abraham. Genesis 12:3:

...All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

God told Abraham that in him, in his seed, which is to be Christ, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

But let me give you a couple of quotations from Romans, chapter 10, verses 19 and 20. Listen to what Paul quotes from the Old Testament concerning the salvation of the Gentiles. Now, he is addressing this chapter 10 to the Jews, but listen

to what he says in verse 19:

Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says [he is quoting from Deuteronomy 32:21], “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”

In other words, the acceptance of the gospel God predicted through Moses would cause the Jews to be jealous. Then in verse 20 of Romans 10, he quotes from Isaiah 65, verse 1:

And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”

That, of course, is the Gentiles.

But now, let's go to Ephesians, chapter 3 and look at this passage and see what Paul is trying to get across here. The first section of this passage, Ephesians 3, verses 1 to 7 is dealing with the divine mystery. Read the passage first and then we will

look at it in more detail:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles —

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

The problem that the Jews created regarding this mystery was that the word "Gentile" in the Old Testament had two meanings. The word "Gentile" could mean a non-Jew and the word "Gentile" was

also sometimes used to refer to the unbeliever. What the Jews did was take the Old Testament text where God said to the Jews, “Don’t be unequally yoked” and so on and applied that word “Gentile,” which really referred to the unbeliever, to the Gentile nations. So the Jews came up with the idea that the promise of the Messiah was only for their fellow Jews. This was the traditional teaching of Judaism at the time of Christ. In fact, the disciples were victims to this teaching so that after Jesus gave the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel, the disciples understood the world to mean the Jewish world and not the Gentile world. God had to open the eyes of the apostles, especially Peter, that the gospel was not to be limited to the Jewish world only but also must include the Gentile world.

Let me give you an example of this. In Acts, chapter 10, we have Peter sitting up in the terrace of a house, waiting for the ladies downstairs to prepare lunch. He was hungry and he fell asleep. And in verse 10, we are told that he was given a vision while he was asleep. The vision was some

unclean animals in a sheet that came down from heaven and a voice said to Peter, “Kill these animals, you are hungry; kill these animals and eat.” And Peter responded, “How can I do this? I am a Jew and these animals are unclean. I have never eaten anything unclean.” And then comes the voice again in verse 28 of Acts 10: “What I have declared clean, let no man call unclean.”

Of course, the voice was not referring to the animals literally. These animals were used as a metaphor, as a symbol of the Gentiles because the Gentiles were considered as unclean, as dogs, by the Jews at the time of Christ. God was telling Peter that the gospel has redeemed not only the Jews but also the Gentiles. Paul expounds this wonderfully as we saw when we studied the book of Romans.

In chapter 3 of Romans, Paul says there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; all are under sin; all have come short of the glory of God and that the gospel saves both Jews and Gentiles. Now, he is expounding this mystery to his readers in this

epistle to the Ephesians.

Having said this, let us now look at what these verses are saying. First of all, in verse 1, there are two things that you must keep in mind. Ephesians 3:1:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles....

What reason? Well, he has verse 22 of chapter 2, the preceding verse, in mind when he uses the words “for this reason.” What is the reason? Here is verse 22 of Ephesians 2:

And in him [that is, in Christ] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The “you too” is “you Gentiles also.” In other words, the gospel is including you Gentiles. Paul was in that dungeon, in that Roman prison, because of his proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. Remember, as I mentioned in our introduction to

this epistle, this letter is a prison letter. But what I want you to notice is that Paul does not refer to himself as the prisoner of Rome, which he is, but as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. In other words, what Paul is saying here is, “I am in prison because Christ wants me there.” This is something that we need to keep in mind. Nobody can touch you if God says, “No.” And if there is any reader who is going through some difficulties and some problems, please remember, God is sovereign; He is in charge. If He allows you to go through these problems — let us say you have lost a job or you have lost a loved one or whatever your problem may be — please remember, nothing happens apart from the permission of God. As Paul brought out in Romans 8, verse 28, all things work together for good to those who love God.

Paul is saying, “I am in prison, but don’t get discouraged. I am there because Christ wants me there. I am not a prisoner of Rome; I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Then he reminds his readers in verses two and three how God had revealed to him:

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

In other words, he is reminding his readers that God set him aside to proclaim the gospel to the Gentile world. That is what he brings out in verse three also, how that "by revelation he made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in a few words, by which you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." In other words, Paul is saying, "Look, God has made it very clear to me through revelation, that the Gentiles are included in the plan of salvation."

Ephesians 3:4-5:

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

In verse 5, he tells us that this truth was kept hidden in the ages gone by, that is, during the Old Testament times. Please notice, the salvation of the Gentiles was not an afterthought. The salvation of the Gentiles was there right from the beginning when God gave the promise to Adam after the Fall. When He said that the seed of Adam would crush the serpent's head, He was referring to salvation to all mankind. Genesis 3:14-15:

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

That is why if you look at the genealogy of Christ as recorded in the gospel of Luke, Luke takes the genealogy of Christ right up to Adam. Now, remember, Luke was a Gentile himself and he is saying that Jesus came to save the whole

human race that was ruined by Adam. And so, in verse 5 of Ephesians 3, Paul is saying this truth, unfortunately, was kept a secret but this divine mystery which was kept a secret by the misunderstanding of the plan of salvation by the Jews is now revealed. First, it was revealed through Peter and now it was especially (Paul says) revealed to him because he was chosen to be an apostle for the Gentiles. And that is what he says in verse six of Ephesians three, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel:

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

In chapter three of Galatians, Paul makes a wonderful statement. Galatians 3:26-29:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ

have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

He says that anyone who has been baptized into Christ has put on Christ, has become one with Christ and such a person has become part of the body of Christ in which there is no Jew, there is no Gentile, there is no male, there is no female, there is no rich, there is no poor, there is no educated, or there is no uneducated. We are all one in Christ and, therefore, we are joint heirs with Abraham of the promise. When God sent Jesus Christ, He sent Him to save the whole human race. John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The gift of God is for all men and women. Paul is saying in verse seven of Ephesians three that he was chosen to be a minister according to the

gift of the grace of God:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

God had called Paul out, given him a special power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel, the good news of salvation, the unconditional good news of salvation, to the Gentile world, just like He had called Peter to preach the gospel to the Jews. And so he goes on in the second phase of this chapter three, verses eight to 12, where Paul discusses the purpose of the mystery. First read this passage and then we will go to it again as we did the first section and see what Paul is saying. Ephesians 3:8-12:

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace [this privilege] was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone [not just the Jews, all people, all mankind] the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden

in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rules and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to this eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Oh, what a tremendous passage this is.

What is Paul saying here? First of all, he calls himself the least of the apostles because he persecuted the Christian church. You will find this in 1 Corinthians 15:9:

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But he is saying, “To me, the one who deserves the very opposite, but to me, Paul, I have been given this wonderful privilege to preach to the

Gentile world the unsearchable riches of Christ.” You know, in Corinthians, Paul tells us eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into our gray matter, the wonderful things that God has prepared for us in Jesus Christ but He has now revealed this to the unbelievers. In Christ, we are, we become, sons and daughters of God. We shall reign with Him; we are joint heirs with Christ, Paul says in Romans 8:17. Oh, what a wonderful privilege God has given us sinners in Jesus Christ. And it is Paul’s great privilege to expound this wonderful truth and that is why we are studying this book so that we, who are Gentiles, may understand this great divine mystery that we were included in the plan of salvation. That’s what verse nine is saying, to make known to all people what is the fellowship of the mystery which has been from the beginning of the ages hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:9:

...And to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Now, what is Paul saying here? Paul is saying here that God's plan from the very beginning was to save all mankind. But unfortunately this was hidden only in God. Does it mean that He did not reveal it before? Yes, as we saw earlier, He revealed the plan of salvation to include the Gentiles in the Old Testament. There are too many texts there. But, unfortunately, the word "Gentiles" was interpreted by the Jews to mean not the unbeliever but the non-Jew and, therefore, the Jews, in the time of Christ and all through the Old Testament, looked at the Gentile world as being outside of the Covenant of God. But now, the secret that was kept hidden, is brought into the open through the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile world. And this is the message in verse 10 of Ephesians 3: the intent that now the manifold wisdom — the word "wisdom" in the Greek means "special knowledge" — the special knowledge might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Ephesians 3:10:

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms....

Now who are these rulers and authorities in heavenly places? This phrase in the New Testament applies to Satan and his angels. Let me quickly explain what this is all about.

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them dominion over all this earth, over the beasts, over the fowls, over the fishes, over the vegetation. God gave mankind dominion over this whole earth. But, unfortunately, when Adam sinned, he passed on this dominion to Satan so that Satan became the prince of this world. In fact, if you look at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, especially Luke, chapter 4, verses 5 and 6, where the devil took Him to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world, the devil said to Christ, "All this I will give You because it was delivered to me. All you have to do is simply bow down to me." Luke 4:5-7:

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”

Now, Jesus did not contradict or disagree with Satan’s statement. He did not fall for the temptation, but He did not disagree with Satan when he said, “All authority has been given to me.” In fact, in John 12, verse 31, Jesus refers to Satan as the prince of this world. But, on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sins. He bought us back as John 12:31-33 says:

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

At the cross, as Peter tells us, we were bought and, therefore, we no longer belong to Satan but

belong to God. And if we look at 1 John, chapter 5, verse 19, we read this wonderful truth that all believers no longer belong to Satan, they belong to God:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Yes, the unbelieving world still is under the evil one but we belong to God. And Paul is saying that, at the cross, Satan no longer became the legal, rightful owner of this world. Isn't it wonderful that God has bought us back? This is the good news that we are to proclaim as a church to the rulers and authorities, "Satan, you have no longer authority over us. We are God's children. We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ." And this is the eternal purpose which God has accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And that is verse 11 of Ephesians 3:

[10: His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be

made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,] according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You and I have a wonderful hope. In Jesus Christ, we no longer are under the evil one. We no longer are under the curse. Since Christ came and obtained salvation full and complete for mankind, salvation is no longer a promise, it is a reality. It is a truth that Satan has been defeated and we have been bought back.

There is a wonderful statement in Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 14 and 15 where it talks about Jesus taking on humanity and by His death destroying the one that is the cause of death — the devil and his angels — and liberating us who out of fear or slavery to the fear of death, have been in bondage all our lifetimes:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their

lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

Every human being is born a slave to the fear of death but, in Jesus Christ, we have victory over the grave. The grave has been conquered by our Savior, Jesus Christ. And this victory has been offered not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles. Oh, what a wonderful truth this is. I am excited about it and I hope you are, dear reader.

Listen to verse 12, the last verse we will read and study in this section of today's study:

In him [that is, in Christ] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

It is my prayer that you shall know this truth and this truth will make you free. Amen.

Chapter 6

Rooted and Grounded in Love

Ephesians 3:13-21

We are studying together the book of Ephesians and we have now come to the second half of chapter 3 of Ephesians, verses 13 to 21. We have already seen that the whole plan of salvation was fulfilled in the holy history of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In the first two chapters of this epistle, Paul expounds so beautifully the truth as it is in Christ. He revealed to us the matchless charms of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in which redemption full and complete has been obtained for all mankind and that in our last study, chapter 3, verses 1 to 12, we saw that this wonderful gift of salvation includes the Gentile world. This is the divine mystery that was kept suppressed, kept hidden, in the past but now, since the New Testament period, has been revealed, first through Peter and then especially through Paul that the Gentiles were included in the plan of salvation.

In this present study, we are coming to an extremely important section of this epistle of Ephesians. Chapter 3, verses 13 to 21, is dealing with the love of God and I have entitled this study as being “Rooted and Grounded in Love” because every Christian to be able to stand the fiery darts of Satan, to stand the pressures of this sinful world, must be rooted and grounded in love. Let me put it this way. There are two important facts that the New Testament brings out concerning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that every Christian must be absolutely clear on. The first truth is the love of God. Why? Because the ground of our salvation is not our performance, is not our goodness; it is the unconditional, self-emptying love of God. We are saved because God loves us. Jesus made that clear in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Paul made that clear in Romans 5 where he

says in verse 5 onwards that the love of God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit and then he expounds that love. Romans 5:5-8:

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

He says, while we were helpless, while we were enemies, while we were ungodly, and while we were still sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. By doing this, He demonstrated His love towards us. In Titus, chapter 3, verse 5, Paul tells us it isn't because of our righteousness but because of His mercy, because of His abundant love, He saved us:

...He saved us, not because of righteous things

we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit....

So the love of God is the ground of our salvation and every believer needs to know this.

Number two, the fact that God loves us unconditionally is not enough to save us, because our God is a holy God. He is a righteous God; He is a just God. He cannot save us or redeem us or take us to heaven simply by excusing our sins. That would make Him an unjust God. His law makes it clear: the soul that sins, it must die. How did God save us? The second truth that every Christian must know is the “in Christ motif,” the central theme of Paul’s theology. This is what we saw as we studied chapters one and two of Ephesians. God took you, He took me, He took all mankind and put us into Christ at the incarnation and, thus, qualified Christ to be our Representative and our Substitute. When we and Christ became one in the incarnation — when God and man were united in the one Person, Jesus Christ — Jesus

Christ became the second Adam. This did not save us, but this qualified Christ to be our Savior, our Representative, our Substitute. Then, by His perfect life, which met the positive demands of the law, and, by His sacrificial death, which met the justice of the law, God gave mankind a new history, a new status in which we stand justified. This is the good news of the gospel. This is what Jesus asked His disciples, commissioned His disciples, to preach into all the world. This is the mystery of salvation which includes the Gentile world. But all this was possible because of God's love. And this is what Paul is dealing with in chapter 3, verses 13 to 21.

To appreciate this passage, we must keep in mind the context — the historical context — of this epistle. As I already mentioned several times, this epistle is a prison epistle. Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel to the Gentile world. He was in a Roman dungeon but he had received news that his flock had become very discouraged, especially his flock at Ephesus. This is how they reasoned: “If God [the supreme God that Paul proclaimed to

them] is not able to protect Paul, who is now languishing in a Roman prison, what hope is there for us?” And their faith began to dwindle. Paul heard about this and he writes this letter of encouragement. He first tells them that, in Christ, they have salvation full and complete and they should not be worried; they should not be discouraged. But now he is turning to the love of God. Listen to what he says in this passage. I am going to read the passage first and then I am going to explain verse by verse what Paul is saying here. Ephesians 3:13-21:

I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

This is why he is writing about the love of God; they are losing heart because of his imprisonment.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through

his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Isn't that a tremendous passage? But what is Paul saying in it? First of all, as I mentioned, in verse 13 Paul is writing to a group of discouraged believers. They were discouraged because Paul was in prison and they were beginning to undermine the power of God, the protective power of God. Paul is saying, "No, please, don't you ever get discouraged because of me. I am there because God wants me there." You see, Paul is not just a theologian; he has the heart of a pastor. Because of

the discouragement of his flock, he is saying, “I bow down my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now, keep in mind, dear reader, that in the days of Paul, the typical attitude of prayer was standing up, facing heaven with your eyes open with your hands raised and praying to God. But whenever a person prayed with deep concern, then he would go on his knees. This is what Paul is doing here. He is on his knees because he is deeply concerned about his flock who are discouraged. He is deeply concerned for any saint who is discouraged. Listen to what he says in verse 15:

...from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

God is the Creator of every created being, angels or human beings. We all belong to the family of God by creation. This is the true God that Paul is addressing, the God of heaven, the God of creation. Listen to his prayer in verse 16

because this prayer includes you and me:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you [that is, us or any discouraged believer] with power through his Spirit in your inner being....

Now that phrase “inner being” or “inner man” is a typical Pauline expression. What does Paul mean by that? Does Paul mean that, “I want you to be strengthened with great might by his Spirit in the inner being?” That term, “inner being,” is used only for the converted, born-again Christian. You will find it in 2 Corinthians 4:16:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

You will find it in Romans 7:22:

For in my inner being I delight in God’s law....

It’s a Pauline expression for the converted

person.

Let me explain to you what he means by it. If you remember what Paul says in chapter 2 of Ephesians, verse 3 that we, while we were unconverted, served the sinful desires of the flesh and of the mind. The unconverted man has no contradiction between his sinful nature and his mind. They both are in unison, in harmony with sin. But, when you accept Christ, a change takes place in the mind. That change is referred to as repentance. The Greek word means a change of mind. When a person is converted, he, by his mind, by his will, turns towards God in appreciation and gratitude and accepts the gift of God, Jesus Christ, as his or her personal Savior. But the sinful nature has not changed one iota, so that the sinful nature of an unbeliever and the sinful nature of a believer are identical. The difference between a believer and an unbeliever is not the nature but the mind. In the believer, the mind has made a U-turn. It is no longer running away from God; it is now in harmony with God. That is what Paul calls the inner man, the converted mind.

Paul is saying that, “It is in this converted mind that I want you to be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit.” You can’t be strengthened in the flesh because the flesh still is sinful and belongs to the realm or the camp of Satan, but the converted mind belongs to God. The inner man belongs to God and that is where the Holy Spirit is controlling, the dwelling. He dwells in our spirit but he wants us to be strengthened with might in the inner man in the converted mind.

How are we to be strengthened? Look at verse 17 of Ephesians 3:

...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love....

That first part of verse 17 puzzled me for a long time. I’ll tell you why, dear reader: because Paul is saying here that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. He is praying to God that Christ may dwell in the hearts of these Ephesian

believers. But the fact is that the believers already had Christ dwelling in them. Was he implying in verse 17 that the people to whom he is writing were unbelievers? The answer is “No,” because in his introduction in Ephesians 1, he called them faithful in Christ. Then what does he mean by this prayer that “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”? Well, the solution is found in the word “dwell.”

The word “dwell” in English simply means “to reside” or “residing in.” In English it normally has one meaning. But in the language in which the New Testament was written, there are two words in the Greek language that can be translated into the English word “dwell.” Both come from the same root word but they have a different meaning. One of the words is *patakeo* and the other word is *parakeo*. They both come from the root word *keo* but the difference is this: *patakeo* means to dwell permanently in a place, *parakeo* is to dwell temporarily in a place. For example, when you are traveling on the freeway and you come to the end of the day, you’re tired and you have not reached

your destination so you book into a motel. You spend the night; you dwell that night in a motel. The word that the Greeks would have used is parakeo. You are dwelling temporarily in that place. But when you return home, your permanent dwelling place, then the Greeks would use the word patakeo.

Now it is true that Christ dwells in every born-again Christian, but the question is, “Is He dwelling in you permanently?” Please remember, it is possible for you to grieve the Holy Spirit and drive Him out of you. In fact, Romans, chapter 4, will deal with this, especially verse 25 onwards. Paul will tell the believers, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit by which you have been sealed unto the day of redemption.” In Matthew 10, Jesus told His disciples (especially verse 22, but the whole chapter) that they would be persecuted because of Him. They would be put in prison because of Him and only those whose faith endures unto the end shall be saved.

Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 35:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

In this verse, the writer of Hebrews is telling the Jewish Christians, “Please, don’t give up your confidence in Jesus Christ.” Why? Because it has great recompense of reward. Then, in verses 38 and 39, Paul says (that is who I believe wrote Hebrews), he says:

But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

The righteousness that saves you is in Christ. Nobody can touch that because Christ is in heaven where no thief can enter. But the faith by which that righteousness becomes yours is not in Christ; it is in you. That the devil can destroy, that he can touch. And Paul’s prayer is here to the discouraged listeners or readers. He says, “Please, my prayer is that Christ may dwell in you, not

temporarily but permanently.” He uses the word kutikeo. And the only way that Christ can dwell in your hearts permanently is when you are rooted and grounded in Christ on the love of God. And for that to happen, he says in verses 18-19 of Ephesians 3:

[And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,] may have power, together with all the saints [and that includes you and me], to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Here is a statement that every Christian should understand. One of the biggest problems we Christians face is understanding the love of God. One reason we have difficulty understanding the love of God is a linguistic problem. We have only one word in English for love. The disciples had at least four words in the Greek language that uses the word for love. They chose a word that has no English equivalent. They chose the word agape.

“Love” in the English language does a great injustice to God’s definition of love by the word “agape.” There are at least two major distinctions which make human love completely contradicting God’s love:

1. Human love is conditional. It depends on outward beauty; it depends on goodness. We do not naturally love our enemies; we only know how to love the good ones, those that are good to us or our loved ones. We do not know how to love our enemies. It is unnatural for us. That is human love because it is conditional. It needs arousing because it depends on beauty, on goodness, and so on. God’s love, in complete contradiction, is unconditional. It is uncaused; it doesn’t depend on outward beauty, on goodness. That is why the New Testament makes it clear that while we were still sinners, God demonstrated His love towards us. You remember what Jesus said on the cross concerning the ones that were crucifying Him? He prayed to His Father and He said, “Father, forgive them.” That is agape.

2. Human love is changeable. The greatest evidence of this is the divorce rate in our country. Fifty-two percent of the marriages in this country end up in divorce and approximately 49 percent in the Christian church. Why? Because any marriage that is founded on human love is on shaky ground. The fact that a man comes to you, young lady, and says, “I love you. Will you marry me?” does not mean that he will love you three years later. He loves you right now because he wants you to marry him but three years down the road and sometimes even less, he may abuse you; he may hit you; he may insult you, physically and verbally. What has happened to his love? It has gone because it’s changeable. Peter discovered this the hard way. He told Jesus in the upper room, “All the disciples may forsake you, but not I. I love you unconditionally and I will die for you.” But when the test came in Pilate’s courtyard, Jesus was denied by Peter three times and the third time by cursing and swearing. What happened to his love? It disappeared because human love is changeable; it’s unreliable. But we are told in Jeremiah 31, verse 3 that God loves us with an everlasting love.

We are told in 1 Corinthians 13, verse 8, where Paul defines that agape love, that “agape love never fails.” We are told in John 13, verse 1, that Jesus loved us to the very end.

We have a God who loves us unconditionally and whose love never stops. There is a tremendous passage in Romans 8 which I would recommend you memorize: chapter 8, verses 35 to 39, where Paul is asking the question [verse 35]:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

His response is [verses 37-38]:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“I am persuaded, I am convinced beyond any shadow of doubt, that nothing in this earth or in heaven or in the Satanic world, nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which was revealed in Jesus Christ.” My dear reader, God’s love is unconditional. God’s love is changeless, and God’s love is self-emptying. Human love, at its very best, is motivated by self. We are egocentric by nature and this selfish nature has polluted every human act so that our love, even if sometimes it is wonderful, is polluted with self. But the love of God is self-emptying.

Jesus, we are told in Corinthians, was rich but He became poor that we who are poor may become rich. In that same book, chapter 5 of 2 Corinthians, we are told that Jesus was made sin that we might be made righteousness in Him. Jesus was willing to empty Himself, totally, for us. God so loved the world that He emptied heaven for us in giving us His only begotten Son. That’s the kind of God we worship. And it is this love that you and I need to be rooted and grounded in. Paul uses two

metaphors: rooted is from botany; grounded is from architecture. Deep roots and firm foundations are the necessity of every Christian if we are going to stand persecution and discouragement. And when you are rooted and grounded in this agape love, you are filled with the fullness of God because John, in his epistle 1 John, chapter 4, verse 8 and 16, tells us that God is love:

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ...And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

He doesn't tell us that one of God's attributes is love. God is love, period. Everything about God is love. Even his wrath must be understood in the concept of His love. His judgments must be understood in the concept of His love. God is love and there will never come a time when He will stop loving you. Yes, you may stop loving Him but He will never stop loving you. And when you are rooted and grounded in this truth, when you comprehend with all the saints what is the width,

height, depth, and length of this love, when you are filled with the fullness of God, you will be able to stand the pressures of this life. The secret for Christ to permanently dwell in the believer is for us to be rooted and grounded in the unconditional love of God.

Let us now turn to his benediction in verses 20 and 21 because chapter 4, with which we will begin our next study, is dealing with Christian ethics. Paul always ends his epistles with how the gospel should affect our Christian living. But let us look at his benediction:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...

Have you got that, reader? God is able to do for you and me more than we ask and we think. That's the kind of God we worship. Why? Because God is a God of love and it is God's purpose that none perish. That is why He so loved the world while we were still sinners and He sent

His Son, not to condemn the world but that through Him we might be saved. And so He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask and think according to the power that works in us.

When Jesus redeemed all mankind, he said, “When I go to My Father, I will send you another Comforter.” Do you know what word Jesus used? He used the word *paraklatos* and that word in Greek means “somebody who is by your side to comfort you, to strengthen you, to help you, to make your prayers meaningful.” He is more than just a “comforter,” as the King James Version of the Bible puts it. He is more than that; He is a helper by your side. He is the power of God in you so that you may not be discouraged, that you may know in whom you believe, that you may be guided into all this truth that I am expounding from this Ephesians epistle. Ephesians 3:21:

...To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The difference between the Christian God and the pagan god is this. The pagan god is “up there.” He will not step down and you, through your sacrifices and through your good works, must appease him so that you may be acceptable to him. The God you and I worship in Christianity is a God of love. He did not ask you to be good before He redeemed you. While we were sinners, He sent His Son down here to this earth. He emptied heaven. The God of the Christian religion is a God who came down to this earth, became one of us and, by His perfect life and by His sacrificial death, He redeemed you and me, redeemed all mankind. The gospel is unconditional good news. God is not asking you to be good before He accepts you. Salvation is a gift for sinners. We are saved by grace, not by works.

It is true that the gospel produces a people that are excited about doing good works. Good works are the fruits of salvation but never the means. Then what is the means of our salvation? The love of God and the holy history of Jesus Christ. These are the two basic facts of the gospel: that God so

loved the world and that He redeemed us through Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that you will know this truth and this truth will set you free. Amen.

Chapter 7

Walking in Unity

Ephesians 4:1-6

We have been studying so far the first three chapters of that great epistle that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, what many commentators call “the queen of the epistles.” We have seen in these three chapters the two fundamental, basic truths that constitute the unconditional good news of salvation. In chapter one and chapter two, Paul expounded to us the truth as it is in Christ, the means of our salvation. Then, in chapter three, he described for us the unconditional love of God that is the ground of our salvation.

Having clearly expounded the gospel to the believers in Ephesus, Paul now turns, as he normally does at the end of all his epistles, to Christian living or Christian ethics. And chapters four, five, and six are dealing with how the gospel transforms our lives. How should Christians,

justified by faith in Jesus Christ, how should they live, how should they walk?

In chapter four of Ephesians and the first six verses, Paul is expounding to his readers the effect that the gospel produces in terms of relationship between believers. This will be our study: Ephesians 4:1-6:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

What is Paul telling the believers here? First of all, look at the way he introduces this new section on Christian ethics. He does the same thing as he did in chapter three, verse one: he introduces

himself, not as a prisoner of Rome, but as a prisoner of the Lord, Jesus Christ. And he is simply saying this as one who is totally surrendered to God and to the call of his ministry, his apostleship. He is pleading with his flock, with his readers, “I beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” What does he mean by that? Now keep in mind that the moment you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, the moment you experience the new birth and have become one with Christ, you become a child of God. As 1 John 3:1 says:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

“Beloved, what manner of love God has bestowed upon us, that we, we wretched, miserable human beings who have rebelled against God, through the grace of God, are now called the sons of God.”

Paul is telling us in Ephesians 4:1, “Please, believers, since you are God’s children, behave as God’s children.”

Now it is important that we realize the formula of the gospel which is best described in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ...

The cross has brought an end to our old Adamic, self-centered life and, in exchange, we have received the life of Christ:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave himself for me.

The formula of the gospel in the life of every believer is, “Not I, but Christ.” Here in this passage on Christian ethics, Paul is simply saying: “Let your life reflect the character of Christ. Let the world see Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Paul says in Colossians 2:6:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him....

When we walk and behave as Christ by the indwelling Spirit or the indwelling Christ, our behavior will be patterned, will resemble the life of Christ that He revealed on this earth when He was here. The first four books of the New Testament, commonly known as the gospels, is a revelation of God walking and dwelling in one Man, Jesus Christ.

The book of Acts is also an historical account the same as the first four books but this time it is an historical account of the church, the body of Christ where God is revealed through the body, the church. Unfortunately, this revelation was short lived because the gospel was perverted and the power of the gospel became null and void. But as we return to the good news of salvation, as we rest in Christ totally — not only for our standing before God, not only for our ticket to heaven, but also in

terms of our Christian living or what the Bible calls “sanctification” — and we walk in the Spirit, allowing the Spirit of God to control us, there will be a transformation in our lives. There will be a complete change in our human relationships so that we will reveal the unconditional love of God in our Christian living.

Having laid this foundation, we will look at what Paul says in verses two and three because here, in these two verses, Paul is presenting to us the five basic virtues of the Christian faith. A genuine, born-again Christian, walking in the Spirit, should reflect the character of Christ in these five basic ways:

1. Humility. (Paul uses the word “lowliness,” which actually means humility. This word is unique because it is a word that was coined by the New Testament writers since there was no Greek word in Paul’s day for the word “humility.”)

2. Gentleness or meekness. (We shall look at this in detail also.)

3. Long-suffering.

4. Love.

5. Peace.

We will look at these five closely. Paul is saying that a true Christian will reflect the humility of Jesus Christ. To appreciate this, we will read Philippians 2:5 where the apostle Paul talks in the context of humility which is found in the first four verses of chapter two:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...

Having admonished the believers in Philippi to have unity among themselves through humility, he now, in verses five to eight, uses Christ as the example of Christian humility. He is saying, "Let this attitude be in you which was in Christ Jesus." In verses six to eight, he describes the self-emptying love of Jesus Christ. He begins by

pointing out that Jesus Christ is God. He was equal with God. He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. It was a sin when Lucifer tried to equate himself with God but when Jesus equates Himself with God, that is no sin, that is no robbery because that is His native right. He is one with the Father. There is a “but” in verse 7. Philippians 2:6-7:

...Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

The actual Greek says He “emptied Himself.” He divested Himself of all His divine prerogatives. He took the form of a servant or slave and came in the likeness of men. Just as man has to be totally dependent for survival, for life, and for everything else, so Christ became totally God-dependent. He who created the world by His breath now becomes one with us. That is the self-emptying love of Jesus Christ.

But He did not stop there. Philippians 2:8 says that, being found in the appearance of men, He humbled Himself and became obedient even unto the point of death, even the death of the cross:

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

The life of Christ on this earth was a life of humility, a life that was in total submission to the Father. Paul is saying that this is what should take place in the life of every believer. When humility is experienced in a Christian church, the result is unity. Let me give you an example in the case of the disciples. The disciples did not know what true humility was before the cross. In the upper room they were fighting among themselves; they were arguing among themselves as to who would be the greatest. But when the cross of Christ destroyed in them every hope, it put an end to self. They saw the unconditional love of God revealed on the cross and self became crucified. The Bible tells us that there in the upper room, just before the experience

of the Pentecostal power, they were of one heart and of one mind. They were now perfectly united. Self was put aside. That is the fruit of the gospel; that is the revelation of the life of Christ in the believer as we walk in the Spirit.

The second is gentleness or meekness. We must not confuse the word “meekness” or “gentleness” with the word “weakness.” Meekness is not weakness but is power under control. A very good example of a real meek man is Moses, the great general of the Jews who led the Jews out of Egypt. He was a great leader in Israel, one of the great prophets of Israel. He is described in Numbers 12:3. It is very interesting how Moses is described here:

Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.

He was humble when God came to him and commissioned him to be the liberator of the Jews from the slavery in Egypt. He was humble all his life because he recognized that it was the power of

God in him that did all the great works. He was gentle. We have the same description of Christ when He was on this earth in Matthew 11:29. Jesus is referred to as the meek and lowly in heart:

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

That is how we, His followers, should be.

The third is long-suffering which means that we never give up. In John 13:1 we read that having loved His own, He loved us to the very end:

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

One of the qualities of God's love is that it never gives up. In Jeremiah 31:3, we are told that God loves us "with an everlasting love."

His love never stops. In 1 Corinthians 13:8, from that great chapter that defines the love of God, the apostle tells us that God's unconditional love "never fails."

When we are rooted and grounded in the love of God, our faith will not dwindle. We will have a faith that is unshakable; we will have a faith that never gives up. That is what long-suffering is and we desperately need this so that we may be able to stand the wiles of the devil.

The fourth one is love. The first virtue is lowliness or humility. The second virtue is gentleness or meekness, the third virtue is long-suffering, and the fourth virtue, which is the ground of all the others, is the love of God that is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is this ingredient that produces the first three virtues and results in the fifth virtue, which is peace. In Galatians 5:22-25, Paul describes the fruits of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

It is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and so on which are the virtues of the Christian life which is controlled by the love of God. This is the crying need of the Christian church. Jesus, in the text John 13:34 and 35, gave the disciples the commandment that they had forgotten in Judaism. It is not a new commandment but it is a renewed commandment. This commandment is that they should love one another just as Christ loves us:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Remember that Jesus loves us unconditionally

and He loves us everlastingly and His love for us never changes. This is the kind of love that we must reflect in our relationship to each other. Jesus said in John 13:34, “I want you to love each other just as I loved you.” Then He makes the statement in verse 35: “By this love relationship between you believers, all men will know that you are My disciples.”

The greatest proof of the power of the gospel is not raising your arms and shouting, “Praise the Lord, I am saved.” The world does not care whether you are saved or not. The greatest evidence of the power of the gospel in the lives of the believers is their love relationship for each other. For this reason, we need to walk in the Spirit because this love cannot be generated by our human will or by our human resources.

Let me give you an historical truth that took place in the early Christian church which was made up of a diversity of people. There were the Jews on one side and Gentiles on the other. Naturally, these two groups were enemies. There were also

male and female and the women were often looked down upon in those days. Then among the Gentile believers there were masters and slaves, two class distinctions that never mingled together socially. Yet when they all became Christians, they would sit down around the same table and have a common meal together known as the agape feast. Even the enemies of the gospel and of Christianity, historians like Cicero and Silius, admitted that Christians loved each other. When the world sees this love today, they will realize that the only way to bring in love and unity between races, colors, all kinds of nationalities is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without the gospel, we do not know how to love each other unconditionally. This is why our world is torn with all kinds of factions and division. But when this love controls us, then we shall walk as Christ walked and the love of God will be revealed in us. Listen to what the apostle John has to say about this love in 1 John 4:7:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Our love for each other is the evidence that we are born again Christians and are walking in the Spirit. 1 John 4:12 reads:

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This unconditional love, this self-emptying love, this changeless love will be reflected in us as we walk in the Spirit. This is Paul's counsel to his readers.

The fifth one is peace. There are two kinds of peace that are mentioned in the New Testament. In Romans 5:1, the apostle is defining here the vertical peace which is what we receive first as we accept Christ, that is peace with God:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

This peace brings such deep appreciation for God that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, this peace reflects in terms of our horizontal relationship. It is this horizontal relationship that Paul is referring to in Ephesians 4:3:

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Once again, that is the greatest proof of the power of the gospel: the perfect unity of the body of Christ.

Having given us these five virtues in verses two and three, Paul points his listeners to two verses that give us the fundamental issue of what it means to be a Christian. Today, the Christian church is broken up into various denominations, various factions and we have become a poor witness of the power of the gospel. For this reason we need to understand what Paul is saying in verses four to six of Ephesians 4:

There is one body and one Spirit — just as you

were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

First Paul is saying that, when you accept Christ, all of us were baptized into one body. Before our conversion, we were dominated by the principle of self which has produced a human race that has put emphasis on the individual. Therefore, we fight for our individual rights; we fight for our individual glory. We aim and we live for self. That is the condition of the fallen, sinful man. But when we accept Christ, we surrender that self-life to the cross. This is the meaning of baptism as Paul says in Romans 6:6:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

The old self-life is crucified with Christ. Paul says in Galatians 5:24 that those who belong to

Christ have crucified the flesh with all its desires or lusts:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul makes a very clear statement about the Christian. He says that all of us have been baptized into one body:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

That is why, in Galatians 3:27 and 28 where he discusses baptism, which is the door or the entrance into the Christian religion, Paul makes it clear that when you are baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ and, therefore, there is no Jew, there is no Greek, there is no male, there is no female; we are all one in Christ, one body. Galatians 3:26-28:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

We all share the same spiritual life through the Holy Spirit, one Spirit, one calling, one hope. God is a God of unity. The greatest revelation of the unity of God is the Godhead. We have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — three Persons but one God. This is because God's love has no self in it; it is unconditional; it is selfless love. It is a love that goes outward towards others. Christ, of course, revealed this on the cross when He decided that He would rather die and save the world than save Himself and let the world perish. He revealed on the cross that He loves us human beings more than He loves Himself. That love brings unity because it has no self in it.

So in the Christian religion, we reflect the unity of the Godhead, the triune God. We are one body; we share one Spirit; we have one hope, one calling.

Paul defines the church as the body of Christ. The human body has perfect unity because of two facts:

1. In the human body, there is only one head which is the mind, the will.

2. In the human body, every member is a slave to the head. When the stomach is hungry, it tells the head. The head tells my legs, “Please go to the refrigerator because the stomach is hungry.” The legs do not say, “I am not hungry. If the stomach is hungry, he can go himself to the fridge.” No, the legs are slaves to the head so when the head says, “Go to the fridge,” without any question the legs go to the fridge. Then the head says to the hands, “Open the fridge; pull out the food and feed the stomach.” And the hands obey unconditionally the directions of the head. There is perfect unity in our bodies because we have only one head and the rest of the body is a slave to the head.

Likewise, in the Christian church, we have only one Head — Jesus Christ — and all of us are slaves of Jesus Christ. In fact, if you read Paul’s epistles,

he often introduces himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, not just a servant, but a slave.

In Romans 6:15-18, he tells us clearly that the reason Christians should not condone sin is because we have become slaves of God and slaves to His righteousness:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

With this in mind, we will see what Paul is saying. Not only are we one body, we have one Spirit, one hope, and one calling, but in verse five, Paul says we have one Lord:

...One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

In other words, one Head, one faith, one truth that unites us together, one baptism. Everything in the gospel brings us into unity because there is no faction; there is no division. It is for this reason that when the Christians in Corinth were divided, Paul rebuked them in 1 Corinthians 3:4-5. He said:

For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

He said, “Some of you are for Apollos, some of you are for me, Paul, but who is Paul and who is Apollos? You were not baptized to this man; you were baptized into Christ.”

...One baptism; one God and Father of all, who

is over all and through all and in all.

The perfect unity that was revealed and is revealed in the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit must now be reflected through the church, the body of Christ. This is the goal of Christian living; this is the greatest evidence. This cannot happen by dialogue. Some have tried this method and it has failed miserably. The only way that the Christians can be united is when they surrender to the cross of Christ, when they claim, as the apostle Paul claimed, “I am crucified with Christ, it is no longer I but it is Christ who lives in me through the Holy Spirit.”

When the Spirit controls us as we walk in the Spirit, all division will go; all jealousy will go; all bickering, gossiping between each other will go. There will be only one thing that will remain, the love of God, which will unite us together. This will be the greatest evidence of the power of the gospel. As it has been claimed to be said by a great atheistic philosopher, who was the son of a Lutheran pastor, “If you Christians expect me to

believe in your Redeemer, you will have to look a lot more redeemed.”

It is my prayer that the truth of the gospel will set us free from self that we may be one. In Jesus name. Amen.

Chapter 8

Spiritual Gifts

Ephesians 4:7-16

Beginning with Ephesians 4, Paul turns to a new section of the Christian message. In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul expounds for us the unconditional good news of salvation. Beginning at chapter four, he turns to Christian ethics. In our last study, we looked carefully at the first six verses of chapter four in which Paul talks about how the gospel, revealed through the life of the believer, produces a people who are perfectly united in love.

Now, beginning with verses seven to 16, which we will now study, we will look at the spiritual gifts which are bestowed upon every believer so that we may function as Christians within the body of Christ. When we become Christians, not only are we justified by faith, not only are we baptized into the body of Christ, but we receive special gifts

so that each one of us may function in whatever part God has chosen us to be in the framework of the body of Christ.

In order for us to fulfill our part within the whole context of God's mission for the body, the church, God has bestowed upon every believer spiritual gifts. Here Paul is describing these spiritual gifts which are the power and the source of our Christian unity and our Christian living and, of course, our witnessing.

With this in mind we will turn to Ephesians 4:7-16. We will look at this wonderful passage which is dealing with a subject which needs to be understood by every Christian. There are no spectators in the Christian church. The Christian religion is not a football game where there is a handful of men exhausting themselves trying to win a game while there are thousands of people watching them and cheering them. That is not Christianity. Christianity is a religion in which every member has a vital part to play within the framework of the body. Now listen to what Paul is

saying in this text:

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all

things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

This is a tremendous passage when it comes to genuine Christian witnessing and it is important to understand what Paul is saying in this passage. First, in verse seven, notice that Paul says:

But to each one of us....

No one is excluded. Every believer, every born again Christian is given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. As we saw in our last study, when we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ. That is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Now, I may be the toe, you may be the finger, someone else may be the tongue; we are all part and parcel of the body of Christ and in unison, together, we constitute the body of Christ. Each one of us, according to the grace of our God, are given a gift to function as the part to which we belong in the body of Christ.

Having said this, we need to pause here to define the word “grace.” The word “grace” is used in two senses in the New Testament. The primary meaning of “grace” in the New Testament is God’s unconditional love towards fallen mankind in which He gave us His Son through whose life and death we have obtained, through Him, salvation full and complete. Hence, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God....

That is the primary meaning of grace.

But the word “grace” is also used in the New Testament, and especially by the apostle Paul, to refer to the power of God made available to the born again Christian through the Holy Spirit so that we may fulfill God’s purpose in our lives. As Paul tells us in Romans 5:1-2 that not only do Christians have peace with God but they are standing in grace

or they are standing under the umbrella of grace and because of this they have the hope of arriving at the glory of God:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

There are several passages that bring out this word “grace” in the context of God’s power or God’s strength made available to us so that we may fulfill God’s purpose. These texts are referring to Paul’s own experience but what is true of Paul is true of every believer. The first text is 1 Corinthians 15:9, where Paul makes a statement that is typical of him, which reflects his humility. Remember, in our last study one of the characteristics of a true Christian is humility. This Paul revealed in his own life. Paul says:

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I

persecuted the church of God.

Paul felt the blessings he received from God, the calling, was more than he deserved. However, there is a “but” in verse 10:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Paul is saying that by the grace of God he was chosen to be an apostle, a messenger for God, not because he deserved it but by the grace of God. It is this grace which was given to him that he did not squander; he did not let it lie dormant. He allowed it to produce works in him that were greater than all the works of the other apostles. It sounds as though Paul is boasting here but notice the last part of verse 10:

...Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Here the apostle Paul is using the word “grace” in terms of God’s power or strength made available to the believer.

Now we will turn to the next text, 2 Corinthians 12:7:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

One of the greatest problems we will face as Christians, especially when God uses us mightily, is the problem of pride. Even though we have surrendered our sinful nature to the cross, it is dead only by faith but in reality it is still there and given the chance it will raise its ugly head up and take all the glory of what God does in us.

So Paul is saying that since God gave him such wonderful revelations knowing that this could go to his head, God allowed Paul to have “a thorn in the flesh.” Paul does not tell what that thorn in the

flesh was. It could be his eyes or his defective speech or something that he felt was a hindrance to his ministry but in verse eight he tells how he responds to this thorn in the flesh:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

On three occasions, Paul earnestly sought God's deliverance from this "thorn in the flesh." God's answer is in verse nine:

But he [God] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Note that the words "my grace" and "my power" are synonymous. Here, the word "grace" is used in the sense of God's strength. Now listen to Paul's response:

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

“My grace,” “my power,” and the “Christ’s power” are all synonymous terms and are referring to the power of God made available to Paul and to every believer who is standing under the umbrella of grace so that they may fulfill God’s purpose in their lives.

One more text is found in Ephesians 3:7. This will remind us of what we have already covered. Listen to what Paul is saying here, speaking about his calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power.

Here, again, the word “grace” is used to refer to the effective working of His power.

In view of this, we need to be reminded that Christian living does not depend on human resources. It is not our natural talents that God is

depending on. When God calls you to do a certain thing within the Christian church, when God calls you to be His witness, when God calls you to fulfill a certain work, even though you may not have the natural ability to do that, the grace of God is sufficient. Therefore, no Christian is to excuse himself when God puts His hand on your shoulder and calls you to do something because what God calls you to do He gives you the power to do it. That is what Paul is saying here. To each one of us, with no exception, grace is given according to the measure of Christ's gift according to which part of the body you function under.

In verses nine and 10, Paul uses an example of a typical situation in his day. He uses a quotation from the Old Testament in verse eight:

When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.

In the olden days, in Bible days, when two nations fought and one nation was defeated, two things took place. The conquering nation would

take the key persons — the king, the rulers, the officers of the defeated nation — and take them back to their country as captives to prove to their people that they were victorious. But they also brought with them all the treasures of the defeated nation and they shared it with the people as appreciation for their support in the war. Paul is using this and applying it as a metaphor, as symbols, to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are all victims to sin and death. Death is the grim reaper. We are incapable of conquering death. No matter how wonderful science is and no matter how wonderful science has made our modern lifestyle, science has not been able to solve the death problem. Now some scientists feel that sometime in the future, they will solve it but they do not know what the Bible says. Only God has the power over the grave and He revealed this in Jesus Christ. Man is unable to conquer death. Death rules over him as Paul tells us in Romans 5:17:

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of

grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

When Adam sinned, death came to us a ruler, as a conqueror. But when Jesus came and redeemed us from sin, He conquered the grave. Remember at the resurrection there was a great earthquake and many graves were opened. Many, who were sleeping in Christ, came back to life and went about the city of Jerusalem. At the ascension, Jesus took these people as evidence of His victory over sin and the grave. I believe that the 24 elders mentioned in the book of Revelation are part and parcel of these people who were the first fruits of the victory of Christ over the grave.

Having taken these people with Him to heaven as evidence of His redemptive power, once He ascended He sent gifts to His people on earth. So “He who ascended up into heaven, who conquered the grave” is what Paul means that “He who descended is also the One who ascended.” It is our sin that took Him to the grave but our sins could not keep him there. He conquered the grave

because He conquered our sin. He paid the price for our sins; He conquered the grave; He ascended into heaven with those He raised from the dead at His resurrection and He sent gifts to His people on earth. The gifts are described in verses 11 and 12:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

Here the word "apostles" means missionaries. "Some prophets" — some who would proclaim the intricate details of God's truth. "Some evangelists" — some who would expound the gospel to the non-Christian world, the unchurched. "Some pastors and teachers" — notice that these two are a unit. God has given some to be missionaries, some to be evangelists and, some pastors and teachers because when we first come to Christ we are babes in Christ. It is through the proclamation of the word, through the feeding of the flock, through the teaching of the Word, through the pastoral ministry

that the lay members grow up into Christ and become mature Christians. The purpose of these gifts is for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, equipping the saints with the Word of God. The work of the ministry is to reflect Christ, for edifying of the body of Christ. Verse 13:

...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The key definition of the church in the New Testament is that it is the body of Christ. He is the Head, we are the body. During His earthly ministry, Jesus revealed, perfectly, the character of His Father. In John 17:4, Jesus, praying to His Father, said:

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

In John 14:8, when Philip came to Jesus and

said:

Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.

Jesus responded,

Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

Jesus went on to explain how the Father dwells in Him and He in the Father and the works that He did, the miraculous works, were not Him but the Father who dwelt in Him through the Holy Spirit. Now that Christ is in heaven, His body is on earth; it is His desire, it is God's purpose that the body reflects Jesus Christ who in turn reflected God. In order for that to happen, God has equipped every believer with a gift, or more than one gift. Every Christian is equipped, through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the ministry of the edifying of the body of Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:7, that all the gifts of

the Spirit are given to the church for the edifying of the body:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

As we study the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, we will discover that they are divided into two categories. The first category, which is what Paul mentions in Ephesians four — apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers and evangelists — are primarily for the church, the body of Christ, so that we may all grow together, we may all be built up from babes in Christ to mature Christians and that we may come closer together in unity through this power of the Holy Spirit.

But the second half of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not mentioned here but in other passages — such as miracles, tongues, and so on — are for witnessing. In 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul discusses the contrast between the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy, he makes a very

interesting observation. Verse 22:

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

The gift of tongues is evidence to the unbeliever that we are controlled by a supernatural power. The gift of tongues was never given to convince us that we are Christians. We are convinced that we are Christians, we are convinced that we are saved, that we stand justified because, by faith, we accept the perfect righteousness of Christ. The doing and dying of Christ is what convinces us that we stand justified. Yes, it is true the Holy Spirit, Paul says in Romans 8:16, he convinces us that we are the children of God. But, prophesying is for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The ultimate goal of the gifts that Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:11 is expressed in verse 13:

...Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Here Paul is saying that the Christian church — which is the body of Christ, which is Christ's representative on earth — should reflect the same character, the same behavior patterns as the Head which is Jesus Christ. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the church needs to grow up until, as a body in unison, it should reflect the unconditional love of God that was revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ on this earth. Therefore, all who see the church will not see human beings doing their best but they will see God manifested in the flesh. That is the ultimate goal of these gifts. It is also for the work of the ministry, for the witnessing to the world the power of the gospel in our lives.

Also, there is something else in verse 14:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there

by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

There are so many false teachers today. Some of them are proclaiming what they call the truth but many of these teachings are dividing us. The goal of the spiritual gifts in the church is that we may no longer be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of man in the cunning craftiness by which they lay in wait to deceive. Behind all this deception is the devil. Jesus Himself warned us that the devil in the last days will come as an angel of light. It is for this reason that it is important that we are rooted and grounded in God's love and in His Word. We must know what the Bible teaches so that we are not swept away by every wind of doctrine.

The positive side is in verses 15 and 16:

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows

and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Paul makes it clear that every believer, every saint, is given a gift of the Holy Spirit, or more than one gift, to fulfill a purpose in the body. Just like the human body which is disconnected to the head when the nerve is severed becomes paralyzed, there are many Christians today who are paralyzed because they are not fulfilling what God has called them to do. There must not only be a living connection with the believer and the Head, Jesus Christ through prayer, Bible study, and witnessing but every believer must use the gift that God has bestowed upon Him. No Christian should be a spectator, Paul says. Every believer should do his part, his share. This is how he concludes in verse 16:

...as each part does its work.

When one does not do his share, the whole body suffers. But there should be no schism in the church of Christ. We should be one and each

member should do his share. By this the whole body grows up, reflecting more and more the righteous character of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the goal of Christian living; this is what God has in mind for the Christian church in these last days. When this happens, when we become one and when the power of the gospel is the source of our Christian living, not dialogue, not human resources, not budgets, but the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then and then only this earth will be lightened with His glory as the book of Revelation, chapter 18 says. This is my prayer for the Christian church and for each one of us in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 9

The New Life in Christ

Ephesians 4:17-32

In our last study of Ephesians 4:7-16, Paul discussed the spiritual gifts that are placed upon every believer for equipping the saints for the ministry of presenting Christ to the world as well as building up the church into unity, into the fullness, into the stature of Christ. Now, we will turn to Ephesians 4:17-32 where Paul discusses the new life in Christ.

For we Christians to understand this new life in Christ, it is important that we understand a very important truth brought out in the New Testament, especially by the apostle Paul. The New Testament in its original language uses two words for life. The first word is our natural life which is the basis of all our performance and our works. That word is *biosis*, from which we have the word “biography.”

The word biosis is basically the life that lives and does things from the natural man. In fact, every heathen religion is based on biosis. Man's religion is trying to transform or to modify that biosis so that it becomes pleasing to God. That is why every human religion is a religion of salvation by works. Christianity, on the other hand, is not based on man trying to modify his old life. It is receiving a new life in exchange for the old.

Two things were accomplished at the cross:

1. Our biosis came to an end.
2. In exchange, God gave us the life of His Son.

In fact, this is God's supreme gift to mankind at the cross. If we look at 1 John 5:11, we are told:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He who has Christ has this life and this new life that we have from Christ is called zoe. We read

about this in the gospel of John. In John 1, as John introduces Christ, the Word of God, he makes this statement in verse 4:

In him [Christ] was life[zoe], and that life was the light of men.

Then in John 10, Jesus says that the thief does not come except to kill and to steal and to destroy. “I,” says Jesus, “have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

This is what a Christian receives when he experiences the new birth. The new birth is not a modification of the old but receiving a brand new life that comes from God through the Holy Spirit. Now, having received this life through justification by faith, Paul is telling the Ephesians and through them, us, in Ephesians 4:17-32 how this new life

should control us, should dominate us, and how it should change our mode of living, both its motivation and its performance. Paul calls this “the new man” in contrast to the old life which he calls “the old man.”

Listen to what Paul says beginning in verse 17 where he is addressing believers, born-again Christians. Notice the phrase “in the Lord.” This is what we are in Christ. Ephesians 4:17-18:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Paul is saying here that, unlike every other human religion, Christianity is not a modification of the old life but Christianity is walking in the Lord with a new life that we receive with the new birth experience. He is saying that this new life is in complete contradiction to the way of the world.

The apostle John in 1 John 2:15 and 16 tells us that the basic drives of the worldly, the unconverted man, even the religious man, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is the life, the biosis life, with which we were born.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.

But Galatians 5:24 tells us that for us to produce the fruits of the Spirit — which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering — is only possible as we Christians realize that we have crucified the flesh, identified ourselves with the cross of Christ and all its passions and desires:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

So Paul is saying here in Ephesians, “Do not walk as you used to and as the Gentiles.” Here the word “Gentiles” does not refer to the non-Jew but rather to the unbelievers. He says do not walk as the unbelievers who (1) are ignorant about the zoe, the new life that we have in Christ, and (2) whose hearts are darkened because they have rejected or they refuse to believe in the good news of salvation. Please remember what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthian 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

The biosis has been crucified with Christ or it is surrendered to the cross by our faith obedience to the gospel and, in exchange, we must let the new life live in us.

Paul goes on in Ephesians 4:19 saying,

Having lost all sensitivity, they [that is, the Gentiles, the unbelievers] have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of

impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Our Christian living must be a complete contradiction to the worldly people. Nothing of the world must creep into the church. Between the world that is under Satan and the church that is under the banner of Christ stands the cross of Christ and God wants nothing of the world to creep into the church. Our lives must be a contradiction to the life of the world. We are “the salt of the earth”; we are the ones who must reflect Jesus Christ. Paul says in Ephesians 4:20-24:

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Remember the meaning of your baptism.

Baptism is always into Christ Jesus and Paul in Romans 6 explains what that is. He says that we who were baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death. His death was to sin. Romans 6:10:

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Because we have submitted in baptism by faith to this death, we must consider ourselves dead to sin. As Paul says in Romans 6:6,

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

“The old man has been crucified, the old life, the biosis has been crucified with Christ and in exchange a new life has been accepted.” Remember that the old life is dead only by faith. In reality, it is still in us and, given the chance, it would like to raise its ugly head up so that it may live above and overrule the work of the Spirit in

our lives. Paul's admonition is, "Do not allow that to happen. Put off the old life; remind yourself daily who you are as a Christian." Every Christian must remind themselves daily that they are crucified with Christ; that we are still living but it is no longer we that must live but it is Christ who lives in us.

Paul continues in Romans 6:20:

When you were slaves to sin, your were free from the control of righteousness.

The believer has only one nature and that is the flesh. With that flesh, with that biosis life, he is capable of doing two things: (1) live a life of sinful acts, or (2) live a life of self-righteousness which, in God's eyes, is filthy rags or iniquity because it is polluted with self. But a Christian, above and over what he has by nature, also has a new life, a new nature. Peter tells us that we have become partakers of the divine nature through the new birth experience through which we must escape the corruption that is in the world. The old life, the

biosis is still in us but daily we must allow the Holy Spirit to control us.

These two natures both want to control the mind because without the will, without the decision of the mind, neither nature can control us. The desire of the flesh is to walk in the flesh. The desire of the Spirit is for us as Christians to walk in the Spirit and the battle is constantly raging in our minds. Paul is saying, “Put off the old self; put on the new self and, therefore, by doing that, put away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” Ephesians 4:25:

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

The biosis life is a life of individuality. In other words, the biosis life lives for self, what is best for me, what is good for me, what is most interesting to me, that is what the biosis life aims for. But there is no self in the life of Jesus Christ which we have received through the new birth

experience. The new life is a life dominated, controlled by this wonderful, self-emptying love of God. In 1 Corinthians 13:5, Paul tells us:

It [God's unconditional love] is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

There is no self in God's unconditional love. When this life controls us, we will put away lying; we will speak the truth.

But there is one more thing. Because there is no self in this new life, the Christian church is described as the human body. The human body is a perfect unit. We have different members: we have hands, we have legs, we have eyes, we have ears, each doing its own function but our human body is in perfect unity. When the stomach is hungry it speaks to the head saying, "I am hungry." Then the head speaks to the legs saying, "Go to the refrigerator and get some food for the stomach." The legs do not say, "I am not hungry. Let the stomach go and get food if it wants some." There

is perfect submission to the head.

Likewise, when Christians are controlled by the love of God and self is crucified, we will be of one heart and one mind because we have been bonded together by the life of Christ. We have become one body. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul talks about the love of God but in 1 Corinthians 12, he talks about the unity of the body through the Spirit. When one suffers, all suffer; when one grieves, all grieve because we feel for each other. The love of Christ controls us. Then in verse 26, Paul makes a statement which is rather difficult to understand. Ephesians 4:26a:

In your anger do not sin....

“Be angry and do not sin.” There is such a thing as righteous indignation. When Jesus cleansed the temple because of the moneychangers, that was righteous indignation. Paul is saying in verse 26, “Do not let righteous anger, which is acceptable, turn into sin.” In other words, “Do not let your unselfish anger, which is fighting for the

cause of truth or upholding the truth, become a means of self-justification or venting your own personal feelings, your selfish anger. That is, do not let righteous anger be turned into sinful anger.” Since we are sinful human beings, if there is any disagreement between two believers; if two believers have a quarrel, he says in the second half of verse 26:

Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry....

“Make up before the day is over, because we are one in Christ.” Ephesians 4:27:

...And do not give the devil a foothold.

Give no place to the devil. He has no right over you. You have been redeemed from this world and from the hands of Satan. Ephesians 4:28:

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his

own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

I realize we are living in a greedy, selfish world and that people will come to you who actually can work but, because of your love and kindness as a Christian will take advantage of you, but remember that Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10:

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

So we must use our judgment. What Paul is saying here is that Christians should not take advantage of others but should work for their living. Don’t take advantage of the kindness of others; do more than working for your living. Work so that you may have an excess to help others who are in genuine need.

Then in verse 29 Paul says:

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building

others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

In Philippians 4:8, Paul says it beautifully:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

In other words, a Christian is a person who lives a life that reflects the love of Jesus Christ which was revealed in Jesus Christ, which was revealed in His earthly life. He went about doing good. He spoke about love. There were times when He had to rebuke the Pharisees, which was righteous indignation, but, as a whole, Paul is saying that our life must reflect the life of Christ. Then in verse 30 he makes a very important statement:

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

Now, we must not confuse grieving the Holy Spirit with blaspheming the Holy Spirit which Jesus spoke about in Matthew 12:31 and 32:

And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

There are many Christians who feel that because they are born again they are born into the kingdom of God, that they cannot leave that kingdom of God. Friends, God has created you with a free will. He will not force you into the kingdom of God, neither will He force you to remain in the kingdom of God. It is possible, Christians, for you to blaspheme the Holy Spirit in the sense that you turn your back to God and go back to the world. Paul, in writing to Timothy, said that Demas, who was a co-evangelist with Paul, had forsaken the truth and had gone back to

the world. In Hebrews 6:4-6, the writer of Hebrews makes it very clear that it is possible after having heard the gospel, after having accepted the gospel, after having experienced the new birth and becoming a child of God and having tasted the good things to come, to turn your back to God and crucify Christ afresh:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

As Jesus said in Matthew 10:22:

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Or as Hebrews 10:38-39 says:

“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

The just shall live by faith but, if any man draws back, if any man turns his back to God and gives up Christ and goes back to the world, God says, “My soul shall have no pleasure,” but we are not those who draw back but believe unto the saving of the soul.

When you and I become Christians, when you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, not only do you have a change of status from condemnation to justification, from death to life, but you also have a change of kingdoms. Before your conversion, you belonged to this world, you were part of this world under Satan. But now that you have become a Christian, you no longer are of this world. Jesus told the disciples in John 15:19:

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world,

but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

In 1 John 5:19 we are told that the human race is divided into two camps:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

We Christians belong to God, but the whole world is under the evil one and here is a problem. Christians belong to the kingdom of heaven but are still living in the world. In other words, we are still living in enemy territory. We need to be on our guard. We must not allow the devil to take over through the flesh. That is what Paul is saying in verse 30:

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

“Stop listening to the flesh and walk in the Spirit. Let the Spirit control your mind so that you

may live the life that God wants you to live.”

What does Paul mean by “grieving the Holy Spirit”? To grieve the Holy Spirit is to act contrary to His leading, to His direction. As mentioned earlier, the flesh wants you to go its way; the Spirit wants you to go His way and the battle is in the mind. As Paul tells us in Romans 12, we must renew our minds daily; we must have the mind of Christ. We must not grieve the Holy Spirit; we must not disappoint the Holy Spirit; we must not turn our backs to the pleading of the Holy Spirit because, if we do that, eventually the devil will pull us out of Christ and we will commit the sin of blasphemy.

Paul goes on to tell us that it is the Holy Spirit, the first fruits of our salvation, that has sealed our redemption. But that seal can be broken. The New Testament is clear. That is why the Christian life is a battle and a march. We must fight this battle of faith against the flesh that is part of our very nature. Your greatest enemy in the world is not your neighbor or some other enemy in the world.

Your greatest enemy in the world is your own flesh and daily we must surrender the flesh to the cross that the Holy Spirit may take over and produce the life of Christ in us.

Therefore, Paul concludes Ephesians 4 (verse 31) by these words:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

What a wonderful instruction Paul gives us. Then in verse 32 he adds:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Justification by faith is not simply a ticket to heaven. Justification by faith is not simply God declaring you forensically righteous. Thank God it is that but justification is also “Not I, but Christ.” Justification by faith always produces works. In

Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul tells us we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not by works:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

But then in verse 10 he goes on to add that we have been created in Christ Jesus unto good works:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Then when you go to Titus, that book to that Gentile young man, Paul says to Titus in chapter 2:11-14 that Christ redeemed us from all iniquity so that He may produce a people who are zealous unto good works:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-

controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Then in Titus 3:5, he reminds us that we are not saved because of righteous works we have done but by His mercy He saved us and by renewing of the Holy Spirit:

...He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit....

Then in verse 8 he says we must be constantly reminded that we who believe must do good for this is profitable, not to us, but to others:

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted

in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Why? Because men and women must see Christ in us, dear friend. Jesus, in John 14:12 says:

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

What has Christ going to the Father to do with our good works? John 16:7 is the answer to that question:

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

Jesus had to go to the Father in order to give us the Holy Spirit that He may dwell in us, that He may lead us, guide us, strengthen us, and reproduce

in us the wonderful character of our Lord Jesus Christ that the world may see no longer us but they may see Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is what Christianity is all about. On the one hand we have peace with God; we have the assurance of salvation. We know in whom we believe and, therefore, we have a future that is wonderful. On the other hand, we have a flesh that is opposing our new life and we must learn to walk in the Spirit and let Christ be revealed in us that the world may no longer see us but Christ. When they see Christ in us, they will realize, they will admit that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. This, dear friend, is my prayer for each one of you, that you will know this truth and this truth will set you free. Amen.

Chapter 10

The Christian Walk

Ephesians 5:1-21

In our last study, in Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul describes for us the new life that we have in Christ. Christianity, as I mentioned, clearly in our last study, is not a modification of the old life but it is receiving the life of Christ through the new birth experience which is an exchange for our biosis Adamic life which stood condemned and which died on the cross. This new life — which the New Testament calls *zoe* — must now, Paul says, manifest itself in every phase of our Christian living. And that is what we brought out in our last study.

Now, turning to Ephesians 5 and the first 21 verses, Paul talks about the Christian walk. It is really a continuation of the new life in Christ but now he becomes specific in three areas.

Number one. The Christian walk is a walk in love. That is in Ephesians 5:1-7:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.

Then in verses 8-14, Paul talks about the Christian walk as a walk in light:

For you were once darkness, but now you are

light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

And finally, in verses 15-21, the Christian walk is a walk in wisdom:

Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father

for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.

Let us now look at each one of these carefully. Turn to Ephesians 5. Let us see what he says in verses 1-2:

Be imitators of God, therefore [in view of the fact that you have this new life], as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

One of the greatest privileges of being a Christian is that we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God. And Paul brought this out right at the beginning of his epistle to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 1:5 this is what Paul said. I want to just remind you what he said because we covered this in our first study:

[In love] he [God] predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance

with his pleasure and will....

Before the cross, God had only one Son, one beloved, special Son. The New Testament says, “the only begotten of the Father.” But since the cross, God has many sons and daughters of whom Christ is the first. That is why, after the cross, He is not referred to as “the only begotten” but “the first begotten” because, through the cross, where Christ gave us His life in exchange for our life; He gave us His zoe in exchange for our biosis, we have by that new birth experience become sons and daughters of God. And what Paul is saying in Ephesians 5:1 is that, since we are God’s children, let us behave as God’s children. Let us stop behaving like the sons and daughters of Adam. We are no longer in that position. We are now sons and daughters of God. He is saying, “Please behave like God’s children.” And how should God’s children behave? Well, they should walk in love as the firstborn, Christ, walked in love and gave Himself for us.

Let me point you to a statement that Jesus

made, recorded in John 13, made to His disciples which is also applicable to us, a very important statement. Jesus is talking to His disciples; He is coming to the end of His ministry and this is what He says. Verse 34:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Then in verse 35 He adds these words:

By this [that is, by this Christlike love] all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

You see, in 1 John 4:8 and also in verse 16, the apostle John makes it very clear. He says:

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ...God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

By this he does not mean that one of God's attributes is love. He means that God's nature, His

character, everything about Him must be understood in the context of His agape love. But now he says that this love must be reflected in His children, the Christian. And when the world sees this kind of love, this unique agape love in the life of believers, they will know that we are Christians. You see, the world does not care whether you are saved or not. The world cares whether the gospel has the power to turn selfish, greedy men and women into those who love others unconditionally.

This brings me to the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5, beginning with verse 43 to the end of that chapter, Jesus describes the kind of love that His disciples should reflect. He says in verse 43 of Matthew 5:

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”

Paul goes on to prove and to show that you do not have to be a Christian to love your neighbor and hate your enemies. He goes on to show that even the publicans and the tax collectors and the

sinners do the same thing. What Christians should do is love their enemies. Matthew 5:44-47:

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

In other words, God's love is unconditional, therefore, it is uncaused. It does not depend on the goodness of the object that is to be loved. It does not depend on the beauty of the one who is to be loved. Christian love must be like Christ's love: unconditional.

Paul beautifully expresses this unconditional love in Romans 5:6-10. He does it in contradiction to human love. In verse 6, he describes God's love and he says that while we were helpless — that is,

incapable of saving ourselves — Jesus died for the ungodly, the wicked. Then, in verse 7, he says that human love is not like this. Human love can only lay down life for somebody good and even this is rare. But, in verse 8 he says that, in contrast to this, God's love is so wonderful that while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us. Then he goes one step further in Romans 5:10, that even while we were God's enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Romans 5:6-10:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

This is the kind of love that Christians must demonstrate to the world. But, dear reader, this must become very clear: you and I cannot produce this love by puffing up our willpower and trying to do what Christ did. It is impossible for sinful human beings in and of themselves to produce this unconditional, self-emptying agape love of God. That is why I would like you to read the apostle John's way of putting it in 1 John 4. We will read two verses and I want you to note carefully because here is Christianity in action. Verse 7:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Here the word love is agape. "Let us love [agape, this special, unique, divine love] one another." 1 John 4:8:

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

"For love is of God and everyone who loves is

born of God and knows God.” Our loving as God loves is evidence that we are born of God: we have this new zoe life and that we know God. Then in verse 12 we read:

No one has ever seen God....

Why? Because He is in heaven or because He is a Spirit.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

You see, it is only through the Holy Spirit that you and I can manifest the love of God. And it is only as we walk in the Spirit that we can walk in love.

Having defined this, let me put it in a nutshell. When God first comes to you, please remember, He takes the initiative, it is not the sheep that go looking for the shepherd, it is the shepherd who goes looking for the lost sheep. That is the clear

picture of the New Testament. God comes to us. He may come to us through another person, He may come to us through a book, He may come to us through a radio program or a TV program — whatever method He uses is immaterial. But He comes to us; He takes the initiative and He tells us, He proclaims to us, through His human instruments, the good news of salvation. He tells us that, while we were helpless, ungodly, still sinners, and even His enemies, we were already reconciled to Him by the death of His Son.

In other words, He tells us what Paul tells us in Romans 5:18:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Now, when that good news comes to you, because God created us with a free will, you and I have a choice either to say “Yes” or “No.” And the positive response to the gospel is defined in the

New Testament by the word “faith.” John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

“Believe” and “faith” come from the same root word in Greek. Our response is faith and faith is saying “Yes” to God, “Yes” to what God did to me in Jesus Christ.

What happens next? The Holy Spirit is sent and, with Him, He brings the life of Christ and dwells in us. Now, we become born-again Christians. And when the Holy Spirit comes into your life and into my life, He brings with Him an extremely important ingredient which Paul spends a whole chapter describing in 1 Corinthians 13. He calls it the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit and that gift is love.

Paul says that this love comes into our hearts not that it may go back to God, because this is unselfish love. God does not give us this love that

it may go back to Him; it comes to us vertically from God through the Holy Spirit. But it wants to go horizontally towards our neighbors, towards everybody we meet. And Jesus said that by this demonstration of divine love all men will know that we are disciples.

May I make it very clear, friends, that the reason why the Christian religion in the Middle East lost its saltiness, and the Christian religion failed in Eastern Europe causing, in the Middle East, Islam to take over and in Eastern Europe, Communism to take over, is because the Christian church failed to demonstrate this love. In fact, in the industrial revolution in Europe, there was so much exploitation done that was condoned by the church, that Karl Marx condemned Christianity as being “the opiate of the people.”

My dear people, the world is getting worse and worse. Selfishness is becoming rampant, not only in our country but around the world. The time has come when the world desperately needs to see Christ in you and Christ in me. And that can only

be seen, not by our words but by the love of Christ effecting in our everyday relationship with our fellow man.

Having laid this foundation, let us see what Paul says in Ephesians 5:3-7:

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.

In verses 5-7 he says, “Look, let us not turn the gospel into cheap grace.” It is true that salvation is by grace alone as a gift to sinful man. But grace does not only save us from the guilt and

punishment of sin, it saves us from sin itself and the very essence of sin is this “own-wayness” which we call selfishness.

And so Paul says in verse 6:

Let no one deceive you with empty words....

The gospel is not a theory; it is a power of God unto salvation. Having expounded this walk in the light, he now turns in verses 8-14 about walking in the light. To understand this we need, first of all, to read the passage and then see something that Jesus brought out also in the Sermon on the Mount. Ephesians 5:6-14:

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light

becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Well, that last statement puts in a nutshell what Paul is trying to say: “Awake you who sleep; arise from the dead since you now have the new life in Christ, and Christ will give you light.”

To understand this, we first of all have to define the word “light.” Paul is not talking about illumination in terms of the light bulb or anything like that. Turn to John, chapter 1 and listen to how John describes Christ. John 1:4:

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John tells us that in Christ was life and the life was the light of men. So the light here is referring to the life of Christ, the zoe life which has made you and me as new creatures in Christ. Then, in verse 5 of John 1, he says:

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

He is referring to the Jews who saw the light but refused to see it. Then in verses 7-8 he says, speaking about John the Baptist:

He [that is, John the Baptist] came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John the Baptist was simply a witness, like you and I are witnesses. The Light is Jesus Christ. Verse 9:

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

So you and I are not the light. Christ is the light but we are to reflect that light since we have received the life of Christ through the new birth experience.

With this in mind, I want to go back to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7. There in verse 14, Jesus makes a very interesting statement concerning His disciples. Listen to this. Matthew 5:14-15:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

The English text does not bring out the full import of what Jesus said so let me help you. The word “you” in verse 14 is in the plural form in the original language but the word “light” is in the singular. The “you” refers to believers — you, myself, and everyone who is a born-again Christian. But while we are many, we all are just one light because the light is Jesus Christ. And so what Jesus is saying is, “Disciples, you must let Me, who is now dwelling in you through the Holy Spirit (and that is clearly brought out in Romans 8, 9, and 10), the light of the world, shine through

you.” How does the light shine through us? Jesus makes it clear in verse 16:

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

What are these good works? They are works of love as Paul describes in Ephesians 5:1-7. And now, in verses 8-14 Paul is saying, “Christians, when you allow the love of Christ to reflect through your behavior, then you are not reflecting yourself; you are reflecting Christ in you which is the hope of glory.” And Paul is saying, “If we walk in this light, we will reflect the life of Christ.” Jesus went about doing good and that is how we will also behave.

Finally, he turns to walking in wisdom in verses 15-21 in Ephesians 5:

Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore

do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.

Please remember the word “wisdom” — the Greek word is sophia — means “special knowledge.” Jesus said in John 8:32:

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

The Jews did not understand what He was talking about. They thought He was talking about political freedom. Verse 33:

They answered him, “We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

And Jesus said (verse 34):

...“Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

My dear Christian believers, my dear reader, sin is not simply an act. Sin is a power that dwells in your nature, that controls you, dominates over you like a slave is dominated by his master. Only through Jesus Christ can you find freedom. Jesus made it clear in John 8:36:

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

But this freedom comes only through a knowledge of the gospel, the truth as it is in Christ.

And so, what Paul is saying in Ephesians 5:15-21 is, “In the light of this knowledge that you have received, this knowledge of Jesus Christ and salvation through Him, see that you walk according to this knowledge. See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming

the time because the days are evil.” If this was true in Paul’s day, how much more is this truer in our day when crime is becoming increasingly rampant in our nation? Verses 17-18 of Ephesians 5 goes on:

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

You see, here is the contrast. The worldly man wants his beer. That is what satisfies him. The Christian’s greatest desire must to be filled, not with alcohol, not with beer, but with the Spirit of God.

Verse 19:

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord...

Christians should be the happiest people in the

world because they have a joy, they have a peace, that the world cannot give them, but also because they are the sons and daughters of God. Let the world see how happy Christians are, not because of what they have done but because of what they are in Jesus Christ. Verse 20:

...Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he ends verse 21, which really is a transitional text:

Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.

The word “fear,” used in some translations here, does not mean scared of God but, as the book of Proverbs chapter 8, verse 13 says:

To fear the Lord is to hate evil....

Now what is Paul saying in this passage we have just covered? Let me summarize what he is

saying. In chapter 5, verses 1-21, he is talking about the Christian walk. He says the Christian walk is three things:

1. It is walking in love, this special divine love, this zoe, this agape love, which was revealed in Christ Jesus.

2. A Christian is one who walks in light. In other words, it is “Not I, but Christ,” who must live in me. He is the light of the world and through you and me He wants to lighten this earth with His glory.

3. Finally, walking in wisdom, in the knowledge that we have through the gospel.

In other words, Paul is discussing here sanctification. He makes it clear that sanctification is “Not I, but Christ.”

My dear Christian, sanctification is two processes that take place simultaneously. One is negative; one is positive. On the one hand, a

Christian must constantly say, “I have been crucified with Christ. Not I, but Christ.” On the other hand, the Christian must say, “Christ must live in me. The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself to me.” Paul puts this very clearly in 2 Corinthians 4:7-11:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

On the one hand, daily, we are submitting to the cross of Christ that the flesh may be kept there on the cross. On the other hand, we must allow the light of Christ, which we have received through the

Holy Spirit, to live in us so that the world sees no longer us but Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is part of the wonderful good news of salvation. On the one hand, we have peace and joy and hope. On the other hand, there must be a transformation of the Christian life. Otherwise, we are deceiving ourselves as Paul clearly brings out in verses 5, 6 and 7 of Ephesians 5:

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.

And so it is my prayer, dear reader, that you will know this truth and this truth will set you free, free from the selfish nature of the flesh, free to live a life that God wants us to live. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 11

The Christian Home

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Now we are going to turn to an extremely important passage in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5:22 to chapter 6:9. I have entitled this study, "The Christian Home." Dear Reader, if there is ever a time when we need to take Paul's counsel to the Christian home seriously it is today, for we are living in a time in North America where the Christian home is disintegrating. Not only are the homes in the nation disintegrating but Christian homes are also disintegrating. And when the unity of the home is destroyed, it will not be long, it is only a question of time, when the nation will also disintegrate. That is why, as Christians, we need to take the counsel of Paul regarding husbands and wives, wives and husbands and children extremely seriously because it is our only hope to recover from what is happening in our country.

With this introduction, I would like you to look at the passage for today. Ephesians 5:22-6:9:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church — for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become

one flesh.” This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” — which is the first commandment with a promise — “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

In chapter 5 of Ephesians, beginning in verse 22 and up to verse 24, Paul deals with the wife's relationship to the husband. And there in verse 25 right up to the end of chapter 5 which is verse 33, Paul discusses the husband's relationship to the wife. Then in chapter 6 of Ephesians, verses 1 to 4, he is dealing with the children's relationship to their parents. And finally, in verses 5 to 9, he is dealing with the relationship of the servant to master since, of course, Paul did live in what we call the slave society.

Now, you will notice that in all these counsels that Paul gives, were they to the wives or the husbands or to the children, Paul uses the relationship of Christ to the church as a model of the relationship of the Christian home, that is, the relationship of husband to wife and vice versa.

What is the relationship of Christ to the church? First of all, Christ loves the church unconditionally, irrespective of whether the church is succeeding or failing. Second, He redeemed the church at infinite cost to Him but as a free gift to us. Thirdly, the New Testament makes it clear that Christ is the Head or the Lord of the church.

What about the church's relationship to Christ because, remember, we are using Christ and His relationship to the church and vice versa as a model? The church's relationship to Christ is one of submission. Christ is her Lord and Master. Number two, the church and Christ are to be one. Jesus made it clear, "Abide in Me and I in you." And finally, the church is to reflect the unconditional, the self-emptying love of God. Remember what Jesus said in John 13:34-35 to His disciples. He said, "Please, love one another. I command you to love one another just as I have loved you." Then He adds in verse 35, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, when you reflect, when you have this love one for another." John 13:34-35:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

The key statement in the passage we are studying is actually verse 21 of chapter 5 of Ephesians. The statement is this:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Remember, as we covered our previous study of this verse, the fear of God is not this fear that we know in English. But it is hatred for sin and it is a love for righteousness. Paul has told us already in chapter 5, verses 1 to 21 that we should walk in love as Christians. We should walk in the light that is Christ because He is the light of the world. Finally, we should walk in wisdom or in this special knowledge that we have received through the gospel. Now he is taking the statement, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God,” or,

in other words, out of love, he is now counseling wives and husbands.

What is his counsel to the wife? Well, wives, please listen to the counsel that Paul gives to you. Verse 22 of Ephesians, chapter 5:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

The key phrase here is “as to the Lord.” What does Paul mean here? We do not submit to God slavishly or out of fear in the sense that He is going to punish us. You see, wives, you are not to submit to your husband as if he is your slavemaster. That is not what Paul is saying, but in love. Just as we submit to Christ in love. Now he goes on in verse 23 and reminds the wife,

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

This verse and several others that say the same thing in the Old and the New Testament have

caused problems. You see, this is the result of the Fall. When God created Adam and Eve, and He created Eve out of the rib of Adam, the two were supposed to be one flesh. They were supposed to walk side by side. But because of the Fall and man's nature became corrupt and sinful, there was a need for one to rule, to be the head of the family. But, having said this, it is important for us to understand how the New Testament and especially how our Lord Jesus Christ defined leadership because the leadership in the Christian church is in complete contradiction to the leadership of the world.

Let me give you a couple of examples to show you what I mean. Turn to Matthew 20 where Jesus deals with this problem in verses 25 to 28. This is Jesus talking to His disciples who had a problem of leadership because they had not fully understood the kingdom of God. This is what Jesus told them, Matthew 20:25:

Jesus called them [that is, the disciples] together and said, "You know that the rulers of the

Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.”

This is what the world is like under Satan. The one that is in command wants to lord it, wants to use his authority, over the ones that are under him. But now look at verse 26 (this is Jesus talking):

“Not so with you.”

In other words, Christians do not practice this work system or method. Continuing verse 26 through 28:

“Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man [that is, Christ] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Can you see it, friends? Husbands, please do not misinterpret the statements about the husband being the head of the house and give it a carnal

interpretation. To be head of the house means that you are the chief servant of the house. Jesus brought this out very clearly also when He instituted the Lord's Supper. After washing the feet of the disciples, He said, "I am your Teacher; I am your Master and you all admit it and you are right. But what Have I done? I have just washed your feet, a menial task that is normally done by a servant. But I, your Teacher, your Master have just washed your feet and this is how I want you to treat each other." You will find this in Luke 22:24-27.

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

So when Ephesians 5:3 says that the husband is the head of the wife, it does not mean that he is to lord it over the wife as many husbands do but he is to be her servant. He is to love her and cherish her and take care of her just as Christ, who is the Head of the church, is the Savior of the body. Therefore, in Ephesians 5:24, Paul goes on to say,

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Wives, do not take advantage of your husbands' servitude. Just as we Christians are to be submissive to Christ, our benevolent Lord and Savior, so wives, love your husbands just as you love the Lord and serve him as we serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, that is the counsel to the wife. But now we read the counsel to the husband. Verse 25 to the end of the chapter:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her....

My dear reader, how did Christ love the church? How does He love us? Only when we are good? No, His love for us is unconditional. Let me give you an example that brings this out beautifully. Remember, when Jesus was instituting the Lord's Supper how Peter turns to Jesus after Jesus had made the statement that all of them would forsake Him and says, "Yes Lord, you may be right about these others but not about me. In fact, I will die for you." Jesus said, "Peter, you don't even know yourself. Yes, you may be sincere, you may mean what you say, but before the cock crows you will deny Me three times."

You know the history; you know what happened. In fact, Peter denied his Savior in front of a woman, not once, not twice, not only three times but the third time he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. Now, this may not mean too much to us living in our modern age but to the Jew, living in Christ's day, denying God with cursing and swearing meant the unpardonable sin. That is why when Jesus rose from the dead and Mary went into the tomb, do you remember what the angel

said to Mary? The angel said to Mary, “Go tell the disciples and Peter.”” Why did the angel single out Peter? Because Peter needed encouragement. He thought he had committed the unpardonable sin. He felt that he could no longer refer to himself as a disciple of Christ. And Jesus was telling him by this statement that, “Peter, you may have failed Me. I knew it all along but I still love you. You are still My child; you are still My disciple and now that you have lost all confidence in yourself, you are now going to be ready to feed the lambs and feed the flocks.”

So, Christ loves the church unconditionally. He loves us so much that He emptied Himself and became a slave. He loved us so much that He became obedient even to the cross, that terrible death, that shameful and painful death, because of His love for us. And so husbands, love your wives the same way that Christ loves the church, not because she is good but because your love for her is like Christ’s love for the church, unconditional and self-emptying. That is what Paul says in verse 26:

...To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word [that is, Christ and the church], and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

This is a great principle of marriage that is Biblical. In marriage the two become one flesh and so the husband must treat his wife the same way that he treats himself. Self love is unconditional and spontaneous and uncaused. We must project this kind of love that we have towards ourselves, husbands, to our wives and vice versa. In other words, the love between husband and wife and wife and husband must be reflecting the love of Jesus Christ to the church. This is Paul's counsel to the husband.

He goes on in verse 28 onwards:

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church....

Christ identified Himself with us. He became one with us and that is why in Matthew 25:40 where He talks about those who have accepted Him, the sheep, and those who have rejected Him, the goats, He makes it clear,

...“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

In the same way, just as we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones, so also for this reason, Paul says, a man shall leave his parents and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one. Ephesians 5:31-32:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery —

but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Now the word “mystery” does not mean “secret” that cannot be known. Yes, it can be known but it cannot be explained. In other words, this love between husband and wife must become a supernatural love, love that is outside the context of human experience and human nature. You see, human love is egocentric. It is self-centered and everything we do — all our acts of love generating from our own natural life — is polluted with self. Oh yes, sometimes the self is so hidden that even we cannot detect it; it is in our subconscious. But the love that must be reflected in the Christian marriage is the love of Christ that was revealed towards the human race in His life and in His death, especially, to the church. And that love must become the basis of the marriage relationship in the Christian home.

Now, to help you understand this, let me explain very briefly that Christianity is not the modification of the old life. The life that you and I were born with, the life that does all these different

things, is called in the New Testament, *biosis*, from which we have the English word “biography.” *Biosis* has to do with my personal performance, what I do every day, how I live, and so on. Christianity is not a modification of the old *biosis*. In other words, “Before, I did several things that were really against the will of God and now that I have become a Christian, I modify my life so that it is pleasing to God.” That is not Christianity.

Christianity is accepting the life of Christ in exchange for my life which is surrendered to the cross of Christ. In other words, Christianity is, “I am crucified with Christ. I am still living but it is no longer I, it is Christ who lives in me.” And the life He lives in me through the Holy Spirit is a completely different life. In fact, the New Testament uses a completely different word, which is *zoe*. John 1:4 says:

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 10:10b says:

...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

He has come to give us life and to give it to us more abundantly.

My dear Christian readers, the life that the world needs to see in our Christian homes, in our marriage relationships, is the life of Christ. This life is one that natural man cannot generate because biosis cannot produce this agape love of God. It is zoe, this new life that we receive through the new birth experience that is able to produce the agape love of God in our lives. That is why in 1 Corinthians 13 Paul tells us that the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer is this unconditional, self-emptying love of God which was revealed in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, I have dealt with the wives and the husbands and now let us turn to Ephesians 6 and see what Paul has to say regarding the relationship

of children to their parents and vice versa. Ephesians 6:1 reads:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Please notice, wives, husbands, and children, there is to be a submission to each other. And that is why I said earlier, that Ephesians 5:21 is the key text on which Paul builds this relationship. The key text says:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as you would do to Christ. Husbands, submit to your wives as you would do to Christ. And now, children, submit to your parents in the Lord for this is right. And then he quotes the commandment that deals with the relationship of parents and children and vice versa:

“Honor your father and mother” — which is

the first commandment with a promise — “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

But the submission, the love relationship is not to be one-sided. It has to be both-sided. And so verse 4 turns to the fathers:

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

The word “exasperate,” or “provoke” in some translations, is the opposite of the word “encourage.” So if I were to put this in the positive sense, “Fathers, encourage your children and do not discourage them so that they turn against you. Bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord.”

We have a great responsibility as parents to bring up our children to know Jesus Christ. There are many parents who try to bring their children up by do’s and don’ts and they give God a very wrong

image. Children often project their image of the father onto God and, if the father is cruel, if the father is unreasonable, if the father is always coming down on his children for every mistake they make, this is the kind of image they will project onto God. And God will no longer become to them a loving, benevolent Father but the tyrant from whom they want to run away. They do so the moment they reach the age where they can leave home.

So, my dear parents, especially fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath but love them as Christ loves us. This also applies to the mothers because today, both parents must be much involved in the rearing of the children. We are living, as I mentioned in the beginning of this study, in an age where homes are disintegrating. There is no unity in the home; there is no love; there is much fighting; the divorce rate is getting terribly high and there must come a time when the Christian church must step into the homes of our people and do something that will cause a reversal of the trend that is taking place today. The only way this can

happen is by taking the counsel that we have just studied in Ephesians 5:22-33 and Ephesians 6:1-4.

But there is another relationship that Paul brings out here in this passage and that is servants to masters and vice versa. The word “servants” actually means “slaves.” Now, please be clear. While the New Testament does not encourage slavery nor attack or condemn it, the thrust of the New Testament, the thrust of the gospel is against slavery. But Christ did not come to change the social status, the system of this world because He knows that the world is coming to an end. Christ, one day, will create a new heaven and a new earth wherein there will dwell righteousness and peace and love. But His greatest desire is that men and women would accept Jesus as their Savior today and that this acceptance must bring a change of behavior, a change in our relationships. And these relationships also include our relationship with our bosses and so on. So, we can take this counsel that Paul gives to servants and masters and vice versa and apply it to our employers, to the ones we are working under.

What does Paul say? Ephesians 6:5:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

In other words, please serve your bosses out of a relationship that is the same as yours to Christ. Yes, the master may be a tyrant and so we may tremble but we must serve him in sincerity because we are Christians.

Look at verse 6:

Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

Have you got it, dear Christian? We should serve or obey our bosses from the heart, not because they deserve it — even though that may be true or may not be true — but because we are Christians and our characters have changed.

Then in verse 7, he goes on to say we must serve our masters with good will, doing service as to the Lord and not to man:

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men...

So we must treat our bosses as if they were Jesus Christ, even though they may not be Christians or even though their behavior may contradict Christ completely.

Now let us turn to verses 8 and 9. He goes on to say knowing that whatever good anyone does he will receive the same from the Lord whether he be a slave or free:

...because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

In other words, our relationship to our fellowmen must be grounded on the basis of our

submission to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 9, he turns to the masters:

And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

So master, bosses, you treat those under you both with love and submission as you did Christ.

What is the conclusion of this study? In Christ, we have a new attitude towards our husbands, wives, and children. We no longer serve out of fear; we no longer have a relationship that is based on the world or on our culture. We have a relationship in the family, in the home, based on the relationship Christ has towards us and vice versa. This is my prayer for the home, for the Christian homes in America, that somehow, we will redeem the situation and show the world that the only solution to the breaking up of homes and marriages is the Christian home. And this is my

prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 12

Putting on the Whole Armor

Ephesians 6:10-24

We come now to our very final study of this tremendous epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, what many scholars call “The Queen of the Epistles,” the crowning climax of Paul’s theology, the sublimest communication ever made to human beings and the most comprehensive statement of the Christian religion. This final study, Ephesians 6:10 to the end of the chapter, has to do with the whole armor of God, putting on the whole armor of God.

Now, keep in mind the context in which Paul wrote this letter. Ephesians was one of his prison letters. He was in prison, in a dungeon, because of the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile world. Many of his followers, many of the believers in Ephesus and around Asia Minor, had lost courage and become very depressed because they felt that if God could not protect that great apostle, Paul, who

was their pastor for approximately three years, what hope is there for them? And so Paul wrote Ephesians to strengthen their faith and to teach them and to show them how the Christian church should walk together in unity, in love, helping each other as they faced what he calls “the evil day.” Because Paul realizes that, before Christ comes to take us to heaven, the Christian church, as well as the world, will be plunged into a time of trouble that has never been experienced by any other generation previously.

Now, what is Paul’s counsel? Paul’s counsel is the only way we can stand the evil day that is ahead of us. And things today point in that direction. I believe we are very close to that evil day. The only way you and I can stand the crisis ahead of us is, dear reader, to put on the whole armor of God. Because, you see, apart from Christ, we are no match for the devil who is still the lord of this earth and the flesh which is dominated by the law of sin and death.

With this introduction, if you have your Bibles,

dear reader, please turn to Ephesians 6 and we are going to look carefully at verses 10-20 which is putting on the whole armor of Christ. Of course, verses 21-24 are simply Paul's greeting. Since this is a letter, he sends his special, gracious greetings to those whom he knows and to the believers in Ephesus.

Look at Ephesians 6:10:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Please notice "be strong in the Lord." This is my greatest concern for you, dear Christians. As I mentioned earlier, you and I are no match for the devil or for the flesh. It is only through the power of Jesus Christ that we can conquer the evil one and overcome the flesh. In other words, the Christian life must be a life of "Not I, but Christ." Having made that statement in verse 10, Paul says, in verse 11:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can

take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Now, who is this devil? Well, the New Testament gives him many names. He is called the adversary, the enemy of God's people. He is called the accuser of the brethren in Revelation 12:10-11. He is called the tempter in Matthew 4:3. He is called a liar in John 8:44. And how he tries to deceive the Christian. He is called the roaring lion who is seeking to devour God's people in 1 Peter 5:8. And he is called the serpent, that sly, cunning serpent in Revelation 12:9. And friends, this devil is no match for you and for me. Paul reminds us, that in the Christian warfare, we are not wrestling against flesh and blood. Ephesians 6:12:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

This is where the battle is for the Christian. The real battle is not our physical, political warfare. Our real battle is our warfare with the

enemy of souls, Satan, the devil. Let me put it this way, dear reader. When you and I became Christians, do you know we changed our citizenship? Christianity is not simply joining a church. Christianity is changing our citizenship from the kingdom of this world which we were born in to the kingdom of heaven which we have now joined and accepted. And when we become citizens of heaven, we have to say good-bye to this world. As Paul made it clear in Galatians 6:14:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

In John 15:19, Jesus tells His disciples that:

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

“You used to belong to the world,” said Jesus, “but I have chosen you out of this world.”

That is why the key word in the New Testament for the word “church” is made up of two Greek words meaning “a called people” and “out of.” As Jesus reminded His disciples in John 15,

I have chosen [or called] you out of the world.

Christians do not belong to this world. They are citizens of heaven but they are still living in this world. And this world is still dominated by Satan. In 1 John 5:19, we are told by this great apostle John, that we Christians belong to God but the whole world, the rest of humanity, is still under the evil one.

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

In other words, a Christian is a citizen of heaven but living in enemy territory. You can be sure, dear reader, that because Satan has lost a citizen from his kingdom, when you become a

Christian, he is determined to make your life hell, to destroy your faith in Christ. That is why, as we see the evil day approaching, we need to put the full armor of God on. Paul says in Ephesians 6:13:

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Let me make it very clear. The righteousness that saves us, that qualifies you and me for heaven, the righteousness that justifies us ungodly sinners, is always in Christ. And Christ is in heaven where no thief can enter and steal that righteousness from you. Satan cannot take that righteousness which is in Christ. Ah, but the faith that makes that righteousness yours, the believer's faith that makes justification effective, is not in Christ; it is in the believer. We are still living in this world, in Satan's territory and that Satan can touch. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 10 beginning in verse 16:

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

He told the disciples that, because they were still living in enemy territory, the devil would do everything to destroy that faith. He would take them to councils; he would flog them; he would persecute them even within their own homes. Parents would turn against their children and vice versa and so on. And then He makes the statement in verse 22:

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Our faith must endure unto the end. This is especially true as brought out in the book of Hebrews. Because, you see, the writer of Hebrews, writing to Jewish Christians, is warning them against the danger of reverting back to Judaism. And in Hebrews 10:35, the writer of Hebrews says:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

“Do not give up your confidence,” that is, your confidence in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him; do not give this up because it has great recompense of reward.

Then, in Hebrews 10:38a, this is what the writer of Hebrews states:

But my righteous one [or “the righteous” or “the just”] will live by faith.

In other words, he who is just by faith shall live. You see, the only righteousness that qualifies you and me for heaven is the righteousness of Christ, which is made effective in our lives through faith. Hence, justification by faith alone is the only way you and I can go to heaven. And that is the great truth that the Reformers, beginning with Luther, restored after the Dark Ages about 400 years ago.

Now, let's go back to Hebrews 10:38:

But my righteous one will live by faith.

But, there is a “but.”

And [or “but”] if he shrinks back [if anyone turns his back to Christ], I will not be pleased with him.

You see, God is love. He cannot save us by compulsion. If we deliberately turn our backs to Christ, if we deliberately say to Christ, “We don’t

want you and your salvation,” then we are saying good-bye to heaven, too. Then God is not able to save us. But I like Hebrews 10:39:

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

And, friends, we can only believe unto the saving of the soul as long as we put on the whole armor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what is this whole armor? Actually, the whole armor of God is equated to the various aspects of the gospel message. Listen to what Paul says. Look at Ephesians 6:14:

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place....

Now, what Paul is doing here is he is taking a typical armor that was used by the Romans soldiers that the people in Paul's day were very familiar

with, something that we are not familiar with, but what the people of Paul's day were very familiar with, and he is using that armor which was used by the Roman soldiers for protection in a war as a model, as a metaphor for the armor of the Christian. Now, one of the key things that were used by the soldiers of Rome was a brass plate to protect the vital organs. And Paul is using the breastplate to refer to the righteousness of Christ which is able to stand against the fiery darts of the devil.

Let me explain it this way. While we are citizens of heaven, while we have a change of mind, a Christian's human nature has not changed one iota. We still possess sinful human natures that are potentially one hundred percent sinful as they were before our conversion. Therefore, the greatest enemy of the Christian is his own sinful human nature. The devil, using the flesh, using the sinful nature, knocks us down. He causes us to commit a sin. The reason we fall is because we have not yet learned fully to walk in the Spirit. Now, what does he do after he has knocked us

down? He comes to us with this guilt conscience. He tells us that we are not good enough to be saved. He tells us that we are an absolute failure as Christians.

Now, the question is, What do you do as a Christian when he has knocked you down and accuses your conscience and riddles you with guilt? Do you lie down dead defeated or do you stand up and use the breastplate and say to the devil (1 Timothy 1:15):

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.

“Yes, I am the chief of sinners but Jesus Christ came to save sinners like me.”

Friends, the only tool that we can use against the fiery darts of the devil, his accusing finger, is the righteousness of Christ. But Paul goes on in verse 15 of Ephesians 6:

...and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Romans soldiers had to protect their shins just like the football players had to protect their shins. They wore solid plates in front of their legs to protect their legs from being broken because, if a soldier's legs are broken, he is no use to the army. He is a defeated foe and the enemy will eventually get him. So Paul is saying, just like the Roman soldiers protect their thighs and calves and shins by metal plates, so we must protect our legs, our spiritual legs, with the gospel of peace. Once again, Paul is thinking of the gospel as the source of our strength.

When Jesus came to this world, do you remember what the angels sang? "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth." Why? Because the Redeemer had come to remove every barrier between a holy God and sinful man. And as Paul tells us in Romans 5:1:

Therefore, since we have been justified through

faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

The gospel brings peace between a sinful human race and a holy God. Why? Because when Jesus died on the cross, when He paid the price for our sins, the curtain that separated a holy God from a sinful priest in the earthly sanctuary was torn apart from top to bottom and a way was made open into the very presence of God. That is why in Hebrews 10, verse 19 onwards, the writer of Hebrews tells us that we can approach God with a pure conscience, with full assurance, with our guilt and our conscience all sprinkled by the blood of Christ, washed away from guilt and this is the peace of the gospel. Hebrews 10:19-22:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a

guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Ephesians 6:16:

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Please notice, as I mentioned already, the righteousness that qualifies you for heaven, now and in the judgment, is the righteousness of Christ. It is a righteousness that is in Christ, never in the believer. Yes, what God does in the believer demonstrates to the world the power of the gospel in our lives but the righteousness that God produces in the believer does not contribute one iota towards the righteousness that qualifies for heaven. The righteousness that qualifies you and me for heaven, dear reader, is a gift. It is entirely what God produced and obtained in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ, His doing and His dying. But, as I mentioned, that righteousness becomes mine. It becomes yours by faith alone.

And when the devil attacks you; when he knocks you down and tries to keep you down, please, remind him that your justification is by faith and your faith becomes a shield against the fiery darts of the devil.

Oh, what a wonderful gospel we have in Jesus Christ. And now, verse 17:

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Today, we protect our heads with helmets, just like the Roman soldiers did. They had their heads covered with a metal helmet. Today, we have fiber helmets when we ride a motorcycle or when the racing drivers race around the track. They wear helmets to protect their brains from damage. Friends, the vital organ, the brain, needs to be protected. Your spiritual mind needs to be protected by a helmet that not a metal helmet, dear reader, but by the helmet of salvation. Don't you ever allow the devil to discourage you, to bring depression upon you, to discourage you from your

hope in Christ. Remind him constantly that your salvation is based on Jesus Christ. Our spiritual minds need to be protected, not by human inventions but by the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

But all these modern instruments that Paul has mentioned are protective instruments: the shield, the armor, the helmet. Now, in the last part of verse 17, he talks about a positive tool. The Roman soldier did not only protect himself from his enemies by wearing an armor that protected him from head to foot — that is what the gospel does to us — but he also armed himself with the sword to fight away the enemy. And the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Tell me, how did Jesus deal with the temptations that Satan brought to Him in the wilderness and in various places? Please remember, the greatest weapon that Jesus used against the fiery darts of the devil, against the temptations of the devil, is “It is written.” And so must we; we must be rooted and grounded in the Word of God, dear reader. We must know what the Bible says about us and about our salvation in

Christ so that we will be able to give an answer. If you are not grounded in the Word of God, you will not be able to resist the attack of the evil one. Jesus met every temptation in the wilderness by “It is written.” The Word of God is powerful. Why? Because the Word of God is Christ Himself for John tells us (John 1:1):

In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And he goes on then to end with (John 1:14a):

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Dear reader, Christ is the Word of God and, as we read our Bibles, we must remember that the Bible is not simply human words, human ideas. The Bible is God’s revelation. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Let me remind you of the two men who were walking to Emmaus after the death of Christ. They

were very discouraged. They had lost all hope because their Savior, their Messiah, had been crucified. Jesus met them on the road to Emmaus and He asked them, “What’s the meaning of all this discouragement?” And they said, “Don’t you know what has happened? We thought He was the One but now He is dead.” My dear reader, if those two men had understood the Word of God, all the wonderful prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament, they would not have been discouraged. If they had only believed what Jesus had told them prior to His crucifixion; He warned them that He would die but He also told them that He would rise from the dead, but they were not grounded in the Word of God. Their faith was weak because the Word of God had not become part of them. And so Jesus had to remind them; He had to teach them, beginning with Moses, going right through the Scriptures, the Word of God, He showed them that how the Old Testament pointed to Him. We Christians have an added advantage. We have the New Testament which clearly describes to us the life and death of Christ which clearly is filled with the gospel message, which no longer is a promise

but a reality in Jesus Christ.

My dear people, let us put on the sword of the Word; let us be rooted and grounded in the love of God and in the Word of God so that we will be able to meet the attacks of the devil with the sword of the Spirit. And now look at Ephesians 6:18-20:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Paul is giving here some wonderful counsel. So far, in verses 10 to 17 in Ephesians 6, he is talking to the individual Christian — “Put on the whole armor of God” — but now in these verses, he is talking of how we Christians should help each

other. In Romans chapter 15, Paul tells us that those who are spiritual should help those who are weak. We Christians are one body. We should help each other, especially as we see the day approaching, the day of trouble, the day of judgment. And in Ephesians 6:19 Paul is saying, “Look, I am giving you this counsel but I need your prayers too. I am in prison; I am in chains; I have to stand up for Christ, for the gospel as I face my accusers. Please pray for me.” We need to pray for each other; we need to hold each other’s hands, dear reader, because the church is one body; we need each other. As Paul clearly brings out in 1 Corinthians 12:26:

If one part [of the body of Christ] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

When one Christian suffers, all Christians must suffer with that one Christian. When one rejoices, all should be rejoicing. There would be no schism in the church. We are one body; and we need to help each other. We need to pray for each other.

And here Paul is telling the believers, “Please pray that I may have boldness to defend the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ against my accusers.”

What a wonderful epistle this is that we have just studied. May I conclude by this warning. The devil will do everything on his part to destroy your faith. And as I read the New Testament, I have discovered there are three ways the devil will try to destroy the believer’s faith.

1. By persecution. He will persecute you physically, mentally, socially, until you give up Christ. But friends, may I remind you what one of the church fathers said about the martyrs of the early Christian church, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The more you mow us down, the more we convert people.” Please, don’t be afraid of those who can destroy your body. Be afraid, said Jesus, of those who can destroy body and soul, that eternal life that you have in Christ.

2. Satan will destroy your faith by dangling before your eyes the material things of this world.

This is a great danger in America where materialism is so predominant in this wealthy country. Remember what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:10 about Demas who was a coevangelist with Paul. He said, “Demas has forsaken me because I am in prison and he has gone back to the world.” Don’t you ever allow the material things of this world to destroy your faith in Christ. Yes, we are living in a wonderful country. We have a plastic card that can buy almost anything that we want in the shops but I will tell you, dear reader, those material blessings do not bring peace. There are thousands of rich people in America who have no peace. Please, do not let the devil deceive you.

3. And finally, the devil will destroy your faith by perverting the gospel. He almost had success in Galatia. And Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 11:2-4 that just as Satan deceived Eve by his subtlety, he will try to deceive us by the perversion of the gospel by presenting to you another Christ, another gospel that is not the true gospel.

Please be on your guard. Put on the whole

armor of God as we face the crisis ahead of us. Do not let anyone rob you of your faith in Jesus Christ which has great recompense. The just shall live by faith. It is my prayer that your faith will endure unto the end. That is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.